

I AM ZOMBIE: MOBILIZATION IN WWII CANADA AND FORCED “ZOMBIE” PER- FORMANCES 1939-1947 ¹

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Abstract. This paper investigates the mediating role that technologies of classification and identification have on individual performances and subsequent identity construction. During WWII in Canada, ID surveillance technologies were developed to govern the behaviours of individuals conscripted into the Armed Forces. Legislation, however, limited how these conscripted soldiers could be deployed. Due to a cultural perception of a lack of patriotism associated with these conscript “Zombies,” the Army consciously developed policy to have conscripts adopt additional performances to identify them as Zombies in order to shame them into “volunteering” for General Service. This paper argues that as a result of implemented governing technologies, conscripted individuals took up new and undesired performances as Zombie soldiers, and furthermore, that these performances impacted how they were perceived culturally and worked to mediate their constructed sense of identity.

Keywords: Performance, Performativity, Identity, Identity Construction, Governance, Zombie, Canada, World War II

Résumé. Cet article traite du rôle médiateur des technologies de classification et d'identification sur le comportement individuel et la construction identitaire qui en découle. Au Canada, pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, des technologies de surveillance de l'identité ont été mises au point afin d'encadrer le comportement des personnes qui s'étaient enrôlées dans les Forces armées. La loi limitait toutefois la façon dont ces conscrits pouvaient être déployés. Comme la perception culturelle taxait ces «zombis» d'un manque de patriotisme, l'Armée a sciemment instauré une politique pour amener les conscrits à adopter d'autres comportements afin de les inciter à se «porter volontaires» pour le service général par sentiment de honte. Cet article soutient que par suite de l'implantation de ces technologies d'encadrement, les conscrits ont adopté des comportements nouveaux et indésirables comme soldats zombis, et que ces comportements ont

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eu en outre un impact sur la façon dont ils étaient perçus du point de vue culturel et dont ils ont composé avec le sentiment d'identité qu'ils s'étaient construit.

Mots clés: Performance, Performativité, Identité, Construction Identitaire, Gounvernance, Zombie, Canada, la Seconde Guerre mondiale

'If there are Zombies, it is because they have been made so by the Canadian Government.'

Globe and Mail 1944. Zombies are Blamed for Faults of Others. [20-8-5]

INTRODUCTION

"The fight started in the canteen when the [NRMA] troops started to sing 'Its Better to be a Zombie than a General Service Man.' Tables were overturned in the fight which followed...and the [NRMA] troops ran to their hut and grabbed their rifles and bayonets to repel the General Service men who resented the implication of the words of the song" (*Globe and Mail* 1944b; also see *Ottawa Citizen* 1944).

In the final years of the Second World War, instances of violence between conscripted "NRMA" classified, or "Zombie," soldiers and other "volunteer," or "General Service" (GS), soldiers grew increasingly common. What had started as a simple internal bureaucratic distinction between soldiers who had been conscripted under the *National Resources Mobilization Act* (NRMA) and those who had volunteered had grown in significance, developing into a cultural category that stigmatized conscripted individuals as Zombies. Although this Zombie, or NRMA, classification came to be a defining element of individual identity, it was one that no individual freely chose to take up, or took part in shaping the performances that this classification would require of them. This paper demonstrates the impact that conscription, or "mobilization," had in forcing individuals to take up and engage in the set performative acts associated with being an "NRMA," or conscripted, Canadian soldier during the Second World War – arguing that although the performances associated with Zombie soldiers were the result of external governing influences, these performances still worked to sediment, influencing public perceptions of identity and individual conceptions of self.

In reading this paper it is important to recognize that regardless of the question of how necessary or correct the choice of the Canadian government was to conscript men into the Armed Forces during the Second

World War, the act itself remains one that is deeply authoritarian and totalitarian in nature, as it was government policy, coupled with the threat of punitive legal action that pulled people from their daily lives and forced them to perform the social role of soldiers, to fight, and in some cases, kill or be killed in military combat. This coercive and intrusive nature of “mobilization” – a term adopted by the Canadian government to avoid the negative cultural association with “conscription” – is perhaps most clearly shown in the fact that these individuals could have chosen to volunteer to serve in the Armed Forces at any time, but instead, were “mobilized” by the government and forced to take up the performances of NRMA soldiers. Even the news media of the time noted the seriousness of this action, characterizing it as a loss of liberty “not in accordance with...[the] government of a free people,” and as policy “which probably wouldn’t live thirty seconds in a peacetime parliament” (Minister of Labour Mitchell 1946).

As a result of Canadian mobilization policy and technology,² 157,841 individuals took up positions as NRMA soldiers, were required to adhere to military discipline, and in some cases, were deployed to the front lines in both the Pacific and European theaters (Stacey 1970 Appendix “R”: 590). Ultimately, this paper argues that these performances led NRMA classified individuals to adopt a governed understanding of themselves that led to the forceful incorporation of the government’s mobilization categories into their constructed sense of identity, forcing them to take up the social role of a Zombie whether they wanted to or not. In this way, the consequences of this government classification can be understood as having played out in regards to mobilized individuals in three parts: first, in the Government policy decision to conscript men as NRMA soldiers, giving them a distinctive legal status and developing a negative social stigma associated with this group; second, in that mobilization technologies, coupled with Army policy to differentiate this group, led to the forced adoption of Zombie performances by selected populations; and third, that the repetition of forced “Zombie performances” resulted in the reiteration, reestablishment and sedimentation of these performances, impacting the identity of classified individuals, and culminating in the adoption of a Zombie identity as a means of engaging politically with Army and Government officials. After a brief review of the concept of forced performativity, each of these points will be addressed in the sections that follow.

