

O'NEIL'S SURVIVAL TACTICS IN GAINING EQUALITY IN DAVID TWOHY'S *G. I JANE*

Jonathan, P¹, Soelistyo, L²

^{1,2} English Department, Faculty of Letters, Petra Christian University, Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236, East Java, INDONESIA

Emails: justchiia@gmail.com; lsyuwono@peter.petra.ac.id.

ABSTRACT

This article tries to reveal about O'Neil's survival tactics in gaining gender equality in the Military. By using the tactics such as contradictory tactic, overcompensation and demonstrating proficiency at the required tasks, the analysis shows the ways she overcomes the difficulties in the Military training as a woman. In adapting with all the requirements, O'Neil wants to prove that she is as capable as any other male candidate there. Moreover, she also wants to overcome her differences from men so that they can acknowledge her as a part of them. In conclusion, O'Neil can show her survival tactics in gaining equality because she is willing to overcome the difficulties in the Military.

Keywords: Women in the military, gender equality, tactics, stereotype

G. I Jane is an action film aired in 1997 by David N. Twohy (David N. Twohy Credit, n.d.). He is a writer and director who has got many achievements in literary works especially in action film. (David Twohy Bio, n.d.).

In this article, the story of *G.I Jane* is basically about a woman who works as a soldier in the Military. In this film, O'Neil who is the main character of this film and works in Nasal Intelligence Center as a topographic analyst has to struggle to fit in by becoming a SEAL Army in which is dominated by men. Topographic Analyst is a job where people who in charge are responsible for supervising and performing cartographic and terrain analysis duties (Topographic Analyst (21U), n.d.). This job does not need or require O'Neil to deal with extra physical pressure, violence, major risk, and hard-training. On the contrary, Military training deals with these activities. O'Neil who is the only female candidate in the training decides to join the training even though O'Neil's boyfriend and all the important people in the Military do not agree with her decision. From the first time O'Neil enters the Military which is dominated by men, all the people there feel a bit disturbed since in the most part, people who enter the Military are men. Moreover, all the men there treat her differently by trying to avoid her, humiliate and discriminate her. However, at the end of the film, she displays a definitive ability in leadership and strategy while she rescues the injured Master Chief. When she returns from the mission, all the men who participate in the training including her accept appreciation from Navy Combined Reconnaissance Team.

In addition, O'Neil struggles to gain equality in the Military, therefore, this article tries to find out the ways O'Neil overcomes all the difficulties in the training as a woman. In order to find out about the ways she overcomes, the tactics of Stacie R. Furia which are contradictory tactic, overcompensation and demonstrating proficiency at the required tasks will be applied in the analysis.

GENDER TACTICS

According to Furia (2010), "this study explores how individual women in Army employ various tactics related to gender performance in order to facilitate success in a masculine-gendered institution that in many ways attempts to maintain and reinforce the gender binary" (p. 108). Indeed, she also mentions about 2 tactics that women do in the Military. The first tactic is, female cadets employed multiple and sometimes contradictory tactics in their navigation of the gender-specific policies instituted by the Army as well as the existing stereotypes about women's abilities (Furia, 2010, p. 111). Another tactic that she mentions is overcompensation. In this tactic, she says that instead of

doing as well as men, women do their best to suppress men. Within this category, women not only embrace the masculine but also excel to it (Furia, 2010, p. 111). Here, since most of people know about women's abilities that do not match or suit with their existence in the Military, women try to gain the acceptance from all the men and institutions in the Military by doing these two tactics. Another concept of Stacie R. Furia in the book entitled *Gender and Sexuality in the Workplace* said:

Another popular way of dealing with stereotypes was to overcome them by demonstrating proficiency at the required tasks. Some women took this to the extreme attempting to excel at all required tasks, as well as counteracting feminine stereotypes by divesting themselves of many signs of femininity. Women's perceived femininity detracts from their successes (Furia, 2010, p. 118).

In this concept, Stacie R. Furia tries to show how women in the Military have to overcome the stereotypes of women by demonstrating their proficiency skill in the training. Indeed, women also have to perform in their highest level so that they can be skillful in that task. By demonstrating their proficiency skill, they can break the stereotype of women's ability. Nevertheless, women also have to do it in order to suppress their femininity signs. When they can suppress their femininity signs to be accepted in the men's area, they can have more opportunities in the job field whether it is in the office or in the Military field.

