GENDERING PROFESSIONALISM: ROLE OF DRESS, SPACE AND FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE MAKING OF A "PROFESSIONAL" WOMAN

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Gendering Professionalism: Role of Dress, Space and Female Relationships in the Making of a "Professional" Woman

by

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This thesis is dedicated to my grandmothers Işık Ferizcan and Saime Şehnaz Uşar

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Abstract

This study is based on a fieldwork research conducted in the head office of a local contracting company in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. It examines various everyday work activities and organizational structures whereby a particular form of professional female employee identity is constructed and the dominant company discourse of professionalism is gendered. During 14 weeks of intensive fieldwork, physical appearance, spatial dynamics, and work relationships between female employees emerged as three interconnected processes through which the women in the company identify and present themselves as professional female workers. My analysis suggests that these processes are embedded in bodily dynamics and intersects with the prevailing discourse of professionalism in the creation of gendered and (hetero)sexualized identities of women in the company. In addition, I discuss the notions of agency and resistance during this creation process and raise critical questions for further consideration.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

We live in a time dominated by organizations. Organizations permeate nearly everything we do. They shape the way we live, the way we think, the way we are valued and the way we value ourselves. They offer opportunities for social improvement but they also threaten our very existence. In short, we cannot afford to ignore organizations (Mills and Simmons 5).

In a very broad sense this is a study of women's everyday participation in and experiences of professional work organizations, which are increasingly shaping the social, cultural, economic and political life of Newfoundland and Labrador. My aim in this thesis is to understand how contemporary discourses of professionalism inform our gender identity at work, and to analyze how women experience, construct, perform, and negotiate their professional work identities within the complex dynamics of bureaucratic organizational settings. Since modern organizations claim such a significant role in our lives we cannot "afford to ignore" the role of organizational discourses and dynamics on the lives of women if we want to develop a comprehensive analysis of women's condition in early 21st century Newfoundland and Labrador.

As a female undergraduate studying for my degree in business management I often found that women were invisible in our textbooks and silenced in class discussions. Despite my considerable success in written exams it was still very hard to be heard in the class as a female voice. Neither did the higher attendance rate of women students change the situation. This school experience coupled with equally frustrating short-term summer jobs in large organizations led me to search for the voices and experiences of women in organizations. Because women did not seem to

exist in the business world, or at best were considered as a generic man, I became interested in learning about the "real women:" female workers with actual bodies and nervous systems, desires and sexualities, and different personalities and agencies. In other words, I wanted to learn, who these women are, what they do at work, and how they develop and negotiate their sense of "professional self," as well as their gender and sexual identities in their everyday activities and relations at work.

Although there have been an increasing number of studies done on women and work, the majority of them focus on women's unequal and disadvantaged position in the labor market. They explore issues such as the wage gap, job segregation and sexual division of labor. On the other hand, questions of identity, sexuality and negotiation of power within individual organizations have very recently received some attention from researchers. It is on this literature that this study builds. As a feminist organizational researcher I am particularly interested in understanding how mundane activities of workers and minute details of organizational life produce, and are produced by, gendered power relations and discourses of professionalism prevalent both on the organizational and societal levels. I believe by focusing on women's everyday activities and experiences situated in local settings of power we can also gain an understanding of the "relations of ruling" (Smith, *Texts, Facts and Femininity*) on all levels of society. Importantly, my research examines the discursive and social constructions of a professional woman identity in relatively unexplored yet rapidly growing industries in Newfoundland and Labrador. While women's work in traditional industries, such as fisheries, and in female dominated occupations, such as nursing and teaching, has been relatively well studied, the experiences of women working in large

professional organizations operating in construction and offshore energy industries are yet to be studied. As a result, in addition to its potential to enhance broader feminist organizational studies literature, this research also addresses and contributes to a neglected area in the literature of women, work, and professionalism in Newfoundland and Labrador.

While like any scholarly work this thesis aims to add to the existing literature, its true meaning lies in its potential to directly affect the lives of women in a positive direction. Because studying gendered dynamics is always a political issue, understanding this process will help to create new ways of feminist political practices. Comprehending the nature of gendered power relations and changing experiences of women at work in the province is essential for the articulation of a strong local feminist policy analysis and development. I hope as well that my work might improve overall well being of the individual organization in question for both its female and male employees.

1.1. Theoretical Location: Critical Feminist Organization Studies and Poststructuralist Thought

Since the beginning of the women's movement feminist researchers have theorized concerning women's labor market participation. However, despite this growing interest feminist studies of women's experiences in micro level organizational settings are relatively few and recent. Some scholars (Hearn and Parkin, *Gender and*; Acker; Brown; Mills, *Organization, Gender and*) note this apparent lack of "systematic feminist theory of organizations" (Acker 140) and explore the possibility

of an intersection of feminist and organizational theorizing and its consequences for both women and men. Joan Acker, for instance, argues that understanding the organizational process is the key to understanding gender inequality in our lives as gender identity is largely constructed and reproduced by organizational practices and processes (140). Similarly, Calás and Smircich claim feminists can contribute to the development of more advanced organization theories by their critical analysis and by bringing the voices and concerns of all members of organizations into their studies (*From 'The Woman's' Point* 218).

Critical feminist[1] organizational researchers redefine organizations as gendered processes and systems rather than fixed, neutral entities as described in the traditional organizational literature. They view gender as the main organizing principle and emphasize the inextricable connection between relations of dominance and gendered organizational processes (Acker; Hearn and Parkin, *Gender and*; Hearn et al; Mills, *Organization Gender*; Mills and Tancred; Calás and Smircich, *From 'The Woman's' Point, Re-Writing Gender*; Ferguson). For Acker, organizations are gendered through a number of "interacting processes (cf. Scott 1986) that, although analytically distinct, are, in practice, parts of the same reality" (146). These processes include the production of divisions and oppositions that follow heterosexual gender binaries. The division of labor, appropriate behavior and appearance norms, and public/private dichotomy are all constructed along the lines of gender. A second process is symbolic

[1] Here I use the term critical feminist to distinguish liberal feminists, who address the "woman question" within the established structures of organizations, and other feminist theorists who problematize these very structures and explore the gendered assumptions inherent in them.

creation that maintains or contradicts these divisions through language and popular culture. A third process occurs at the behavioral and interactional level. It includes patterns of interactions between men and women, or among men and among women, that reinforce relations of domination. According to Acker all these symbolic and interaction processes help to produce our gender identity "which may include consciousness of the existence of the other three aspects of gender, such as, in organizations, choice of appropriate work, language use, clothing, and presentation of self as a gendered member of an organization" (147). The final gendering process is the implication of gender in the creation and maintenance of social structures, most obviously in the family system and in a more subtle way in complex organizations. In their research, critical feminist scholars illustrate how certain interests are privileged and material structures are reproduced, as well as gendered work identities are constructed through these processes (Hall; Leidner, *Serving Hamburgers, Rethinking Questions*; Pierce; Martin, *The Organization of*; Nicolson; Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*; Savage and Witz; Witz et.al).

In the second half of the 20th century, with the development of poststructuralist thought and the "linguistic turn" in social theory (Ashcraft and Mumby xvii), the role language plays in the construction of subjective identities and interpretation of personal experience gained significance in social science research. Organizational scholars began examining multiplicity of identities, locality and temporality of experiences, and process of meaning making in organizational settings (Linstead; Hassad and Parker; Calás and Smircich, *Re-writing Gender*; Cooper and Burrell; Alvesson and Deetz). As a result, communication processes and the complex

relationships of discourse, gender, identity, and power became their main focus. These scholars define communication as an active and constructive process that creates various subject positions and organizational structures. Recent organizational research explores the discursive constructions of gendered subjectivities, and the dialectic relationship between discourse and structure, power and resistance, and control and agency in this construction process (Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*; Collinson; Mills and Chiaramonte; Mumby and Putnam; Kondo; Martin, *Deconstructing the*; Freeman, *High Tech and*; Mills, *Man/aging Subjectivity*; McDowell, *Body Work*; Brewis Hampton and Linstead; Dellinger and Williams; Fletcher; Trethewey, *Disciplined Bodies, Resistance, Identity*; Dellinger; Loe; Ashcraft and Mumby). These studies investigated micro practices of everyday organizational life through which gendered identities are negotiated and constructed, as well as the connection of these practices to historically specific organizational and cultural discourses.

My research and its textual (re)presentation in this thesis are mainly influenced by these current developments in "[critical] feminist organization studies in the wake of the linguistic turn" (Ashcraft and Mumby 1). In an ethnographic study of a local business located in Newfoundland and Labrador I identify and analyze various organizational dynamics through which the discursive and social construction of (heterosexual) professional female employee identity is accomplished and the dominant discourse of professionalism is gendered.

1.2 Geographical and Economic Location

Newfoundland and Labrador

The economic and social life of Newfoundland and Labrador is primarily shaped by its unique history and geographical location. As an island, isolated from mainland Canada, Newfoundland is located on the eastern border of North America. Until the late 19th century, the cod fishery was the most significant source of economic activity and employment. However, "by the 1880s, the traditional fishery was at its peak and could no longer absorb the rapidly-growing labor force" (Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site Project, *Economy*). During the early 20th century, up until the end of the Second World War, the economy remained in a grim shape and confederation with Canada seemed to promise a better future. After joining Canada in 1949, the provincial government, with the support of Ottawa, initiated several modernization projects hoping to revitalize the long-suffering economy of the province. The intense modernization and industrialization efforts brought about drastic changes in the fishery industry, as well as in the structure of the labor market and in the social and cultural life of the province (Porter, "*Women and Old Boats;*" House, *Against the Tide, The Challenge of Oil*; Parsons; McCay; Davis; Wright; Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site Project). Rapid growth in the resource industries and increased government expenditures led to an initial economic boom in the early years after Confederation. However these developments were followed by a high unemployment rate in the 1970s due to inadequate and inefficient economic policies and "by 1985 unemployment had become a chronic problem" in the province (House, *Against the Tide* 5). While the goods-producing sector, especially

manufacturing and fishery industries, failed to meet the expectations created by the modernization plans, the service industry and the number of professional, clerical and administrative jobs have flourished, mostly in the urban areas (Botting, Rennie, and Inglis).

The most striking economic and demographical change occurred in women's labor force participation. In less than three decades—between 1976 and 2002—the number of women in the labor force increased by over 100% in the province (Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labor 11) despite a high unemployment rate and considerable decline in the fish-processing sector, in which women were traditionally employed. As a result, the majority of the female workers, who were once salting, drying, freezing fish at home or engaged in seafood processing plants, have been increasingly employed in clerical, administrative and service jobs. They have been occupying cubicles in large professional or service organizations located in urban centers instead of working in fish-processing facilities in small out-port communities. The women who took part in my research were employed in one of these organizations located in St. John's, the capital of the province.

Hall Inc.[2]: "A Professional Company"

We have earned [our clients'] confidence in the professional management of projects and delivery of high quality results... The professionalism of our work speaks for itself...

(Company Catalogue 2003)

In the early 1950s, Mr. Hall started a small, residential electrical contracting business in the basement of his St. John's home. Little did he know then that by the turn of the 21st century his small business would become one of the largest privately owned contracting companies in Atlantic Canada. Now as "a major player in the contracting and servicing of electrical and instrumentation systems in the offshore energy industry" (Ocean Resources), Hall Inc. employs approximately 250 skilled trades people, and undertakes both national and international projects. Among its various offices located in Atlantic Canada, I conducted my fieldwork in the head office, where 14 women and 21 men carry out administrative, financial, and technical tasks.

The company remained relatively small until Victor, Mr. Hall's son, joined his father's business in the late 1980s. With the revival of the Hibernia oil and gas project, and under Victor's leadership, Hall Inc. expanded its operations to the offshore energy field in the early 1990s and established its reputation quickly in a highly competitive industry. This is not a small accomplishment for a local business in Newfoundland, where "the economy has always been a problem" and "the manufacturing sector is underdeveloped" (House, *Challenge of Oil* 18,118). As J.D. House noted, the

[2] All the names and identifying details of the company and the employees have been changed to protect their anonymity.

discovery of the Hibernia oil field, located off the southeast shore of St. John's, led to an influx of national and international companies to the region (*Challenge of Oil* 141). These companies, equipped with the required capital, experience and reputation for expensive offshore oil projects, became the major operators in the province's offshore energy industry. Consequently, local businesses with limited resources faced the problem of breaking into this highly competitive environment, which is inherently hostile to smaller companies (House, *Challenge of Oil* 141-49). Despite all the barriers, however, in the last two decades Hall Inc. has successfully signed its name to several local, national and international projects. It is against this background of monopolizing corporate power that the discourse of professionalism emerges as an extremely important strategy to the success of Hall Inc.

1.3. The Discourse of Professionalism in Hall Inc.

Sociologist Eliot Freidson argues that the notions of "profession," "professional" and "professionalism" have very ambiguous meanings and contradictory uses (*The Theory of Professions*, *Professionalism Reborn*). In general, when a "profession" is defined as a concrete historical occupation, it refers to one with specialized knowledge, skill, and training, with a right to control its own work and outcomes. Professions gain power and establish their legality and credibility through "strategies of social closure" that usually require membership in a specific association or regulating body (Deverell 16). These associations examine and license individual organizations, and establish rules and guidelines for the operation and maintenance of the specific profession in question. In this regard, Hall Inc. is a

professional organization, "providing wide range of services to support the full life cycle of a [construction] project" (Company Catalogue). The company is a member of various professional associations and takes active part in the development of professional standards in the industries in which it operates. This is a very simplistic way of defining a professional organization however. How one becomes professional is a more complex process that requires a closer look at the mundane aspects of professional practice.

According to Katie Deverell, professionalism is both a "social construct" and an "identity marker" as it "not only says something about what people do, but also who they are" (16-17,136). It implies particular, though not fixed, sets of values, ways of thinking, practices, behavior and appearance norms, as well as certain socio-economic status, education and skill level. In this regard, professionalism is also a discursive construction. Alvesson and Deetz state that discourses "structure the person's subjectivity, providing him/her with a particular social identity and way of being in the world" (205). Similarly, the discourse of professionalism at Hall Inc. offers particular subject positions through which the organizational members perform their identities and make sense of their everyday experiences.

In my analysis of the discourse of professionalism in Hall Inc. I draw on feminist interpretations of Foucauldian theory of discourse and modern power relations. While I am aware of the ongoing discussion among feminists regarding the political futility of employing Foucauldian analysis (Fraser; Hartsock; Ramazanoglu; Hekman), I believe, as some scholars state (Flax; Weedon; Bartky; Butler; McNay; Bailey; Allen; Bordo, *Feminism Foucault*), Foucault's work can provide useful

insights and be appropriated for feminist theorizing and political aims. Indeed, several feminist researchers have already utilized Foucault's concepts with some modifications, in order to illustrate the workings of social power in organizational and cultural contexts, with its political consequences for women (Freeman, *High Tech and*; Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*; McLaren; Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*; Trethewey, *Disciplined Bodies*, *Rethinking Organizational*; McWhorter).

In Foucault's theory of discourse, both discursive practices and "the institutional effects of discourse," or social power relations, are integrated together in the construction of subject positions (Weedon 107). In other words, Chris Weedon states that in Foucauldian analysis:

> Neither the body nor thoughts and feelings have meaning outside their discursive articulation, but the ways in which discourse constitutes the minds and bodies of individuals is always a part of a wider network of power relations, often with institutional bases (108).

This recognition of the relationship between historically specific discourses and material relations of power allows us to comprehend how the discourse of professionalism shapes subjective identities and daily lives of the workers in Hall Inc. in their relationship with their bodies, coworkers, families, other institutions, and society in general. Furthermore, Foucault's theory suggests the possibility of creating "reverse" discourses through which alternative subject positions and truth claims can establish their legitimacy (*The History of Sexuality* 101). Likewise, while I examine how the discourse of professionalism at Hall Inc. produces a particular form of gendered and (hetero)sexualized employee identities, I also analyze the ways through

which employees, as active agents, negotiate and subvert these dominant subject positions and create alternative ones.

1.4. Outline of the Thesis

I could have constructed and written this study in several different ways, all versions being equally legitimate. Writing a "scholarly text" however requires a certain type of structure and language use —which can be negotiated to a certain degree— imposed by academic discourses. This master's thesis, like the research itself, is therefore shaped not only by my political and socio-economic realities, interests, and values, but also by the institutional constraints of a particular academic discipline and university located in North America.

The straightforward division of the thesis into a number of chapters and sections, each with seemingly different focus, is rather illusionary, as I am aware that all the processes and dynamics discussed are interdependent and occurring simultaneously. With the given limitations on the thesis structure, research material, and available time, I have divided the thesis into six chapters. The first two chapters, Introduction and Research Design, set the stage for the reader. They provide the background information and discuss the theoretical and epistemological frameworks of the study. In the following three chapters I explore the main themes that emerged after reading and re-reading my field notes, research diary, and interview transcripts.

In chapter three I examine how the discourse of professionalism produces, and is a product of, gender appropriate dressing and appearance norms at Hall Inc. In this chapter I particularly focus on the everyday dressing practices through which the

professional female body is constructed, gendered power relations are negotiated, and heterosexual ideology is maintained. Chapter four analyzes how the professionalism discourse interacts with the spatial dimension of body politics in the construction process of gendered and (hetero)sexed professional workers. The investigation of everyday use and meaning of space, spatial relations, and metaphors, and their role in the reproduction of the professionalism discourse constitutes this chapter. The fifth chapter considers the women's relationship with each other at work. It discusses how the women in Hall Inc. construct and give meaning to their relationships, and the role of the various organizational structures, broader socio-economic context, and the discourse of professionalism in the creation of the women's work relationships with each other. All three chapters also examine notions of agency and resistance in the construction of gendered professional identities. The final chapter sums up all the important arguments laid out in the previous chapters, raises critical questions for further consideration, and suggests new directions for future research.

In the next chapter I describe my research design, discuss the benefits and shortcomings of doing fieldwork research, and introduce the various research methods I utilized to gather any relevant information.

CHAPTER 2: Research Methodology and Design

...I finished my first four weeks in the company as of today, yet I still feel that I don't know what I am doing here! I'm afraid of writing or recording wrong things, of missing what is actually going on. I'm worried that I'm wasting my time... I have no idea what I'm doing, if I'm doing anything! (Except torturing myself by waking up at 6:30am and subjecting myself to the absolute boredom of Friday afternoons at work on sunny July days!). I sometimes question myself "why am I doing this?"

(Research Diary, July 25, 2003)

The above quote from my research diary sums up my feelings during and even after the completion of my fieldwork. Despite all the ambiguities, obstacles, complexities, and the occasional boredom it entails—or perhaps because of them—however, I believe ethnography is an invaluable research methodology. From the very beginning of this research, I was convinced that searching for answers to the complex questions I posed would require my own participation in the processes I was trying to understand. Therefore, I decided to do ethnographic research, more commonly referred as fieldwork, in a local business organization where I could join formal and informal activities of its members, and become familiar with employees' daily work routines. The research methodology I chose, and the research process itself, form the basis of this thesis. Thus, I believe it is essential to explore them in detail. In the next section I describe ethnographic research as my research methodology, and discuss why I believe it is a suitable feminist research strategy to understand the complex nature of organizations. Subsequent sections focus on my particular research design and the methods I used to collect and construct my "data."

2.1. Ethnography and Feminist Organizational Research

During the 1960s, second wave feminism had an impact on the changing nature of research in most of the social sciences. Realizing the sexist, patriarchal assumptions inherent in mainstream academic research, feminist researchers in the social sciences started to claim "*the right to criticize* the accepted body of knowledge, [and] *the right to create* knowledge" (Reinharz 11, original emphasis) based on the subjective experiences of being women. As opposed to the principles of traditional, positivist research, feminist scholars emphasized the value of alternative epistemologies and qualitative methods in understanding the multiple, complex realities of everyday life they were studying. Therefore, qualitative research practices: case studies, ethnographic methods, participant observations and in-depth interviews have become more visible and acceptable. Having its roots in anthropology, ethnographic research, or fieldwork, offers an interactive, subjective and interpretive approach, and uses a wide variety of methods including, but not limited to, participant observations, archival and content analysis, filming and in-depth interviewing (Reinharz; Schwartzman; Hamada).

One of the most important aspects of ethnographic research is its potential to provide richer and more detailed information and deeper understanding. As Emerson et al. claim, with its utilization of multiple research methods and its focus on "interactional detail" and "indigenous meanings," ethnography offers a strong and effective research methodology that no other single method can achieve by itself (3). Particularly within the context of organizational research, the study of complex webs of relationships, power relations, construction of meanings and identities is only

possible with the intimate and constant involvement of the researcher with the workplace she is studying. Smircich for instance, argues that in studying organizations as cultures "the researcher's concern is with meanings, and not with facts that lie outside human actions, the researcher needs to be close to, not detached from, those social interactions in which meanings are rooted and elaborated" (*Studying Organizations* 165).

In addition, ethnographic research enables us to recognize that all the meanings assigned to observed behaviors and interactions have a dynamic nature and are subject to negotiation, re-interpretation and change over time. The evolution of research questions, construction and negotiation of meanings and interpretations can only be possible with the dynamic relationship between the researcher and her participants, and the integration of their *subjective* experiences into the research process. Without doubt, this is one of the most crucial characteristics of ethnographic research that makes it appealing to feminist researchers. Shulamit Reinharz underlies the importance of the inclusion of personal experiences in feminist research. She claims, "personal experience typically is irrelevant in mainstream research, or is thought to contaminate a project's activity. In feminist research, by contrast, it is relevant and repairs the project's pseudo-objectivity" (258). Given that knowledge is produced by discursive processes that shape and are shaped by power relations, it is not possible to claim pure, objective knowledge that exists outside of power relations. Therefore, "the issue is not whether one is 'biased'; but rather, whose interests are served by one's work (Simon and Dippo 196). My aim in this study is not only to record and document women's experiences but also, as critical ethnography intends, to employ the understanding of

these experiences into action (Simon and Dippo 200) in accordance with women's interests.