2. For details regarding how these technologies were developed, implemented and functioned see Thompson (2014; 2014b).

INTENTION, FORCED PERFORMATIVITY AND TECHNOSOCIAL SPACES

Within this paper the concept of performativity is taken up as a means of conceptualizing both the mediation of agency that exists within particular techno-social spaces and the limited role of intention in the construction of certain kinds of realities, identities and understandings of self. Within the performativity literature, identity is conceptualized as being socially constructed, while its appearance of substance only exists as the sedimented result of the repeated performance of delineated, social acts that have been culturally associated with a particular identity type or classification – such as wearing a dress, in the case of the category of women (Butler 1997). In this way, performativity provides a means to “counter a certain metaphysical presumption about culturally constructed categories and to draw our attention to the diverse mechanisms of that construction” (Butler 2010: 147). In particular, this emphasizing of an existing, yet conditioned, form of agency (Butler 1997: 14-15) coupled with a stressing of the technological and social (techno-social) conditions of performance within the performativity literature (Butler 2010: 151; Callon 2010: 164), points to the importance of a need to investigate how these mechanisms and processes work to bring governing social categories into being and enable them to exert significant ontological effects.

Austin’s (1962; 1975) work on speech acts in the early 1960s notes how specific technological and social requirements are necessary in order for a speech act to be performed “successfully.” As Loxley (2007: 9) notes of Austin’s work; performances are conceptualized as being “dependent for their [success] on circumstances in precisely the way that marriage can only be said to have taken place, if the right words were said at the right time, in the right place, if the right person was officiating, [etc.]” In other words, certain performative acts can successfully work to bring the actor’s personal identity construction into better approximation with the intended identity associated with a given performance, but *only* if they are performed in environments containing the necessary technological and social components. Butler (2010: 151) extends this argument, asserting “that certain kinds of performative speech acts could only have ‘effect’ if certain conditions [are] first met.” Importantly, these assertions stress how performances, and as a result, their subsequent identity construction, are not simply the actions of single subjects, since they rely on “broad networks of social relations, [and] institutional practices, including technological instruments” (Ibid: 151). In this way, Butler (2010: 150-151) argues that models that stress only the speaking subject fail “to provide an adequate way of understanding how performativity works,” as “networks of social relations, institutionalized

practices, including technological instruments," are also of critical importance. Within this understanding of performativity, "it is not simply that a subject performs a speech act, rather, a set of relations and practices are constantly renewed, and agency traverses human and non-human domains" (Ibid: 151). In short, the techno-social make-up of the environment in which the individual is performing, or the "circumstances" of the performative act, are fundamental to its capacity to "succeed."

This insight, however, also implies an under-investigated element of performance/environment argument – that if techno-social spaces can determine whether or not an *intended* act finds performative expression, then techno-social spaces can also determine if a particular act by *unintended* or *undesired* means finds performative expression as well. Following this understanding of performance, and acknowledging performativity's alignment with Foucault, we can understand the taking up of these unintended, or undesired, "forced performances" as a result of the governing rationalities and technologies of specific institutional techno-social spaces that work to define, classify and categorize people (Foucault 1991; 1982: 792). Foucault (1987: 122-123) notes that subjects within governed spaces are faced with a multiplicity of ways to deal with each other and are free to choose how to do so from a defined field of possibilities – producing what Butler (1997: 14-15) has constructed as "a radically conditioned form of agency." Here agency exists as dialogic relationship between the discursive command of cultural categories and the particular enacted reiteration of these categories by the subject – the individual contributing to the discursive content of identity categories through their "choice" in performance (Callon 2010: 164; Callon, Lascoumes and Barthe 2009). However, given the mediating role of the technological and social requirements pointed out by Austin (1962; 1972) and Butler (2010), the context of performance becomes incredibly important in mediating the capacity for agency – as "external reality" may not "yield to the efficacy of sovereign authority" (Ibid: 151). As Ehlers (2012: 112) notes; "context inevitably determines the capacity for agency, and the structures within which an agent comes into being and operates will all influence the kinds of agency that becomes available."

Callon (2010: 614) adds an important institutional aspect to this, arguing that due to the fact that cultural categories are subjected to constant redefining and reconfigurations, any sense of categorical "stability, when it exists, can be obtained only by means of a set of investments that are at once cognitive, material and institutional." In this sense, governing techno-social spaces can mediate the "successful" expression of performative acts, effectively selecting which acts are included as part of the cultural processes of reiteration, re-establishment and sedimentation

that bring into being the appearance of certain kinds of realities, identities and understandings of self. The importance of intention in performance is cut away to the extent that the techno-social conditions of spaces strictly limit the reiteration of performance to the defined, “stabilized,” categories and set governing rationalities of a given system of classification. In other words, institutional “discourses draw boundaries, exclude and reject,” forwarding standardized interpretations of categorized identity performances (Callon 2010: 165). Though an individual may intend to take up a particular identity performance, the techno-social conditions of the context of that performance could allow for a very different, and *unintended*, identity performance to “succeed” instead.

To conceptualize this forced or undesired performance as a “misfire” (Austin 1975: 16) in that the performance did not result in the *intended* identity performance, or as “performative failure” where “nothing happens” (Butler 2010: 15), is problematic. Doing so abandons the insight that performances are necessarily productive – something was the result of the performance, and that something has the same cultural capacity for the reiteration, reestablishment and sedimentation as do intentional acts. This is not to say that agency does not exist within these techno-social spaces, but simply that within governing techno-social spaces, how categories are constructed, defined, are standardized, and mediate reiteration, is of critical importance.

The remainder of this paper demonstrates the technologies and practices which worked to diminish the capacity for agency for conscript soldiers, and in so doing, contributed to the bringing into being a deep social meaning for the identity category of NRMA “Zombie” in Canada during the Second World War.

