

Gendering Social Relations of Work in the Canadian Automotive Industry: An Autoethnographic
Study

by

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Abstract

This paper is an analysis of my gendered experiences working in the male-dominated industry of automotive manufacturing. My objective was to explore and critically analyze the gendered relations that I experienced while working in the contemporary automotive industry. Women working in male-dominated professions and environments often face circumstances that are unique to their male counterparts (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013). The nature of the social relations affects women's integration and potential success in male-dominated professions (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013).

The purpose of this research was to explore the challenges that I experienced as a woman working within a male-dominated profession. This was an exploratory qualitative study which was conducted through the method of autoethnography. An investigation and examination of my journal allowed for me to select important themes that represented the gender relations I experienced in the workplace. The main findings indicated that while working in male-dominated profession I experienced a host of challenges that were inherent in my work setting. The main challenges were as follows: 1) negotiating dominant forms of masculinity, 2) gender stereotyping/gender role expectations, 3) sexual harassment, and 4) the ways in which women's bodies were considered suspect. I adopt several concepts/ideas from feminist political theoretical perspectives as well as other literature to analyze these themes. There were a variety of different concepts and theories that could assist in explaining why I was treated in an oppressive and dominating fashion. These concepts were as follows: 1) hegemonic masculinity, 2) gendered division of labour, 3) gendered hierarchies at work, and 4) embodied labour and bodies at work (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Bird, 1996; Connell, 1995; Gottfried, 2013).

Keywords: autoethnography, hegemonic masculinity, feminist political economy, embodied labour, automotive manufacturing industry, organizational theory.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Gender plays a significant function in the experiences of workers within organizations (Ettorre, 2005; Spry, 2001; Taber, 2005; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). This is particularly true for women in non-traditional roles as they often struggle with a host of daily challenges. Women working in male-dominated professions and environments encounter struggles that are unique to their male counterparts. The nature of these experiences affects women's integration and potential success in male-dominated professions (Ettorre, 2005; Spry, 2001; Taber, 2005; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). The purpose of this research study is to explore the challenges that I experienced working within a male-dominated work environment. In addition, I analyze these experiences through the use of feminist political economy and other influential literature (Connell, 1995; Ettorre, 2005; Gottfried, 2013; Spry, 2001; Taber, 2005; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). This study is exploratory in nature as I desired the theoretical explanation of gendered experiences in the male-dominated industry of automotive manufacturing. This chapter first focuses on the motivation and background for the research, and moves on to discuss the structure of the paper including chapter layout and research questions. I suggest that in order to enhance employment equity in historically male-dominated professions and environments, an understanding and acknowledgment of women's experiences and contributions in such workplaces is essential.

Motivation for the Research

The experiences of women within the context of paid work differ distinctly from those of their male counterparts (Ettorre, 2005; Spry, 2001). The history of women and work has predominantly been recorded through the eyes of men (Ettorre, 2005; Spry, 2001; Taber, 2005;

Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). This research topic was motivated by my personal experiences and perceptions as a woman working in a Canadian-based automotive plant. The automotive manufacturing industry is a historically and still highly male-dominated business and my experience in a large auto facility is an important example of what it is like to work in this industry. I felt through my experiences working in this field that the contribution of my work as a woman was undervalued and not highly regarded by male colleagues. I experienced the working environment as sexist and gender-oppressive. These features of the workplace were joined with a patriarchal culture and “boys club” mentality. This made me question how other women working in various historically male-dominated environments and professions experienced their work. Were there similarities or differences between other women’s struggles who found themselves working in such positions and my social relations and experiences? By sharing my social relations in the “auto plant,” I hope it can assist others in becoming aware of gendered power relations and also move towards critiquing them. My experiences may act as a learning guide for others, as my role within the automotive plant and subsequent reflection provide a unique lens through which to examine challenges that working women may struggle with.

As my research method of choice (autoethnography) suggests, I consciously reflect on my journal and demonstrate how it is relevant as a particular inquiry and attempt to understand and critically analyze the knowledge I produce. Through the method of autoethnography, I explore my personal experiences in relation to gender in the context of the automotive industry (Ellis, 2007; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011; Ettore, 2005).

Social theorists suggest that it is important to engage in reflexive research where the researcher acknowledges his/her subjectivity, desires, and interests instead of ignoring and

dismissing them. Through my experiences and relations with the men I worked with I can demonstrate that women have different experiences than men, and that the journey we are making towards full participation, opportunities and abilities for all members of society is not complete. This is particularly true for the unique struggles that women face. Many of women's daily struggles are still hidden from view, and it is necessary to participate in questioning certain assumptions, as well as engage in critical analysis in order to reveal the social actions and attitudes that continue to oppress women (Bochner & Ellis, 2006; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011; Ettore, 2005; Spry, 2001; Taber, 2005; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010).

Background of the Study

Historically, male-dominated environments in Canada such as automotive manufacturing and production were built and entrenched within deep racial and class struggles (Milkman, 1982; Sugiman, 2004; Sugiman, 2001). These work environments and professions only provided space for a male workforce. Historically occupations in heavy manufacturing and production industries made no room for women and even in modern times continue to remain highly patriarchal in practice. It comes as no shock that the role of women continues to be mainly confined to clerical and support roles (Woodhall & Leach, 2010; Sugiman, 2004; Sugiman, 2001). Occupations in auto manufacturing have always been viewed as 'naturally' white and male (Sugiman, 2001). Auto manufacturers drew on widespread cultural beliefs and stereotypes in relation to 'race' and gender. The individuals that had control and influence in these factories exploited their power when hiring workers, assigning them certain jobs, and establishing the terms of their employment (Sugiman, 2001).

Statistics Canada (2006) reported that 50,990 men worked in motor vehicle assembly, but only 11,245 women (about 22% of the total) were employed there (Statistics Canada, 2006). Furthermore, women only hold 15 % of management positions in this occupation. Women are also paid less in these occupations earning only \$41,000 and men earning over \$60,000 (Statistics Canada, 2006). Often, women working in male-dominated organizations and positions are less inclined to be considered leaders, and this may discourage them from seeking a leadership position. This impacts and influences the level of pay women receive and can be considered one reason why women are often found in the lowest positions in the workplace. In general, women still have to contend with the problem of being able to fulfil both their outdated stereotypical obligations as homemakers and their obligations as paid workers (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013; Luxton & Lahey, 1998; Waring, 2003).

In my experience of working in a large automotive manufacturing plant I was the only female employee on my line for the first four months of my employment there. After my initial four months another female began working on my line; however, we were temporary contract workers and there were only a few women in my entire stamping department that were permanent. Walking through the plant each day it was relatively effortless to count the women that I would see. Women's entrance into male-dominated workplaces may be more common, but often they experience domination and oppression (Acker, 2008; Sugiman, 1994; Gottfried, 2013; Luxton, 2006). Literature on the experiences of women in these environments reveals that women's career patterns are unique to those of their male counterparts (Acker, 2008; Gottfried, 2013; Mandell, 2005). Literature specific to studies conducted on women working in male-dominated environments suggest that there is a lack of acceptance of women, stereotyping, an absence or deficiency of support within organizational structures, exclusion from social

networks, and destructive/hostile behaviours towards women (Faulkner, 2009; Paap, 2006, Gottfried, 2013).