Another very significant, yet more recent, strategy of ethnographic research is what has been called by John Van Maanen "defamiliarization" (*End to Innocence* 20). According to Van Maanen, the function of this emerging strategy is to turn the familiar and comfortable into ambiguous and strange rather then vice versa as seen in conventional ethnographic texts. In other words, it is the question of how to "provide the details of concrete social relations in a manner which renders them familiar and sensible yet simultaneously calls their taken-for-granted character into question" (Dippo 203, cited from Dippo and Simon). For the purposes of critical feminist study of organizational life, this problematization and disruption of already-too-familiar acts and assumptions is crucial. If we claim that taken-for-granted assumptions, everyday routines and well-known facts about organizational life form the very basis of the gendered patterns and the communicative behaviors of organizational members, and hence reproduce the dominant organizational ideology, then as a critical feminist researcher it is my duty to seek the already familiar and to problematize it. Indeed, feminist researchers have been using this strategy for many years even before "deconstruction" and "defamiliarization" concepts become popular (M. Wolf; Smith, *Everyday World*). In this case then to depend solely on interviews with organizational members, however detailed they are, may not be sufficient as "in daily life, people are primarily concerned with the mastery of typical, recurrent situations. None of us... are interested to the same extent in all objects and events that take place within our taken-for-granted world" (Dippo 208). In other words, what might be an irrelevant detail

unworthy to talk about from our informant's point of view might indeed be a crucial piece of the puzzle we are trying to put together.

Although ethnography is a very strong and valuable research methodology, it is demanding and time-consuming and therefore is not practical and suitable to all kinds of research. It requires a long-term and intense commitment of the researcher to her "field." It takes many hours to translate daily observations into field notes, as well as to organize and analyze the detailed ethnographic data. Furthermore, obtaining access to a field can be a long, costly and stressful process. Once in the field, the closer and deeper relationship with informants may provide rich information to the researcher, but this very closeness "places research subjects at grave risk of manipulation and betrayal by the ethnographer" (Stacey 23). In the following sections I will discuss my particular fieldwork experience in more detail, in relation to its both advantageous and problematical aspects.

2.2. Negotiating the Field: Access and Entry

It is almost end of the fourth month [since I have started searching for a company] and I still don't have a place to do my research in. Time is passing very fast, yet things progress very slowly. Brenda says "persistence" is very important. I really hope that persistence and patience pay off at the end! I'm getting very anxious and worried.

(Research Diary, April 15, 2003)

The first part of my research journey, from the approval of the thesis proposal by the Women's Studies Graduate Studies Committee to my first day at Hall Inc. as a researcher/employee, lasted approximately six months. During this time period I experienced a great deal of agony and frustration, as well as hope and exhilaration. I

learned that obtaining "inside access" to any work organization for extended period of time is not an easy task and requires a strong ability to network and negotiate. As Schwartzman argues however, the access issues, negotiations, and first encounters may indeed provide a rich source of data for the researcher (48), regarding the culture, values, beliefs and dominant ideologies of the organizations in question. It may also enrich self-knowledge and provide insights into the nature of academic research and knowledge production processes. Therefore, in this section I briefly describe and reflect upon the first part of my research journey that led me to the doorstep of the Hall Inc. at the end of the sixth month.

Following the approval of my thesis proposal, I approached a couple of local organizations where someone at the managerial level agreed to discuss with me my proposed research project. Despite the initial interest and positive response expressed by the respective managers, however, in each case the proposal was turned down by upper management or executives for reasons not clearly conveyed. After these two unsuccessful attempts and spending a couple of months with no progress, I decided to get in touch with possible organizations through more formal channels. I thought securing institutional support for the project would speed up the search process; realizing however, it would also put some restrictions on the project. With the help of a business professor to whom I wrote for some advice, I got in touch with the Co-operative Education (Co-op) Program located in the Business Faculty. While the main responsibility of the Co-op program is to provide work term placements for business students in local, national and international businesses, through the connection I established with the business professor I was able to obtain the support and help of the

program coordinator for my research. The coordinator agreed to approach local businesses on my behalf advocating for my research project.

A few weeks after I handed my project summary to the Co-op program, just when my anxiety about finding an appropriate research place reached its peak, I received a phone message from Mr. Payne, who introduced himself as a special projects manager in Hall Inc. He was interested in my research proposal and asked to meet with me to discuss it in more detail. I immediately called him back and arranged a meeting for the following morning. This was the first significant development after my initial failed attempts and I was apprehensive that this too would fail. It was the beginning of yet another semester; I did not have too much time left to complete my thesis and I was under great pressure to start my research as soon as possible. It was with these feelings of exhaustion and anxiety that I knocked on Mr. Payne's office door the following day wearing a self-confident, competent researcher's face!

As I suspected, being backed by an institution proved to be very beneficial. My meeting with Mr. Payne had a very different quality compared to my meetings with the previous managers that lasted no more than fifteen minutes. In our hour-long meeting not only did Mr. Payne take his time to tell me about the history of the business and what they exactly do, but we also discussed some key issues such as, my prospective position in the building and protection of the anonymity of the company and employees. When he took me for a building tour at the end of our meeting, already introducing me to a few people around, I thought in his mind I had already started doing my research. Despite the puzzling and certainly discouraging encounter I had with Laura, the Human Resources Manager who seemed very dismissive of my

project,[3] the firm handshake I had with Mr. Payne at the end was a strong indication of the "good news" I would receive within a week. The following excerpt from my research diary summarizes my feelings after my first meeting with Mr. Payne.

I felt very optimistic at the end of the meeting today. The last word will come from Victor [the owner of the company], but I believe Mr. Payne will be able to convince him. He [Mr. Payne] was very interested and enthusiastic about the project and he sounded like he had a personal and very good relationship with Victor... As he requested, I sent him all the necessary contact information of my supervisors. He told me I should hear a definite answer mid next week. I'm hopeful but very anxious!
("The First Visit to the Research Site," Research Diary, May 8, 2003)

After ten days of agonizing waiting following my visit to Mr. Payne's office, I received an e-mail from him that simply read:

Onar ... good news ... [Victor] is in agreement with your doing your research here and I will oversee that, so if you could please call me on Tuesday to arrange a meeting and we will get at the process... have a good weekend...
(E-mail correspondence with Mr. Payne, May 16, 2003)

I was ecstatic with the news and for the first time in five months I was able to breathe without worrying about the future of my project. As Mr. Payne requested, I called him the following week and we made arrangements to have a second meeting in order to discuss my position in the company in more detail. My second meeting with Mr. Payne was relatively short. It seemed that he had arranged everything for me. I was to work on project proposals with Dianne, the executive assistant. He had already mentioned my project to her and asked for her help. The only thing I needed to do was to apply for my ethics approval and wait for July, as we agreed, to start my fieldwork in the building. Thus far Mr. Payne was the main character and he took charge of

[3] I describe my first encounter with Laura in more detail at the beginning of Chapter 5.

every detail about my study. Aside from him and Dianne who I met very briefly, everyone else in the building was still a mystery, including the owner of the company.

2.3. Constructing the Field: Research Methods

Tomorrow morning I will have my first full day in the company, but I don't feel prepared for this at all! I don't know what to do, what to look at or pay attention. I don't know anything. I have never done research before! ...My first two days [at work] have been very overwhelming. I'm bombarded with lots of new information. Guess I'm kind of feeling lost. I hope in time I'll have a better sense of what's going on in the building!

(Research Diary, July 1 and July 6, 2003)

In line with my original research design, I started working at Hall Inc. at the beginning of July 2003, after the approval of my ethics application by Memorial University Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR). As planned, as a part-time employee/researcher I was assigned to assist with project proposals and I worked primarily with the executive assistant, who also became my main informant and gate opener. I went to "work" three days a week for about 14 weeks, from July to October 2003. Since I was not receiving any payment from Hall Inc. I continued working at my part-time student job the remaining two days of the week. Although I had already been in the building and met with a few people before my formal research started, my first days, even first weeks, were very challenging. I spent most of my time trying to familiarize myself with my surroundings, my job, and the technical/business jargon, which were all foreign to me. Who was doing what and located where, how to introduce myself and explain my presence in the building, and how to blend in were the main questions I was occupied with initially. Even seemingly mundane details such as what to wear to work, what to do during lunch hours, what

time to leave the work were all complex issues for me. It is against this background of initial chaos and perplexity I started collecting and constructing my "data."

As in most ethnographic research, I used in-depth interviews, participant observation, and analysis of cultural artifacts as primary means of data generation and interpretation. In addition, I kept a personal diary in which I reflected upon daily events and interactions that took place during the research process. Below I will discuss each of these methods briefly.

Participant Observation

...Dianne introduced me to Shelly and explained the job I was going to do for the company... Then she added, very casually, "oh, by the way, Onar is also doing her research here, so the job is... you know... a cover story! We'll be her subjects now for a while!" While Dianne and Shelly were joking and laughing about this, I just smiled and did not really say anything... I thought they were nervous and uncomfortable about the idea of having a researcher around, observing everything they would do. The truth was, I was as anxious as they were... I felt like I was under scrutiny all the time!

("First Day at Work," Field Notes & Research Diary, July 2, 2003)

Unlike in some ethnographic studies, all the employees located in the main building of Hall Inc. knew that I was doing participant observation for my master's research while working part-time in the company.[4] Participant observation is an essential part of fieldwork research. It enables the researcher to immerse herself in a culture she is trying to understand. It entails both being with other people to observe their interactions and their responses to events, and subjecting the self to the same circumstances under which people carry on their daily lives (Emerson et. al 2). For that reason, I sought a part-time employment position through which I could participate in

[4] See Appendix B for a copy of "Invitation and Information for Research Participants" distributed electronically to all the employees in the main building at the beginning of the research.

daily organizational life and actively engage with organizational members. My job at Hall Inc. was to develop an electronic "proposals library" for easy referencing and access purposes whenever a new Request for Proposals, commonly referred as RFP's, was issued for construction projects. It mainly involved organizing previous project proposals submitted by the company under various subject headings and filing them under the company's internal network system. According to Emerson et al. "through participation, the field researcher sees first-hand and up close how people grapple with uncertainty and confusion, how meanings emerge through talk and collective action, how understandings and interpretations change over time" (4). This requires hanging around with people, chatting during lunch and coffee breaks, participating in daily work routines, formal and informal meetings and gatherings, and weekend activities (Van Maanen, *Fieldwork on the Beat* 105; Goodall, *Writing New Ethnography* 84). While my job was isolating and did not require much human contact, I tried to participate in all these activities and interactions as much as possible during my fourteen weeks in the building. I went out for Friday lunches and joined in lunch time walks with other women, took long and frequent coffee breaks in the company kitchen, and participated in office parties, baby showers, annual staff meeting, and social committee meetings.

Despite my genuine efforts to blend in however, I was more an "observer" than a "participant." As Judith Stacey reminds us, the ethnographer is in the field for a specific research purpose and ultimately she is bound to leave once her research is over. My informants at Hall Inc. were quite aware of this fact and they did not regard me as a full participant, as "one of them." As well, my relatively younger age and

"come from away" status, the ambiguity surrounding my job and position in the building, the presence of other students, accounting interns and engineering students who were completing their work-terms, and my full disclosure of my identity as a "researcher" all possibly played a role in how the "insiders" viewed me. While my "outsider" status likely may have prevented me from forming deeper relationships and hence obtaining richer insight and information, I do not perceive it as a major shortcoming. I believe, how the permanent members of the company viewed me, assigned various roles to me, and formed relationships with me all provided very important insights and clues about the life inside the building.

Field Notes

Is there any easy way of doing this [writing field notes] I wonder? How do anthropologists manage to record all their interactions, experiences in the field? It is very time consuming. Seems like there is no time left to do anything else!
(Research Diary, July 6, 2003)

Recording daily observations, interactions and experiences in the form of field notes is an indispensable component of doing participant observation. Field notes are written accounts of daily observations and experiences that enable one to study and analyze the recorded events and interactions over and over again. By its very nature writing is a linear activity and simplifies the complex reality of lived experience by focusing on only certain details and leaving out others. For that reason, far from a simple task of recording what one sees, writing field notes is an interpretive process that involves particular (re)presentation of events, or "inscriptions of social discourse" (Emerson et al. 4-11).

At the time of my fieldwork I did not have any particular activity or issue in mind that I wanted to focus on. As a result, in the first few days of my research I attempted to take note of everything I saw, heard, or observed, making jottings in a small notebook I carried everywhere with me. Eventually however, I only recorded events and interactions that *I* found more interesting, and focused on the subjects that were more frequently discussed than others. This was both a natural evolution of the fieldwork process, and a necessity for practical reasons. As I got adjusted to life in the building, certain details and events became routine occurrences and were relegated to the outside of my everyday awareness. Also, translating the jottings into lengthy field notes at the end of the day was very tiring and time consuming and I was forced to choose what to pay attention to and what to omit. While initially I wrote my everyday observations right after the end of my day in the building, in time, it proved to be impossible to keep this up due to my busy schedule with paid work and other responsibilities and I was forced to write notes up later.

Interviews

Yesterday I did my first formal interview... I wanted to start doing my interviews with someone I would feel comfortable, someone who would be easygoing, approachable and young (so that if I made a mistake I wouldn't feel too embarrassed!)...Still I was very anxious when walking to the coffee shop. I kept thinking, what if he wouldn't show up, what if he changed his mind, what if he wouldn't want to be tape recorded etc...

(Research Diary, August 6, 2003)

The interviews I conducted form a significant part of my research. Some themes, such as the women's relationship with each other, emerged as a result of these interviews, directly reflecting my informants' concerns. Interviews allow research

participants to express their personal experiences, ideas, and realities in their own words (Reinharz 19). Particularly open-ended and in-depth interviews are valuable research tools as they reveal the issues important to interviewees and give them a chance to elaborate on them, which would in return provide deeper insights to researchers. This process, however, requires a certain level of trust between the interviewer and her informants (Reinharz 27-30). For that reason I waited about four weeks before I started conducting my formal interviews. By that time I was more familiar with everyday life inside the building and had begun forming relationships with my co-workers. Initially I approached only a few people I was almost certain would not mind being interviewed by me. Through time, as I gained more confidence and experience, I asked others who, I thought, would like to share their experiences and insights with me. In total I contacted fourteen people. Eleven agreed to be interviewed. Out of twelve[5] interviews I conducted, seven were tape-recorded and transcribed by me. In the case of four people who did not want to be tape-recorded, I only took notes. In each case I handed out an information sheet and a consent form before the interview took place.[6] Among the eight women and three men I interviewed, only three (two men and one woman) were in managerial/executive positions. The others were employed in various positions and had from six months to ten years of work experience with the company.

[5] I interviewed the executive assistant twice since the considerable part of the first interview was erased due to a technical problem.

[6] See Appendix B for a copy of each document.

Most of the interviews were half an hour to an hour long and conducted during lunch hours. As a result, some of them took place in nearby restaurants while others were done in vacant offices in the main company building. Due to the time constraints, I conducted semi-structured interviews rather than open-ended ones that would require longer hours to complete. In a typical interview I started by asking some specific background information such as the informant's position and years of experience in the company and her formal job description. Afterwards I moved on to more open-ended questions; for example I asked for a description of the informant's typical workday and inquired about her initial experiences and feelings when she started working in the building, and about her overall relationships with co-workers, supervisors and executives. In some cases where clarification or more information was needed, especially after I finished my fieldwork, I communicated with my informants through e-mail.

Research Diary

I have absolutely no time left to write in this journal! I didn't know at the beginning that I was proposing to do too much! Eight hours of work three days a week, then writing the field notes, remaining two days six hours of work at my paid job, in this summer time while mom is visiting is TOO MUCH!

(Research Diary, July 25, 2003)

A personal diary includes autobiographical details about the researcher as well as a record of her deeper and emotional responses to everyday events and interactions. As Goodall argues a diary is an important part of the fieldwork and can contain invaluable information about the researcher (*Writing New Ethnography* 88). Indeed, Emerson et al. claim "the very distinction between field note 'data' and 'personal

reactions,' between 'field note records' and 'diaries' or 'journals' (Sanjek 1990c) is deeply misleading" (11) as this separation distorts the inquiry process by falsely claiming the 'objective' accounts of events. Furthermore, they continue, connecting personal reflections with the data gathered from the field "encourages recognizing 'findings' not as absolute and invariant but as contingent upon the circumstances of their 'discovery' by the ethnographer" (12). Feminist researchers as well underline the significance of using personal or group diaries (Reinharz 221-2) and as feminist and critical ethnographers give emphasis to the significance of the self-reflection in the research process and in the resulting textual product, it has become a more popular and a recognized practice to include personal diaries into the research process (Okely and Callaway; Goodall, *Writing New Ethnography*).

For all these reasons I mentioned above, I started recording my research related thoughts and feelings in a research diary even before my actual fieldwork began. Once the fieldwork commenced however, with the lengthy field notes claiming all my time, it became impossible to record regular entries into my diary. Eventually I had to abandon altogether keeping a separate diary, but I incorporated my feelings and responses to daily events into my field notes. The initial entries of my diary proved to be very valuable and I relied heavily on them for the textual reconstruction of the first part of my research journey.

Analysis of Company Artifacts

Artifact analysis is basically the systematic examination and interpretation of any kind of objects. In completing an ethnography of a business, researchers consider a range of artifacts that include newsletters, yearly reports, employee contracts, supervisory reports, mission statements, and brochures; visual texts such as company logos, stickers, pictures and posters, commercials and web pages; as well as spatial arrangements such as office and building designs and even parking lots (Goodall, *Casing a Promised* 17-8). Company artifacts play a significant role in the construction of symbolic and material realities of the organizations that they facilitate both the creation and reproduction of some sense of sharing the common meaning and values in the organization (Smircich, *Organizations as Shared*), and the opposition and counter-production of the very same values (Pondy). Therefore, it is crucial to examine and analyze these artifacts and the process through which they are produced. Ideally, the only restriction to identification and collection of company artifacts "is the researcher's imagination" (Reinharz 146). However, access and confidentiality are the primary issues when collecting information, as even though some artifacts can be available and visible to everyone, some documents such as employee contracts, cannot be obtained due to their highly private and confidential nature. During my time in the company building I examined various artifacts such as the printed company catalogue, external and internal company web pages, office furniture, decorative objects such as framed photographs or drawings of project sites, inspirational/motivational phrases and pictures hung on the walls. These artifacts were significant in conveying the subliminal, everyday maintenance of the professionalism discourse in the building.

2.4. (Re)presenting the Field: Positioning the Self

Focusing on and voicing women's experiences from their points of view is one of the major aims of feminist research (Reinharz 51) that I wanted to accomplish with this study. However, I am aware that as a researcher I function in the same web of power relations and my claim to represent and give a voice to women's experiences is a problematic one, as regardless of my best efforts and sincere intentions "ethnographic truths are... inherently partial--committed and incomplete" (Clifford 7). In other words, as a researcher my observations, interpretations, analysis, and conclusions are limited and partial due to my particular cultural, economic and political *positioning* within the larger society. This is by no means a shortcoming. Rather, as Haraway states, "positioning is... the key practice in grounding knowledge" and "situated knowledge" constitutes the core of "feminist objectivity" (*Situated Knowledges* 581, 587).

The issue of representation in ethnography has been a subject of heated discussions among critical feminist scholars (Stacey; Baker; Dippo) as well as among critical anthropologists (Van Maanen, *Representation in Ethnography*; Clifford and Marcus; M. Wolf; D. Wolf; Denzin; Goodall, *Writing New Ethnography*) in recent years. It has been one of the many challenges I have experienced during my research and writing process as well. Despite my best efforts to incorporate direct quotations as much as possible in my writing, at the end I am the one, as the author, who has chosen the bits and pieces of my informants' words to construct a sense of meaning and (illusory) cohesion. However, while my "researcher" status grants me some authority to construct a certain form of reality, Marnina Gonick reminds us that "informants are

also actors and agents and... the negotiation of reality... involves complex and shifting relations of power in which the ethnographer acts but is also acted upon" (4). Sometimes informants may offer only censored and partial information and they do not necessarily reveal their genuine feelings or thoughts all the time. Consider for instance, Sarah's comment at the end of our interview:

> *...I don't really like talking about work. Probably because I don't really know what's the appropriate answer is... It's hard topic to discuss. And you're not going to say anything really that negative!*
>
> *(Interview with Sarah, August 13, 2003)*

In their participation in a research project, informants may have their own agenda and watch for their own interests, which may be in conflict with the researcher's. The possible tension between different agendas and interests however may facilitate a deeper understanding and help us to recognize the multiple constructions of "reality" (D. Wolf 14, 15). Therefore, as the "author" of this text, I carry the ultimate responsibility for reminding my audience that this is only one version of the story among many possible ones.

Having said this, I think everyone in the company would agree with me that "professionalism" is an influential and frequently implied notion, even though they might not formally define it as a discourse or organizational ideology. In the following chapters I examine how the idea of professionalism shapes the women's identities and informs physical, spatial, and relational dynamics at Hall Inc. In the next chapter I turn my attention to simultaneous interaction of the physical aspects of the body politics (Witz et al. 189) with the professionalism discourse in the production and presentation of professional female bodies.

CHAPTER 3: *Professional* Appearance

On Thursday morning I woke up around 8am. After a night with a very poor sleep, I was quite anxious about the meeting I was scheduled to have with Mr. Payne in his office. As I decided a night ago I wore my black skirt, around an inch above my knees, and my deep dark red, long sleeve top with a large but not too deep neck. Finally I put my black pantyhose and black boots on. I guess I put some thought into how to dress up for this meeting. I wanted to communicate a message that I am not too much "out there" and "visible" (very little make up, no big jewellery or hairdo), but at the same time "professional," "feminine," "attractive," perhaps a little "conservative" (classic black skirt and boots). It is not typical of me to wear skirts, make up, or high heel boots, so I was little uncomfortable and definitely self-conscious about my looks, yet was confident and ready to meet with Mr. Payne. I didn't know too much things about him and the company, except that it was probably an engineering company (which indicated to me that it was a "formal" and a "serious" place), and this person was a male manager (previously thought he was the Human Resources Manager, but realized after that I was wrong). Therefore I wanted to dress up a little to show them that I was also "serious" and "professional." Yet I didn't want to be out there as I was only a "student researcher." I wanted to look attractive to the male gaze (I thought that would help me to hide my "real" sexuality, which could be a "problem" if revealed). Yet, I also wanted to be on the safe side to be able to negotiate the nature of this business relationship.