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THE FORCED PERFORMANCE OF NRMA SOLDIERS

Under the *National Resources Mobilization Act* (NRMA), specific performances were required of called up NRMA soldiers. In this section the development of government policy and the content of these forced performances are demonstrated, noting how required performances changed after demands placed on the Canadian government for overseas soldiers became greater. The following sections will then argue how it is that the application of specific technologies of governance associated with Armed Forces classifications – which found discursive expression in the popular term “Zombie” – worked to mediate the identity performances of NRMA classified individuals.

The question of conscription during both WWI and WWII was an issue that threatened the delicate unity of the country by driving a wedge between English and French Canada. Where the former were seen as overly tied to British Imperialism, the latter were viewed as disloyal and lacking deference to the British Crown. In both wars conscription was seen by many in the English Canadian majority as a means of ensuring that French Canadians would "do their part" and contribute equally in the sacrifices required of the Commonwealth. In contrast, the French minority largely viewed conscription as an act of Imperial despotism, unjustly enforced upon them at the whim of a foreign European power. During the First World War the issue of conscription had pulled the country into political turmoil, with English Canada largely in support, and French Canada vehemently opposed. The matter became so heated that in 1918 direct action protests in French Canada resulted in the burning down of government registration offices and the deployment of Canadian troops throughout the province of Québec to maintain order until the close of the war (Auger 2008: 503, 510). When WWII became a reality, Prime Minister King feared that if conscription was imposed for overseas duty there would be a shattering of national unity, a break-up of the federal Liberal party and a serious threat of civil conflict (Roy 1975-76: 60).

The decision not to force any potential conscripts to take part in the conflict in Europe was first put forward by the Conservative leader on March 27th 1939 as a means of improving the party's political support in the predominantly French province of Québec, where public opinion was known to be in opposition to the idea of conscription for a European war.³ This position was also taken up by the Prime Minister and expressed in the House of Commons only three days later (Stacey 1970: 387-398). After rapid defeats suffered in Europe in 1939-1940, the need to take more drastic action to increase the number of soldiers within the Armed Forces was accepted by the Canadian government and the first steps were taken towards conscription (Department of National War Services 1941; Byers 2002: 156). When the *National Resources Mobiliza-*

3. Since the time that registration had been proposed there had been several public denouncements of the program in the province of Québec. Most of which argued, correctly, that registration would be a precursor to conscription. The most public of these was made by Camillien Houde, the mayor of Montréal. Houde called on the Québécois not to register through several statements that he made to Québec newspapers, and as a result was interned by the government of Canada (*Hamilton Spectator* 1940; *Globe and Mail* 1940; *Toronto Daily Star* 1944). The sentiment against conscription in Québec would also be expressed later in a plebiscite held by the federal government in 1942. Quebec was the only province in which the majority voted against conscription (72.1%), compared to the Canadian average of (64.5 %) in favor (*Hamilton Spectator* 1942).

tion Act was passed on June 21st 1940, the legislation specifically stated that any possible compulsory service would *not* include the capacity of being deployed overseas.

In order to identify individuals for conscription and bring these individuals into the Army, a detailed National Registration program was initiated. Specifically, legislation called on all individuals over the age of 16 living within the Dominion to present themselves to a government official who would record their personal information and issue them an ID card (Department of National War Services 1940; *Star* 1940). Canada's WWII National Registration occurred on August 19th, 20th, and 21st 1940 and the personal information of over 7,862,900 individuals were recorded, duplicated and filed at regional National Registration offices as well as at a central Head Office in Ottawa (Department of National War Services and Dominion Bureau of Statistics 1941; *Leader-Post* 1942). These data were then analyzed by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and lists of individuals who were deemed to be "available," having been found not to be employed within one of the government's 200 "necessary" industries, were passed on to National Registration Officials who were then charged with the conscription, or "mobilization," of these men into the Armed Forces (Department of Labour 1949: 9).

Individuals started being called up for compulsory service in September of 1940, and as part of their mobilization, they were required to participate in thirty days of training at Military camps set up across the country. These initial 30 day training camps were designed to present the Army in a positive light, and were, at least in part, developed to soften political opposition and public resistance against conscription, as well as to act as a means for recruiting attendees to volunteer to serve in the Army (*Globe and Mail* 1940a). In January 1941 the policy regarding the training of mobilized men changed significantly, extending the 30 days of training to a period of four months. In April of that same year, only three months later, policy changed yet again and mobilized men were no longer released to return home after training. Instead, all men mobilized after April 1941 were deployed to Army units after having received their basic training, were based across the country and were forced to take up the performances of full time NRMA soldiers under the Army's authority and discipline. As part of this shift, the experience of training also changed to reflect the fact that these men were now being mobilized into combat ready units.

As part of the war effort, NRMA soldiers were also deployed into combat positions starting in September 1942. The move had come after heated public debate and pressure from the Conservative opposition had pressed the McKenzie government to take further action on the issue.