Research Problematic

In this paper, the research question addressed is based on my own experiences as a woman working in a male-dominated workplace and the literature surrounding the topic. The research questions are: how can I make sense of my experiences of gender relations in the contemporary automotive industry? How can the existing literature assist me in theorizing about this experience? I argue that the gendered relations that I experienced in the contemporary automotive industry were produced by the combination of structural/organizational and interactional processes. My experiences were produced by the gendered social structure/organization that disadvantaged me in relation to men's power, and also through social interactions and relations where certain meanings of what it means to be a woman and a man are constructed (Bakker & Gill, 2013; Gottfried, 2013). The ontological approach that I am embracing in my research begins with actual individuals and understanding that human beings have agency, but also that the activities and actions of human beings are largely connected to social forces and structures (Smith, 2005). I suggest that although individuals in social environments are active in making decisions and enacting certain behaviours, our actions are shaped by gender orders and social expectations that are embedded in society and social structures (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013).

Structure of the Paper

This paper is divided into five major chapters: "introduction", "review of the literature and theoretical framework", "research methodology and design", "presentation of findings and

critical analysis” and “discussion and final thoughts”. The **review of the literature and theoretical framework chapter** offers a historical and modern account of women’s experiences working in male-dominated environments. Furthermore, I allow for an understanding of the challenges that women struggle with while working in male-dominated work environments. This chapter also provides a feminist political economy theoretical discussion. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a thorough demonstration of feminist political economy and the arguments surrounding this perspective. For instance, the difficulty with women successfully penetrating traditional male-dominated environments emanates from historically prevalent sex hierarchies in family and social units (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013). Furthermore, in this chapter, I discuss how the emergence of capitalism threatened patriarchal control as it broke down many old institutions; yet the household unit that has been traditionally structured in a patriarchal manner continues to insist that males are the dominant gender (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013). I also present arguments which suggest that male workers play an important role in maintaining strict sexual divisions of labour in the workplace (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013; Luxton & Lahey, 1998; Waring, 2003).

Chapter 3 presents the **research methodology and design** for the research study that dealt specifically with my experiences of gender relations in the workplace. This chapter addresses the chosen method and considers the rationale behind the methodological approach. Additionally, I provide an overview of how this method is employed, as well as limitations related to it. I also provide a description of the steps I took to conduct the research. The stages I took in order to conduct this study were carefully chosen with the goal of being able to understand and critically analyze my gendered relations in the workplace.

The presentation of **findings and critical analysis chapter** provides an analysis of my gendered experiences in the workplace. I analyze and explore my gendered relations in the male-dominated industry of automotive manufacturing through the use of feminist political economy perspective. My goal is to critically analyze the gendered social experiences and interactions I encountered while working in the automotive industry. I also discuss my gendered experiences in relation to the theoretical perspective that I am adopting in order to understand my experiences. In addition, I analyze the themes that I developed while examining my journal. Themes that were developed were as follows: 1) negotiating dominant forms of masculinity, 2) gender stereotyping and gender role expectations, 3) sexual harassment/ harassment and, 4) the ways in which women's bodies were considered suspect. I employ feminist political economy concepts as well as other literature that assist me in a better understanding of the themes that represented my experiences. Concepts I suggest that are important for analyzing my experiences are outlined as followed: 1) hegemonic masculinity (Acker, 2006; Connell, 1995; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013), 2) gendered division of labour (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013, 3) gendered hierarchies at work (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013, and 4) embodied labour and bodies at work (Acker, 2006; Gottfried & Graham, 1993; Gottfried, 2013).

In the final chapter I offer further **discussion and final thoughts** in a summary of my findings. Here, I offer a feminist analysis of my experiences of gendered relations in the male-dominated industry of automotive manufacturing. The final chapter provides a thoughtful recapitulation of the literature that I reviewed, as well as my investigation conclusions and what I learned through my analysis. In addition, I provide a summary of the research studies limitations and strengths.

This paper involves the critical analysis and feminist interpretation of the difficulties and challenges that I experienced while working as a woman in a male-dominated profession and environment. It is important to look at the negotiations of power in a male-dominated workplace regardless of whether you are male or female, because of the possible social change that it could bring. It is essential for individuals feeling that certain injustices are present in their social interaction explore social experiences that they may consider dominating or oppressive.

Chapter 2- Review of the Literature and Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I engage in an in-depth review of the literature that is relevant to my research on gender relations in the automotive industry and other male-dominated occupations. I argue the gendered relations that I experienced in the contemporary automotive industry were produced by the combination of structural/organizational and interactional processes. My experiences were produced by the gendered social structure/organization that disadvantaged me in relation to men's power, and also through social interactions where certain meanings of what it means to be a woman and a man are constructed (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013). The ontological approach that I am embracing in my research insists on beginning with actual individuals and understanding that human beings have agency, but also that the activities and actions of human beings are largely connected to social forces and structures (Smith, 2005).

Initially, I focus primarily on providing a discussion of theoretical perspectives of social construction of gender and feminist political economy. In addition, I present the history of gender relations in the automobile industry, and also explore the relevant literature on gender relations in male-dominated industries (Sugiman, 1994; Gottfried, 2013). In the past, much of the literature on gender issues in the workplace has focused on retail, services, and the garment industry (Rinehart, Huxley & Robertson, 1997). However, theorists such as Heidi Gottfried (2013), Pamela Sugiman (1994), Joan Acker (2008), and Meg Luxton (2006) (to name a few) have engaged in critical work on gender and racial relations in primarily male-dominated settings. The work of these critical theorists as well as others will be greatly influential in this review (Acker, 2008; Sugiman, 1994; Gottfried, 2013; Luxton, 2006).

The Social Construction of Gender

The theory of the social construction of gender (West and Zimmerman, 2008) is a critical method of examining the ways in which we “do gender” in Western society. Supporters of this theory argue that gender is not something that is innate or natural, but is created through our social interactions and relations with other people (Gerson & Peiss, 2008; Lorber, 2007; West and Zimmerman, 2008). Gender is so prevalent in Western culture that we tend to believe it is built into our make- up. I consider gender as a social construction that is naturalized and normalized, and is taken for granted as merely being part of our common sense, however; gender is constantly created and recreated out of human interaction and is an essential way of organizing social life. Like culture, it can be argued that gender is also a human production that is contingent on everyone continuously “doing gender”. Judith Lorber (2007) argues that, gender is such a normal part of our everyday existence that it takes an intentional disruption of our expectations of how women and men are supposed to perform to actually recognize that gender is a social construction (Lorber, 2007). West and Zimmerman (2008) argue that the moment our genders are assigned to us at birth, we will automatically be approached and treated differently based on that gender attribution. It can be argued that a social course of action of gendering gets mobilized. A biological category becomes a gender status through naming, dressing, and the use of other gender markers (Gerson & Peiss, 2008; Lorber, 2007; West and Zimmerman, 2008).