...It was a very modern looking, but somewhat cozy building. Inside it seemed like everything was very well calculated, neither too shiny and out of ordinary, nor boring, traditional, messy or old looking. I was glad for my clothing choice that I didn't show up with a pair of jeans or with unpolished shoes!

("The First Visit to the Research Site," Research Diary, May 8, 2003)

The air of professionalism was one of the main impressions I had during my first trip to Hall Inc. Many others I interviewed in the company mentioned experiencing the same impression on their initial visit to the head office. Fortunately, I was well prepared for my first appointment and was able to fit into the "professional picture" easily. However, as someone who had been a student all her life, dressing appropriately for work was one of the biggest challenges I had to face once I started my fieldwork, and eventually it became a main focus of my research.

Dressing our bodies is a simple fact of life. It is also a significant part of social and moral order. Through dressing we perform our gender and sexual identities and negotiate power relations. It is a symbolic activity through which we challenge or reinforce gender, class and all other markers of being (Rubinstein; Entwistle *The Dressed Body*, *The Fashioned Body*; Brewis, Hampton, Linstead; Dellinger; Calefato; Entwistle and Wilson). As a part of complex systems of signs and symbols, our clothing and bodily adornments may tie us to certain groups while distancing us from others. In this regard, all work organizations adapt more or less formal dress codes and establish gender appropriate appearance norms. However, as Rubinstein emphasizes, clothing images or dress codes are meaningful and significant only when they are located and interpreted in a specific social and geographical context (8). In this chapter I explore how the discourse of professionalism produces, and is a product of, gender appropriate dressing and appearance norms in Hall Inc. I examine how these norms are used to maintain hierarchical levels, negotiate power relations and discipline the female body in particular. I investigate how heterosexuality is maintained and normalized in the on-going process of creating professional, gendered, and (hetero)sexed bodies. Finally, I discuss the notions of agency and resistance during this creation process.

In this complex analysis of the relationships between discourse, identity, and power relations, I employ notions of "the dressed body as a *situated object*" and "the dressed body as a discursive and phenomenological field" (Entwistle, *The Dressed Body* 135 original emphasis, 136). "Situated" in the sense that it is located in a particular social, geographical, and historical context both influencing and influenced

by these elements. The dressed body is a discursive and a phenomenological field, as it exists on the material level and is constituted by everyday bodily experiences. In turn, these experiences are shaped and interpreted by discursive practices in the form of language and meaning systems (McDowell, *Body Work*; Rubinstein; Calefato; Entwistle, *The Dressed Body*). It is therefore open and subject to negotiation and reinterpretation, as it becomes evident for instance in the process of introducing "jeans days" in the building. Before I return to the construction of professional appearance in Hall Inc., I briefly look at the recent feminist research that informs my analysis.

3.1. Feminist Research on Appearance Norms at Work

Given the crucial role of dressing norms in the maintenance of social order, as well as in the formation and expression of individual and group identities, it is no surprise that organizations spend a great deal of energy and money on defining and scrutinizing their members' dress and appearance, whether in the form of establishing dress codes or through more informal ways (Rafaeli and Pratt 32). Despite the apparent bureaucratic and organizational efforts to regulate the bodies' and appearances' of workers, organizational scholars have largely ignored this practice (Rafaeli and Pratt 32). Like any other subjects related to body and bodily experiences, dress is often trivialized and discarded as irrational, belonging only to "private," and irrelevant to the rational domain of business (Dellinger and Williams; Rafaeli and Pratt). Similarly, the literature on fashion, social psychology of dressing, and communication studies ignores the inextricable links between bodies, dress, gender

identity and sexuality by solely focusing on the symbolism clothes convey, abstracting them from the bodies (Entwistle, *The Dressed Body*).

Critical feminist scholars provide the most valuable empirical research and comprehensive analysis of appearance and dress. Particularly studies done on the service sector, where the majority of workers are women[7] and the direct interaction between the service provider and the client is the basic part of the job, offer rich evidence for how female bodies are gendered, sexualized, regulated, and in some cases dehumanized by dress codes and appearance rules (Loe; Leidner, *Serving Hamburgers, Rethinking Questions*; Adkins; Cockburn; Brewis and Linstead). Research that focuses on managerial jobs and professional workplaces similarly illustrates the process of gendering and disciplining of female bodies through the regulation of appearance norms, albeit by different and sometimes contradictory discourses on "appropriate business look" (Wajcman; Freeman, *High Tech, Designing Women*; Dellinger; Dellinger and Williams; Trethewey, *Disciplined Bodies*; Brewis, Hampton, Linstead; Green; Sheppard; Kaiser, Chandler, Hammidi). For example, as Lisa Adkins shows, physical attractiveness, wearing make-up, and dress and high heel shoes are the basic criteria for women's recruitment, and are constantly demanded of women in most of the service sector jobs (93-143). Silvia Gherardi underlies the unwritten organizational rule that when attractiveness is not directly related to the

[7] In Newfoundland, for instance, sales and services industry employs the greatest percentage (36%) of women who are active in the labor market, according to the latest (2001) Canadian and provincial labor market statistics. See Appendix C for more detail.

advantage of the organization, the female worker has to be "pleasing and moderately feminine, but she should not be attractive" if she wants to be taken seriously (594).

The boundaries between different discourses are not that clear-cut however, nor are the discourses within themselves uniform, unchallenged, and permanent. Linda McDowel, for instance, argues that "increasing number of professional jobs, once seen as the epitome of disembodied rational workers—as mind work rather than body work—are also characterized by sexualized performances" (*Body Work* 76). As she illustrates, discourses on professionalism are constantly negotiated, reinterpreted, subverted, or reinvented through time in different socio-economic contexts and under different circumstances. Furthermore, as dressed bodies move in and out of various contexts, the subject positions they occupy, as well as their subjective meanings, shift. Therefore, analyzing the reproduction of gendered and (hetero)sexed bodies is a complex task, although not an impossible one.

3.2. Professionalism Discourse at Hall Inc.: Professionalism as the Management of Appearance and Self-Presentation

I'm supposed to be dressed well, present myself well. I would think that...I would probably be expected to wear nice clothes, shoes and stuff a lot of times...[because] well, I think, Hall Inc. is really big on appearance, and I guess if somebody is coming in to the office and I'm sitting wearing a t-shirt and jeans or whatever, that's not gonna... that's not gonna look well...But I just can't afford to have that wardrobe for work. So I try my best...I try to wear, you know, a skirt and a blouse and basics expected of me...

(Interview with Nancy, September 17, 2003)

Victor [the owner of the company] is extremely, extremely big on professionalism. He portrays that through all its... you know, all the companies and the people he works with know that he expects high level of professionalism from everybody...

(2nd Interview with Dianne, the executive assistant, February 9, 2004)

Undoubtedly, "professionalism" is the most influential and the dominant discourse at Hall Inc. While the strong emphasis on professionalism is a deliberate effort on the part of the upper management, it is widely accepted and embraced by almost everyone I interviewed in the building. Interestingly, while the professionalism discourse can be produced and maintained by various metaphors, organizational structures, and daily interactions such as formal company policies, social activities, and rituals, the most obvious and frequently invoked metaphors are "appearance" and "self-presentation." For instance, when I asked Dianne, the executive assistant, what she meant by *"a very professional place,"* she replied *"I mean, appearance, it's a very* professional *appearance..."* (Dianne February, 2004) and then she continued to talk about how this appearance was cultivated through particular self-presentation and interaction styles. Other employees as well emphasized the importance of a professional look with phrases such as, *"Hall Inc. is very big on appearance,"* (Nancy 2003) or *"We have a very professional image here"* (Doug 2003). Although the spatial dimension of this professional appearance was obvious to people I talked to, its gendered nature was never mentioned. Certainly, space plays an important role in professionalisation and the gendering of bodies, and indeed gender, space, dress, and self-presentation are all intertwined. That is, both the presentation and the location of workers' bodies are crucial in the construction of the professionalism discourse and

gendered subjectivities. However, for the purpose of this chapter I exclusively focus on dress and external appearance. In the next chapter, I will turn my attention to the spatial dimension of the body politics in more detail.

3.3. The Professional *Female* Body: Organizational Power and Self-Discipline

...[While waiting for Mr. Payne] I noticed a few women constantly going up and down the stairs. They rather have a conservative, traditional female look: short to medium hair, blond or sometimes with varying shades of blond highlights, long or knee-high skirts and dresses with matching half or long sleeve blouses, with a limited variety in styles and colors. Perhaps because it is only my second time, they all look the same to me. Their height, weight and body shape are all within a certain range. No one is visibly overweight, too short or too tall. They're all white (possibly local people, I don't know for sure yet), with a similar complexion and facial features. But then again, I reminded myself that I didn't see all the women in the building yet...

("Second Visit to the Company," Field Notes, May 22, 2003)

The adoption of detailed dress and appearance rules is one of the most common and direct ways the service industry maintains employee control and discipline over their large female workforce. Explicit regulations and strict guidelines put forth by management on how a female employee should dress, carry her body, do her hair, and apply her make-up are commonly found in these types of jobs, and breaking rules can eventually lead to lay-off (Adkins 122). However, in so-called professional and managerial jobs it is less common to find such formal, written regulations and dress codes (McDowell, *Body Works*; Rubinstein; Kaiser). Similarly, although Hall Inc. has various company policies and procedures, from maternity leave to Internet usage, there is no single written policy specify a dress code. This does not mean, however, that employee appearance and dress is not regulated or that there is no negotiation of power

through appearance. Rather, the organizational power operates in subtle and complex forms, making it more difficult to recognize initially. In this case, the Foucauldian notion of "modern power" provides a better analysis of how power relations operate, especially, as Susan Bordo says, "when it comes to the politics of appearance" (*Unbearable Weight* 27).

Foucault conceptualizes modern power as non-authoritarian and non-coercive, but still able to produce relations of dominance and subordination. Power is not something concrete that belongs to only one group but rather a dynamic "network of non-centralized forces" as Bordo puts it (*Unbearable Weight* 26). These forces are shaped by the dominant ideologies of the time and are challenged and recreated through history (Foucault, ***Discipline and Punish***). Furthermore, modern power is deployed not through repression or coercion but through numerous techniques of power such as surveillance and self-discipline. As a result, self-induced discipline and surveillance, or what Bordo calls "power from below" comes to replace the coercive assertion of authority, or "power from above" (*Unbearable Weight* 27). Joanne Entwistle suggests that the Foucauldian notion of power can be extended to the analysis of modern forms of self and dress. According to her:

> Foucault's insights into the ways in which bodies are subject to power and discursively constituted can also be utilized to show how institutional and discursive practices of dress act upon the body, marking it and rendering it meaningful and productive. The idea of surveillance through self-surveillance is one that has also been extended to describe the emergence of a new modern self who is increasingly called upon to monitor behavior, often by technologies of the body, such as, diet, exercise and plastic surgery to name but a few (*The Dressed Body* 147).

Bordo's and Entwistle's re-interpretations of the Foucauldian concept of power are particularly useful in exploring the power dynamics at Hall Inc. Due to anti-discrimination legislation, there are no formal or written rules specifying height, weight, complexion, or gender of the employees deemed appropriate for certain positions in the company. Nor is there any formal company policy indicating what can or cannot be worn, or what kind of hairstyle or body shape is appropriate for professional appearance. Nevertheless, my daily observations suggest that every woman knows what to wear and how to look or present herself in a strikingly similar, "professional" fashion. Despite the summer heat, dark colored, solid fabrics, skirted suits and dress shoes, half-sleeve blouses with collars, full make up, neatly arranged hair, and a simple piece of jewellery, usually a wedding band and a gold necklace exemplify this fashion.

In Foucauldian terms, the organizational control of female employees' bodies and their heterosexual appearance are achieved and maintained through the dominant discourse of professionalism in Hall Inc. The discourse is embraced by most of the women as it brings meaning and pride to what otherwise might be called low status "female" jobs. The women already monitor themselves and each other's dressing and grooming practices by embracing the professionalism ideal, regardless of whether their actual position is defined as professional or not. As a result, the management at Hall Inc. does not have to exert its power through strict, explicit dress codes.[8] The technique

[8] This is true with the exception of two cases. Two women who were both performing receptionist duties mentioned that they were told how to dress in one way or another.

of surveillance, disciplinary gaze, and self-discipline, effectively reproduce the discourse of professionalism and the existing power relations, without too much resistance. Dianne, the executive assistant, puts it very clearly:

> *You are never told [how to dress], but you don't need to be! You really don't need to be. You can tell by the atmosphere, you can tell by the building itself. How it's built, how it's organized, the decor...you know when you are walking... We just take our cue from the type of business people we deal with and the professional look of the office itself...*
>
> *(2nd Interview with Dianne, February 9, 2004)*

Men, on the other hand, do not experience the same level of scrutiny on their dress and appearance. The professional male body comes in all different sizes and shapes. I observed several men, especially estimators, coming to work with casual pants or jeans and t-shirts on any given day. Their informal look is neither a threat to the overall professional air of the company, nor is their competency as professional workers questioned because they do not dress formally. Their casual attire is usually explained in terms of the spatial organization of the building—that men are usually located upstairs, so no one sees them anyway— or the nature of the job they do—that they go to the construction site, so it is more convenient to wear jeans. Similarly, it would be more convenient for the IT (Information Technology) staff, both of whom are women, to wear more casual/practical clothes as well, *"...because they may be crawling under desks working on computers at any time"* (Dianne June, 2004). While Dianne explains that *"[the IT staff] very rarely wear dresses or skirts,"* nevertheless they maintain the full image of professional women with pantsuits (instead of skirted suits), high-heeled shoes and makeup (Dianne June, 2004).

However, it would be wrong to assume that the regulation of the female body is mediated only by the organizational ideology. As Carla Freeman illustrates, broader cultural values as well as specific corporate ideals simultaneously shape dress and appearance rules for women (*Designing Women* 177). Situating the women at Hall Inc. in a larger socio-cultural context helps to explain why diet and exercise are the most popular conversation topics among women in the company. Although there is no explicit requirement to conform to a certain body shape to perform their duties, or to be professional, clearly the (professional) women's bodies at Hall Inc. are well disciplined, slim and fit with no visible excess. The almost uniform fit and slender look of women in the company conveys the simultaneous interaction between the organizational and larger socio-cultural ideologies. While the western cultural ideals of beauty, health and productivity dictate vigorous exercise, dieting, and body management for women,[9] the company encourages and maintains this self endorsed bodily discipline through the professionalism discourse, and through recruitment practices. Unlike in the case of men in Hall Inc., the narrow range of body sizes or shapes for women sends a message to women, both inside and outside of the company, that only the physically fit, slender, young, and well-groomed female body can be appropriately professional. The contemporary notions of professionalism, "are thus intimately and inextricably connected to a particular type of embodied and constructed femininity" (Trethewey, *Disciplined Bodies* 425). In turn, the construction of the fit

[9] While one can argue that the same standards apply to men as well, it is certainly not to the same extent (Trethewey; Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*). Slim and slender appearance is not a necessary condition to show their professionalism either.

and slender professional female body reinforces and normalizes the culturally dominant norms of health and productivity (Bordo, *Unbearable Weight* 186).

During my three months of fieldwork at Hall Inc., I participated in numerous conversations about low-fat meal recipes and the essentials of healthy weight loss, and I took part in lunchtime jogs in the neighbouring park. These were all exclusively female activities in the company. While it can be argued that these activities are forms of surveillance and endorsement of bodily discipline for women, they can also be interpreted as a pleasant way of socializing with, and relating to other women in the company. However, the following excerpt from my research diary shows the extent of the pressure for self-control can take.

> *While I was chatting with Dianne and Shelly by Dianne's desk, to my surprise and amazement, Heather [an administrative assistant] put a little, gray, handbag like thing on the floor and stepped on it. Only then I realized that it was a scale and Heather was weighing herself in the company lobby! After she weighed herself turned to Shelly, who was next to me, showing her four fingers and her mouth moving quietly "I lost four pounds" she said. Shelly shook her head and said it wasn't that good. She then went on saying how much weight she lost, except the previous week because it was her birthday so she ate a lot. Dianne made a joke (perhaps to ease the tension) and said, "I think I put on all the weight you lost!"*
>
> *(Field Notes, July 14, 2003)*

This seemingly casual exchange among Heather, Shelly, and Dianne, and their preoccupation with body weight and food intake exemplifies a part of "a process that disciplines through *self*-surveillance, measurement and comparison with a... fictive norm, an 'ideal'" (Malson 172–73, original emphasis), whereby social and organizational control on female body is achieved and dominant norms are maintained.

3.4. Professional Dress(es): Maintenance of Organizational Status-Quo and Hierarchy

Despite their considerable resemblance in terms of the physical appearance and dressing practices, the women at Hall Inc. are not an homogenous category, nor are their jobs and positions within the company synonymous. How they dress and present themselves varies within certain parameters depending on personal taste and organizational status. Among the fourteen women in the building at the time of my fieldwork, only one was in a managerial position. The others were employed in administration (2), accounting and finance (5), information technology (2), purchasing (1), reception (2), and executive assistant (1) positions. As Dianne said, *"...because women [are] in varying office roles they wear clothing equal to their roles"* (Dianne June, 2004). While she distinguishes different styles according to the amount of public exposure—more public exposure was equated with more formal dressing— women's appearance and dress styles also reflect and reproduce the occupational subcultures to which they belong, as well as their place in the organizational hierarchy.

Several researchers have argued that women in managerial or senior positions pay particular attention to their overall look in order to distinguish themselves from women on the lower end of the hierarchy (McDowell, *Body Work*; Sheppard; Dellinger; Trethewey, *Disciplined Bodies*; Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*). In addition, they claim that female managers make a special effort to minimize their feminine look and sexual attractiveness by adopting sombre, serious, business attire in order to relate to and blend with the dominant male managerial culture. Indeed, both strategies are interrelated as women's bodies and appearances in the lower end of the organizational

hierarchy are particularly gendered and sexualized, a process of subtle exercise of power, by the masculine workplace culture. By their close approximation to the "male" look then, women managers are able to set themselves apart from the other women with less power, and claim their place in the hierarchy. As this subject was never a direct focus of my interviews with the participants, it is hard for me to speculate on whether or not women at Hall Inc. dress deliberately to underline their higher status and power in relation to women with less authority. Nevertheless, there are a few observable differences among their dressing patterns that are worthwhile to look at briefly.

During my time at Hall Inc., I noticed that it is very unusual for Laura, the only female manager in the building, to wear jeans on designated jeans days, while almost all the other women do. Laura's constant care and attention to her professional image, even on more casual days, indicates her actual or desired membership in the higher level, masculine managerial culture. Her around the clock professional appearance symbolizes that anytime she can have an important business meeting with the senior officials, implying her relatively higher position and importance in the organizational hierarchy, and her difference from the other women. This may also be one of her non-verbal strategies to establish her boundaries, and assert her authority over the women in the company. In my brief interview with her, Laura talked about the difficulty of balancing her friendly, easygoing approach to everyone in the building and her need to assert her authority when necessary, especially in relation to other women. Once, she noted, she was *"on the edge of [her] boundaries"* (Laura 2003) and even the owner of the company noticed a few of the women held a "disrespectful" attitude towards her.

Distinguishing herself from other women through her more serious appearance, particularly in the absence of more concrete authority symbols, might serve to remind other women of her distinct status and authority in the company. This is a well-documented method used by several female managers demonstrated in the literature (Sheppard; McDowell, *Body Work*; Dellinger).

Sarah, the purchasing assistant, usually comes to work with minimal make-up, sporty, casual pants and large clothes that cover and minimize the contours of her body. She is located on the fourth floor and her location away from the "public eye" plays a role in her clothing choices. However, it is her relatively equal working relationship and status with her male colleagues that permits her more casual appearance. Her education and training are comparable to that of the male estimators, and like them she is working on company projects rather than taking care of routine office business. Similar to the male estimators who dress very casually, Sarah's dress style and appearance mimic the general look of the floor on which she works. Like Laura, Sarah's clothing choice and appearance de-emphasizes her femininity and sexuality. Sarah realizes this through her casual appearance, approximating the general look of the men she is working with, while Laura dresses in more elegant, serious, and tailored suits to achieve and maintain her authority in the company.

On the other hand, the junior administrative assistants' look is slightly more "feminine." Their shoe heels are usually a little higher, skirts are a little shorter and colourful, and makeup is a little more gleaming. Hence their bodily appearances prominently mark their femaleness and sexuality in a stereotypical fashion. The female assistants work for male managers, organizing and taking care of the everyday routines

of the office in general and the divisions they work for in particular. Unlike Sarah, they are working for the men, who have more power, authority, and status. As a result, the assistants' immediate working and reporting relationships with the men is based on the apparent structural power imbalance.[10] The subtle organizational norms that prescribe an appropriately gendered and heterosexualized look for women are maintained through this imbalance. Whether they do so knowingly or not, the assistants conform to these norms through their more feminine appearance, which in turn reproduces the assistants' subordinate status in the company. However, their more sexualized and feminine appearance challenges the gender-neutral, dispassionate depiction of the "professional company" to some extent.