The government's solution was to hold a nationwide plebiscite on the issue of eliminating the restrictions placed on the deployment of conscript soldiers. Although the 1942 Conscription Plebiscite had shown a 66% nationwide support for eliminating any restrictions on the deployment of NRMA soldiers, a staggering 72% had voted against the measure in the predominately French province of Québec. As a result of this strict divide and the heightened emotions on both sides of the debate, the McKenzie government moved cautiously on the issue, crafting Orders-in-Council which slowly expanded the deployment of these troops beyond the protection of Canada and its territorial waters. The first deployment of NRMA soldiers was to three anti-aircraft batteries in Alaska in 1942, while later in September of that year, other conscripts were deployed to Newfoundland and Labrador to bolster infantry forces stationed there. NRMA soldiers also saw combat in June 1943 as part of the American commanded forces attacking Kiska in the Aleutian Islands (*Calgary Herald* 1943). Under pressure to produce more troops for the European front, the order was given in August 1943 to enable the deployment of NRMA men anywhere in Newfoundland, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, British Guiana, Alaska, and the United States (Granatstein and Hitsman 1977: 298). Finally in 1944, after it had been reported that the numbers of volunteer soldiers were not matching the losses experienced overseas, Prime Minister King chose to act on the Minister of Defence's previously offered resignation over the government's continuance to limit NRMA soldiers to the defence of Canada (Roy 1975-76: 59-60; King 1944; *Windsor Daily Star* 1944). Culminating in what is now known as the "Conscription Crisis" of 1944, political pressure placed on the government forced King to go back on the government's repeated promise to legally protect NRMA soldiers from service outside of Canada (*Windsor Daily Star* 1944; *Windsor Daily Star* 1944b). The matter was put to a vote in the House of Commons and after passing by a 143 to 70 decision, an Order-in-Council was given on November 22nd which gave the authority to send NRMA soldiers to the European front (Morton 1981: 147). As a result, the matter of NRMA conscripts became a heated political and social issue, ultimately leading to 16,000 NRMA soldiers being selected to make up the initial deployment.

Due to changes in government policy, NRMA legislation and NRMA Army training practices and procedures, the forced performances associated with being mobilized and becoming an NRMA soldier became more significant over the course of the war. What started as more of a recruiting tool, developed into a full conscription program which selected men who had no desire to participate in the fighting of the war through combat, mobilized them into training camps which required them to

perform strenuous training and physical fitness regimes, and finally deployed them to perform the role of soldiers, which in some cases resulted in the forced performances of military combat. In the European theater alone, National Registration mobilization technologies resulted in 9,667 NRMA classified individuals being deployed to the front, 2,463 to fight in operational units, and left 232 wounded, 13 taken prisoner and 69 killed (Byers 1996: 202).

THE DIFFERENTIATION OF NRMA SOLDIERS AND THE ZOMBIE CLASSIFICATION

With the shift from conscripts receiving three months of military training, to the mobilization of these men into positions of full NRMA soldiers serving in the Canadian Army for an indefinite period, also came a significant shift in the public perception of those who were mobilized. While in the war's early years the NRMA classification held little meaning since those mobilized into military training units would be released, once these individuals started to be retained by the Military and then deployed in combat units, the NRMA classification came to be of great importance since NRMA soldiers and General Service (GS), or volunteer soldiers, had different legislation which mediated how they could be deployed. In making the decision to apply a differential status to those who were mobilized, the result was that the Army was composed of two categories of soldier: conscripts, known as "Home Defence" or NRMA soldiers, which could only be deployed for the defense of "Canada and the territorial waters thereof"; and volunteers, known as "General Service," "GS," or "active" soldiers, who could be deployed anywhere the government saw fit (*National Resources Mobilization Act* 1940). Since NRMA soldiers could at any time volunteer to "go active" and become GS soldiers, but instead chose not to, this resulted in "the disappointment of [Officers and N.C.Os] at the obvious reluctance, not to say outright refusal, of NRMA soldiers to enlist," while internal Army documents noted that this "feeling rapidly changed from disappointment to scorn, and even to anger, mingled with incredulity" (Macklin 1944 cited in Stacey 1970 Appendix "S": 591-598). The adoption of these changes, the extension of NRMA mobilized individuals into full time and indefinite soldiers, in addition to the public understanding of the limited use of these soldiers to fight overseas, lead to the development of a negative social stigma around NRMA soldiers for: (1) not contributing to the "shared sacrifice" of wartime Canada; and (2) also not being free to take up industrial positions, or make their own decisions regarding the fighting of the war.

The lack of control over their performances led to soldiers classified as NRMA being given the moniker of "draftees," and "conscripts." Within popular parlance, however, the label of "Zombies" quickly caught on culturally, and in short order became how these men were identified (Stacey 1970: 462; *Calgary Herald* 1944; *Globe and Mail* 1944). The term Zombie itself was derived from a translation of the Kimbundu term *nzūbe* meaning "ghost" or "spirit of a dead person" (Bishop 2006: 197). When brought from Africa to Haiti the term became tied to the mystical practices of the Vodoun, which established Zombies as being linked to an entrancing practice which harboured "the magic required to strike people down to a death-like state and revive them later from the grave to become virtually mindless servants" and "the most subordinate slaves" (Ibid: 197). The term Zombie had apparently been lifted from the popular horror movies of the *Magic Island* (1929), *White Zombie* (1932) and *Revolt of the Zombie* (1936) that were popular in North America during the 1930s, and ended up being applied to NRMA soldiers by "some too-clever person" (Ibid: 197; Stacey 1970: 462; *Calgary Herald* 1944; Morton 1985: 189). The term developed a context during the war which "implied that the conscripts had no will of their own," and instead, their actions were animated by the government's law and politics (Russell 1999: 52). Not only was this concept of Zombie noted to have been incredibly effective in reflecting the state of these individuals, it was also noted to have "tended to worsen it" through the widespread adoption of this category and its meaning (Stacey 1970: 462).

This lack of control over individual performance was also cited within media as the source of problems associated with NRMA individuals, as Zombies existed not quite as soldiers and not quite as civilians, but as the victims of government policy – the argument being that "if there are Zombies, it is because they have been made so by the Canadian Government" (*Globe and Mail* 1944). As was noted in the *Globe and Mail* in 1944:

Zombies are not cowards or men lacking in ordinary courage, but are normal individuals that the government, in playing a cat-and-mouse game under the Mobilization Act, has maneuvered into the humiliating position where they are now rapidly losing their self-respect and the esteem of the public, and where they will undoubtedly become a sulky or mutinous mob which the Government or the Military authorities cannot handle. If all men are treated alike in a National Emergency under compulsory service laws for both soldiers and civilians and no preferential treatment is permitted on grounds of race or religion, groups of men such as our 70,000 Zombies and other unjustly exempted individuals would cease to exist and all causes of friction, criticism, unreasonable bullying and ragging would be abolished automatically (*Globe and Mail* 1944c).