To offer an explanation and provide possible justifications as to why gender begins from birth, and why it is achieved by everyone daily, theorists argue that we are required to examine gender as a social institution (Gerson & Peiss, 2008; Lorber, 2007; West and Zimmerman, 2008). Gender can be considered one of the fundamental methods that people employ to organize their

lives. For instance, it cannot be denied that human societies rely on certain responsibilities of members within society such as a division of labour, accountability for the caring and nurturing of children/other family members, and legitimate leadership. Lorber (2007) believes that there are different methods for choosing people for different tasks that are required to be filled in society. For instance, in Western culture we select people for specific tasks based on their abilities and skill levels, and also on the basis of gender, 'race', ethnicity, and other social identities. Although we cannot generalize about different cultures, it is essential to understand that gender and age categories are utilized to determine how to allocate people to carry out certain tasks within every society (Lorber, 2007). The process of gendering is legitimated by law, science, religion, and a society's entire set of values. Gendering also brings with it the social construction of ascribed social statuses. That is, social statuses are carefully constructed through prescribed teaching of learning, and enforcement, and are related to social power. Lorber (2007) states,

...In Western societies, we see two discrete sexes and two distinguishable genders because our society is built on two classes of people, 'women' and 'men'. Once the gender category is given, the attributes of the person are also gendered: Whatever a 'woman' is must be 'female'; whatever a 'man' is must be 'male'. Analyzing the social processes that construct the categories of what we call 'female and male', 'women and men' and 'homosexual and heterosexual' uncovers the ideology and power differentiates congealed in these categories (p.9).

The point here is that even though bodies may be very different physiologically, they are transformed to fit into two gender categories that have been socially constructed. This profoundly impacts the way in which we live our lives and how we treat and are treated by other individuals. We become limited and constrained through these gender categories (Gerson & Peiss, 2008; Lorber, 2007; West and Zimmerman, 2008).

Gender can be considered to be a social construction when you notice that gender boundaries are breachable, and individuals often shift from one gender to another. Even though there are many different arrangements of genitalia for people to have, the social construction of gender depends on the production and maintenance of a limited number of genders (Gerson & Peiss, 2008; Lorber, 2007; West and Zimmerman, 2008). Individuals are not born gendered, as they have to be taught by members in society how to properly perform their gender. Even though we see people breaching “proper” gender practices, these individuals are still expected to fit in by members in society into the limited number of genders their society recognizes (Gerson & Peiss, 2008; Lorber, 2007; West and Zimmerman, 2008).

What becomes more relevant and important for my understanding of gendered relations in the contemporary automotive industry is how inequalities and differences are embedded in the ways that we “do gender.” West and Zimmerman (2008) argue that through our gender performances, individuals and their actions can often solidify power differentials between men and women. In a patriarchal society, we often recognize that being masculine is regarded as more valued than being feminine (West and Zimmerman, 2008). When I discuss ‘value’ I mean that women are less important or inferior in this society and are considered with less esteem (Lorber, 2007). When gender is considered a social accomplishment that is achieved daily, the attention should be shifted from matters of how gender is performed by an individual and focus the concentration on how it affects our social interactions in institutional arenas such as the workplace. ‘Doing gender’ (West and Zimmerman, 2008) can be argued to be a social and collective practice. West and Zimmerman (2008) maintain,

...In one sense, of course, it is individuals who ‘do’ gender. But it is a situated doing, carried out in the virtual or real presence of others who are presumed to be oriented to its production. Rather than a property of an individual, gender is an emergent feature of

social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions in society (p. 93).

The point that West and Zimmerman are making is that understanding gender is essential for interpreting the relationships and interactions among people. In Western societies, the accepted cultural assessment on gender views women and men as “naturally” demarcated by certain behavioural tendencies that are based solely from their reproductive functions. Members of Western society perceive certain distinct differences between the two genders which support the division of labour into women’s and men’s work. Feminine and masculine behaviours are prominent features of social organization. These divisions that are considered ‘natural’ have extreme social consequences (Gerson & Peiss, 2008; Lorber, 2007; West and Zimmerman, 2008).

I tend to agree with these authors because when I was in the workplace I would often experience oppressive treatment from co-workers. For instance, being told that I was “finally performing the tasks that I was put on Earth for” when I was seen sweeping or cleaning during down time. I was often considered too “girly” for certain job positions such as lifting certain vehicle parts and dealing with machines. Co-workers considered these gendered roles I was performing to be ‘natural’. This presented social consequences for me in the form of negative comments and remarks.

The Impact of Gender on Social Relations

Theorists who tackle the complex subject of the social construction of gender argue it has a massive impact on our social relations and interactions. They often contend that cultural ideologies (or discourses) that are held about gender and the social relational contexts in which

they are performed are amongst the fundamental parts that maintain the current gender system.

Correll and Ridgeway (2004) maintain that

...If gender is a system for constituting difference and organizing inequality on the basis of that difference, then the widely held cultural beliefs that define the distinguishing characteristics of men and women and how they are expected to behave clearly are central components of that system (p.516).

While people can argue that the cultural ideologies and discourses about gender are simple stereotypes, many gender theorists have strongly suggested that they actually have a substantially broader social significance and power than one may think (Correll & Ridgeway, 2004; West & Zimmerman, 2008).

What is problematic about the social construction of gender is that it does not matter if women and men perform identical tasks. The social institution of gender emphasizes that only what men and women do is perceived as different. In order to maintain gender differences tasks that are identical will be given a different title to maintain gender division. This theory also suggests that in the case of Western society, genders are ranked according to prestige and power, and women are considered the inferior gender. We just have to consider our gendered relations within the family structure and other organizations such as work to recognize that it is built into every social interaction. It is important to mention that not every society is equivalent in terms of the social statuses of women and men, but where there is inequality 'women' are usually considered the inferior gender. When gender is a major component of structured inequality, the devalued (female) gender have less power, opportunities, and economic rewards than the valued (male) gender (Correll & Ridgeway, 2004; Gerson & Peiss, 2008; Lorber, 2007; West and Zimmerman, 2008).

Theorists such as Connell & Ridgeway (2004) have demonstrated that there are many commonly held gender ideologies and discourses that do exist. For instance, modern gendered discourses describe women as more emotional and men as more instrumental. What is essential to understand is these hegemonic gender ideologies have a hierarchical dimension of status inequality. Men are viewed as containing more competence than women and are more status worthy. Women are thought of as being kind and caring and are much better at communal and nurturing tasks (Connell & Ridgeway, 2004; Ridgeway, 2009). Widespread gender beliefs are embedded in institutions such as the media, government policy, and normative images of the family. As individuals enter social settings such as the workplace it requires them to define themselves in relation to others, and they expect that others will also treat them according to hegemonic ideals of gender. It is argued that, these particular hegemonic beliefs act as the unspoken guidelines for individuals conducting their behaviour in social and public contexts (Correll & Ridgeway, 2004).

Theorists such as Correll and Ridgeway (2004) argue that cultural ideologies about gender are implicit rules for the way that we do gender, and also suggest that “social relational contexts” are the domains in which these implicit guidelines can make their entrance. Many theorists have disputed that the process that connects gender ideologies and “social relational contexts” is the practices whereby we automatically sex categorize individuals that we come into contact with. Sex categorization can be thought of as a practice where we identify an individual as a man or woman through gender markers such dress attire and behavioral tendencies. Critical research on the matter of sex categorization has presumed that individuals will unconsciously and automatically sex categorize people into the rigid binary classifications of ‘man’ or ‘woman’ (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Ridgeway, 2009).