3.5. The Professional Dress: Normalization of Heterosexuality and Gender Binaries

The complex relationship among the operations of organizational power, appearance norms, gender identity, and the status quo are all interwoven by the assumption of universal heterosexuality. Feminist researchers have already documented everyday operations of the heterosexual ideology in office life "[that] involves the domination of men's heterosexuality over women's heterosexuality and the subordination of all other forms of sexuality" (Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*). Among several ordinary office routines, women's work attire and makeup constitute two key

[10] However as Pringle notes organizational structures are only one of the dynamics among many, and power relations "cannot simply be read off from these structures or be said to reflect them" (*Secretaries Talk* 28). The assistants are quite resourceful in their negotiations of power.

practices through which appropriate gendering of female body, and heterosexual desire are achieved and normalized (Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*; McDowell, *Body Work*; Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*; Wacjman; Sheppard; Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*). In this regard, Entwistle claims that the notion of a professional woman and the strict monitoring of her visual appearance "articulates a very particular kind of body: one that is feminine *and* professional at the same time... a relatively recent historical invention" (*The Dressed Body* 141, original emphasis). "Compulsory heterosexuality" that manufactures and normalizes the traditional gender binaries lies at the center of this articulation (Butler 23). In heterosexual ideology, the disembodied, rational male worker comes to represent the logical order and values of the bureaucratic organization. His body and appearance do not endanger the rational command, as his mind is claimed to suppress his body and any bodily desires. Of course, this is true only as long as he maintains a certain form of heterosexual masculinity (McDowell, *Body Work* 85). Women, on the other hand, are defined by their bodies and constructed in opposition to the rational (male) mind. If women want to have higher authority and power within the modern organizational hierarchy, or to assert their "professionalism," they have to refrain from overt display of their bodies. (Green; Entwistle, *The Dressed Body, The Fashioned Body*; Trethewey, *Disciplined Bodies*).

The proper display of the heterosexual professional female body usually poses contradictory and complex tasks for women. On the one hand, the professionalism discourse claims a disciplined, not too feminized or sexualized appearance. As women they have to downplay their "distracting" sexuality, and demonstrate self-control and logical thinking to validate their place in the company and to confirm their

professionalism. On the other hand, as a main organizing principle of workplace relations and interactions, heterosexuality requires women to be pleasant and attractive to the male gaze, regardless of their position in the hierarchy. They must maintain their femininity and sexual attractiveness to men in order not to create any real threat to the implicit heterosexual, masculine order of the modern organization. For instance, even though Laura dresses in suits akin to those of male managers, with her high-heeled shoes, makeup, medium-length hair, and accessories she is still unmistakably "female" and "heterosexual," at least in her appearance. Thus, says Bordo, "with a 'softening' fashion touch to establish traditional feminine decorativeness, and continually cautioned against the dire consequences of allotting success higher priority than her looks, she represents no serious competition (symbolically, that is) to the real men of the work place" (*Unbearable Weight* 209).

Unlike Laura, most of the women at Hall Inc. are support staff positioned in the bottom of the organizational hierarchy. This provides them a wider range of possibilities to present themselves, since they do not have to fit in to the male managerial culture. However, the display of their femaleness and (hetero)sexuality is circumscribed by yet another appearance rule endorsed by the professionalism discourse. Janet, the temporary receptionist, explains that at the reception desk it is important that she looks professional as she gets to meet everyone coming in the building. She cannot wear *"jeans, or something too short or revealing"* (Janet 2003). The prevalent notion of the "professional workplace" enables the organizational power to control the overt display of female sexuality that would otherwise present a threat to the so-called non-sexual, impersonal nature of the bureaucratic organization.

As Trethewey claims, "learning to navigate one's body through these complex, ambiguous, and precarious 'in-betweens' ...becomes of paramount concern for women in their professional lives" (*Disciplined Bodies* 425). This is of course by no means to suggest that women's bodies are passive constructions and women do not have any agency or capacity to resist and to manipulate this process for their own pleasure. Rather the construction of body and the interpretation of its experiences are dynamic processes where conflicting discourses are negotiated and new ones are formed, as it is evident in "jeans days."

3.6. Jeans Day: Subversion or Compliance?

...[During this Friday's lunch] Shelly said that, Victor had noticed a few of them with jeans and asked "Is this that Friday again?" not amused at all. "He doesn't like us wearing jeans," she said. I asked the reason. She replied: "Victor doesn't think it looks professional." Speaking directly towards me she continued, "We've been fighting for a year [over the issue of wearing jeans to work]." She seemed upset [by him]. I was glad that I was wearing my jeans as the other women at lunch were also all wearing jeans...

(Field Notes, July 25, 2003)

As a lesbian, I was well aware of the "heterosexual norms of feminine appearance" in modern capitalist work organizations before I started my research (Dellinger and Williams 162). I carefully planned the details of the image I wanted to present through my external appearance in my first visit to the company. After the research project was approved, one of my initial concerns was about arranging and buying clothing suitable to wear at Hall Inc. This, I thought, would help me both to establish my credibility as a competent organizational researcher and to blend well with the other women at work. Consequently, like most other women in the company,

I played a part in the reproduction of the dominant organizational ideology and status quo. However in Foucauldian terms, power relations are not fixed or stable, and there is a dialectical relationship "between processes of organizational control and acts of resistance" (Ashcraft and Mumby 103).

Bordo notes that resistance exists simultaneously with power and "prevailing norms themselves have transformative potential" (*Feminism Foucault and* 191). Similarly, John Fiske adds, "no bodies are completely docile" (64) while Dellinger and Williams discuss women's capacity to resist and to "transform institutionalized norms" (168). Dellinger and Williams claim that "makeup can be a topic of conversation that bonds women together" and that "some women... use makeup to promote their goals of personal enjoyment and bodily pleasure" (169, 171). Brewis et al. argue that professional women's dress at work is gender *in*appropriate and it provides an example of "a deliberate modification of gender identity" (1288). The adaptation of the male suit for the professional women, they believe, takes the attention away from their femininity and puts the focus on "their (masculine) abilities" (1287). Accordingly, the jeans day at Hall Inc. can be interpreted as an act of resistance against the organizational norms of gendered professional appearance. Jeans day was initiated by the Social Committee, an almost all-female group. On the last Friday of each month, anyone can come to work wearing jeans if they donate two dollars to charity. Since men usually come to work in casual dress and jeans on any given day, the jeans days are significant for the women. Therefore, they take active responsibility to implement and carry on the practice. It would be misleading, however, to construe the jeans day as an utterly subversive practice.

Bordo warns us that while the Foucauldian notion of power makes resistance possible through the creation of alternate discourses and practices, the new discourses may paradoxically help to maintain established norms. According to her, the experience of power through subversion of dominant discourses can be illusory (*Unbearable Weight* 28, 179) and thus, the negotiation of power relations and the practice of resistance may become double-sided (Pringle, *Bureaucracy Rationality and* 168). Brewis et al. recognize power dressing is not "particularly subversive" as it still perpetuates traditional gender binaries and heterosexual ideology (1288). Similarly, Dellinger and Williams accept the limits of their argument by stating that comments about appearance and makeup are not always comforting or bonding (169). In the same way, the meaning of jeans days becomes fluid. Nancy explains on jeans days *"[they] usually put a little sign up on the [reception] desk that tells everybody coming in that 'we're wearing jeans today in support of a local charity'"* (Nancy 2003). Dianne adds an important piece of information to this. She states that *"giving back [to community and charities] is something Victor is extremely big on..."* and gives numerous examples of donations (Dianne February, 2004). Clearly then, contributing to the charities is a significant social component of becoming a "professional organization" at Hall Inc. As a result, the jeans days quickly become a medium through which the professionalism discourse at Hall Inc. is maintained and expressed, albeit in a different form. In other words, "resistance is not merely undercut but *utilized* in the maintenance and reproduction of existing power relations" (Bordo, *Unbearable Weight* 168, original emphasis). By notifying every visitor to the company about the jeans days and their charity activity, women still function within the same

discourse, yet with a different appearance rule. Yet again, I am mindful of anthropologist James Scott's argument that "most acts of power from below, even when they are protests—implicitly or explicitly—will largely observe the 'rules' even if their objective is to undermine them" (*Domination and* 93). By playing the game according to its rules, the female employees have been able to manipulate the discourse for their own interest. Four months after I finished my fieldwork, Dianne informed me that jeans days were extended to every Friday instead of once in a month, a direct result of the efforts of the social committee.

As I have demonstrated, organizational practices and discourses are embedded in bodily dynamics, since employees "do not 'leave their bodies behind' when they 'go' to work" (Witz et al. 176). Visual presentation of bodies is one dimension of this dynamics and in this chapter I focused on how this dimension intersects with the prevailing discourse of professionalism in the production process of gendered and (hetero)sexualized identities of women in Hall Inc. In this process, culturally dominant constructions of femininity and the professionalism discourse reinforce each other's legitimacy and are achieved through disciplinary gaze and self-surveillance. However, this is not a straightforward process. Rather, it entails the negotiation and recreation of meaning by all the agents involved. Furthermore, physical appearance cannot be isolated from other aspects of body politics and be analyzed separately. In the next chapter I look into spatial dimension of this politics and its intersection with the professionalism discourse and visual display of bodies.

CHAPTER 4: *Professional* Space

The company building rather looks like a big and contemporary house located in an affluent neighborhood. It is surrounded by a nice, green landscape, close to main highways but secluded so well with the high trees that it is not possible to see the building from the road. The only visible markers that distinguish the building from the neighboring private house are the big sign that bears the company name and logo placed at the end of the driveway, and several serious looking, dark color cars and vans parked in front of the building...

...After I took a few seconds I opened a door located on the left end of the building. As soon as I opened the door, I found a modern looking inside décor... Everything looked neat, clean and in order. Without doubt it was very carefully planned and designed... The pictures of offshore oil and gas platforms hung on the walls, depicting huge steel structures in the middle of the ocean, clearly indicated that I was right to think that it was an engineering (or similar sort of) company. It had a very serious and "masculine" feeling. I was little intimidated, but the friendly young woman at the reception desk made me feel more comfortable. After I checked with her that I was at the correct address, I mentioned to her my appointment with Mr. Payne. She pointed to me a place right across from her desk where there were three chairs and asked me to have a seat... It seemed quiet around. I noticed only a couple of women going up and down the stairs... The most vivid things that stayed with me were those construction pictures, very modern look of the surrounding area, interesting chairs in the reception area, and a few business and technical magazines sitting on the side table...

("The First Visit to the Research Site," Research Diary, May 8, 2003)

On the surface, the dominant discourse of professionalism in Hall Inc. is most evident in the exterior and the interior design of the main building, as well as in the clothing and appearance style of its female employees. While in the previous chapter I examined the inextricable relationship between gendered appearance norms and the professionalism discourse, in this chapter I focus on the simultaneous construction of gendered and professional spaces in Hall Inc. I look at how the professionalism discourse at Hall Inc. interacts with the spatial dimension of body politics in the production process of gendered and (hetero)sexed workers. I also explore the everyday

activities through which the existing gendered spatial arrangements are maintained, negotiated, and sometimes resisted by the employees in this process.

Undoubtedly, the everyday use and meaning of space, spatial relations, and metaphors play important roles in the employees' understanding and interpretation of the professionalism in Hall Inc. As the author of this text, my knowledge and understanding of the spatial relations and dynamics are situated in and shaped by my specific position and location in the company as well (Haraway; Bordo, *Feminism Postmodernism*). The various physical and social spaces I occupied in the building as a student/researcher/employee informed my interpretation/construction of the meanings embodied in the spatial interactions. Therefore throughout the chapter I also address the particulars of my spatial positioning in Hall Inc. The next section briefly reviews recent literature on spatial dynamics at work. The following three sections examine the physical structure and the main spatial dichotomies operating in the company building. The last section discusses the strategies employed by the women to resist these spatial orders and to subvert their gendered meanings. Once again, the division of the chapter into different sections is for the sake of simplicity, as none of these boundaries/divisions have clear-cut beginnings or endings.

4.1. Space, Gender, and Organizations: A Brief Literature Review

Witz et al. suggest that *spatial* dimension of body politics is one of the fundamental means through which bodies in organizations are structured, governed and understood (188-89). According to the authors, spatial dynamics refer to both the regulation and distribution of physical space between actual bodies, and "the symbolic

space between bodies as they are arranged into hierarchies within organizations" (188). Similarly, social scientists and philosophers who view the human body as a site of power struggle have called our attention to the significant role spatial arrangements play in the control and discipline of bodies (Fiske; Lefebvre; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*; E. Hall; Grosz; Goffman; McDowell, *Gender Identitiy and*; Gregory and Urry). John Fiske argues, for instance, that bodies' movements in and through space and the control of spatial and temporal relations are "crucial to any disciplinary system whether- that of work, school or home" (26).

Feminist researchers, particularly feminist geographers and anthropologists, but more recently feminist scholars in many disciplines, recognize the crucial interrelationship between the everyday use of space, formation of social and institutional structures, and the performance of sexual and gender identities (Bell and Valentine; Massey; Bell et al.; McDowell, *Gender Identity and*; Rose; Duncan; McDowell and Sharp; DeKoven). They maintain that space is indicative of power and constructed, negotiated and transformed through social, cultural, and political practices. It is therefore both a basis for and effect of gendered power relations and dominant social discourses. In other words, "[gender], space, place and sexuality are implicated in the constitution of each other and society as a whole" (Knopp 651).

In general, researchers who study space and spatial arrangements at work focus on the gendered segregation of the labor market, public/private dichotomy, and the resulting sexual/spatial division of labor. (Jenson et al.; Hanson and Pratt; Massey; Spain; Women and Geography Study Group; Monk). Initial studies conducted in this area have been mainly descriptive and statistical in nature, looking at gender

differences in mobility, spatial behaviours, and types of employment (McDowell, *"Space, Place and...Part1"*). These broad, larger scale labor market studies are now accompanied by more recent ethnographic studies of individual workplaces that examine the gendered construction of space and spatial organization of gender on a micro level (Rofel; Witz et al.; Kondo; Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*). Influenced by poststructural and postcolonial perspectives, these works explore the production of gendered and (hetero)sexualized space, as well as the performance of gender and sexuality through everyday use of space, in local organizational settings (McDowell, *"Space, Place and...Part2"*). My inquiry is primarily informed by these micro level studies. However, I also look at the larger labor market where Hall Inc. is situated, in order to develop a more comprehensive analysis.

4.2. A Professional Place: The Company Building

...It [the structure of the building] was very meticulously thought out, you know... because it's an extremely professional building too. And Victor likes it that way...

(1st Interview with Dianne, August 15, 2003)

First time I ever walked into this building I was like whoa! This place got to be a good place to work, because the physical appearance of the building is stunning, so then when you walked in, even when I drove by the building, I was like oh my god! I'd love to work there, you know, so I think that was my first impression. It's like whoa!

(Interview with Shelly, August 15, 2003)

It is widely acknowledged by social theorists that the physical structure and design of a corporate building and its landscape reflect and express the dominant ideology and culture of the organization they belong to (Domosh; Weisman; Spain;

McDowell and Sharp). The skyscrapers that house many modern corporations, for instance, are claimed to be "the pinnacle of patriarchal symbology and the masculine mystique of the big, the erect, and the forceful" (Weisman 16). Furthermore, not only do company buildings provide physical settings for everyday work interactions, but also themselves are part of those interactions both on the symbolic and material levels. Physical structures therefore actively participate into the organization and production of embodied—that is gendered and sexual— subject positions (McDowell, *"Space, Place and...Part1;"* Roberts; Weisman; Rofel; Agrest et al.).

As Shelly and Dianne convey above, both the external look and the internal design of the main company building are very impressive. The building's structural design was well thought through so that it has been successfully converted from a formal school into a contemporary workplace. On the contrary with skyscrapers however, the building resembles anything but vertical and forceful male sexuality. As my field note describes at the beginning of the chapter, the company building looks like a big, three story family house, rather than a corporate office of a successful business located in North America. Nevertheless, this is not unusual given the geographical area where it is located, as many other business buildings in Newfoundland have similar characteristics. Unlike the rest of North America, where the tall corporate buildings seem to be the norm, most buildings in this province extend horizontally, reflecting the availability of the landscape and the limited number of large corporations located in Newfoundland and Labrador.

At the outset, the home-like appearance of the building creates an atmosphere of a relaxed and egalitarian workplace where, as the management and some employees

claim, everyone is comfortable and treated equally. The inside décor and design of the building on the other hand, convey a different impression with its serious, orderly, well planned and organized—hence well disciplined—look. Pictures of various construction sites and professional association certifications hang on the walls, quality statements that pop up in every corner, technical and business journals, sharp edges and corners, sombre colors, and hardwood floor quickly replace the initial relaxed impression with a very serious, "professional" feeling, the main characteristic of many bureaucratic work organizations.

Some feminist scholars argue that the serious, bureaucratic, rational, hence masculine, construction of capitalist work organizations is a deliberate activity that excludes anything feminine (Ferguson; Mumby and Putnam; McDowell, *Gender Identity and, Capital Culture*). McDowell claims, for example, that dominant social and cultural values construct women "as inappropriate bodies in the rational spaces of the mind—especially in bureaucratic, academic, scientific and high-tech workplaces" (*Gender Identity and* 48), leaving women feeling "out of place" at work. However, I believe in the late twentieth century capitalist organizational ideology, and certainly within the professionalism discourse in Hall Inc., women occupy a very specific and crucial place. Women's presence in work organizations and the particular arrangement of their location within them is indeed vital for the production and maintenance of the heterosexual and masculine, professional corporate culture. With their well-groomed and pleasant presence not only do women represent a modern and progressive image of the company, but also provide essential services for the emotional and material well-being of the organizational members and clients. The friendly and young female

receptionist at Hall Inc. for instance, softens the serious and masculine air of the company, and provides the first hint of the gendered organization of space in the building. At the same time, her "sexually coded position and location" (Burrell and Hearn 15) constructs and reinforces her (hetero)sexuality and femininity, as I discuss in the following section.

4.3. Professional space(s): Upstairs vs. Downstairs

...In my first hour today on the first floor, I met with more women than I ever encountered during my first two weeks on the fourth floor of the building. The first two things I immediately noticed on this floor were: The sound of high heels (you would definitely know that someone is coming even though you don't see anyone from your cubicle), and the topics of casual conversation among women... a refreshing change after the fourth floor...

("Third Week in the Company," Field Notes, July 14, 2003)

...When you walk in the door, you know, the professionalism starts. The way the clients are greeted when they come in, the way they're treated when they're there, the impression that they get from the time they come in the office to the time they leave is "whoa, this is a professional place." Everyone here, everyone works here is professional. They know their place, they know what they have to say, they know what needs to be done to keep clients happy, to ensure that when people leave that building they left with a good impression.

(2nd Interview with Dianne, February 9, 2004)

As Dianne states above, in Hall Inc. visitors encounter professionalism as soon as they walk in the main door on the entrance level. The first desk and the first person they meet is the receptionist, followed by the executive assistant, both of whom are women. Indeed, in the whole building, all the women, except one, are located either on the entrance level or on the immediate upper and lower levels of the entrance. As a result of this spatial arrangement, the women inhabit all the public areas of the

building on the lower levels, while the men are either secluded in their offices or are located on the uppermost floor, away from the scrutinizing eyes of the visitors. In addition, because the majority of the women are employed in support staff positions, they constantly move between floors, from one manager's office to another's, passing through the second floor[11] most of the time. As a result, being the only visible employees to visitors, the location as well as the bodily presentation and performance of the women becomes a main vehicle through which the professional face of the company is crafted.

McDowell claims that due to the major shift from manufacturing to service industry jobs in the late twentieth century Western economies, bodily performances and presentations have become the significant component of the economic process. She suggests that this shift "has transformed the embodied worker from muscle power to part of a product of exchange... [and] particular bodily performances in service occupations become part of the exchange process" (*Gender Identity and* 37). In my observations, this exchange process, and the complex interrelationship between the heterosexual ideology, space, and professionalism discourse are revealed most clearly in the position of the "receptionist." Given that most of the visitors and clients are (presumably) heterosexual businessmen, the location and function of the—always young and female— receptionist plays an important role in the maintenance of the heterosexual ideology as well as in the representation of the professional image of the company.

[11] Since the building is located on a hill, the entrance level corresponds to the second floor of the building. The first floor is on the ground level with windows above the ground.

Nancy, a young and beautiful woman, who is performing receptionist/administrative assistant duties, is aware of the strategic importance of her location and her personal presentation. She states that:

> *I've been told actually that my job is probably one of the most important jobs because I'm the first person that people in the public, I'm the first person they deal with. I'm the first person they see when they come in. So I present myself as how the company is represented...*
>
> *(Interview with Nancy, September 17, 2003)*

Not surprisingly, even in the temporary absence of Nancy, due to illness, vacation, lunch or coffee breaks, it is always a young, presentable woman, usually one of the admin assistants, with a friendly smile who occupies the reception desk. Hence, the main lobby—the most public section of the building where the reception desk and executive assistant's cubicle are located—is produced and maintained as a professional space through a particular form of (young and heterosexual) female appearance and (caring and friendly) performance. Carolyn, who has been with the company almost a decade, confirms this observation. She recalls that in her early years, "*I wasn't [a] very happy camper on the front desk... I didn't like being a receptionist... I didn't want to be on the front desk. I just felt that I was too old to be down there, I had too much experience and anyway...*" (Carolyn 2003, emphases are mine). Carolyn's comment underpins the "common" organizational knowledge that the receptionist implies a young woman with little work experience or skill. Her symbolic place in the overall organizational hierarchy is peripheral, yet her physical place and appearance are crucial in the heterosexual corporate culture.

In his classical work on the presentation of self in everyday contexts, Erving Goffman directs our attention to the significance of the spatial organization of bodily

performances. According to Goffman, in order to achieve the desired effect of the bodily performances in organizational contexts, employers utilize various spatial strategies. For instance he continues, they locate "persons with undesirable visual attributes for back region work, [while] placing persons who 'make a good impression' in the front regions" (124). While Goffman does not consider gender and sexuality directly, certainly his theory applies to the receptionist's visually and aesthetically pleasing front-stage positioning to the heterosexual male gaze in Hall Inc. Furthermore, Goffman explains that the "backstage" is usually reserved for technical imperatives whereas the "front-stage" remains as the expressive domain (124). Goffman's observations helps us to grasp the complex interrelationship between (hetero)sexuality, gender, space, and professionalism discourse. The main lobby—and to that effect downstairs— which would correspond to Goffman's "front-stage," is clearly maintained as a female space, while the uppermost floor, or the "backstage," is allocated to all the male estimators who are dealing with the technical side of the business. This gendered division of space in the building reinforces the dominant heterosexual gender binaries that define the femaleness with expressive qualities and masculinity with technical and rational traits. Simultaneously, the professionalism discourse operates most overtly through a particular presentation of (hetero)sexual female bodies whose front-stage/downstairs location become significant for its reproduction.