The term Zombie also carried a prejudicial understanding of these individuals which drew on the discourses of subjecthood and citizenship, presenting them as not volunteering to become full GS soldiers “out of pure selfishness and lack of manhood,” and a refusal to accept “the principle of equality of service and sacrifice” (*Globe and Mail* 1944d; also see Allen 1961: 393-94; Byers 1996: 200; *Leader-Post* 1944; *Maple Leaf* 1945). In regards to the rationality of citizenship, Zombies were seen as remaining “idle when there [wa]s a labour shortage throughout the country,” and were therefore actively choosing to render “no service to the Country in [its] hour of crisis” (*Toronto Telegram* 1944; *Globe and Mail* 1944e; *Leader Post* 1943; *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* 1943; *Calgary Herald* 1943b). As a result, Zombies were culturally understood and presented in media as being “foreign,” or “not real Canadians,” as being of a Central European descent or carrying an affiliation with the “French-Canadian race” (Russell 1999: 52; *Globe and Mail* 1944f). As was noted of Zombies in an internal Army report regarding the treatment and behavior of NRMA soldiers:

the great majority are of non-British origin – German, Italian, and Slavic nationalities of origin probably predominating. Moreover most of them come from farms. They are of deplorably low education, know almost nothing of Canadian or British history and in fact are typical European peasants, with a passionate attachment for the land. A good many of them speak their native tongues much more fluently than they speak English and amongst them the ancient racial grudges and prejudices of Europe still persist. Here again the process of converting these men into free citizens of a free country willing to volunteer and die for their country will be a matter of education, and I think it will be slow, at present there is negligible national pride or patriotism among them. They are not like Cromwell’s ‘Good soldier’ who ‘knows what he fights for and loves what he knows.’ They do not know what they are fighting for, and they love nothing but themselves and their land (Macklin 1944 Brigadier W.H.S. Macklin’s Report on the Mobilization of the 13th Infantry Brigade on an Active Basis 2nd May 1944 cited in Stacey 1970: Appendix “S” 596).

Although NRMA Army entrance records⁴ show this “foreign” association to be untrue, as the vast bulk (92.02%) of NRMA soldiers were reported to be Canadian Citizens under the law, and thus as “Canadian” legally as was possible (Byers 2002: 168-169). This stigmatization was

4. Data were gathered on new NRMA soldiers when they entered Army training and was collected by means of a standardized form (see Department of National Defence 1940 Records of the Department of National Defence RG 24 vol. 6570 file: HQ 1161-1-5 Procedure of National Defence Department Mobilization Act v.2).

so significant, however, that it resulted in many individuals volunteering to be GS soldiers in order to avoid the social stigma attached to taking up the performances of a Zombie.

In 1942 mobilization officials commented on this fact, noting that the issuance of a new batch of mobilization orders would result in many of those individuals choosing to volunteer for one of the three branches of the Armed Forces instead of passing through the mobilization process to become NRMA classified soldiers. As one National Registration official noted in a report on conscription; it was "expected" that "when designated, these classes w[ould] go through the process of mobilization" and would "provide the usual proportion of enrolment and volunteers" (Department of Labour 1943). As these officials knew, the negative stigma worked to pressure those individuals called to "volunteer" instead of remaining NRMA classified soldiers. In a similar report in 1943 it was asserted that "80 per cent of military volunteers only offered their services after they received their [conscription orders] in the mail," and from an analysis of these data, the Chief Registrar reported that "there is no doubt that National War Services Regulations have been the best single recruiting agency of them all" (Department of Labour 1942; House of Commons Debates, 18 May 1943: 2779).

The social pressure of the Zombie stigma associated with being an NRMA soldier impacted these men outside of training facilities and camps as well. As it was reported, "nice girls do not dance or dine with them; GS personnel object to being associated with them under any circumstances, and they are now regarded by the public as a group of cowards" (*Globe and Mail* 1944c). Add to this fact that many GS soldiers and their families saw that because "NRMA were not being sent overseas, their access to various leave arrangements w[ere] seen as having a detrimental effect on the post-war prospects of GS personnel" (Oliver 1998: 53). At a farm labour facility in Ottawa, the appointment of a NRMA soldier as a Commanding Officer in 1944 even led to a work stoppage, as "the girls took exception to the appointment of a draftee in charge of their group, on the grounds that many had relatives overseas and were unwilling to work under a 'Zombie'" (*Globe and Mail* 1944g). While in Fort Frances, several Zombie soldiers were in need of hospitalization after they were attacked by a mob of townsfolk crying "why don't you go active" (*Montréal Gazette* 1944). Additionally, a prisoner of war in need of new clothing had "demanded GS sleeve flashes" as he had been issued a spare NRMA uniform and had noted that there was a greater degree of scorn directed towards NRMA men than towards captured German soldiers (*Hamilton Spectator* 1945). As Morton (1981:

126) notes: “NRMA removed the title of ‘slacker’ from the wartime vocabulary but its replacement, ‘Zombie’ was no improvement.”