Kessler and McKenna (1978) go even further into their analysis showing us how gender attribution gets done as a social practice. While Correll and Ridgeway have some very good aspects to their analysis of sex categorization, they do not push their investigation further to discuss the certain distinction between biological sex and social gender. For instance, Correll and Ridegway (2009) are very insightful when discussing “social relational contexts” Kessler and McKenna break down this distinction pointing out that biological sex is also a social construction. Many theorists tend to not fully recognize the full significance of the cross-cultural and historical diversity in the social organization of gender. Ethnomethodologists have illustrated that sex categorization is socially constructed. Based on the gender performance of individuals we come in contact with we will categorize them on the foundation of these culturally presumed indicators that supposedly stand for physical sex differences (Kessler & McKenna, 1978).

Most individuals in society will construct their appearance very strategically according to the implicit cultural gender guidelines to guarantee that other individuals will categorize them with the gender they identify with. The way that we categorize individuals will automatically activate hegemonic gender discourses, including distinctions of status according to each gender, which affects our judgments of the genders and behaviours (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). It has been shown that when hegemonic gender ideologies are prominent in a social situation (and it usually is) hierarchical presumptions about men’s greater status, skill level, and competence become significant for individuals in certain contexts such as the workplace. While all ideologies of gender shape the way in which we interact, these ideologies also contains a hierarchical dimension, which often result in gender inequality. It becomes problematic when women are operating in the same arenas (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Correll & Ridgeway, 2004). Gender creates an area of inequality when it invents a double standard for judging ability and

performance. This impacts women as men are more likely to judge themselves and other men as possessing more ability than women. To be judged on an equal playing field, women may actually have to perform better than the men at identical tasks (Correll & Ridgeway, 2004; Ridgeway, 2009).

Gendered Division of Labour

In our society it cannot be understated that the division of labour by sex is hierarchical with men holding the superior roles and women the inferior. In capitalist societies, gender is a primary means for legitimizing the differences between men and women. As was previously mentioned, gender signifies a hierarchal relationship and can be argued to be related to class inequality based on material oppression. This essentially means that gender inequality causes women to have less access to resources, power, and control (Hennessey, 2000, Mandell, 2005; Tong, 2009; Gottfried, 2013; Waring, 2003). Systems of gender inequality are rooted in patriarchal relations. The division of labour in societies such as ours is directly attached to socio-cultural patterns, which impact what roles women and men perform in their everyday lives. In general, societies use biological differences between women and men as the basis to divide their tasks both in the home and in the public sphere. In public spheres male-domination and control is well recognized, while in the domestic sphere is meant for women. Feminist thinkers have strongly suggested that it is necessary to analyze the division of labour and the power relations of women and men to understand the oppression of women. In all societies there is a set of norms that determine responsibilities that are established (Hennessey, 2000, Mandell, 2005; Tong, 2009; Gottfried, 2013). The ideological dichotomies between the “public” and “private” sphere have long supported the subordination of women, and as a result allow men to hold the control and power. The systemic devaluation of domestic labour usually performed by women has been

instrumental to the capitalist mode of production. The sexual division of labour is an important element of capitalism. The construction of hierarchical relations of labour is used to maximize production in the interests of those who benefit from the system. While the most basic division of labour in the capitalist mode of production is constructed in terms of class position, this division is further constructed and defined by other social identities such as gender and ‘race’ (Hennessey, 2000, Mandell, 2005; Tong, 2009; Gottfried, 2013; Waring, 2003).

As was previously mentioned, women have been referred to the private sphere and generally denied access to the public in the same way that men have been accepted. Domestic labour that is performed by women under the capitalist system is thus categorized as “women’s work.” Women are thus expected to perform such labour and experience great social expectations (Hennessey, 2000, Mandell, 2005; Tong, 2009; Gottfried, 2013; Waring, 2003). Within the capitalist production system, it becomes more problematic when one considers that this division is further split in terms of waged domestic labour and unwaged domestic labour that women are expected to fulfill. Feminist political economists (Gottfried, 2013; Waring, 2003) have claimed that the division between waged and unwaged labour is a key component in supporting capitalist exploitation of women. The devaluation of domestic labour that women perform on a daily basis obscures the productive value of women’s work and its contribution to society. Furthermore, this works to perpetuate economic subordination of women (Hennessey, 2000, Mandell, 2005; Tong, 2009; Gottfried, 2013; Waring, 2003). Feminist discourse has, for quite some time, allowed for the understanding that the socially constructed spheres of the “public” and “private” have impacted and defined notions of womanhood, women’s labour, and how there are systemic factors that allow the further exploitation and oppression of women. Although the history of the subordination of women has its origins in pre-capitalism, the division

between the “private” and the “public” can be said to be formed in the capitalist mode of production in the devaluation of women’s work within the domestic realm (Hennessey, 2000, Mandell, 2005; Tong, 2009; Gottfried, 2013; Waring, 2003).

It is important to remember that the separation of spheres does not apply to all women alike. Women of colour would not have the same experience within the capitalist mode of production. For instance, they would not have been privileged in the same way where they could choose to stay and work in the home unless they were working for privileged white people (Hennessey, 2000, Mandell, 2005; Tong, 2009). Just as gender is not something that is “natural” it can further be argued that the separation of men and women’s work into private and public sphere is also a social construction (Hennessey, 2000, Mandell, 2005; Tong, 2009; Gottfried, 2013).

What becomes important to capitalism is the continuation of the current patriarchal structure. Capitalist patriarchal structures work to continue and reinforce the social differences “by the way of ideologies of gender that naturalize and reproduce the asymmetrical social divisions that help to sustain, manage and maximize the appropriation of surplus labour through a variety of complex arrangements” (Hennessey, 2000: 25). Since patriarchy is historical and not necessarily fixed and is an organization of social and economic relations made by people it is capable of transformation or eradication. Marxists and socialist feminists argue that, “capitalism is driven by the accumulation of profit through the extractions of surplus labour and it does so in the way of historically varied patriarchal structures” (Hennessey, 2000: 25). This is important to understand as patriarchy and capitalism are inextricably tied together. It has been essential for feminists of many different tenets to deconstruct and interrogate the home as a capitalist unit and how the separation of the domestic and public sphere ultimately oppresses and devalues women

and the work that women perform (Hennessey, 2000, Mandell, 2005; Tong, 2009; Gottfried, 2013).

Feminist Political Economy

In this section I provide an overview of feminist political economy. Some of the main arguments and views of this theory will be articulated from the perspectives of some critical thinkers (Gottfried, 2013; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Luxton, 2006; Waring, 2003). Feminist political economy theorists typically argue that social theories often privilege the (masculine) public sphere and they leave out the work that takes place within the private sphere (feminine). The unpaid labour that women perform in the home is often not considered in mainstream political theory. In my view, feminist political economy theoretical perspective offers an innovative and brilliant method to study and investigate the subjects of gender, work, and the economy. In capitalist societies, gender is a basic way of organizing and creating differences between men and women. Women suffer discrimination and differential treatment due to their subordinate position in the gender system of inequality. Institutions reinforce differential treatment of women and other marginalized groups. Feminist political theory brings attention to issues surrounding important subjects of care, reproductive, and productive labour that women are very much a part of (Gottfried, 2013; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Luxton, 2006; Waring, 2003).