Most of the employees acknowledge that the downstairs is *the* place where the professional image of the company is manufactured, albeit with total dismissal of its gendered dimension. Doug, a male estimator located on the fourth floor, claims:

...It's all about the company image and it's nothing to do with women. I'm sure he [the owner of the company] would be upset if the women on the front desk were wearing jeans, because they are the first person somebody would see. Yeah, I think he would like for them to look professional because they are the first person when somebody come in, whereas nobody sees us upstairs, not very often... the only people see us upstairs are generally wearing jeans themselves!

(Interview with Doug, August 5, 2003)

Sarah, the only woman on the fourth floor, echoes Doug's claims. She admits the difference between relatively relaxed and free atmosphere of the upstairs, and the *professionalism* of the main floor, where the surveillance is more profound. She explains for instance:

...I think up here you are not really noticed. You are not out there with when the clients are coming in and stuff like that... Up here is better! It's quieter too up here. I like that. You seem to have your own space. Somebody is not necessarily watching out what you do or anything like that... Downstairs both the first and second floor, it's more of a thoroughfare, you know what I mean, and you got everybody walking back and forth, and up here you don't have as much.

(Interview with Sarah, August 13, 2003)

However, like most of the others, she discounts the gendered nature of this spatial arrangement through which women become subject to more rigid rules on their appearance and behaviour. Sarah dismisses the idea that gender has any relevance at work, as she affirms *"you don't necessarily look at yourself as being a man or a woman... we're just people and we're working together"* (Sarah 2003).

Although it is meaningful to a certain extent, the upstairs/downstairs dichotomy is not the only process through which the space is gendered in the building. Each floor has also its own gendered spatial divisions and dynamics whose meanings change under different circumstances. While for example, the first and the third floors have the highest concentration of female workers, not all parts of these floors are accessible

to or controlled by women. Daphne Spain suggests that women, who occupy support staff roles, are more likely to work in open-plan layouts, where they are subject to greater surveillance and repeated interruptions (206, 212). Similarly, in Hall Inc. women inhabit almost all the cubicles and open spaces on each floor whereas men are located in closed-door offices.

As I have already described, the main lobby is constructed and maintained as a female space. However, all the remaining offices and the boardroom located on the same floor are almost always inhabited by men. Equally, all the private offices on the third floor, except one (it is shared by one male and one female accountants) are allocated to male managers while the female employees are located in cubicles right across from the managers' offices. On the symbolic level, the ownership of a private office indicates a higher status and importance at work, as an office space is usually a scarce resource (Spain 215, 218). For instance, Doug tells *"it would be probably expensive for everybody to have an office, ...[and so] you wouldn't really expect someone on the bottom of the scale to have her/his own office"* (Doug 2003). The women's allocation to cubicles then indicates the relatively low status nature of the jobs they are employed in. It also conveys the minimal value attributed to the women's jobs, regardless of the amount of work, skill, and responsibility their positions require. Furthermore, the particular location of the women, in an open space, right across from the managers' offices, subjects them to constant surveillance and discipline. Undeniably, this spatial distribution restricts the women's access to the private offices, while reducing their ability to define and control their own space and making them vulnerable to constant invasion of their privacy. Because "higher status within an

organization is accompanied by greater control of space" (Spain 218) and vice versa, the women's limited ability to control their space and the transfer of knowledge, in turn, reflects and reproduces their lower place and status within the organizational hierarchy.

Arguably, the fourth floor, where on each side of a long corridor the estimators' desks are located, is also designed as an open floor that may constrain estimators' behaviours and privacy. However, while this layout limits the estimators' privacy to some extent, the set up of the fourth floor differs significantly from the other floors in the building. Situated on the uppermost floor, estimators are quite far from the controlling gaze of their managers or company executives, as well as the visitors. Unlike the women on the third and second floors, they hold a certain degree of control in the definition and production of their space. For instance, each section and its surrounding area are given different "street names"[12] reflecting the specific projects the estimators are working for. That is, "Ductwork Street" defines the area for the estimators working in ventilation, while "Plumbingwell Road" and "Old Plumbingwell Road" border the plumbing section, where one young and one relatively older estimator work. Similarly, "Electricity Avenue" defines the part of the floor where the estimators working in electrical job contracts are located. This simple exercise of naming their places "for fun" exemplifies the estimators' ability to define—hence exert some control over— their spaces on the symbolic level.

[12] The street names they come up with are playful reconstructions of the major street names in the city.

For the estimators being in an open space is partly required by the nature of their jobs as well. As Doug explains, *"we interact a lot, it's a nature of the job... like you might see me singing out to Peter or Jeff, or singing out to somebody else. So that's a lot better than walking out and going around..."* (Doug 2003). This, on the other hand, is not the case in the majority of the jobs undertaken by the female staff. The nature of some administrative and accounting jobs require more privacy. Dianne says for instance:

> *This [privacy] is becoming an issue for me. Especially when I deal with sometimes sensitive issues and sensitive papers and documents and stuff... So when my review comes up that's one of my things I want to bring up. Because... I think I need an office...*
>
> *(1st Interview with Dianne, August 15, 2003)*

Having privacy however, does not readily increase one's status. Consider, for example, the situation of Joni, a financial accountant:

> *...I am in the office with no window, not even an office, but a library, no window, no nothing, sometimes it's kind of a depressing. I was saying the other day, I was going to get one of those blinds that got different seasons on it! [laughs] That's what I need I think. Because I think I'm getting kind of claustrophobic... I've been here for six months and ever since I came here, well before I started they said that you have to go to the library, it's a very temporary thing, it's only gonna be a week or two until we'll get an office for you. And it has been six months... I think they're going to move me [but] it's not like they were [saying] 'OK, well, you know, she's a really good employee, let's keep her happy, let's do something.' It wasn't like that at all... now all of a sudden they need storage for all of their files, so they're trying to find a place to move me out of necessity for themselves. It wasn't for me...*
>
> *(Interview with Joni, September 8, 2003)*

Neither does an office space necessarily provide privacy. The meaning of an office space changes under different circumstances and in relation to the person that occupies it. While for instance junior level employees would not enter Victor's or other vice presidents' offices before making an arrangement or checking with the

executive assistant, it is possible to observe them walking into Laura's office without a notice. As Sundstrom states, "perhaps a private office is more private when occupied by a manager than when occupied by a secretary" (191), or in this case, occupied by a "female" manager. I did not ask Laura how she felt about the constant invasions of her workspace, however my following field note written in the last week of my fieldwork describes *my* frustration due to endless interruptions I experienced while located in an office.

> *This week I was in John's, one of the project managers, office on the third floor. He was away for his summer vacation for a week, so I took the opportunity to settle in his office! Finally I thought I was going to be able to have privacy and a little space of my own... My excitement about the office however was replaced by despair quickly. In an hour or so after Shelly set up the computer for me and I settled in, I realized people were walking into the office unannounced as though I did not exist. Linda or Ursula, the admin assistants, would come in to look for a file or a document or to use the photocopier, even though there was another one located just outside of the office! Sometimes they would not even say anything to me. They would just come in, mind their business and leave the office without saying a word! The managers on the same floor would poke in their noses to see what I was doing... Some others would come in to say 'hi' and start chatting...Frustrated by not being able to focus on doing my job I thought to myself, on the first floor when I was in Health and Safety officer's little cubicle surrounded by high walls I had more privacy and quieter time than this!*
>
> *(Field Notes, September 29, 2003)*

My apparent *invisibility* in John's office reflects the peripheral role assigned to me as a young woman with no clear status, a direct result of the existing sexual division of labor in the company.

4.4. Inside/Outside: Sexual and Spatial Division of Labor

...This morning I found Shelly in the kitchen emptying the dishwasher. I started helping her after I said "good morning" and asked if there was anyone particularly responsible for emptying or filling the dishwasher. She said: "No, in theory whoever comes first is supposed to empty the dishwasher, but usually women empty it. There are usually bunch of men at 7am. But they never empty!" ...When we were still in the kitchen Jeff walked in and said "hi" to us. Shelly turned to him, pointing at me emptying the dishwasher commented, "she learns pretty quick!"

(Field Notes, July 7, 2003)

The distinction made between inside (company building) and outside (construction sites) is another spatial dichotomy through which the notions of femininity, masculinity, and (hetero)sexuality are organized and reproduced in Hall Inc. Regardless of their job or position in the organizational hierarchy, "outside" is defined as the domain of men. For example, estimators and managers go to construction sites to supervise projects, executives often travel to other provinces or to the US for business meetings or to oversee distant project sites, the Health and Safety officer works in the fields, and laborers and drivers by definition of their jobs are always on the move doing errands outside of the building. Women, on the other hand, all stay "inside" (the company building) or, as in the case of IT personnel, move between the buildings when necessary. In one of my brief meetings with Victor, he stated that Laura, the Human Resources Manager, was *"his right hand"* and expressed his appreciation of her work by referring to her position as, *"like a general manager of the office"* (Victor 2003, emphasis is mine). Hence in Victor's opinion, Laura was managing the *office*—the life inside the building— while he and other, all male, executives were responsible for the business that took place outside of the building.

As Shelly observes, *"the one thing you'll notice in [Hall Inc.] is that all the administrative people are women and then you know all the engineering and all the work is done by the men."* (Shelly 2003). As administrative/executive *assistants*, purchasing *assistants*, accounting/payroll *clerks*, IT *support* specialists, or receptionists the women working in the building occupy the support roles, and are in charge of the so-called routine office work. Their wide range of formal responsibilities include: filing, typing, organizing and distributing documents; preparation of payrolls, bills, accounts receivables, and courier items; sending faxes; maintenance of office supplies; organizing managers' schedules, travel arrangements and business meetings.[13] As a result of this sexual division of labour the women rarely leave the building for the purposes of work and even if they are required to go from time to time, their main domain is still defined inside the building.

Mobility, as Linda Cullum states, "is an important marker of the gendered organization of space, and the division of labour in the workplace, and of the boundaries between femininity and masculinity" (197). In the every day life of the Hall Inc., the inside/outside split—as it directly relates to the mobility of bodies—plays a significant role in the production of the gendered identities of the employees. Furthermore, the gendered divisions of labour and inside/outside dichotomy intertwine with the professionalism discourse in the maintenance of the appropriately gendered professional appearance norms. Some people, for instance, argue that because men might travel to project sites at any time it is more convenient for them to have casual

[13] See Appendix D for the selected samples of formal descriptions of the jobs women are employed in.

clothes on. Doug claims that *"maybe it [wearing jeans at work] wouldn't be so bad for a couple of estimators because... well maybe the person might think they might be out in the field or something"* (Doug 2003). He doesn't think however, women may have jeans on, as they do not *go out* to the field.

The spatial division of labor, organized around the assumed gender dichotomy and heterosexual ideology, is produced and maintained in different forms and through various activities. On the macro level, the sexual and spatial division of labor in Hall Inc. is both a basis for and result of the larger labor market segregation through which the majority of women in the labor force are allocated into certain occupations. The latest (2001) Canadian and provincial labor market statistics demonstrate that women dominate the health and service industry occupations such as business, finance and administrative; sales and service; social science, education, government service, and religion. On the other hand, women make up only 35.4% of employees working in the managerial occupations in Canada.[14] The magnitude of the segregation is quite similar in Newfoundland and Labrador where the head office is located.

In addition to the segregation of women into certain type of occupations, occupations within themselves are sexually and spatially divided as well. Shelly explains for instance:

...In the IT world you see the desk top applications and like you know the training side of it, all of that is very female oriented but when it comes down to hard stuff like, the network administration and like the cables and like you know the more difficult stuff still seems to be male oriented... the technical side of it still male... [So] when I went out to [project site] we did a lot of cable running, like we actually run all the cables in the wall and we have this big pan we were putting on all the cables and

[14] Adapted from: http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/labor45a.htm
Refer to Appendix C for the detailed statistical data

there was a guy there hooking up the phones and he said, "oh my god!" he said "you don't very often see a girl doing that!"

(Interview with Shelly, August 15, 2003)

The gendered structure of the labor market partially explains why almost all the women in Hall Inc. are employed in administrative and accounting jobs that are usually performed in enclosed spaces. However, while it is useful to note the larger labor market segregation, it does not describe the whole picture. Theories that attempt to explain reasons behind the gender segregation on a macro level have been inadequate and largely ignored the varying nature of the labor market and gender associations of occupations[15] (McDowell, *Gender Identity, Capital Culture*). As some scholars argue, closer examination of the socially and culturally constructed nature of jobs and the micro-dynamics of everyday interactions is necessary in order to uncover the gendered meanings embedded in the structures of occupations and organizations (Acker; McDowell and Sharp, McDowell, *Gender Identity and*; Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*; Mills and Chiaromante; Hearn and Parkin).

In the everyday life of Hall Inc. the spatial and sexual division of labor is primarily organized around the "separate spheres" paradigm. The public/private spheres dichotomy places women and femininity into the realm of private or home, the site of reproduction, whereas masculinity is associated with public or, with the sites of work and production. While clearly problematic due to its binary conceptualization, the public/private, work/home or, production/reproduction dichotomies are still "the

[15] For instance, during the late 19th century, administrative jobs were thought to be the most suitable for men, while "by the 1950s male secretaries were considered strange" (Pringle, *Secretaries Talk* 156). Joy Parr's book *The Gender of Breadwinners* provides an excellent example for the different gendered meanings ascribed to the knitting mills in different cultural/geographical locations (Canada vs. Britain),

most pervasive representation of gendered space" (Rendell 103), and reproduced in myriad ways both in macro and micro levels of the society. In other words, as Rosemary Pringle states, "the public/private distinction cuts right across the home/work distinction and is generated by everywhere, in the minutiae of everyday life as well as in constructing the larger divisions" (*Secretaries Talk* 228).

In this regard, the company building comes to represent the bounded space of the "domestic sphere" for women in Hall Inc., where they are grounded and assume the role of "office wives" (Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*; Ogasawara) or "surrogate mothers" (Kondo; Pierce). This gendered constitution and organization of space is simultaneously reproduced on the material and discursive levels, and through visual representations. Consequently, like the generic "woman" who is relegated to the sphere of reproduction, the women in Hall Inc. are deemed to be responsible for the material, emotional, and social reproduction of the company. Besides their formal administrative/clerical tasks that are essential for the reproduction of the daily office life, as women they are also expected to do certain domestic chores in the building as well as to perform "emotional labor" (Pierce; Hochschild; Leidner, *Serving Hamburgers*) in the form of being nice, pleasant, and caring all the time. Furthermore, by organizing, supporting, or actively participating in social events, fundraising campaigns, and team sports the women continuously reproduce the positive and professional image of the company and well being of its members.

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and in different time periods (59-76). See also Christine Williams' book *Still a Man's World* in which she discusses the diverse gendered meanings the 'Women's Professions' carried overtime.

Despite the women's crucial role both in the production and reproduction of the business, their position in the company is usually trivialized and defined as peripheral. For example, in the annual company staff meeting after Shelly, as the chair of the social committee, summarized impressive number of events the committee organized, Victor took the stage and commented, *"it sounds like you are doing a lot, but I don't really know what else you're doing here!"* (Field Notes, August 1, 2003). Through his 'joke' Victor was sending a subtle message that the social committee members, most of whom are women, were not doing any "real" jobs, but spending their time with trivial business, like arranging company socials.

The company catalogue is instrumental in the visual representation and reproduction of this trivialization, as well as of the inside/outside, female/male, production/reproduction binaries. Prepared for prospective clients, the catalogue describes the past and current projects undertaken by the company, supplemented by colored pictures of the project sites and several company buildings. All the pictures in the catalogue depict men *outside*, in the construction sites, and *in action*, working on or supervising various projects; or in the boardroom discussing seemingly important issues with a serious attitude. Almost always their locations, such as a construction site, factory, office, and status, a construction worker, technician, supervisor or manager, can be identified through visual clues, like the overall appearance and dress, the tools being used, the surrounding environment. On the other hand, the four pictures that portray women are all of enclosed spaces. In two of the pictures women's identities are not recognizable as only the back of their heads is shown. In the only instance where two women are directly looking at the camera, all that can be seen is

their smiling faces. Neither their location nor their job could be identified as they are depicted in a close-up shot, doing nothing but just posing for the camera, fulfilling their role as friendly and professional "face" of the company.

However, the separate spheres ideology becomes most evident in the gendered construction of the company kitchen. Even though men would also use the kitchen to eat their lunch or to grab a cup of coffee, their use of kitchen space is considerably different from women's. Unlike women, once men finish their meals, they do not extend their stay in the kitchen to relax, socialize with others, or organize and clean up the kitchen. Indeed, spending time in the kitchen to do some errands is considered as "unmanly." In the few instances I observed, when especially young men tried to do some of the cleaning after their meals, they were ridiculed and made fun of by the other men with phrases such as, *"domesticated men"* and *"she [wife/girlfriend of the man] teaches you well!"* (Field Notes, August 4, 2003). Although there are no formal rules stating who is responsible to do certain domestic duties, women are expected to carry out these chores including but not limited to filling and emptying the dishwasher, cleaning the kitchen table and counter, and preparing coffee. Nancy provides numerous examples that illustrate the everyday operations of this implicit organizational rule:

> *...I think us women are expected to clean the kitchen. There is a sign that clearly says "put your dirty dishes in the dishwasher," but a man is shocked! They expect us... I've been there in the kitchen and they come in and say "oh, no coffee is made!" and they leave until women make the coffee so they can [have coffee]...*

> *...I was in the kitchen one time and this guy came in ... I was drying the dishes, I was taking them out from the dishwasher in the morning. He looked at me and he said "I need a spoon." ...He wanted me to dry the spoon and give it to him!*

...And the other day I was drying the dishes and a guy said "yeah, that's right..." something about that was a woman's job...

...I know how somebody... who puts his dirty coffee cups in his outgoing baskets for his secretary to take out...

(Interview with Nancy, September 17, 2003)

Whether consciously or not, some women in the building assume an active role in the reproduction of the division of space and labor organized around the oppositional gender categories. For example Janet believes that women in every organization should carry out administrative tasks, because they are "*good organizers*." Men, she argues, do not know how to file, how to look for things, or are not trained for organizing skills, but women are better doing those kinds of jobs (Janet 2003). Dianne thinks men do everything as well as women in the company and believes that they do not have such issues, *"like men wouldn't do this or wouldn't do that"* (Dianne February, 2004). On the other hand, the examples that Dianne offers to verify her points, reveal her subtle assumptions about the appropriate performance of femininity and masculinity at work that parallels the established heterosexual gender categories. She says for instance:

Victor is really good for that. If he is at a meeting or something, he gets downstairs and gets the coffee himself rather than asking me to do it. If I don't ask, if I don't say "do you want me to bring something?" he will get down and get it himself. But you know I'd like to...

(2nd Interview with Dianne, February 9, 2004)

In this example Dianne implies that Victor's behaviour is somehow unexpected and extraordinary. She praises Victor for getting his coffee from the kitchen himself *when* she does not bring it to him. Dianne sees it as her duty to offer Victor coffee and

to take care of his other personal needs, even though her formal job description does not include such tasks. In another example Dianne remembers a *"funny event:"*

...poor Bill, an older gentleman working upstairs, turned the dishwasher on when it was loaded and put dish liquid instead of the dishwasher detergent...and when I went downstairs [to the kitchen] the soap was coming through right to the door to meet me! ...He thought he was doing the right thing, you know... so they [men] all pitch in and do what they think is right!

(2nd Interview with Dianne, February 9, 2004)

During her narration both Dianne and myself kept laughing, visualizing the thick soap overflowing from the dishwasher. However, it would be hardly amusing if the person who made the mistake were a woman in the same situation. Nor, I contend, would Dianne be so sympathetic to her for making such a mistake as she was to *"poor Bill."* While these examples draw somewhat clear-cut picture of the spatial and sexual division of labor, the gendered production of space carry multiple meanings and possibilities as I discuss in the following section.

4.5. Subversive Spaces?

...After we emptied the dishwasher Shelly turned on the kettle to make herself some tea. I poured myself a cup of coffee and we started chatting (she seems very friendly and talkative). She asked me about my weekend, that how it was going with mom... then I asked her about her weekend and how did the kayaking go...We had a very nice chat in the kitchen and I realized it was already 10am. We had spent almost twenty minutes with emptying the dishwasher and talking about our weekends. Two more hours and it would be lunchtime! "Thank god for the kitchen!" I thought. What would I do if it weren't for this kitchen? Being one of the only two women on the fourth floor was way too boring during the work hours...