TECHNOLOGIES OF NRMA CLASSIFICATION

Within the government and the Army itself, the power of the negative stigma of the Zombie classification did not escape their attention – as the military’s desire for more soldiers capable of being sent to the European front led them to adopt policies that would force NRMA soldiers to take on more elaborate performances that would further signify them socially as Zombies as a means of pressuring these men to “choose” to convert to GS soldiers. In this way, Army recruitment policy was enacted to develop a techno-social environment within their training camps and bases which forced NRMA classified individuals, through the strength of law and military disciplinary authority, to take up specific Zombie identity performances as a means of gaining more GS troops. This section demonstrates how the classification of NRMA soldiers impacted the development of the individual and social identities of those who were forced to take up these performances, arguing that it was Military technologies and socialization which enabled the Zombie identity to find ontological expression. As military policies were followed, the actions worked to render the NRMA classification more visible by means of the application of specific identifying technologies, while the impact of these repeated performances effectively worked to reiterate, reestablish and sediment to form a Zombie identity within popular culture and within the NRMA classified soldiers themselves.

In November 1941, training centers officially adopted policy to assert social pressure on individuals carrying the NRMA classification as part of their recruiting plan, working to “coerce draftees to go active” and become GS soldiers (Department of National Defence 1941 cited in Byers 1996: 188; *Globe and Mail* 1944e). Key to this action was the capacity to apply differential treatment based on the individual’s classification as either an NRMA or GS soldier (*Globe and Mail* 1945). As a means of differentiation, after December 1941 NRMA classified individuals were denied the right to wear the “Canada” patch on the shoulders of their uniform as part of their performance as soldiers, and after December 1942, General Service soldiers were issued special “GS” badges and black “G.S.” patches to be worn on the left forearm of the uniform that marked their categorical distinction from those choosing to remain NRMA soldiers (*Windsor Daily Star* 1942; *Globe and Mail* 1944e; Stacey 1970: 429; see Figure 1).

Figure 1. General Service (GS) Badge Public Announcement

**“We’re Proud of
You, Son”**

“Yes, we’re proud to see the G.S. badge on your arm, the badge that means service on any fighting front in the world. We didn’t want you to go, no parents do. We’ve watched you grow up and planned your future since you were born. But now, something bigger than we had ever dreamed of has called you. And we’re proud our boy has risen to meet that responsibility.

“You didn’t have to volunteer. You could have waited as many others have done, but, you put your country’s interests ahead of your own, ahead of ours, and we’re proud of you son.”

VOLUNTEER TO-DAY
JOIN THE CANADIAN ARMY
FOR OVERSEAS SERVICE

NB – We’re Proud of You, Son. in *Globe and Mail* (1944k).

As the legislation noted, badges were to be awarded to all “members of the Naval, Military or Air Forces of Canada who have declared their willingness, or who have engaged, to serve in any of the said forces on active service beyond Canada and overseas, during the present war, and

who have been honourably caused to serve on active service” (Order in Council P.C. 1022 March 29th 1940; Veterans Affairs Canada 2001).

The act of rendering these classifications a visible part of the performance of being a Canadian soldier significantly changed how soldiers were treated by their superiors and how they interacted with one another. As it was reported;

at Camp Salute...there was at first no hostility between [NRMA]-men and [GS]-men, or even anything that could be called coolness. Since most [NRMA], or reserve men went [GS], or active, within a week to two anyway there was, in most cases, no occasion for it. But later the climate of their ninety man hut came to be as carefully and expertly managed as though it were controlled by a thermostat. The visible differences between the [NRMA]-men and the [GS]-men began to achieve some importance... An active soldier wore the cap badge of the corps to which he would soon be posted... A reserve soldier wore a non-committal maple leaf. An active soldier had badges saying Canada on his shoulders and the ribbon of the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal on his chest. A reserve soldier had nothing on his shoulders and nothing on his chest (Allen 1961: 234).

Through the technology of service badges, NRMA and GS soldiers’ classifications became forced performances that rendered this classification visible and actionable to military officers and other soldiers. In addition, this capacity to distinguish between the two groups allowed for classified individuals to be subsequently required to perform further differentiated performances based on their mobilization classification. Not only were NRMA men visibly distinguished from General Service men, the performance of being an NRMA soldier became a central aspect that shaped their daily lives – as allegations started being made regarding “offers of alcohol and cash payments” to go active, of NRMA men being denied medical treatment, and even suffering physical violence and humiliation at the hands of fellow soldiers for not volunteering to convert (Russell 1999: 54; *Globe and Mail* 1944e; Byers 1996: 196-199; Byers 2002: 164; Morton 1985: 189; Morton 1981: 116; Oliver 1998: 49; *Ottawa Citizen* 1944). In particular, major incidents of violence were recorded in 1941 in Military District 3 where several NRMA men swore legal affidavits that GS soldiers had beaten them to the point of unconsciousness while a Sergeant-major told them that the beatings would continue until they volunteered (Byers 2002: 164). Other more minor incidents of violence by GS soldiers were reported in 1941 and 1942 as well by commanding officers in different regions throughout the country (Department of National Defence 1942).

The classification also served as a means through which soldiers were called on to perform different acts. In one case an officer "lined his men up the canal bank, ordered all who were going active to take three paces forward and [NRMA] draftees to take three paces backwards – into the canal," while in another case different amounts of leave time were allocated to GS and NRMA men (*Globe and Mail* 1944e; Department of National Defence 1942). This differentiation made the performance of being a Zombie a repeated act of military life. As was noted by an NRMA soldier in 1941, "the Canadian officer has openly boasted that he intends to make it as tough as possible for those who do not intend to join... those who did not volunteer were taken on a route march without equipment and also without our water bottles. This is in line with their policy on tough stuff" (NRMA Soldier 1941). In later years a war correspondent described similar behaviours, reporting that:

inevitably and quickly the existence of two such armies side by side led to frictions and differences of the ugliest kind. In their training camps it was the habit – and in many cases the deliberate policy – to mix the [NRMA] Men and the [GS] Men in fairly close ratios and hope that by moral pressure and sometimes by actual physical violence the [GS] Men would help persuade the [NRMA] Men to 'go active' too. Between the two groups there were small distinctions in such things as cap badges and service ribbons and quite often larger ones in their treatment by their officers and non-commissioned officers (Allen 1961: 393-94).