In Gender, Work, and Economy: Unpacking the Global Economy Heidi Gottfried (2013) discusses that gender signifies a hierarchal relationship between men and women and is often based on material oppression and exploitation. Gender inequality means that women have less access to control, power, and privilege in society. Systems of gender inequality are founded in patriarchal relations and that ultimately impacts women's economic independence, denies their

needs, and devalues “female-type” work. Gottfried argues “gender inequality as being generated both by the social structure disadvantaging women in relationship to men’s access to power and material resources, and by a process whereby conceptions and meanings of manhood and womanhood are constructed through social interactions” (2013: 30). The point here is that gender identities are not imposed on us by external laws but are produced from the actual practices of men and women, and social structures (Smith, 1995). This argument is very much like the one presented from social construction theorists such as Correll and Ridgeway (2004) found in an earlier section of this literature review. These theorists also developed an argument that gender is not something that is ‘natural’ but rather becomes naturalized and normalized through our social interactions with other human beings (Gottfried, 2013; Bakker & Gill, 2003).

Feminist political economists have grappled with questions of gender-coded occupations and differential treatment for women as these are important issues for women in both highly industrialized and Third World countries. They argue that as we find ourselves in contemporary capitalism gender is a primary means of legitimating differences between women and men and in organizing our social lives (Gottfried, 2013; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Luxton, 2006). Women suffer inequality due to their inferior positions in the economy because it is structured by the gender system. Institutions work to promote and continue gender and racial inequalities. The term gender signifies a hierarchal relationship between men and women based on material oppression. Gender inequality thus means that men have greater access and control over women. As critical thinker Heidi Gottfried (2013) argues:

Central social institutions, including the economy, the polity, and the family, are gendered to the extent that they privilege men and expressions of hegemonic masculinities on the one hand, and penalize women and emphasize stereotypical characteristics devaluing femininities and alternative masculinities on the other (p.30).

Understanding what is meant by hegemonic masculinity is very important for my research of gender relations in the workplace. It essentially means that most societies indirectly and directly encourage men to express a dominant version of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is often competitive and reflects a tendency for males to seek to dominate other males and subordinate females. In relation to the economy it could be argued that masculinity in the current world gender order is the masculinity associated with those who control its dominant institutions (Connell, 1995). Although I agree with what Gottfried is arguing here, I do not want to appear to suggest that these hegemonic masculinities are inescapably the most customary form of male expression, but rather the most socially endorsed form of masculinity that contributes to the subordinate position of women. Sociological and feminist approaches to hegemonic masculinity claim that prominent characteristics such as drive, ambition, claims to independence, and heterosexuality are important to examine. These characteristics are encouraged in males, but are discouraged in females in contemporary Western society (Connell, 1995; Gottfried, 2013; Bakker & Gill, 2003). Theorists such as Connell (1995) and Gottfried (2013) argue that hegemonic masculinity can be considered a form of social regulation, a central organizing principle that supports present power arrangements. Hegemonic masculinity is articulated at many points within the economic, social and political structures of the material world. Furthermore, the control of these institutions rests on the authority of men who may resort to behaving in fashions that may enhance their dominance within the Canadian society (Connell, 1995; Gottfried, 2013). Within these institutions they may create means of making it difficult for women to establish a form of equality. Gottfried (2013) argues:

Through the control of these institutions, through legitimate authority and decision making capacity typically rests with men who behave in ways that mobilize hegemonic masculinities and that enhance their own positions of power. Within institutions, hiring practices organizational barriers, job images, and informal networking constrain women's

social mobility by limiting the jobs available. Institutions establish rewards and punishments that make it difficult for women to achieve independence socially, economically, politically, and culturally (p.30).

It must be understood that there are interconnections between institutions of the labour market, the private sphere, and the divisions of labour between men and women. Acker (2006) argues that women experience differential treatment based on their gender when we consider the hiring practices into many male-type occupations. Feminists have also examined the organizational barriers that women face in male-dominated occupations. Women also experience first-hand negative stereotypes and assumptions about which tasks they are suited for and those they are not. I experienced this while working when I would hear negative comments when trying to lift something that would be considered too heavy for a woman to handle or when I was sweeping during down time.

Women lack equal access due to their unequal and outsider status. This is something important to consider as women's outsider status could have economic implications. Feminists for years have written about the "sticky floor" and the "glass ceiling" and how these organizational barriers and forms of segregation have serious economic implications for women. Women often face an invisible barrier when trying to reach top managerial positions and other positions of power. Furthermore, the devaluation of women's skill and persistent stereotypes of what types of roles women should be performing often result in gender bias in recognition of qualifications. Women are no doubt paid less than men in Western society and many (Gottfried, 2013; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Luxton, 2006) have argued that discrimination and the devaluations of women's work is a contributing factor.

Even after gaining access to male-dominated fields women are often channeled into certain specializations that tend to pay less and offer less chance of advancement (Gottfried,

2013; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Luxton, 2006). Gottfried (2013) states that women are far more likely to be paid less in any occupation whether you are a waiter or a teacher. Women are more likely to hit the “glass ceiling” which is a barrier that keeps women from advancing to higher level job occupations and positions (Gottfried, 2013). I feel this is important to understand for my analysis of the gendered experiences in the workplace. I constantly felt that the roles and duties that I was expected to fulfill in the factory were because of my gender. For example, during down-time I was given roles such as cleaning out the glove bin, mopping up oil, sweeping, and cleaning graffiti off of tables. The men were often sent out to other departments or were sent to perform hand work. Hand work is a method of fixing deforms on the automotive parts where sanders and files are used to smooth out the surface. There was clearly a separation of tasks and responsibilities for women and men workers. The job functions that the men received were considered “skilled” whereas the duties I received were considered “unskilled.” Furthermore, there was no female leadership in my department and the few women working in the plant (besides me) all worked in the office and mainly were expected to perform clerical duties.

Feminist political economists frequently put forth an argument that women are often left out of male-dominated occupations or treated differently because of the social organization of care and reproductive labour (Gottfried, 2013, Bakker & Gill, 2003; Luxton, 2006). Social reproductive work involves the activities aimed at the daily care of human beings including the nurturing, feeding, emotional support, teaching, and clothing of individuals. The domestic setting became sharply distinguished from the relations of capital and the public sphere. As was previously mentioned capitalism brought with it a reorganization of women and men’s relationship to the economy and a system of relations mediated by monetary gain. The current

global transformation corresponds to important changes in the governance of production and social reproduction. Furthermore, I brought attention in the previous section on the separation of the ‘private’ and ‘public’ was historical for the industrial age (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013; Waring, 2003). What was considered ‘productive work’ was left for the public and economy. Work in the home, usually by women, was considered ‘unproductive’ and these women were seen as ‘inactive’. The division of labour was gendered and each gender was assigned a different role. Men were the breadwinners and women were considered the caregivers and were responsible for carrying out ‘non-productive’ work in the home; however, this all changed when women began entering the workforce in large numbers. With these changes in production and social reproduction, the gender orders and regimes associated with globalization are also being transformed (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013; Waring, 2003).