(Field Notes & Research Diary, July 7, 2003)

Despite its seemingly well-planned structured nature, space in the building is not a fixed entity. Nor do organizational members interact in prearranged spaces. Rather they actively participate to the gendered construction and organization of space,

whose meaning is subject to negotiation and reinterpretation. As in every work organization, in Hall Inc. some of the women are aware of their role in this construction and negotiation process, and when they have a chance, will openly challenge the dominant gendered meanings and spatial dynamics. Other times they simply reproduce the binary divisions but subvert their gendered, traditional meanings for their own interests.[16] For example, on the one hand the construction of the company kitchen as a female space reproduces the dominant heterosexual ideology that associates femininity with domestic/private sphere. The women in the building, including myself, take part in this reproduction process by willingly doing the errands in the kitchen, rather than leaving them undone as most of the men do. On the other hand, the same space becomes a site of resistance, when the women spend their work time in the kitchen to socialize, take a break, and relax. In this case, not only do women form their own support network in the kitchen, but also they resist the constant pressures dictated by professionalism discourse and capitalist organizational ideology to work harder and produce more. It has been illustrated by various researchers that, foot dragging or slowdowns, taking frequent and long coffee breaks, and spending time in the washrooms are common forms of non-confrontational resistance strategies employed against the authorities that demand more efficiency and productivity (Andriyani; Westwood; Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*). In the case of Hall Inc., since only two female washrooms, which can accommodate only one person at a time, are

[16] At this point I should mention that whether they use so-called *resistance* strategies deliberately or not, none of the women I interviewed or casually chatted with named their activities as "resistance" or "subversion." These are rather academic terms fashioned by social theorists and here I use them to construct my own version of the story.

designated for the fourteen women in the building, spending a long time in the washroom would be very noticeable. However, no one would readily suspect a woman spending some time in the kitchen presumably loading the dishwasher or preparing coffee. As a result, the seemingly submissive behaviour of a woman may become an act of resistance when a woman subverts the dominant gendered meaning of the kitchen for her benefit.

The reception area and the position of the "receptionist" that I discussed in the previous sections carry alternative meanings as well. Maintained as a female space, the reception area represents and reproduces the spatial dichotomies, gender binaries, and the bureaucratic hierarchies in the company. As Nancy says, *"a lot of people think a receptionist is the bottom of the ladder"* (Nancy 2003). However, Nancy's access to vast and sometimes crucial information through her control of all the incoming/outgoing phones, faxes, mails, documents, visitors, and through her role as an initial gate keeper, provides her more power—and hence ability to resist— than others tend to realize. The following field note taken during the informal setting of a baby shower exemplifies Nancy's ability to utilize her physical location to challenge the power structures established in the company.

> *...Laura was talking about the job interviews they were doing to fill Stephanie's position, the IT support staff, when she leaves for maternity leave. She said "I told them [the upper management] the best person to ask about the candidates is the receptionist..." so she continued to tell her story that the other day they were late for the interview 5 minutes or so on purpose, so that Nancy could have a chance to observe the candidate... In the mean time, Nancy was imitating the man who was nervously waiting to be interviewed, with comical gestures... then she switched to mimicking and mocking Mr. Payne, whose office was located just across from her desk... We were all laughing like crazy! It seemed like Nancy was getting quite a pleasure from her act so she kept going on and on about Mr. Payne...*
>
> *("Stephanie and Ursula's Baby Shower," Field Notes, September 25, 2003)*

As argued by several researchers, humour, joking, and mimicry can function both as a means of resistance and as a way of establishing and maintaining authority and control (Collinson; Radner and Lanser; Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*; Cullum). In this example Nancy employs humour and mimicry to subvert the inferior meaning conventionally attributed to her position, as well as to validate the relative power she acquires through her physical location.

In addition to the subtle forms of resistance she employs, under certain circumstances Nancy openly challenges the dominant gender ideology and resulting sexual division of labor, by refusing to perform domestic tasks demanded of her. In one case she recalls yelling at a male employee who asked her to give him a spoon (when she was drying the dishes in the kitchen), *"well grab a cloth and dry one!"* after which, she proudly reports, "*he did.*" In another one, when a man commented (while she was drying the dishes again) that she was doing what was proper for a woman to do, she challenges him by saying *"if you don't [take your word back] I will stop doing this and you won't have any clean cups for coffee or whatever..."* (Nancy 2003).

Similarly, the following field note taken during a lunch break, describes a situation where Heather, one of the administrative assistants, playfully challenges the prevalent notion that the women and their positions in the building are exchangeable, so that they can substitute for each other to ensure the uninterrupted care of the (all male) engineers and managers.

...Jay [an engineer from a subsidiary company] was talking about his next trip to [a major city]. By the way, he remarked, turning towards the admin assistants, the reservation for the flight ticket and the hotel was needed to be done. With a slight grin, Heather said that Elizabeth [the woman who is doing the reservations] was off for a couple of days, so there would be no one to book his flight for the time being. Jay then

asked Heather to do it for him, upon which she simply replied, "No!" "What?" Jay asked jokingly, "who is your boss or your supervisor?" Heather replied quickly, "No one! I'm my own supervisor!" He said after, then he would call [a male manager] who would request Dianne [the executive assistant] to book his flight... Finally Heather said, "OK. you tell me the details of your flight and I'll book it for you."

(Field Notes, July 21, 2003)

At the end, Heather agreed to book the flight for Jay—which wasn't her responsibility to do— but not before she rejected it first and claimed her authority to decide whether or not she wanted to fulfill his request. However, just as in the case of "Jeans Days" I discussed in the previous chapter, to what extent Nancy and Heather's protests, and subversive use of the kitchen space successfully challenge the established norms, or reinforce the existing power relationships, is hard to determine. One could question for instance, whether or not Nancy and Heather could give the same replies if the men were in higher power positions. It can be also argued that Nancy was the one who was doing the dishes in the first place and eventually Heather agreed to do the task required of her.

In this chapter I argued that who is located where, and how much space one can occupy or move within, are not simply practical organizational issues, but rather they are part of gendered power relations. As some theorists claim, space is indicative of power, and gender, sexuality, and space constitute each other simultaneously (Bell and Valentine; Massey; Bell et al.; Rose; Duncan; Knopp; DeKoven). In Hall Inc. organization of the building space is vital in the production of the professionalism discourse. Gender and sexuality are constructed, organizational status quo and power relationships are maintained through spatial dynamics as well. The main spatial dichotomies of upstairs vs. downstairs, inside vs. outside, open vs. closed work spaces

all bear gendered meanings and inextricably linked to the visual aspect of body politics and professionalism discourse. These dichotomies maintain the sexual division of labor and separate spheres ideology, both of which confine women into private, bounded spaces, and segregate them into a limited number of low paying jobs. However, space is not a fixed entity and the gendered production of space carry alternative meanings some of which can challenge the dominant norms, while others reproduce them. In the following chapter I turn my attention to relational dynamics among women in Hall Inc. and explore the meanings they articulate with regard to their identities as professional women.

CHAPTER 5: *Professional* Relationships

...Five or ten minutes into our conversation, a woman in a red suit entered his [Mr. Payne] office. Mr. Payne introduced her as Laura, the Human Resources Manager, and asked her to join us. She did not sit down, remained standing by the office door, away from both of us. It seemed like she was in a hurry... When Mr. Payne was describing my research project to her, she appeared disinterested. After Mr. Payne finished, she said Victor [the owner] had already hired a consulting firm a few years ago and they had done a similar sort of a project... Laura didn't think Victor would be interested in my research proposal. I got very upset and was surprised to hear this. I felt that she was being unhelpful and unfriendly! Mr. Payne insisted that this was a different kind of a study, and I added that I was only a student, so my project would be quite different from what the consulting firm had done. Laura remained dismissive and disinterested and asked me to send my proposal in written form and she would have a look at it when she had some time. Mr. Payne said he already had the information on paper. "Well then" she said, "I have to go, I'm very busy now." ...During our brief talk in Mr. Payne's office, Laura didn't really look at or pay attention to me. I felt right away that she didn't like my project and me, and SHE was just being difficult. Well, sure enough I was upset and worried as a result of this interaction. I was quick to realize however, Mr. Payne did not really take this incident seriously and continued his talk with me as though nothing had happened...

("The First Visit to the Research Site," Research Diary, May 8, 2003)

As I described above, my first encounter with Laura was very disheartening. I had automatically assumed, even before I met with her, that as a woman in an apparently masculine company culture, Laura would have been interested in my study and become my ally. I did not understand why she was so dismissive of me. She did not know me I thought, or the details of my project, but right away she rejected it. I was also discouraged as I perceived Laura an important source of information for my research, and believed that her corroboration was crucial. Even if Victor approved my proposal, unless I secured the cooperation of the women working in the company, the research would be meaningless. I quickly concluded, much in line with the popular literature on female relationships at work (Madden; Briles; Dellasega; Chesler; Heim

and Murphy) that Laura was threatened by the possibility of another woman studying/challenging her authority, and she was simply being difficult. Only after a few weeks into my research did I began to grasp the existing power dynamics and the politics of decision making in the company that would have impacted my first encounter with Laura. In my first private meeting with her at the end of my third week in the building, it became clear to me that Mr. Payne had already planned all the details of my proposed study without consulting Laura even though she would have been the appropriate person to contact if I had approached the company by myself. Mr. Payne's invitation for Laura to join our meeting was more of a symbolic gesture, rather than an actual interest in her participation to the decision making process. Laura was simply responding to this situation, not to me personally.

During my research in Hall Inc. the subject of women's relationships with each other formed a large part of my field notes and interviews. Due to the gendered and spatial division of labor in the building, women spend most of their work time in the company of each other. They socialize together, and form their own social support and friendship networks. Despite this seemingly cooperative picture however, the women express contradictory opinions and ambivalent feelings about working with other women. Some argue that, as women they stick together and support each other, while others, like Sarah, believe "*when you go into the work field with women, it's bad!*" (Sarah 2003).

Despite the abundance of studies on women and work, and female friendships in general, women's relationships with each other in workplaces have received very little attention from researchers (O'Leary; Ely, *The Role of Men, The Social*

Construction; Korpi). The existing literature relies heavily on social psychology and linguistic theories, and focuses on early sex-role socialization and sex-role spillover to explain adult women's interactions and relationships with each other at work. These studies however, present contradictory results. Some researchers conclude that female relationships are essentially nurturing, supportive, and intimate (Jones; Helgesen; Johnson and Arneson; Korpi; Johnson and Aries), while others suggest women are catty, competitive, and over-controlling (Briles; Madden; Dellasega). As Robin Ely argues, in both cases "these person-centered explanations reinforce constraining, often negative stereotypes about women and their capacity to work productively with one another (*The Effects of* 204). These stereotypical portrayals ignore the socially and discursively constructed nature of relationships and the specific socio-cultural contexts within which women interact such as, organizational structures and bureaucratic norms, heterosexual ideology, unequal distribution of organizational power, and prevailing cultural discourses. More recent works, influenced by poststructural thought, attempt to go beyond the binary construction of relationships among women as catty vs. nurturing and point out the complex nature of interactions, and multiple meanings attributed to them (Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*; Ely, *The Role of Men, The Social Construction of*; Sotirin; Keller and Moglen; Rofel).

In this chapter, I explore how the women in Hall Inc. construct and give meaning to their relationships with each other. I pay particular attention to the meanings they articulate with regard to their identities as professional women. In this process, I examine the role of the various organizational structures, broader socio-economic context, and the discourse of professionalism in the creation of the women's

work relationships with each other. In the next section I introduce two basic processes that I identified through which relationships between the women are constructed and expressed in the company. The rest of the chapter analyzes each process in relation to micro (organizational) and macro (socio-economic) structures, and social-psychological dynamics.

5.1 "It's Important to Have Women in the Environment"

...Personally, I don't know if I want to work with all men...I think a woman offers a different perspective to the workplace...It's like you feel connected more working with women. I think that's important. It's important to have women in the environment...

(Interview with Shelly, August 15, 2003)

Many women in Hall Inc. would agree with Shelly's comments that same-sex ties play important roles in their lives and psychological well-being. Even the women who express ambivalent feelings about same-sex female co-worker relationships, admit a few positive aspects of working with the other women in the workplace. Several researchers have also demonstrated that women value and recognize the significance of their connection with other women both in organizational and other social contexts (Westwood; Rosen). Carolyn, *"the oldest living female"* as she calls herself, illustrates this clearly in her account of her early years in Hall Inc:

In the beginning we were some small... I must say when I came first here [nine years ago] my first few months were very stuffy... Very quiet you know, people didn't talk a lot and there was hardly any laughter... When I first came here it was very, very, very quiet, and again there was only Joy and the girl on the front desk and myself and Kristina, very quiet... And for the first few weeks Kristina and I were kind of walking around each other to kind of get a feel for each other and once we realize that "hey, I like her" then I mean [life] started to come in to the place a little bit...

(Interview with Carolyn, September 22, 2003)

The women in the company construct, enact, and maintain their relationships with each other in numerous ways. In this chapter, I explore two basic, interrelated processes through which they establish and reinforce connections with their female colleagues. Everyday, informal, talk among women is the most frequently recognized aspect of the same sex female relationships in Hall Inc. Referred to "bitching" or "gossiping" by my informants, this type of informal talk can be both an empowering and oppressive activity. The second process I focus on is the social construction of the women's relationships, informed by the material conditions of the organization and the larger society. The availability of formal and informal support networks, social activities and mentoring relationships, patriarchal family dynamics, and dominant economic and political ideologies shape the women's relationships and their articulation to a large extent. In the following sections I explore each of these processes in detail.

5.2. Women's Everyday Talk or "Gossip and Bitching"

Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.
Mother Teresa
(From the Internal Human Resources Web Page, Hall Inc., July 21, 2003)

... If I was having a personal problem and I came to work and I was working with all men I'd never ever be open about it. I wouldn't. And they'd be like "gee, what's wrong with her today?" And I don't think that I would ever tell them. But if I was working with a bunch of women I would say, you know, listen I had a fight last night, I was up the whole night you know and that's why I'm feeling cranky today. And I would open up to women, but I wouldn't do that with men, so I think, like I said, I think that I personally connect differently with women...
(Interview with Shelly, August 15, 2003)

As Shelly explains, informal, personal talk occupies an important place in her workplace relationship with the other women in Hall Inc. Several linguists and communication scholars similarly point out the significance of everyday talk in the construction of women's same-sex friendships and relationships (Jones; Coates; Johnson and Aries; Korpi; Sotirin). Although it is predominantly portrayed as trivial in the mainstream literature and popular culture—and by the men in Hall Inc.—women's informal, same-sex talk is a vital, multifaceted activity. Through their intimate, everyday talk not only do the women in Hall Inc. establish their relationships with each other, but also reproduce, challenge, and transform the dominant constructions of the professional female employee identity in the company (Sotirin 19).

Gossip and bitching are two commonly performed types of personal talk and my informants mainly refer to gossip to describe this type of talk among women in Hall Inc. Far from its binary conceptualizations as either "empowering" as claimed by some linguists (Jones; Korpi) or "unprofessional" and "disruptive" suggested by popular self-help books (Duff; Tannen), gossip and bitching have multiple functions and meanings. Before I explore these meanings however, it is important to distinguish gossip from bitching, and bitching as a specific, "gendering mode of interaction" from bitching as a malicious behaviour, stereotypically attributed to "women's communicative patterns and feminized workplace identities" (Sotirin 21).

Despite their close connection, gossip and bitching refer to slightly different speech acts. Bitching is usually considered as a subcategory of gossip (Jones; Sotirin). They are both informal and intimate in nature and based on personal experience. However, while "bitching involves the speaker intimately rather than as an

observer..." (Sotirin 19), gossip "has no identifiable author" (Scott, *Domination and* 142). In this sense, bitching is similar to indirect complaining or grumbling. In this section my focus will be more on bitching as it provides a better conceptual framework to understand and analyze the discursive production of the women's personal relationships with each other.

Even though both men and women engage in bitching, it is regarded as an inherently female speech act and labelled as petty and unprofessional. However, as postmodernist linguist Deborah Cameron points out "speech too is a 'repeated stylization of the body'" (272) like other repeated bodily techniques through which we perform our gender and sexuality. Therefore, as a particular form of speech, bitching is far from just being a distinguishing characteristic of women's talk, claimed by some socio-linguists (Tannen). Rather it is a linguistic resource to "reproduce, resist, or creatively recast socio-culturally dominant configurations of femininity" (Sotirin 19). In this sense, through their bitching the women in Hall Inc. construct and give meaning to their relationships with each other as women, while simultaneously reproducing and challenging the particular professional female worker identity promoted by the company.

In my following field note, for instance, a group of women relate to Dianne's frustration with not being able to leave the work at the time she negotiated with her boss. Through their empathy and advice the women create a sense of solidarity, albeit momentarily. They bond together in their common struggle: in their attempt to

reconcile their identity as full-time professional workers and mothers in a bureaucratic organization where the two are deemed incompatible.[17]

...[for the first time, five of us, all women, were in the kitchen enjoying our lunch after a nice walk around the park] Dianne dropped by to the kitchen to tell me that she was leaving soon for the day and asked if I had any questions for her before she left. Sharon turned to Dianne and asked why she was leaving that early. Dianne explained that for the month of July she would be working part-time to spend some more time with her kids. But, she said "I'm already 45 minutes late!" It was her first day trying to leave early, but she had still things to do in the office. She wasn't sure, she added, if her arrangement was going to work or not. Some women suggested to her that she not come to work two days a week, rather than coming everyday and trying to leave early. They said, "once you're here, it is very difficult to leave early. People would always ask something at the last moment." Dianne was nodding, "yes" she said, "you are right" but she had to come everyday according to the arrangement she made with Victor. Another woman suggested that she would come in the afternoon, like at 1pm., so that she could make sure that she had the time off she asked for. Dianne said it wasn't a good idea because her children woke up late in the morning and watched TV, so if she stayed at home in the mornings they would be still sleeping. Working in the morning was better for her when her children were still asleep or watching TV. We all sympathized with Dianne. One woman said, "just go before anyone else comes and asks you to do something else!" "Yes," said others, "be quick!" Dianne said, "you're right," and left. It seemed to me that all five of us women in the kitchen understood Dianne's struggle to spend some more time with her children. A common sentiment and silence dominated the kitchen for a while...

(Field Notes, July 7, 2003)

This incident exemplifies what Shelly refers as women's special connection with each other. Men, according to her, *"don't have the same sensitivity... They are just not sensitive to that kind of stuff. They come in, they do their job and they go home. Whereas, women are different...they feed each other in terms of positiveness."* (Shelly 2003). Without doubt, the women share their pleasures and concerns, display support and sympathy, communicate their anger and frustration, and thus deepen their relationship with each other, in their bitching. In this regard, bitching is similar to

[17] Among five women in the group, three were mothers. The fourth woman was engaged soon to be married. I was the only single woman.

"consciousness raising" (Jones 247). It can be an empowering act, even a "resistive performance" (Sotirin 21), or "voice under domination" (Scott, *Domination and* 136). Consider for example another occasion, when Hannah expresses her anger and frustration with the management.

> *...On our way to a restaurant for lunch all the talk was around summer vacations. Joni had already had hers in Toronto. She had gone to listen to the Rolling Stones live with her husband and kids. Dianne was leaving for Toronto as well, in two weeks, for her vacation. They were talking about vacation time, how quickly it would pass etc. Then Hannah turned to Dianne and Joni and said angrily "you guys shut the fuck up!" She then continued to say that she was not given any vacation time for the summer. Others seemed surprised and inquired the reason. Hannah told that there was no backup, no one to replace her if she would go away, and there were several projects to complete. Joni suggested some help and said she could do some parts of her projects and Dianne could take care the other parts. Hannah sighed and said perhaps it would have been possible, but Laura [the HRM] had already informed her that she would not be able to have any holiday in the summer. Other women in the car commented on the unfairness of the situation and discussed what could be done... Hannah uttered some more 'f' word about her job and the management until we arrived to the restaurant. At one point she turned to me and apologized for her language. I said, "that's fine, I don't mind it at all." Shelly commented jokingly "this will be your raw data Onar!"*
>
> *(Field Notes, August 8, 2003)*

In this case, Hannah's bitching offers her some relief from her anger and frustration. Her ability to express anger freely among her colleagues indicates the degree of comfort she has with this specific group of women. It also challenges the management and its authority, and becomes a subtle act of resistance. All the women in the car are united, again only momentarily, against the management and convey their contempt for Hannah's situation.

On the other hand, it should be noted that bitching still operates within the relations of domination (Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*; Sotirin; Scott, *Domination and*). It is a coping strategy to survive within, and an act of resistance against, the prevailing

power relations simultaneously. In his discussion of "elementary forms of [political] disguise," Scott discusses the ambiguity of grumbling as a political strategy, which can apply to bitching as well:

> The point of grumbling is that it stops short of *in*subordination—to which it is a prudent alternative. Because the intention of making an explicit statement is denied, the need for a direct reply is also denied: officially, nothing has happened. Looked at from above, the dominant actors have permitted subordinates to grumble providing that they never infringe on the public etiquette of deference. Looked at from below, those with little power have skilfully manipulated the terms of their subordination so as to express their dissent publicly, if cryptically, without ever providing their antagonists with an excuse for a counterblow (*Domination and* 155-6).

In the first case, there was only a brief silence after Dianne left the kitchen, and shortly after all the women went back to work. Similarly in Hannah's case, by the time we ordered our food we had already switched to another topic to discuss. There was no further action; neither Dianne and Hannah themselves, nor anyone else openly demanded the management to respect Dianne's arrangement and to observe Hannah's need to get some vacation time in summer months.[18] As Scott states, "officially nothing has happened" (*Domination and* 156).

In their bitching the women do not aim to change the material conditions in which they live, indeed in some instances they reproduce them. Even the strong camaraderie they establish is temporary. At another time Hannah would be the person bitched about by one of the women. Women, in this regard, can be both subjects and

[18] Here I agree with Scott (136-8) and Sotirin (21) that this ambivalence does not erase the possibility of political imagination. Various political possibilities, albeit fragmentary and transitory, emerge out of these acts.

objects of bitching. Laura, for instance, recalls the hostility she experienced from some women, when she first came to Hall Inc. as a Human Resources Manager. *"There were two women,"* she says *"and they thought that they should have got [my] position."* As a result, she experienced strong resistance from some women. *"[About six months ago] a woman came to me to say that she was disgusted by the way some women were talking about me... One day Victor overheard some girls talking about me, calling me names, and he was very upset about it."* (Laura 2003). Laura confronted one of the women about her behaviour and the woman was very upset after that. *"She didn't talk to me for a while"* Laura remembers. Clearly, the women, who felt that they should have been promoted to Laura's position, directed their resentment towards Laura, rather than questioning the management's decision and its hiring/promoting practices. At the same time, the women's behaviour was quite understandable given the hierarchical structure of the organization. It would have been very risky for them to challenge the management, whether directly or indirectly, due to the large power imbalance. Laura was a less threatening target than Victor who made the ultimate decision. Consequently however, their bitching about Laura more likely perpetuated the authority and power of the management, far from challenging it.