O'Neil's Tactic to Adapt with all the Requirements

This part talks about O'Neil's first way to adapt with all the requirements in the Military. First of all, O'Neil uses contradictory tactic to get the same rules and requirements. Because O'Neil gets a different set of rules, it is difficult for her to adapt with all the requirements in the Military. Therefore, O'Neil uses contradictory tactic to get the same rules. The contradictory tactic that she uses is complaining. That complaint itself refers to the contradictory tactic because as candidates in the training program, there is a rule that does not allow them to complain and she has to accept about anything that they face during the training program. That is why the complaint that O'Neil uses to get the same or equal treatments indeed refers to the contradictory tactic since O'Neil violates the rule that forms for all the training candidates. It can be seen from the conversation between O'Neil and the C.O. To be treated the same as the others and to be able to adapt with all the requirements in the Military; O'Neil uses complaining as a tactic to get the same rules and treatments. By complaining about the special treatments and rules that she gets, she will be able to show to them that she does not want to be treated differently and also prove that she really wants to adapt with all the requirements in the Military without any special treatment and she can do everything without special treatments from the C.O or the instructors.

"Pardon the hour, sir. But you told me to come to you immediately if I felt I was being mistreated in any way."

"All right, lieutenant, give me a name and specifics, I'll have the X.O. file an action first thing in the morning. (waits) A name?"

"It's you, sir. And it started the day I came here. It's this double-standard, the separate quarters, the deferential treatment. It's how you pulled out my chair and nearly served high tea the first time we met..."

"Well. 'Least now we're talking the same language. (a beat) So one standard. Is that what you're after?"

"Same rules for everyone, sir."

"You'll get everything you want, O'Neil. Let's see if you want what you're gonna get."
(Twohy, 1995, p. 31-32)

From this conversation above, it shows that, O'Neil uses contradictory tactic which is complaining to the C.O regarding the special treatments that she gets as a tool or way to get equal treatments and rules from all the male candidates there. By complaining she will be able to get the equal treatments and the same rules like all the male candidates in the training program. Moreover, the most important thing is

when she gets or has the same rules with the male candidates, she can adapt easily with all the requirements in the Military training.

For the second tactic, O'Neil uses demonstrating proficiency at the required tasks as a tactic to adapt with all the requirements in the Military. By adapting with all the requirements, she will be able to prove that she can do everything regarding men's job whether it is in the office or in the Military field. Therefore, she uses her skill and proficiency to show that she is capable. In doing so, she indeed has to deal and accept all the requirements without hesitation. O'Neil demonstrates her proficiency in the required tasks when O'Neil and the other candidates have a grade exercise in fixing weapon. This is one of the required tasks in the Military training. During that exercise, O'Neil becomes the first one who finishes in fixing the weapon rather than the other candidates. This is the way to prove that she is capable and worth enough in the men's place. Even though she finds difficulty in adapting with men's job, she finally can demonstrate her ability in that required task well. Because of that, one by one tries to see her as a capable, useful person or even consider her as equal as them. It can be proven in the conversation where her instructor appreciates her.

"On my mark. stand by! Mark!"

"O'Neil, Done!"

"Cortez, Done!"

"Does it work, Lieutenant? (checking the weapon) Well done, Lieutenant" (Twohy, 1995, p. 53)

These statements show that the instructor gives compliment to O'Neil because she is the one who finishes in fixing weapon compared to the male candidates who are supposed to be the one who finishes first. Not only that, she can also do well with men's job since fixing weapon is one of men's activities in the Military. This becomes the proof that O'Neil can adapt well with all the requirements and men's activities in the training program. Moreover, by becoming the one who finishes in fixing weapon, slowly but surely she can prove that she is able to work in both places; the office and the Military field. Nevertheless, when all the male candidates consider her just the same with the stereotypes of women that they know which is weaker than them, O'Neil can prove it that she is not the same as what they think about. Moreover, by showing her ability and proficiency in the required task, she wants all the people who get involved in the Military training to be able to consider and acknowledge her as a part of them because she is able to do men's job and she is not weak like the other women that they imagine.

To prove that she can adapt well with all the requirements in the Military and show that she can do better than any other men there especially in making strategy, O'Neil uses overcompensation such as exercises more and studies more about all the tasks in the training program. Besides using her physical strength to fit in and prove that she is strong enough, O'Neil also uses her ability or skill in making strategy to show her inner strength. Since almost all of the male candidates are not the experts in that kind of job which is making strategy, with all knowledge that she gets before or even during the training, O'Neil takes a chance to demonstrate her proficiency in training tasks. It can be seen when she can lead her group to the target place, she does it by looking or reading a map. Moreover, she also has already shown her expertise as Topographic Analyst when she and the other male candidates are in a mission to help Master Chief.