Theorists such as Bakker and Gill (2003) and Heidi Gottfried (2013) have argued that institutions continue to be organized around the idea that men should be the breadwinner and the proper place for women is within the home. It can therefore protect male privileges through the invisibility of women’s reproductive labour within the home. The devaluation of care is rooted in the social construction of housework as a duty rather than a form of reproductive labour. It is no shocking revelation that women perform most of the caring and reproductive labour for children and the elderly (Bakker & Gill, 2003). It is important to look at how there is a “general trend toward reorganization of social reproduction and re-division of reproduction and care labor, both unpaid and, increasingly, paid fuels the transnational growth and feminization of services and the transformation of employment relationships in the new economy” (Bakker & Gill, 2003: 116). In contemporary society, we are now witnessing the reprivatization of reproduction which essentially results in the changing relations of employment for men and women (Bakker & Gill,

2003). While women remained at work in the domestic sphere, men were more active in the public sphere that connected them to the market.

Capitalism has now shattered the relationships between production and reproduction. Production is in large part about the accumulation of capital. Taking care of family and performing domestic duties are not seen to be important contributions to the main business of capitalism (Gottfried, 2013, Bakker & Gill, 2003; Luxton, 2006). The historical development and widespread conviction that a woman's proper place is within the home and that it is seen as "natural" assists us in understanding women's economic position (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013). As was previously mentioned, the devaluation and invisibility of care work may stem from a cultural construction of motherhood which is based on the ideology of domesticity that assumes that it is an obligation or that it is "natural" for women to perform this type of work (Waring, 2003). I believe that the devaluation of care and domestic labour is rooted in the social construction of housework as a woman's duty rather than a form of productive labour. The family is presented according to the state as if it is private, and thus unrelated to, the public functions of the state (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013).

Mainstream political economy claims that unpaid female labour throughout the world is officially considered as being "nonproductive" as it produces no progression when it comes to the economy (Waring, 2003). Feminist political economists attend to the invisibility and the lack of value that we associate with women's work in the home and elsewhere. The often time consuming and strenuous work that women perform daily that goes unpaid is officially of little or no importance. However, these feminists argue that productive labour in the market actually depends on the socially necessary and reproductive labour in the home. This, of course, is represented by the care and emotional labour that is required to enable workers to be

‘productive’ in society. These thinkers have urged political economy to include reproductive labour in their definition of the economy (Gottfried, 2013; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Luxton, 2006; Waring, 2003).

Feminist political economy theory states that gender informs and structures political institutions and policy which influences certain important factors such as the size of the gender gap, women’s risk of potential poverty, and gender segregation in the workforce. One cannot deny that the state reinforces male dominance and hegemonic masculinity as well as the rights to oppress certain groups in society whereby maintaining the differences between men and women. Many have argued that the male breadwinner model continues to inform policy decisions in many different countries. Women are in no doubt responsible for most of the caring responsibilities in their day to day lives (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013; Waring, 2003). Isabella Bakker and Stephen Gill (2003) argue that neo-liberal governance and the reprivatization of social reproduction has impacted and shifted the gender order in their critical work. Reprivatization implies that social reproduction will once again be assigned to the private sphere. It pushes reproductive work back to where it ‘naturally’ belongs which is with the woman in the home. It can be reasoned that reprivitization of social reproduction is a neo-liberal policy strategy that reproduces inequality for women yet again.

The feminist political framework allows us to see how gender regimes, reproductive bargains, and systems of inequality can be shown to understand power relations in capitalism. The role of the state in perpetuating gender relations cannot be dismissed (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013). Through the understanding that social reproduction is left out of mainstream political economy they argue that the welfare state and its reproductive policy shapes gender relations either by ignoring costs of reproduction or by giving away the delivery of care and

social services to the family. In this way, the state gives minimal support for these women that are delivering care to children, significant others, and family. The extent of state support for care impacts employment that women will receive (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013; Luxton, 2006; Waring, 2003).

Organizations

Feminist political economists (Gottfried, 2013; Acker, 2006) have also written extensively on organizations. The gender and organization theory demonstrates quite well how organizations operate to produce and reproduce gender differences. Many women spend quite a lot of their time in occupations that are dominated by men. The most powerful positions are held by men and occasionally by women who at times have to resort to “behaving like a man” in order to receive a prestigious role in large organizations. “Behaving like a man” has become synonymous with ‘aggressive’, ‘dominant’ and ‘loud’ behaviours. Women may often feel that they have to perform stereotypical acts that men may perform such as swearing, hiding ‘girlie’ emotions, and being outspoken. Many theorists have written about organizations and organizational theory, however; the consideration of women’s treatment in these places is usually not explained (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013).

Joan Acker (2008) argues that a systematic theory of gender and organizations is required for many different reasons; for example, she states that gender segregation of work, including the division between paid and unpaid work, is partially created through organizational practices (Acker, 2008). Acker argues that “all organizations have inequality regimes, defined as loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (2008: 201). This essentially means that inequality in organizations stems from systematic disparities between participants in power and

control over goals, resources, and outcomes. Regarding the workplace we could think of this as who has the decision-making role and has the power to decide the organization of work; the control over certain opportunities for promotion; and in pay and other monetary rewards. Inequality processes shape work organizations and the experiences of employees at every organizational level. Gender, as socially constructed differences between male and female and the beliefs and identities that support difference and inequality, is also present in all organizations. Gender was, in the not too distant past, almost completely integrated with organizational status. That is, managers were almost always men; the lower-level white-collar workers were always women while blue collar production workers were usually men. Those categories were, of course, segregated by race. Also related to gender segregation is women's lesser pay in the workforce, which is also created due to organizational practices. In addition, organizations are settings in which widely shared cultural images of gender are produced and reproduced (Acker, 2008).

As previously mentioned, new approaches to wage work have demonstrated that organizations are not gender-neutral. In an important way Acker states that "the structure of the labour market, relations in the workplace, the control of the work process, and the underlying wage relation are always affected by symbols of gender, processes of gender identity, and material inequalities between women and men" (Acker, 2008: 268). If one were to communicate that an organization such as the workplace is gendered, would essentially mean that the advantages/disadvantages that individuals have in an occupation are based on whether or not you are a woman or a man. Gender is essential to understand when looking at experiences and struggles in organizations. Acker (2008) also argues there are obvious signs of hierarchies set up in different organizations. Hierarchies can be gendered because they are constructed on the

underlying assumptions that those who are committed to paid work are ‘naturally’ more suited to responsibility and authority; those who must divide their work with domestic duties with the home are in the lower ranks. Since women are considered to be the individuals that perform most of the domestic duties within the home and complete the majority of the child rearing and socialization responsibilities they are put in lower ranks within the workplace (Acker, 2006).

Regarding the principles of hierarchy, most job evaluation systems have been derived from already existing gender structures. To understand what I mean by “evaluations systems” is to communicate that a person’s worth or merit is governed by a set of standards used in job performance evaluations. Acker (2008) argues that these evaluations consistently value male-dominated management functions over non-management functions more likely to be performed by women. For instance Acker (2008) claims that “skills in managing money, more often found in men’s than in women’s jobs, frequently receive more points than skills in dealing with human relations skills, more often found in women’s than in men’s jobs” (2008:267). Evaluations and job assessment completed by the managers often reflect their values and produce believable ranking of jobs based on those values. These rankings and evaluations work to maintain that women are kept in the lowest and most poorly paid jobs. It can be argued through organizational theories that, “the gender-neutral status of a job depends on an assumption that the worker is abstract and disembodied, although, in actuality, both the concept of a ‘job’ and real workers are deeply gendered and ‘bodied’ (Acker, 2008: 267). Although women have democratic rights, there is still the notion of a universal body which is constructed from a male body. The concept of a universal ‘male’ worker excludes and marginalizes women in the work setting and could explain why women are found more in ‘female type’ occupations (Acker, 2008).