Some women in the company view gossip and bitching in entirely negative terms. They believe that in general women do not get along well with each other in a work environment and cite gossip as one of the main reasons for that. Gossip is, however, something unavoidable, according to them, as it is in women's nature. Sarah, the purchasing assistant, claims:

...[In] a lot of companies, not just this company, but a lot of companies, you'll see when you go in to the work field with women, it's bad... Lots of people have problems with women, like amongst themselves... and some women are more snotty because of the way somebody looks... [Whereas] all guys communicate [differently]... If they really look like a dirt bag someday, nobody is ever going to say, nobody ever has a problem [with that]. Women are probably more likely to say 'hmm, look what she's got on her!' or something like that...[Because of that] for the main part I do keep to myself, except for going down and talking to Shelly and Nancy, and Sharon, but everybody else I keep to my own business... I don't want what I say or don't say interpreted as something else...

(Interview with Sarah, August 13, 2003)

Even though Shelly offers many positive aspects of working with women and believes in the significance of informal communication among themselves, she also states that:

...Women can be hard to deal with because of the gossip and I think you don't see that with men. You don't see men sitting around and talking about each other or anything like that, and women do. You know, I think the bottom line is women are catty... It's true! And I think that's why some women do say that they would rather work with the men, because you'd avoid all that stuff...

(Interview with Shelly, August 15, 2003)

Laura agrees with Shelly and reasons that women get defensive very quickly, are more emotional than men, and have problems with separating business from personal. This is, according to her, in contrast to men, who *"just come and do their job."* In Laura's terms, men are the true professionals; they *"are not emotional and become defensive like women"* in the face of criticism (Laura 2003).

Not surprisingly, Laura's depiction of the men and their professionalism echoes the fundamental principles of the bureaucratic company discourse in Hall Inc. where

impersonality and suppression of emotions define the professional (male) worker.[19] The very emotionality of informal, personal talk constructs the feminine in opposition to masculine and professional. Bitching and gossip, in a way, corresponds to female body and sexuality at work. They both have to be regulated and kept under strict control. Intense emotions, like anger, bitterness, or sympathy run against the allegedly objective, detached character of the bureaucracy, and their expression threatens the existence of rational and professional organizations. In this regard, the women who engage in bitching challenge the bureaucratic norms of impersonality and the dominant discourse of professionalism. In their bitching they open up alternative discursive spaces in which they can negotiate and modify the meaning of professionalism and professional worker identity. However, they also reinforce the dominant constructions of heterosexual femininity that define women as emotional, irrational, and therefore unfit for the logical bureaucratic organization.

5.3. Material Conditions and Social Construction of the Relationships

The company has expanded considerably since I started here nine years ago, but it hadn't opened up lots of opportunities for the women within it. I find most of the key roles are male oriented... I've never seen lots of women here to move up. And I don't think you're going to see that change in foreseeable future.

(Interview with Carolyn, September 22, 2003)

I worked with both women and men. And I would work with men any day of the week. I find the women that I worked for are... they tend to be... don't know how to describe it... It's like they're always looking over their shoulder because there is

[19] Paradoxically however, the women are expected to perform emotional labor in the form of taking care of other's, usually their male bosses' emotional needs, while the expression of their own emotions is considered unprofessional.

somebody looking... and they're thinking that if they don't keep on top of their jobs something is gonna happen, they'll lose their job or they're not gonna be thought of as same as men are... And they tend to be stressed out a little more. If you got a family then everything kind of falls on women more than it does on men. And you know, it's no fault of [anyone]; it's just the way it is. It's the way, the society is, the family stuff falls on women more than men.

(2nd Interview with Dianne, February 9, 2004)

Women's relationships with each other do not exist outside of organizational and social structures. Their lives and relationships are shaped by the historical and material conditions of the specific geography they live in, as well as by competing discourses of the time. As Ashcraft and Mumby state, material conditions and discourses exist in a dialectical relationship and simultaneously shape each other (123). In other words, "discursive practices create the material world in distinct ways, but in turn this material world provides the social, political and economic context in which discourse is produced by institutions and individuals"(Ashcraft and Mumby 56). Therefore, it is crucial to look at material realities of the larger society and individual organization in question when analyzing women's work place relationships. The constant exclusion of women from positions of power, historical devaluation of their skills and contributions to economy, as well as the gendered division of labor bear real consequences for women (Smith, *The Everyday World*; Acker; Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*) and shape their relations with each other to some extent in the work environment (Elly, *The Effects of, The Role of Men, The Social Construction*; Ashcraft and Pacanowsky; Onyx).

In the above quotes Carolyn and Dianne point out such material realities and their effects on the women's relationship with each other at Hall Inc. Carolyn's remark indicates it is no surprise that Laura readily embraces the dominant discourse of

professionalism that regards certain forms of emotional expressions as feminine and therefore petty and unprofessional. As the only female manager in the building[20] where there are very limited opportunities for women to move up, Laura has no female mentors or role models at the managerial levels. If she wants to keep her position and carry out her job, she must fit into the male managerial culture and reconcile her managerial role with her femininity. Robin Elly claims that in organizations where "power differentials are constructed along sex lines... [and] women are underrepresented in positions of power and authority... women may be more likely to perceive women, and characteristics typically associated with women, as devalued" (*The Social Construction* 131, 132). Several researchers suggest that if a woman wants to advance her career in such an organization she might use various strategies to distinguish herself from other (junior) women and may take men as her reference point. (Kanter; Ferguson; Elly, *The Social Construction*; Ashcraft and Pacanowsky). Arguably, the apparent lack of women at managerial levels shapes Laura's beliefs on "unprofessionalism" of the other women in Hall Inc. Elly continues that "the extent to which a woman internalizes such beliefs is the extent to which 'internalized sexism' shapes her gender identity" (*The Social Construction* 133), and eventually her relations with her female colleagues at work. As I discussed earlier, the special attention Laura gives to her appearance is one of her possible strategies to relate to the male managers and to differentiate herself from the other women. Through her narratives of emotional

[20] She is not though the only woman in the company with a managerial title. Linda, as a regional manager, is placed on the higher levels of the company hierarchy than Laura is. However, she is located in another province. That leaves Laura as the only woman manager in the building.

(un)professional women, Laura detaches herself from the (junior) women psychologically/emotionally as well. By taking on the dominant meaning of professionalism, Laura is able to create various strategies to identify with men and to succeed in the bureaucratic male managerial culture. Simultaneously, however, she reproduces the discourse through these strategies. This in turn recreates and normalizes the existing gendered power relations and bureaucratic structures in which Laura found herself initially, isolated as a female manager.

Some scholars argue that scarce resources, limited opportunities, and structural barriers to women's advancement in organizations may lead to a fierce competition between women (Kanter; Kelly and Morgan; Elly, *The Social Construction*). While competition does not necessarily mean a zero-sum game, in the face of limited opportunities, women may perceive one woman's success as other's failure. This can generate hostile feelings and be detrimental to women's relationships with each other. It is possible to argue for instance that the hostility and strong resistance Laura experienced from some of the women would have been unnecessary if Hall Inc. had created ample opportunities for the women to advance within the organizational hierarchy. However, the structural inequalities within the organization are not the sole reason behind women's competition[21] (Keller and Moglen; Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*), nor do they always lead to nasty battles among women. Sometimes the women

[21] Keller and Moglen for instance draw from the psychoanalytic theories of mother-daughter relationship to explain some of the tensions between junior and senior women in the academia. Pringle as well cites various theorists who use the early mother-daughter relationship as a model to illuminate the nature of women's relationships with other women in their adult lives. However, Pringle also notes that "...the psychological explanations provide insight into its mechanisms, but the merging, the intimacy and the disappointments do not occur in a vacuum but in a broader context of patriarchal relations" (246).

recognize that their collaboration might be mutually beneficial to all. For example Nancy explains:

> *There is conflict among some of us... [but] we definitely pitch into help each other... A few weeks ago when Dianne was on holidays I was relieving for her. We had a proposal that was due and we thought the deadline was at 5 o'clock on that particular day. But it turned out... we found out like twenty to twelve that it was supposed to be due by twelve! And it was nearly finished, so every female in the place, we all pitched in and nobody did their own jobs, we just all came together, we did, and get it ready on time. So, yes, we definitely do pull together to help somebody who has a deadline and can't get it done without us.*
>
> *(Interview with Nancy, September 17, 2003)*

Clearly, the woman who was responsible for the timely completion of the proposal would have been unable to do so if all the women did not pull together to help her. Her failure to finish a proposal on time could have been a perfect opportunity for others to gain advantage over her if they had chosen not to help. Undoubtedly, the women are not lost in a vicious cycle as passive victims of the structural inequalities and limited resources. Rather they take active role in the reproduction, negotiation, and transformation of the material conditions.

In addition to the gendered organizational structures, Dianne's comment draws our attention to the gendered division of labor in the larger society and the heterosexual family unit. As she points out rightly, "*if you got a family then everything kind of falls on women more than it does on men*" (Dianne 2004). The women's marital status and the domestic roles they assume within their families inform their interpersonal relations, conversation topics, and leisure/social activities to a large extent, both inside and outside of the company. Shelly states that:

> *...The people I hang out with are still the people who go downtown, still the people who don't have any family commitments. You know, we're all still pretty free*

and outgoing. Whereas some of the other people in the building wouldn't be able to participate in the things that we would do because they have children and etc...
(Interview with Shelly, August 15, 2003)

Unlike Shelly, the majority of the women in the building are married with young or teenaged children. The excessive demands put on their time and energy by childcare and other domestic responsibilities might likely keep them away from socializing and spending more time with their female colleagues at work and sometimes may create tension among different groups of women. Joni, for instance, expresses her frustration with some women who criticize her for not being involved with them more frequently.

...There are some people that are single or some people that are married and they don't have children and I think that's a very hard thing for [them] to grasp, "why can't you go to Happy Hour every Friday, why can't you do this, why can't you do that?" ...I'm married and I got two kids and I got a house and I'm doing a course and doing all that kind of stuff and I can't juggle it...I think, younger people or the people that are not married or people don't have commitment [who say] "well, how come you don't take part?" sometimes it maybe they kind of don't understand that...
(Interview with Joni, September 8, 2003)

Certainly, Joni is not alone in her struggle to balance her paid work with her unpaid, domestic responsibilities. Canadian women still carry the largest portion of household and childcare duties, despite their increased labor force participation. According to a study cited in a recent regional overview on women in Atlantic Canada:

> During the week, working mothers put in an average of 11 hours of work a day (7 paid hours and 4 unpaid hours). On weekends, these mothers catch up on their unpaid work by contributing 7 ½ hours a day to household work. Not surprisingly, a Statistics Canada survey found that one out of three full-time employed mothers suffered from extreme levels of time stress, and fully 70% felt rushed on a daily basis (Pye 13).

Another report produced by economist Sylvia Hewlett in USA complements the Canadian study. Hewlett's research reveals that 33% of high-achieving career women, ages 41 – 55, are childless and 43% are unmarried. On the contrary, the more successful a man is, the more likely he has a spouse and children (7). These figures underscore the fact that the heterosexual family unit and separate spheres ideology, which inform the gendered division of labor, unequivocally impact women's personal and work lives, and ultimately the quality of their workplace relationships. Not only does the ideological equation of femininity with private, segregate women into limited number of occupations and low paid jobs as I discussed earlier, but it also demands women's time and energy at home for emotional and physical reproduction of the heterosexual family. The resulting "double burden" and stress invariably affect women's interpersonal relationships both at work and outside of work, particularly with other women who are single or "lucky" enough to get some extra help.

As presented in this chapter, the relationships women form with each other is not a simple process that can be solely explained by sex role socialising theories. Nor can they be characterized as one dimensional, essentially nurturing or malicious. Rather women's same sex work relationships are shaped by the dominant discourses and material forces of the specific socio-cultural context they are located. The creation and expression of relationships is a multifaceted activity that can be both empowering and damaging simultaneously. In Hall Inc. the discourse of professionalism along with the structural barriers, unequal distribution of organizational power and domestic labor between men and women play major roles in how the women establish and understand

their relationships with each other. A certain form of informal talk, referred to gossip and bitching, is the most frequently recognized means through which the women articulate these relationships in the company. While some women and men consider this form of talk as inherently female and "unprofessional," gossip and bitching challenges the prevailing constructions of appropriate professional behavior and authority of the management. At the same time however, it reproduces the stereotypical definitions of femininity as emotional, uncontrollable, and therefore, unfit for the logical professional organization.

The lack of opportunities for women to advance in the hierarchy and the resulting under representation of women in key decision making positions inform how they perceive each other's and their own ability to be "successful" professionals. Furthermore, nearly all of the women who are married with children undertake the bulk of the domestic and childcare tasks in addition to their paid jobs, which leave them exhausted and over stressed. All these dynamics inevitably affect the women's relationships with each other at work. Nevertheless, the women recognize their material circumstances and do not get lost in a vicious cycle of nasty battles. Like the physical and spatial dimensions of the body politics, relational dynamics are situated at the intersection of discourse, material structure, and individual agency in the ongoing process of fashioning professional woman identity in the company.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

In this study I have aimed to understand and analyze how contemporary discourses of professionalism interact with various organizational processes whereby professional female body and worker identity are constructed, experienced, and negotiated. As several researchers have already illustrated, organizations and the labour market itself are gendered constructions that simultaneously shape and are shaped by dominant discourses and material realities of the specific time and culture (Pringle, *Secretaries Talk*; Collinson; Mills and Chiaramonte; Mumby and Putnam; Kondo; Freeman, *High Tech and*; Mills, *Man/aging Subjectivity*; McDowell, *Body Work*; Brewis Hampton and Linstead; Fletcher; Trethewey, *Disciplined Bodies*; Loe; Ashcraft and Mumby). Without doubt, discourses of modern bureaucracy and professionalism have been one of the leading forces in the 20th and early 21st centuries North American society, affecting all aspects of life in Newfoundland and Labrador as well. Thus, a thorough examination of these forces is vital to understand the experiences of women working in bureaucratic organizations. I believe, understanding these experiences will facilitate the development of sound feminist policy analysis both on the local and national levels.

My theoretical and methodological frameworks are based on critical feminist and poststructuralist thought that explore multiple constructions and articulations of gendered subject positions situated in local settings of power relations. I utilise a critical feminist approach since my primary concerns are to examine gendered structures and power relationships with a critical eye and to use this knowledge for the betterment of women's lives. However I also recognize the subjective nature of

experience, fluidity of meaning, and inadequacy of making universal truth claims. Hence, I do not seek definite answers, or claim to represent *the* reality of all the women in my research place. Recent ethnographic studies of individual workplaces and the inquiry into the dynamics of power and resistance, control and agency, discourse and material structure within the everyday life of organizations inspired me to undertake this research and eventually shaped my thesis.

Doing fieldwork was a logical consequence of this theoretical and methodological approach. Searching for a suitable "field" was a long and arduous process, albeit a rewarding one at the end. Despite the many setbacks it posed, ethnography proved to be the best way of comprehending and analyzing the complex dynamics of the daily life in my research place. I began my research at Hall Inc., a local electrical and mechanical contracting company, in the summer of 2003. As a part-time employee/researcher I worked on organizing and filing project proposals three days a week about 14 weeks. The executive assistant, whom I called Dianne, was my primary contact person and she provided invaluable support and encouragement in my first weeks in the building. I gathered and constructed my "data" through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and analysis of company artefacts. During my study I was guided by the feminist principles of conducting research that value integrating the researcher's subjective experiences into the research process. Thus, I also kept a research diary in which I recorded my feelings and thoughts about my experiences at work and used them as part of my data.

In my research at Hall Inc. "professionalism" has emerged as a dominant organizational discourse largely shaped by patriarchal, bureaucratic company

structures, and by the conditions of the local economy. Given Newfoundland and Labrador's peripheral economic and social status, the successful construction of the professional and modern image of the company is vital for its survival and growth in a highly competitive industry. The discourse of professionalism, as a result, play a significant role in shaping and organizing the minute details of the organizational life and the identities of its members. My observations and interviews suggest that physical appearance and work relationships are the two most frequently named practices through which the women in Hall Inc. identify and present themselves as professional workers. The organization of the building space and spatial dichotomies operate on a more subtle level, and are not immediately recognized. Nevertheless, spatial dynamics are as significant as bodily appearance and relationships in the construction process of the professional woman identity and professionalism discourse in Hall Inc.

It has long been argued that the female body and by extension its external, dressed appearance is highly charged with sexuality and constructed as a main site where the dominant discourses, power relations, and gender binaries are negotiated and maintained (McDowell, *Body Work*; Bailey; Bordo, *Unbearable Weight, Feminism Foucault and*; Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*; Sheppard). Similarly, at Hall Inc. the discourse of professionalism is most evidently conveyed through the physical presentation of female bodies. While one cannot find any written rule that dictates a certain form of professional appearance for women, there is "common sense" knowledge of how a woman working in Hall Inc. looks: slim, well-groomed, adorned with "reasonable" amount of makeup and accessories, and unequivocally heterosexual. The dominant norms of gender appropriate heterosexual appearance in the larger

society and bureaucratic company ideology primarily define this look. These norms are instrumental in maintaining the existing power relations, organizational status quo, and the prevailing discourse. The professionalism ideal provides a strong sense of pride to the women in their identities as "professional workers." Consequently, as the Foucauldian notion of modern power relations suggests, appearance norms do not need to be directly imposed by the management. Rather, they are embraced by the women themselves and observed through the techniques of surveillance and self-surveillance. The appearance norms are reinforced by the heterosexual bureaucratic corporate ideology, as well as the Western ideals of health, success, and productivity. However, this does not mean that women's bodies are passive constructions, nor that women lack agency to resist or manipulate the dominant discourses for their own benefit. In this regard, the women at Hall Inc. embrace and reproduce the professionalism discourse, while simultaneously challenging it by creating alternative discourses of professional appearance, such as the "jeans days" they initiated.

Spatial dynamics and appearance norms are inextricably linked in the definition of the professionalism and maintenance of the organizational control in Hall Inc. The interior design of the building, and the gendered spatial dichotomies of upstairs vs. downstairs, inside vs. outside, public vs. private, delineate the professional spaces and identities. Downstairs, for instance, is the central place where the professional face of the company is crafted. Not surprisingly, it is also the site in which the heterosexual professional appearance is vigorously maintained, and the majority of the women are located in open spaces. Consequently, "dress and fashion become powerful metaphors of corporate discipline..." (Freeman, *High Tech* 215) for the

women who are subject to constant surveillance. Sociologist Erving Goffman's argument concerning "front-stage" display of pleasant appearances as a form of spatial strategy utilized by employers, is also instructive in understanding the spatial organization of gender and sexuality in the building. Given that most of the visitors are heterosexual businessmen, the public/front-stage/downstairs location of the young and pleasant looking women maintains the heterosexual professional image of the company. Furthermore, the sexual division of labor in the larger labor market, and the separate spheres paradigm that place femininity into the private/domestic/reproduction domain foster the gendering of the company space, most notably in the association of the kitchen space with femininity. The women are quite resourceful in utilizing the gendered organization of space for their own benefits. However, it is hard to determine the success of their subversive activities in challenging the existing power relations, as their actions are not aimed at making fundamental changes in the status quo. Rather, as individual agents the women actively participate in both the reproduction and subversion of the gendered meanings embedded in space.

Due to the gendered and spatial division of labor, the women in the building spend most of their workday in close proximity. As a result, work relations among the female employees have become the recurring theme in my research and formed the third part of my inquiry. While some argue that women are supportive of each other, others disagree and explicitly convey their displeasure about working with the other women. There is a similar tendency in the popular literature that dichotomizes women's work relationships as either nurturing or malicious. However, it is important to locate the women's interactions within particular social, material, and organizational

context. In Hall Inc., bureaucratic and patriarchal company structures, the lack of promotion opportunities for women and positive female role models in high power positions, and the heterosexual nuclear family dynamics primarily shape the women's relationships with each other. Among several practices through which my informants articulate their relationships with each other, I exclusively focus on a particular form of informal talk I have identified as "bitching." Far from a stereotypical female talk, bitching is a discursive strategy through which the women share their distress and anger with each other. While it can be a subversive practice when utilized against the management, bitching still operates within the existing power relations, and poses no serious threat to the organizational status quo. Therefore, with jeans days and subversive use of the kitchen space, through their bitching the women simultaneously oppose and reproduce the dominant definitions of professionalism and traditional notions of heterosexual femininity in Hall Inc.

Physical appearance, spatial dynamics, and work relationships are three interacting processes through which the gendering of the organizational structures and employee identities are achieved and professionalism discourse is carried out in Hall Inc. However, they are by no means the only processes. Nor can they be isolated from each other and from other organizational activities, and be analyzed separately. This study rather draws a basic picture of the organizational life in Hall Inc. experienced by some women and filtered through my eyes, within a particular time period. It is an initial step in comprehending the complex interactions of the gendered discourses and social, organizational structures that shape subjective experience and identity. Thus, it offers possible directions for future research. Firstly, because the main themes I

discussed emerged after my fieldwork was over, it would be useful to explore these themes through further in-depth interviews and structured observations for more detailed information and through analysis. Secondly, given my time constraints, I was unable to give any opportunity to my informants to review this text, disagree with me, or contribute further to my claims. My voice and observations overshadow my informants' views, which are heard occasionally through selected quotes, and only to support my statements. Participants' reflections on and responses to major points would undoubtedly add clarification and deeper understanding. Finally, while I argue for the dialectic nature of power/resistance, control/agency relationship, my research provided a limited number of concrete examples and discussion of everyday forms of resistance. More comprehensive research on power/resistance dynamics and women's perceptions on it would help create a better theory of gendered organizational power relations. Detailed attention to the broader economic, cultural and geographical context within which Hall Inc. is located, as well as an inquiry into the constructions of a particular form of (heterosexual) professional masculinity would produce a more thorough understanding of the gendered constructions of organizational structures and identities.