"We gotta go. O'Neil, retrace your tracks. Cortez, pick up the rear."

"We're going back in there for body parts?"

"You damn right we are."

"Do the headwork with me. If he's on the run, he's not coming back this way to lead them to us. Right? Now look here. If we're here, and I left the Chief here, I think he's gonna make his way southwest, down this wash and out to sea. If we hump it, we can get there and knock out any pursuit."

"You work this out with the Chief ahead of time, O'Neil, or are you just clairvoyant?"

"No, but it's what I'd do." (Twohy, 1995, p. 105)

Through this conversation between O'Neil and the other male candidates, it shows that they depend on O'Neil's skill in reading map. Thus, when O'Neil finally can show her skill or expertise in reading map, they cannot deny it but rather choose to follow O'Neil's idea. Nevertheless, she also competes with them as best as she can so that they can acknowledge her strength and ability.

O'Neil's Tactic in overcoming her Differences from Men

This part talks about another ways or tactics that O'Neil uses to overcome all the difficulties in the training program. O'Neil uses two tactics in order to overcome her differences from all of the male candidates in the Military. The first tactic that she uses is overcompensation. It can be seen in the training where O'Neil and the other male candidates are captured by Master Chief and instructors. Master Chief acts harshly toward O'Neil. He hits her, slaps her, kicks her and even tries to abuse her (Twohy, 1995, p.75). He purposely acts like that so that O'Neil will give up and quit from that training. However, this does not bother O'Neil. She still wants to continue all the processes regarding the training program. Moreover, when she is persecuted by Master Chief, she uses all her energy and courage after getting hit by Master Chief and fights back against him. Even though she gets weak, she does not want to give up and she indeed forces herself against Master Chief. It can be seen through her conversation with Master Chief.

“Didn't you know you'd be raped if you were captured? Didn't you even think about that?”

“Sure. Just like your men do”

“I think we oughtta practice it, just so you know what to expect.”

(He flips her over, rips off her belt, starts tearing open her pants.)

“Should I practice bleeding, too, sir? Would that make me a better soldier?” (Twohy, 1995, p. 76)

From this conversation, it shows that O'Neil uses all her strength and courage to show to the other male candidates that she is acceptable. By her overcompensation tactic. saying like that, they will see her seriousness in accomplishing all the training tasks and accept her to be a part of them.

The second tactic that O'Neil uses to overcome her differences from men is counteracting feminine stereotypes by divesting themselves of many signs of femininity. She uses this tactic to overcome her differences from all the male candidates in the Military. In this part, O'Neil tries to overcome her differences from all the male candidates by showing her courage in arguing with male candidates. Since there is a stereotype of women and indeed because she is a woman, people in the Military count her as a weak person. Therefore, to overcome her differences from them, she divests herself from any sign of femininity by showing her courage. When she can show her courage whether it is from the way she speaks or the way she acts, she counteracts feminine stereotypes such as being weak, not being brave, being unable to compete with men. These are the stereotypes that have been labeled from all the male candidates for any woman especially for O'Neil. To prove that O'Neil tries to divest from sign of femininity can be seen when O'Neil gets the permission to stay in the same barrack with the other male candidates. In the barrack, O'Neil talks or argues with one of the male candidates in the Military because he does not agree if O'Neil stays in the same place with them.

“Anybody usin' these drawers here?”

“Hey, hey, HEY. No possibility. You can't stay in here. You can't sleep right next to me.”

“Funny, the C.O. says I can.” (She slaps orders on his chest, continues to unpack.)

“Aw, lookit this, lookit this -- she's bringin' Tampax in here. C'mon, you got nothin' but rooms over there.”

“That your desk? I'll take this one.”

“WOULD YOU JUST GET OUTTA HERE?”

“(whirling on him) Listen, Sex Ape. I'm here to stay. And if you don't want me for a roommate or classmate, you got two options -- move out or ring out. End of file.” (Twohy, 1995, p. 34-35)

Through this conversation, it shows that O'Neil divests from sign of femininity such as not being brave to speak. When she argues with the male candidate, O'Neil wants to show to the others that she is equal to them and that she has the same right as they are. She does not want to get a special treatment from the others because she is a woman. Moreover, by doing so, O'Neil changes their point of view about stereotypes of woman in the Military. Shaving her hair becomes another proof that she wants to have the same rules with them and show that she wants to divest from the sign of femininity such as having a long hair (Twohy, 1995, p. 33).