The absence of sexuality, emotion, and procreation in organizational theory is an additional element that assists in reproducing gendered relations within the workplace. Organizations such as the workplace have been known to suppress sexuality and emotions of people working within these settings. For instance, organizations typically find sexuality, procreation, and emotions a major disruption of the ideal functioning of the establishment. Acker argues that men are often considered ideal workers for reasons that they are minimally responsible for procreation and are gendered to show less emotion than their women counterparts. Women's bodies and sexuality remains suspect and have quite a different presence in organizational settings. Women's ability to procreate, breastfeed, menstruate are suspect and stigmatized, which can be argued to be justification for control and segregation. Women are devalued because they are assumed to be unable to conform to the demands of the job as they have other family obligations. Acker suggests that the maintenance of gendered hierarchy is achieved partly based on ideologies and contentions about women's reproduction, emotionality, and sexuality, helping to legitimize the unequal organizational structure (Acker, 2006).

I cannot communicate how many times I heard, "Meagan's just on her period again" and was considered "bitchy" when I would speak an opinion or convey certain disgust for certain conversation topics. It always came back to the fact that I was a woman and was capable of menstruation. I also had many conversations about my unwillingness to procreate. It was seen as something completely unnatural that my partner and I have chosen not to have children. More overt controls and treatments, such as sexual harassment, and consigning women to lower level tracks in their occupations because they have the ability to give birth reinforce these gendered hierarchies. Women often put up with sexual harassment as they believe it just part of the job.

While women's bodies are ruled out of order or sexualized and objectified, men do not often experience this in work organizations (Acker, 2006).

Organizational theory can demonstrate how gender provides the undertone for arrangements of subordination and how it is organized dominance and control in our organizational lives. When organizational activities are gendered, gender becomes more powerfully relevant for individuals, as gender introduces and shapes how people will carry out activities. The gendering of institutional tasks or roles, then, empowers the gendering in the situation to become a significant part of the process by which people enact their institutional duties (Acker, 2006). Gottfried (2013) puts forth her opinion on this matter claiming that "gender and class based appropriate codes of conduct, including the tone of voice, cadence, body language, and dress codes are strategic choices, not simply individually selected, but also institutionally constrained" (2013:83). Organizations sanction certain gender appropriate behaviours and performances which impact the relations between men and women. The privileging of certain emotions and behaviours contribute to gender-coding of jobs and identities. Emotional traits that can be said to be associated with hegemonic masculinity such as aggression or ruthlessness are valued in many male-dominated occupations. As a result women receive different treatment and appear as an outsider when they do not conform to certain expectations. It can be argued that "the doctrine of feelings indexes anger as rational and appropriate for male workers, but as a sign of weakness or an instance of excessive emotionality in supposedly emotionally prone women" (Gottfried, 2013: 83). The same emotions are treated differently depending on if a woman or a man enacts these behaviours. I can attest to this as my experiences in the workplace allowed me to realize that when I got angry I was "being overly emotional," but when a man got angry it was seen as something completely understandable and nothing was said

about the act. On the line anger was accepted only when it came from one of the men that I worked with.

It is vital that I mention that the organization that I was employed in was a non-unionized workplace. The possible impact of a non-unionized organization and how this might be a factor in my experiences on the assembly line will be explored to a greater detail in the data analysis chapter. Woodhall and Leach's (2010) research with workers in the automotive industry in Ontario demonstrates that a union and especially a women's advocate program can work to improve the lives of women working in manufacturing industries. The organization that I was employed in was absent of any union and definitely did not have any sort of women's advocate located within the plant. Woodhall and Leach (2010) argue that there are positive effects that unionization can bring to women's livelihoods and work experiences. However, they also note that women are often discriminated against within unions and this could be greatly improved through the presence of a women's advocate. These academics suggest how unions can have an important impact on worker wage rates, seniority rights, and grievance procedures. In addition, these researchers argue that women working in non-union automotive manufacturing plants are more likely to have more harmful experiences in terms of their workplace conditions than the unionized workers. Woodhall and Leach (2010) also maintain that although the presence of a union is important, a woman's advocate and could have a further positive impact on working conditions of women working in manufacturing industries.

Woodhall and Leach (2010) suggest that the CAW takes pride in its dedication to human rights issues. These scholars maintain that unions have a positive impact on the lives of working people. For instance unions have policies and regulations relating to a variety of issues such as: pay equity, sexual harassment and racial harassment, job security, benefits, and complaints.

Unions like the CAW exist to represent the rights of the worker and work to have a reputation of being a highly democratic organization. However, as Woodhall and Leach (2010) claim this is not always the case and the presence of a women's advocate could improve the lives of women working in manufacturing occupations (Woodhall & Leach, 2010).

History of Gender in the Automotive Industry

Although the automobile industry in Canada and the United States have employed relatively few women in their factories compared to men, the historical relations of these women is essential to shed light on. Women began entering the automotive industry in Canada during World War Two (Sugiman, 1994; Milkman, 1982). Before the war women were always a minority in the industry. After the war began single women were hired first, followed by widows, while married women were eventually permitted. Women were hired to do "men's jobs" during the war. The auto industry was quite resistant to hiring women but did so when the supply of male labour had been completely exhausted (Sugiman, 1994). It was not that factory owners believed that women could now perform this work, but rather they felt there was no other option. They were not put into men's jobs, but rather new patterns of occupational segregation took place. The economic mobilization led to a new shifting of boundaries to what was considered men's and women's work, not the elimination of the boundaries. Women primarily segregated into certain departments such as sewing and wiring. Ruth Milkman (1982) argues:

The upheaval in the sexual division of labour precipitated by the wartime mobilization was particularly dramatic in the basic manufacturing industries such as auto. While women's participation increased in the economy as a whole between 1940 and 1944, in heavy "war industries" the number of women rose to 460 percent during that period, and in the auto industry the increase was an astounding 600 percent. Clearly the auto industry was by no means typical of the economy as a whole in regard to the changes that occurred in the sexual division of labor, yet, precisely the shifts in position of women was so extensive and so rapid, the auto industry experience is especially revealing. It offers a

magnified view of reproduction of job segregation by sex, a process that is always occurring (p.343).

The automotive industry relied on mostly male labour before World War Two. This work was considered high paying and the automotive companies had little interest in employing women. In 1918, for instance, women comprised of less than 6 percent of GM's total work force (Sugiman, 1994). Although women could be found in these plants in extremely small numbers they were primarily found in the "cut and sew" departments and in the wire and harness department where men would cut the wires and women would add terminals to the products. Although women earned more in this industry when compared to other industries they still earned less than men. For instance, in 1925 the average hourly wage for women was forty-seven cents compared to seventy three cents at Ford (Milkman, 1982). Jobs were clearly defined as being either "male" or "female" during this time period. Women were given jobs that were considered "light" forms of work, jobs that were considered to correspond with "women's work". This included finishing and polishing different parts. Once established, the jobs that women performed before the war was fairly stable over the years. Between 1942 and 1943, the number of women employees increased. In 1942, GM's Oshawa plant employed 200 women and then doubled to 400 by March 1943. Conversely, none of the companies offered employment to black women. (Sugiman, 2004; Sugiman, 2001).