It is not possible, however, to draw a complete picture or to provide a whole account of the women's experiences, and attempting to do so would be contradictory to the theoretical frameworks upon which this study is based. By definition, experience and identity are unstable notions and organizations are dynamic processes, changing, evolving, and transforming through time. I carried out my fieldwork almost three years ago. Since then the number of women and men, their positions in the organizational

hierarchy, and physical locations in the building have changed. As the company gets bigger and undertakes more projects the initial organizational structures such as, divisions of labor and responsibility, number of tasks and positions, and everyday interactions have become more complex. Some of the issues have resolved, while new ones have appeared as a result of the fast pace of the growth they experience. On the other hand, the young and friendly receptionist has remained in her position, so have the well-disciplined and (hetero)sexualized professional appearance of the women. They still occupy the public spaces on the lower levels and work in predominantly administrative and support jobs. Clearly, change and persistence are interwoven, some structures and processes are more firmly established and more resistant to change than the others. It is precisely for this reason that this thesis offers important insights for women in general and for my participants in particular. Comprehensive and analytical examinations of women's experiences in organizations can facilitate the creation of more elaborate techniques to challenge rigid patriarchal structures and practices at work.

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Dianne, Executive Assistant. Personal Interviews, August 15, 2003 & February 9, 2004.

Laura, Human Resources Manager. Personal Interview, November 19, 2003.

Doug, Estimator. Personal Interview, August 5, 2003.

Shelly, Information Technology Support Staff. Personal Interview, August 15, 2003.

Carolyn, Accounting Staff. Personal Interview, September 22, 2003.

Sarah, Purchasing Assistant. Personal Interview, August 13, 2003.

Joni, Financial Accountant. Personal Interview, September 8, 2003.

Victor, President. Personal Interview, October 20, 2003.

Mr. Adams. Special Projects Manager. Personal Interview, September 5, 2003.

Janet, Temporary Receptionist. Personal Interview, August 13, 2003.

2. E-mail Correspondences

Dianne, Executive Assistant, June 8, 2004.

Mr. Payne, Special Projects Manager, May 16, 2003.

3. Field Notes and Research Diary

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APPENDIX A

Master's Thesis Research Summary Handed in to the CO-OP Program

In this research I am mainly interested in organizational culture, and communication strategies organizational members employ. In today's business world it is a very well known fact that strong company culture and effective communication strategies are key for increased employee satisfaction and overall organizational productivity, while poor communication and weak culture are the main source of interpersonal conflict and high employee turnover. Therefore I believe systematic study of organizational culture and communication is beneficial and important for the overall well being of all organizational members.

I would like to do my research in a medium size local business that employs both men and women. As in most of fieldworks the major part of this research involves interviews with organizational members, participant observation, and analysis of the characteristics of the organizational culture.

The participant observation part of the research requires me as a researcher to have access to the organization on a regular basis, at least three days a week during three months period, in order to become familiar with the daily routines and activities of organizational members. For that reason, I am seeking to have a part-time job or an internship position that would give me an opportunity to socialize more closely with other people in the workplace. This would, for example, give me a chance to participate in staff meetings, training programs, formal and informal activities, lunch and coffee breaks, socials and celebrations, where face to face and non-verbal communication take place.

The analysis of the company culture involves examination and interpretation of various cultural objects that have a role in the creation and maintenance of particular organization's culture. These objects can be found in various forms. Printed documents, i.e. yearly reports, newsletters, employee contracts, training manuals, supervision reports, mission statements, brochures, newspaper articles and adds, or any PR material, and visual texts, i.e. company logo, stickers, signs, pictures, wall hangings, commercials, company web page are common forms of cultural objects. Slogans, myths, stories, metaphors, rituals and ceremonies, organizational language and company history can be observed in the symbolic level. Spatial arrangements and physical surroundings, i.e. office and building designs and furnishings, degree of openness and space between offices would also provide insights about the specific culture of the organization.

Finally, doing interviews with organizational members would allow me to learn what kind of communication strategies and skills they use, and to understand how workers themselves experience the organization in which they function daily. Typical interview questions would be: description of a usual workday, their socialization experience at the beginning of their career in that company, the most important characteristics of a work place they seek out for their success and productivity, the skills and strategies they think necessary for effective and open communication, and in which ways they think male and female members' communication strategies differ.

As I stated at the beginning of this research proposal, organizational culture and communication are key elements of a healthy, productive, and successful organization. Formation and maintenance of a strong culture would bring the

employees together for the shared values and goals of the organization and hence would improve interpersonal dynamics, cohesiveness, commitment and loyalty. In addition, it conveys a sense of identity for organizational members. Similarly, effective communication would decrease amount of conflict and improve trust among workers. It is therefore very important for every members of the organization to understand and be aware of the ways they communicate. The study and understanding of organizational culture and communication then would help to eliminate disruptive elements of communication and would help to maintain strong yet adaptable culture for the long and healthy survival of any organization.

APPENDIX B

Information Sheet and Consent Form for Research Participants

A Study of Communication Process in Organizations
Master's Thesis Project
Onar Usar
Women's Studies Program, Memorial University

Invitation and Information for Research Participants

This research project explores how women and men communicate in the workplace. It will involve me observing how people interact with each other in the workplace known as participant observation, and interviews with any member of this organization who will voluntarily agree to be interviewed.

Interview topics will include: description of a usual workday, the socialization process at work, your thoughts about the differences between men's and women's ways of communication and, the skills and strategies one may think are necessary for effective and open communication at work. The data obtained from interviews and participant observation will form the basis of the thesis and may also be used in published articles and/or book chapters, class lectures and public presentations. Individuals who do not wish to participate may notify me in person that they do not want to be observed. In all cases anonymity of participants and confidentiality of the information they provide will be protected by not using any identifying details of interviewees and organization in which they work. However it should be kept in mind that complete anonymity may not be possible. You may withdraw your participation in this project at any time during the research process by advising me. Any information collected before withdrawal will be destroyed.

I appreciate any willingness to assist me in the research for my thesis. The proposal for this research has been approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on

Ethics in Human Research at Memorial University and if you have ethical concerns about the research, you may contact the Chairperson of ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 737 8368. If you have any questions, comments or concerns about this research you may contact me by telephone at (709) 754 2813, by e-mail at onarusar@hotmail.com, or by mail at Women's Studies Program, Science Building, Memorial University, St. John's, NL, A1C 5S7. You may also contact my supervisors, Dr. Diane Tye, Department of Folklore, Memorial University, (709) 737 4457, dtye@mun.ca and/or Dr. Shirley Solberg, Faculty of Nursing, Memorial University, (709) 777 6873, ssolberg@mun.ca. Any inquiry regarding this research and the researcher will be kept confidential.

Consent Form for Interview Participants

This research is undertaken by Onar Usar to explore how women and men communicate in the workplace.

I, _____, hereby voluntarily agree to allow Onar Usar to interview me for her research towards the completion of a master's degree in Women's Studies at Memorial University, Canada.

I understand that all information gathered is to be kept strictly confidential and any identifying details of me will not be used. I grant Onar Usar my permission to use this material at her discretion for all academic purposes, including master's thesis, published articles and/or book chapters, class lectures and public presentations, with the following exceptions:

I agree to have my interview tape recorded: Yes _____ No _____

I grant permission for Onar Usar to deposit the recording of this interview in Memorial University's Folklore and Language Archive upon the completion of her research:

Yes _____ No _____

I also understand that I may chose not to answer any question(s), and that I may withdraw my participation in this project at any time during the research process, verbally or in writing, by contacting Onar Usar at the phone number and address below. In addition I understand that any ethical concerns I have concerning this research, which cannot be resolved through discussion with Ms. Usar may be addressed to her thesis supervisors, Dr. Diane Tye, Department of Folklore, Memorial University, (709) 737 4457, dtye@mun.ca and/or Dr. Shirley Solberg, Faculty of Nursing, Memorial University, (709) 777 6873, ssolberg@mun.ca.

Signature of Participant Date

Name (please print)

Signature of Researcher Date

Address and telephone number (plus any additional contact information, e.g. fax, e-mail).

Questions or comments about this research may be directed to Onar Usar by e-mail at **onarusar@hotmail.com**, phone at (709) 754 2813 or mail at Women's Studies Program, Science Building, Memorial University, St. John's, NL, A1C 5S7

APPENDIX C

Canadian and Provincial Labor Market Statistics

Experienced labour force 15 years and over by occupation and sex, by province and territory (2001 Census)					
(Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick)					
	2001				
	Canada	**N.L.**	**Canada**	**N.L.**	
	number		**percentage (%)**		
All occupations	**15,576,565**	**232,265**			
Management occupations	1,620,900	19,020			
Business, finance and administrative occupations	2,768,375	32,565			
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	1,003,810	11,950			
Health occupations	812,200	13,685			
Occupations in social science, education, government service and religion	1,068,810	16,900			
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	435,680	4,605			
Sales and service occupations	3,813,750	60,375			
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	2,193,090	38,430			
Occupations unique to primary industry	667,550	18,105			
Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities	1,192,395	16,630			
Females - all occupations	**7,265,430**	**107,910**	46.6	46.5	
Management occupations	574,380	7,180	35.4	37.7	
Business, finance and administrative occupations	2,016,255	24,190	72.8	74.3	
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	215,620	2,135	21.5	17.9	
Health occupations	642,745	10,735	79.1	78.4	
Occupations in social science, education, government service and religion	667,340	9,830	62.4	58.2	
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	235,560	2,660	54.1	57.8	
Sales and service occupations	2,238,510	39,695	58.7	65.7	
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	157,845	2,060	7.2	5.4	
Occupations unique to primary industry	153,460	3,245	23.0	17.9	
Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities	363,720	6,185	30.5	37.2	
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population.					
Last modified: 2004-09-01.					

APPENDIX D

Selected Sample of Job Descriptions

Job Description
IT Support Specialist

Reporting Relationships

The IT Support Specialist reports to the Engineering Support Manager.

Primary Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the IT Support Specialist are:

For all the companies:

- troubleshoots, maintains and repairs all computer hardware and software;
- troubleshoots and maintains office LANs and WANs;
- maintains company domain names and e-mail system;
- updates software when required;
- sources and prices computer hardware and software, (purchase decisions remain with the Engineering Support Manager);
- researches new hardware and software products and proposes changes that will increase productivity and reliability;
- develops, updates and improves Internet web pages;
- develops databases to increase productivity and reliability;
- ensures efficient and reliable backup of critical network data, applications and operating software on the server in accordance with backup policy and procedures;
- assists with the development of the company e-commerce system;
- distributes construction associate group bulletins to managers via e-mail;
- gives seminars and presentations on computer software uses;
- produces and standardizes, in conjunction with the Engineering Support Manager, proper IT procedures;
- regularly updates virus software and virus definitions;
- assists with the troubleshooting, maintenance and repair of other technical hardware such as office phone systems and security systems;
- performs computer programming, as required.

Performance Objectives

- achieves the specific objectives established for the IT Support Technician.

Quality Program

- initiates and chairs a continuous improvement group – part of the Quality Program.

Payroll Administration

- works with the Accountant, Payroll to ensure proper administration of employee benefit and pension programs.

Performance Objectives

- achieves the specific objectives established for the Human Resources Manager.

Job Description
Administrative Assistant

Reporting Relationships

The Administrative Assistant reports directly to the Human Resources Manager.

Primary Responsibility

The primary responsibility of the Administrative Assistant is to provide administrative support to the management and staff located at

Duties

- Responsible for the compilation of Requests for Proposals, Expression of Interest, and Prequalification Questionnaires.
- Types correspondence, memos, as required.
- Responsible for the typing of tender documents.
- Responsible for maintaining the General Files.
- Responsible for office supply budget, as well as ordering office supplies for Place, and forwarding supplies to local jobsites and Sheet Metal Shop as requested by Site Foremen.
- Responsible for maintaining Official Stationary supplies i.e. forms, letterhead, cheques, Purchase Orders, etc.
- Responsible for all Office Equipment Maintenance and ordering of toners for Fax Machines, Copiers and Printers.
- Responsible for ordering and maintaining coffee supplies for the office.
- Responsible for maintaining telephone equipment and voicemail.
- Relieves Receptionist for morning and afternoon breaks and provides backup as required.
- Performs other duties as requested.

Job Description
Office Manager

Reporting Relationships

The Office Manager reports to the Regional Manager Business Development and Administration.

Primary Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the Office Manager are:

Accounting

- completes job progress billings, working with the Project Managers to ensure timely and accurate billings (28th of each month);
- completes work order billings weekly;
- completes work order summary report monthly (7th of each month);
- completes billing summary for the month on the last day of the month;
- collects accounts receivable and maintains accounts receivable journal;
- receives cheques, posts cheques, prepares and drops off bank deposits;
- prepares monthly accounts receivable report (7th of each month).

Accounts Payable

- enters purchase orders into system daily;
- processes supplier invoices for payment daily;
- verifies invoices and credits with suppliers;
- maintains accounts payable journal.

Job Cost Reporting

- prepares weekly job cost report and distributes every Wednesday;
- produces ad hoc reports on request.

Office Administration

- keeps office orderly and efficient;
- sets up and maintains filing systems for office and for site startups;
- answers, screens and redirects incoming calls;
- records callers messages;
- welcomes clients and visitors to the office;
- prepares items for courier, calls courier, completes waybills, receives and distributes incoming items;

- sorts, opens, date stamps and distributes all incoming mail;
- orders and maintains office supplies inventory;
- distributes faxes;
- compiles operations and maintenance manuals;
- types credit applications and supplier accounts;
- administers hiring kits.

Time Keeping

- enters and reports time to Payroll Clerk;
- distributes pay cheque stubs upon receipt.

Record Keeping

- maintains records for vehicles, employee training, telephone usage, tools, employees;

Purchasing/Expediting

- performs purchasing functions, as required.

Safety Documentation

- ensures the safety program is adhered to with respect to flow and filing of documentation.

Other Responsibilities

- performs other duties as required.

Performance Objectives

- achieves the specific goals and objectives established for the Office Manager.

Job Description
Receptionist

Reporting Relationships

The Receptionist reports to the Controller.

Primary Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the Receptionist are:

Phones

- answers, screens and redirects all incoming calls;
- places outgoing calls;
- sets up conference calls;
- welcomes clients and visitors to the office.

Couriers

- prepares items for courier;
- calls couriers;
- completes waybills;
- receives and distributes incoming items;
- prepares invoices for posting.

Faxes

- files faxes daily.

Typing

- types all letters, memos, faxes, minutes of Safety Meetings, Statutory Declarations, various forms, credit applications, etc.;
- types tender documents as required;
- types resumes for proposals in format (on occasion).

Credit Applications

- types all incoming credit applications;
- forwards credit applications to the Controller for signing;

- faxes credit applications to individual companies;
- files credit applications.

Filing

- files the audit trail.

Other Responsibilities

- books boardroom;
- sorts, opens, date stamps and distributes all incoming mail;
- performs other duties as required.

Performance Objectives

- achieves the specific objectives established for the Receptionist.

Job Description
Executive Assistant

Reporting Relationships

The Executive Assistant reports directly to the President and Vice-Presidents of the company.

Primary Responsibility

The primary responsibility of the Executive Assistant is to provide executive assistance and administrative support the President and Vice-Presidents of the company.

Duties

- Open, date stamp, and annotate all incoming correspondence for the President and Vice President Corporate Development.
- Monitor President's daily electronic schedule and ensure all appointments are included and accurate for the day.
- Monitor daily schedules of the Vice-Presidents.
- Prepare outgoing correspondence from handwritten copy, dictation, or tapes.
- Remove all items from the President and Vice-President's out-trays and deal with it accordingly.
- Tidy up Boardroom after meetings.
- Greet all appointments when they arrive.
- Arrange weekly Management Meetings.
- Prepare minutes for weekly Management Meetings.
- Organize, maintain, and retrieve Corporate Files.
- Update electronic contact list for President and Vice-Presidents.
- Review and annotate, if necessary, NOIA news bulletin daily.
- Complete and submit registration forms for various luncheons, conferences, etc., for the President or Vice-Presidents as required.

- Order and mail out company Christmas cards.
- Screen calls and check voice mail for Vice-President, Corporate Development.
- Arrange meetings with outside agencies as requested.
- Perform other related duties as requested.

Job Description
Executive Assistant

Reporting Relationships

The Executive Assistant reports to the President, the Vice President Corporate Development, the Vice President Operations and the Controller.

Primary Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the Executive Assistant are:

Filing

- maintains central filing system;
- sets up new jobs files, general files & President's files (electronic and manual file systems);
- reviews, sorts and files all pertinent correspondence;
- breaks down current files (manually & in system);
- updates old and creates new letter lists;
- archives completed job files;
- stores archived jobs.

Typing

- types correspondence (letters, memos, facsimiles, minutes, statutory documents, etc.) for the President, Vice President Corporate Development, Vice President Operations and the Controller;
- prepares, updates, disseminates Job Numbers List and Directories;
- maintains an up-to-date phone list for site and general office;
- updates the job list.

Reception

- answers, screens and redirects incoming calls;
- places outgoing calls;
- sets up conference calls;
- greets clients;
- provides backup to the Receptionist throughout the day;
- controls the flow of visitors through the premises.

Couriers

- prepares items for courier;
- calls couriers;
- completes waybills;
- receives and distributes incoming items.

Supplies

- conducts weekly inventory of office supplies in stock;
- checks with employees weekly for office supplies required;
- completes various order forms;
- places orders and follows-up with various suppliers;
- receives and vouches orders;
- organizes and distributes incoming stock.

Facsimiles

- checks faxes at 30 minute intervals throughout the day;
- copies all incoming correspondence;
- sorts and distributes incoming faxes;
- matches outgoing faxes with confirmation.

Mail

- picks up and drops off mail.

Miscellaneous

- prepares Christmas card list;
- orders cards;
- prepares labels and sends out cards;
- shreds documents, as required;
- orders kitchen/washroom supplies.

Performance Objectives

- achieves the specific objectives established for the Executive Assistant.

Job Description
Administrative Assistant / Document Control Coordinator

Reporting Relationships

The Administrative Assistant / Document Control Coordinator reports directly to the Human Resources Manager.

Primary Responsibility

The primary responsibility of the Administrative Assistant / Document Control Coordinator is to provide administrative support to the management and staff located at and to establish and maintain efficient Document Control processes.

Administrative Duties

- Types correspondence, memos as required by the management team;
- Types tender documents through Bid Depository;
- Updates the Job Tracking Database and prepares the Tender Job Status Report / Estimating Schedule for the weekly management meetings;
- Responsible for filing job correspondence, change orders, shop drawings, etc;
- Updates shop drawing logs for assigned projects and forwards shop drawings to clients as required;
- Maintains recycling program i.e., shredding confidential documents;
- Maintains the company library;
- Assists staff with correspondence, sending and retrieving of faxed documents, ensuring that copies are made and distributed to appropriate files and / or persons on a timely basis.
- Relieves Receptionist for lunch breaks and provides backup as required;
- performs other duties as requested.

Document Control

Electronic Files

- Develops and maintains a controlled electronic filing system. (format for T Drive)

Current Jobs

- Sets up new job files upon award, duplicating hard copy files and electronic file format;
- Files project drawings & specifications in appropriate location;
- Incorporates new revised drawings into the master job set on the Plan Holders and stamps old revision as "superseded".

Archives

- Archives job files upon job completion and incorporates new boxes into archives, which includes entering data into database and assigning their location for placement in the warehouse;
- Retrieves files/boxes from warehouse as requested;
- Periodically reviews the database and retrieves boxes that have expired and arranges for destruction outdated files.
- Files full size drawings from completed jobs in the appropriate cubicle in warehouse.

Job Description
Human Resources Manager

Reporting Relationships

The Human Resources Manager reports to the Vice President Corporate Development.

Primary Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the Human Resources Manager are:

Recruitment and Selection

- coordinates the recruitment process:
- develops advertisements for positions;
- assists managers to screen candidates and conduct interviews for field and technical postions;
- conducts reference checks;
- coordinates the job offer process including preparation of employment contracts;
- ensures necessary payroll actions are initiated for new employees;
- coordinates the use of replacement personnel with temporary agencies;
- conducts employee orientation.

Human Resources Policies

- develops and implements human resources and related policies;
- communicates human resources policy changes and actions to employees.

Human Resources Management Program

- coordinates the implementation of the Human Resources Management Program:
- ensures position descriptions are developed for all employees which reflect the corporate strategic goals and objectives;
- ensures Individual Performance and Professional Development Plans (IPPDP) are completed and reviewed with staff as scheduled;
- ensures appropriate records are maintained of each employee's annual objectives as set by the managers and employees during the IPPDP sessions;
- ensures IPPDP objectives are set for new employees, as appropriate;
- participates in incentive review meetings and ensures timely communications of incentive program results to employees;

- participates in the annual salary review meeting and ensures the results are communicated to employees;

- tracks probationary periods and facilitates discussion with managers to evaluate the employee's performance and decide upon the ongoing employment status of the employee.

Employee Relations

- coaches supervisors and managers to manage sensitive issues with employees;
- facilitates the resolution of concerns such as work performance, work load, interpersonal skills, etc.;
- advises managers on managing disciplinary issues;
- manages employee terminations, proposes appropriate separation packages and terms of separation, participates in termination interviews, provides support to terminated employees and follows up.

Personnel Records Management

- maintains the vacation schedule;
- maintains sick leave and absence records;
- ensures accurate and timely human resources records are maintained including current trades certificates.

Training

- develops the annual training requirements summary from the results of the IPPDP objectives;
- prepares the annual training budget for approval;
- coordinates inhouse and external training activities:
- arranges training sessions on and off site;
- evaluates the effectiveness of training through follow-up with participants;
- administers the policy and procedure for education assistance.

Labour Relations

- assists the President with labour relations matters, as requested.

Career Planning

- develops career paths for employees as appropriate.