In addition, O'Neil also tries to overcome and reject the stereotype of women's that has been labeled from all the men in the Military by dealing with all the requirements without estimating the risk that she gets. This becomes her way to overcome her differences from all the male candidates in the training program. Because of the stereotype of women's ability in the Military, O'Neil uses another tactics which are overcompensation and counteract feminine stereotypes in dealing with these activities. O'Neil has to deal with the military activities such as hard-training, physical violence, major risk, discipline and pressure. Moreover, she also tries to push herself into her limit so that she can detach from stereotypes of women or signs of femininity. It can be seen when she often lacks sleep in order to exercise more compared to the other male candidates. Because of that, she loses her period. It can be seen through the conversation between O'Neil and Royce on the phone. "I've been trying you for five days. Don't they give you messages?" "It's hard to find time to sleep, Royce. Much less keep up with my phone life." (Twohy, 1995, p. 57-58). Through this conversation, it shows that O'Neil lacks sleep and suffers from all the exercises and requirements that happen in the Military training and even she has to suffer from her period. This all happens because she wants to excel at all the required tasks in the Military training and prove that she can adapt well with the requirements even though it is hard for her.

Through the analysis above, it shows that O'Neil tries to overcome all the difficulties in the training. It can be seen through the tactics that she uses to overcome the difficulties. She deals with all the men's activities such as being expert in fixing weapon, hard-training and violence. Not only that, she also can prove that she is capable by showing her expertise or proficiency as a candidate in the training program.

CONCLUSION

There is gender inequality in the Military. As what we know, Military formed by men and for men. Therefore, it will be difficult for women to enter that place because men always perceive women as weaker than them. Men think that women are not worthy to be in the Military and cannot be compared with them in terms of power. Moreover, according to men, they fight better without women around. So, if women join into the Military field, they are afraid that people will compare them with women. That is why they do not expect women to join or enter the Military field. Moreover, since the majority of people in the Military field are men, to let women enter or join into the Military field will make all the regulations in the Military become imbalanced.

Moreover, the survival tactics that O'Neil uses in gaining equality are very helpful because those tactics such as contradictory tactic, overcompensation and demonstrating proficiency at the required tasks, can help her to show her ability and expertise. Besides, by using those tactics, O'Neil is able to defeat all the male candidates in the Military with her skill. She can show that she can do well regarding men's job or activities without any special treatments.

In addition, if women want to fight for gender equality especially in the Military field, they have to believe within themselves that they can do what men do. When women have faith within themselves that they can do men's job, than it will give them confident to work or experience any job regarding men's job or field. Moreover, when women have faith within themselves that they can do men's job, it can help them to have more opportunities in the job field. Even though like that, when women decide to work in the men's field for instance in the Military, they have to deny some of 'being feminine' values for instance from their appearance like wearing dress, skirt, make up and has a long hair. It might be difficult for some women who are feminine and like to wear make up or has a long

hair, but it is one of the consequences that they have to take when they decide to enter men's field. It is like the price that they have to pay when they put themselves into the men's workplace. However, denying some of 'being feminine' values is not the only thing that women have to do if they want to fight for equality. There is another thing that they have to do. That is sacrifice. When women decide to enter men's job or field especially in the Military, they have to sacrifice some things that they have before. Things that they have to let go might be their career, relationship, feeling, business, or even their live.

REFERENCES

- David Twohy Bio. (n.d.). Retrieved November 18, 2012, from <http://www.tribute.ca/people/david-twohy/4071/>
- David N. Twohy Credit. (n.d.). Retrieved November 10, 2011, from <http://www.artistdirect.com/nad/store/movies/principal/credits/0,,1997927,00.html>
- Scott, R (Director), & Largo Entertainment. (Producer). (1997). *G. I Jane* [DVD]. U.S.A: Hollywood Pictures.
- Topographic Analyst (21U). (n.d.). Retrieved November 18, 2012, from http://www.armystudyguide.com/content/Prep_For_Basic_Training/army_mos_information/topographic-analyst-21u.shtml
- Williams, Christine L., & Kristen, D. (2010). *Gender and Sexuality in the Workplace*. UK: Emerald Group.