The Army's own internal documents also noted the speed and efficiency at which the performative acts associated with being NRMA and GS classified individuals were taken up:

I have seen this feeling developed to an amazing degree in 13 Infantry Brigade through the month of April, as men enlisted and new drafts of volunteers arrived. On 1 April the 13 Brigade was rent into two distinct bodies of men poles apart in feeling and outlook. By 1 May there were some 2,600 active personnel of high morale, fine bearing and excellent spirit, and on the other hand there were about 1,600 or 1,700 NRMA soldiers discontent and unhappy; a solid mass of men who had resisted successfully every appeal to their manhood and citizenship, despised by their former comrades (Macklin 1944 cited in Stacey 1970: Appendix "S" 595).

Internal documents also noted the importance of the NRMA and GS classifications in the identity performance of soldiers, noting that "it is an interesting psychological fact that when an NRMA man enlists he frequently changes his own attitude to his former comrades with startling and even amusing suddenness and completeness" (Ibid: 597).

In light of the Conscription Crisis in 1944 Armed Forces personnel were instructed to adopt “a ‘gloves-off’ recruiting effort, to persuade the remaining [NRMA] men to convert to GS” (Burns 1956: 123; also see Roy 1975-76: 58). As a result, officers were instructed to “interview every [NRMA] soldier to determine the reasons each gave for refusing to ‘convert,’” and junior officers were specifically brought on to surveil NRMA soldiers in order to identify men who were considered “hard core” conscripts – those “who were not only expected never to volunteer themselves, but who also might prevent others from doing so” (Russell 1999: 54). Once identified these men were to be “progressively transferred out of the military camp, to a separate tent camp, jeeringly referred to as ‘Zombieville’” (Ibid: 54; also see Roy 1975-76: 56).

Over the course of the war major incidents of violence between NRMA and General Service men were reported in BC, Alberta and Ontario, while several newspapers also reported differential treatment in regards to allocated leave time, increased fatigue duties such as cleaning or food preparation, and inferior housing conditions (*Globe and Mail* 1944f; *Globe and Mail* 1944e; *Globe and Mail* 1944b). As the war progressed, the rift between GS and NRMA widened and the NRMA classification came to represent one of the most important social identity markers in the Armed Forces, carrying with it not only a prejudicial understandings of another individual’s character and identity but also an important understanding of oneself. It was noted in an internal Military report regarding the effectiveness of attempts made to convert NRMA soldiers to GS soldiers, that:

it is not too much to say that the volunteer soldier in many cases literally despises the NRMA soldier...The volunteer feels himself a man quite apart from the NRMA man. He regards himself as a free man who had the courage to make a decision...the volunteer regards himself as above, and apart from the NRMA soldier. Nothing the latter does or can do by way of physical courage or superior intellect can alter this fact, it might be likened to the scorn of a white man (even the ‘poor white’) for the educated negro. He may be educated but he is still a ‘nigger’ (Macklin 1944 cited in Stacey 1970 Appendix “S”: 595-597).

This social pressure resulted in many men choosing to conform to the Armed Forces’ desire for their *full* conscription, and “volunteered” to “go active” and become GS personnel. In a report from the Department of Labour in March of 1944, it was noted that between November 7th 1942 and the end of January 1943 over 2,000 men converted to GS, representing 7.8 % of the mobilized “enlisted” men in this period. By the end of the war, a total of 64,297 (58,434 Army, 747 Navy, and 5,082 Air

Force) were reported to have volunteered to become GS soldiers “either on receiving their call up orders or after a period of service” – while the above data shows that a larger percentage of men “volunteered” after the Army had adopted its “gloves off” policy (Stacey 1970: 399; 595-597).

ZOMBIE AS POLITICAL IDENTITY

In response to their visible classification, differential treatment, and distinctive forced performances as NRMA soldiers, the term *Zombie* began to be taken up by these individuals as an element of their identity and as a means through which they engaged in political action. Importantly, politics developed not around who was a *Zombie* or how a *Zombie* was to be recognized, but instead around what *being a Zombie meant*. Although reports of political acts by *Zombies* were rarely reported near the start of the war, incidents did occur where *Zombies* had protested their position by challenging it in court (Byers 2002: 64). This form of collective political action, with the adoption of the *Zombie* identity, came to a head on Friday November 24th 1944 when self-proclaimed *Zombies* took to the streets in response to hearing the news that approximately 16,000 of their ranks were to be deployed to combat at the European front. As Morton (1985: 189) notes: “Army stratagems to gain conversions to the General Service category left behind a bitter residue [in NRMA] soldiers who had taken all the pressure and abuse their officers could hand out” and the government’s betrayal of their promise not to send conscripts overseas resulted in a political taking up of the *Zombie* identity. Added to this was how the Conscription Crisis of 1944, coupled with the registration of Minister of Defence Ralston, and the “press conference” concerning the difficulty of *Zombies* put on by the senior officials of Pacific Command, made the “problem” of NRMA troops a very public and heated matter (Roy 1975-76: 65-70; *Maple Leaf* 1944). Furthermore, an inquiry into disturbances between classifications of soldiers, as well as moral reports submitted to Adjutant General’s office, noted a “general deterioration in GS-NRMA relations” in 1944, particularly following the “increased flow of casualties from overseas” (Oliver 1998: 51, 53). 1944 also saw the “most invasive” campaign to convert NRMA to GS troops (Roy 1975-76: 58).

Protest began in Vernon, British Columbia on Friday November 24th 1944, and the Military later reported publically that around 200 men from the military camp near the town of Vernon had left camp and “paraded in a relatively ordinary manner, and then returned to camp after military police told them to do so” (Russel 1999: 59; also see Roy 1975-76: 70).

Within media reports of this event, it was noted that protesters had fully adopted the Zombie title, including it in their slogans and descriptions of self-expression, as it was reported: “the most notorious label ‘Zombie,’ was obviously intended to be an insult, while the November demonstrators at the time took it up as almost a badge” (Russel 1999: 52). As Morton (1981: 116) notes “such men would even glory in the contemptuous title of ‘Zombie.’” As part of these protests, banners were carried with the text “Zombies Strike Back” (*Hamilton Spectator* 1944). Action taken in Vernon quickly spread as more NRMA soldiers took to the streets to demonstrate against their forced deployment. Over the coming weeks similar demonstrations and sit down strikes were reported in military camps near the towns of Prince George, Courtenay, Chilliwack, Nanaimo, Port Alberni and Terrace, while protests were also reported in Sussex, Ottawa, Québec City, Chicoutimi and Montréal (*Windsor Daily Star* 1944c; *Hamilton Spectator* 1944b; *Hamilton Spectator* 1944c; *Globe and Mail* 1944h). News media reporting from these events noted that “demonstrations were protesting what they termed a ‘phony conscription’ and were expressing their disapproval of a form of compulsion which they considered discriminatory” (*Hamilton Spectator* 1944; also see *Windsor Daily Star* 1944c). In particular, protests in Terrace pointed to the working class makeup of NRMA soldiers, leading to calls to “let them conscript wealth too,” and to “give guys like Henry Ford a \$1.50 a day and our rations and see what he would say” (Russel 1999: 59). The Army’s response was to assemble the soldiers at these camps and inform them that “the names of every [Zombie] was taken following the reading [of the *King’s Rules and Regulations for the Canadian Militia*] and each man was informed that now that he had been made aware of the rules he was liable to be fired upon if he took part in a demonstration” (*Windsor Daily Star* 1944d).

In other parts of the country, taunted NRMA soldiers started to respond to their treatment, taking up a new song entitled “Its Better to be a Zombie than a General Service Man,” which chastised those who had volunteered and adopted the term of *Zombie* as one which portrayed the *smart* men of the Army – the argument being that a *Zombie* had “done everything his country, acting through its elected government, had asked him to do” and, as an analogy, “even the most respectable and responsible citizens do not volunteer to pay more taxes than the Government demands, if they pay what they are asked to pay they are considered to have done their bit; to pay more would not suggest patriotism, but lunacy” (*Globe and Mail* 1944b; *Globe and Mail* 1944; *Ottawa Citizen* 1944).

In 1944 a letter of protest was also sent to all members of Parliament from a self described “Zombie,” which expressed many elements of the stereotyped understandings of NRMA soldiers. The writer, or writers, claimed to be of foreign born parents, being opposed to the forced performance of service, but in describing their political position the writer(s) drew on the rationality of citizenship, arguing that the discontent associated with Zombies came as a result of experienced social inequality. As the letter noted:

I have been labeled as a ‘soulless person without guts or spirit,’ who, out of pure selfishness and lack of manhood refuses the principle of equality of shared service and sacrifice ... assure me, that all Canadians, who have honestly tried to abide by the laws of this country, will have equal rights, equal opportunities for education in every field and enterprise. Assure me this with deeds not promises. This done – there will be no need or coercion nor compulsion to further disunity, no need to sell ‘citizenship’, no need for further useless ‘drives’. It has been well said ‘that you cannot drive men of spirit, but you can lead them. [signed] ‘The Zombies’ (*Globe and Mail* 1944d; *Globe and Mail* 1944i).

CONCLUSION

This paper demonstrates the impact that the *National Resources Mobilization Act* classification of “NRMA soldier” had on classified individuals and how the forced performances, asserted through the application of specific governing technologies, shaped both the behaviors and sedimentation of “Zombie” identity performances. From the time forcefully conscripted or “mobilized” individuals arrived at military camps they were faced with taking up a strict set of performances based on how the NRMA classification found expression within military discipline and regulations. Although the content of these performances shifted quickly from the summer camp-like atmosphere of the first training sessions, to one that integrated these individuals into the basic training practices of volunteer soldiers, each represented the taking up of a forced performance that these individuals were legally required to take on.

Although the simple forcing of individuals to perform the acts of being a soldier in war time is significant in its own right, this case study also demonstrates the role that mobilization technologies played in developing a specific and distinguishable identity for NRMA mobilized individuals. In particular, these data show the impact that these governing technologies had become more significant over time, as repeated forced performative acts became sedimented into individual and cultural

understandings of identity. In this way, the role of ascribed classifications within governing systems can be understood as achieving something more than a simple mediation of individual performances in the present moment, but also, under certain conditions, can result in the taking up of new understandings of self and the development of new social identities – as it did for NRMA soldiers who knew themselves and were known as *Zombies*.

In this way, this history demonstrates a very important conceptual shift, linking classification, identity and performance. The category of NRMA soldier initially existed as an abstraction adopted to allow registration and Armed Forces personnel to conform with the legislation of the *National Resource Mobilization Act*, and then, through the performance of differentiated acts, the classification came to be understood as an originary form that spoke of a universal element of these men's character. This paper demonstrates that the specific technologies designed to distinguish NRMA from GS men enabled the differentiated identity performances of these two groups and lead to both Armed Forces commanding officers and NRMA classified men themselves adopting the simplified abstraction of "Zombie" and affixing to it some sort of essential nature. In short, the mobilization technologies which brought these men into service and differentiated them from GS soldiers in appearance, treatment and action, led to the sedimentation of performances attributed to the *Zombie* classification, and culminated in the adoption of this category as an understanding of self and as part of a cultural and political identity. This work not only points to the importance of conceptualizing the role of forced performance in an understanding of performativity but it also stresses important relationships between the design of techno-social spaces, performativity and resistance.

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