Even during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when the auto industry underwent huge crisis, there was little change to the division of labour in the manufacturing plants. The 1930's brought not only economic changes but also political transformations. Management began recognizing the UAW which altered the character of labour relations in the auto industry. Women working in these factories actually gained from the union's presence. For instance, they received a slight pay increase and women also had some protection against sexual harassment

for the first time. By the 1950's women realized that their presence in the automotive industry was going to be on a long term basis and decided to take a more active role in the unions (Milkman, 1982; Sugiman, 2001). They began paying more attention to shop floor politics and terms of employment. Shop floor resistance from women workers began to become more evident after the war ended. In certain cases, women were filing regular grievances at the individual level and at others there would be more women connecting through solidarity to make changes to their work circumstances. Women began venting about their wage disparity in terms of what men earned. By 1961, there were 3,162 women members of the UAW Canadian Region (Sugiman, 1994).

The women working in the automotive industry during the 1950s and 1960s took advantage of the grievance procedure established by the UAW. They filed grievances on a variety of different concerns that they had during this period. For instance, issues surrounding production standards in GM's sewing department in 1957 allowed the women to file complaints when new work quotas were established. Placing new machines in the workplace allowed the company to set new standards and expectations on these women. In lodging such complaints these women working in the automotive industry simply desired a higher level of human dignity and respect. In a further attempt to try to secure a certain level of dignity women in the GM plant struggled with their supervisors over 'personal relief' time. Women were often interrogated about the frequency and duration of their bathroom breaks. It was not uncommon for there to be bathroom matrons in the sewing departments counting the time that women were in the washrooms. Like the 'speed up time' for production output the 'personal relief' issues also generated several formal complaints from the women. Although women began resisting certain discriminatory treatment and there was an existence of union support for the women's equality

women still continued to experience oppression. Although the union was against sexist and discriminatory acts against women it has been argued that this did not put a stop to certain negative and oppressive treatments of women (Rinehart, Huxley & Robertson, 1997; Sugiman, 1994).

Pamela Sugiman (2001) claimed that since the development of the manufacturing of automobiles, white men have dominated the auto manufacturing workforce. She continues to argue that if you did not fit the ideal worker image of being white and male you were considered an outsider (Sugiman, 2001). In the automotive plants located in Southern Ontario, two ‘minorities’ existed: Sugiman (2001) argues:

These two groups consisted of small groups of women, many of whom were born in Canada of Anglo-Celtic and Eastern European descent, worked in McKinnon Industries of St. Catharine’s, Ontario and the General Motors Company of Canada’s (GM) manufacturing facility in Oshawa, Ontario. Two, even smaller pockets of black men, mostly Canadian-born, were concentrated in janitorial jobs and various types of foundry work in McKinnon Industries and the Ford Motor Company of Canada, as well as some smaller auto factories in Windsor (p. 86).

Occupations in auto manufacturing have always been viewed as ‘naturally’ white and male. Auto manufacturers drew on widespread cultural beliefs and stereotypes in relation to ‘race’ and gender. The individuals that had control and influence in these factories exploited their power when hiring workers, assigning them certain jobs, and establishing the terms of their employment. In performing these sexist and racist acts, management was essential in the construction and maintenance of inequality among women and black workers in the factories. In a critical manner Sugiman (2001) states,

...That in exploring the racialization of gender, and the gendering of race within the sphere of capitalist production — in viewing multiple oppressions, simultaneously experienced and resisted — we furthermore see how relations of domination are far more complex and historically-contingent than most analyses of industry and ‘the auto worker’ have suggested. In the auto plants of Southern Ontario, relations of exploitation were

common to all, but workers faced different forms of oppression, and experienced relative privileges, depending on their place in the race-gender- class order (p.86).

Here, Sugiman is arguing that individuals experienced different forms of oppression and domination and was contingent on 'race' and or gender. In addition, she is suggesting that understanding the history of the relations of domination in the auto industry is important for showing how complex the forms of oppression these workers experienced.

Gender Relations in the Automotive Industry/ Male-Dominated Industries

As was previously mentioned in the theoretical section, feminists and other critical scholars have worked to conceptualize gender as a dynamic social process. In addition they have illustrated how gender impacts our identity, social status, and what is taught during socialization processes. Accordingly, feminist theorists and researchers have shown that workplaces are infused with gender. Specifically, what is important to my research is how gender is pervasively practiced in male-dominated workplaces (Bose & Whaley, 2007; Martin, 2003; Papp, 2006). Many feminists and other social theorists have contended that the gendering practices and practicing of gender profoundly affects both women's and men's work experiences (Bose & Whaley, 2007; Martin, 2003; Papp, 2006). As Patricia Yancey Martin (2003) puts it,

...Along with other social constructionists, I view gender as having a social structure and related practices with a history that entails opportunities and constraints and a plethora of meanings, expectations, actions/behaviors, resources, identities, and discourses that are fluid and shifting yet robust and persisting. Framing gender as an institution lets me focus on only one aspect of it—the practicing dimension—while acknowledging that there is more to the story. While gendered practices/practicing gender constitute only one aspect of the gender institution, they are key to its perpetuation. If the gender institution failed to provide a repertoire of practices for societal members' use, they (we) would be at a loss about how to “do gender” at work (and elsewhere) (p. 344).

It is important to understand that gender relations that take place in a workplace or elsewhere do not happen because there are a few “corrupted” workers that make it their goal to oppress certain

individuals. Paid work is organized, practiced and is shaped by gendered ideologies. Throughout my experience of gender relations in the workplace I realized that the treatment that I received in certain instances were not because the individuals that I was in contact with were terrible people that wished to oppress me. I agree that gender is socially constructed and we are taught through a variety of different methods how to perform our genders in social interaction. My view is in opposition to the commonsense view as I believe that a masculine self is not a built-in feature of male bodies, but is, rather, the masculine identity results from information that is received during human interactions. This has devastating consequences for women as they are often treated in very oppressive manners when dealing with dominant forms of masculinity. The qualities or behaviours that constitute a masculine self can vary historically and culturally which is extremely important to understand.

Male-dominated professions have a masculine organizational structure and also a masculine occupational culture (Acker, 2006; Bose & Whaley, 2007; Demaiter & Adams, 2009). Many male-dominated jobs have been created by the authority and power of men that typically draw on masculine strengths. For example, Bose and Whaley (2007) argued that the qualities necessary for positions of power and authority stressed the certain qualities that were esteemed by middle-class men. Such characteristics included authority, rationality, and self-control. Male-dominated occupations have included manufacturing, medicine, law, dentistry, and engineering. It is of no consequence that the stereotypical “masculine” characteristics including mental toughness, aggressiveness, and rationality, were considered to be essential to these occupations (Bose & Whaley, 2007; Demaiter & Adams, 2009).

Drawing from the literature as well as my own experience I am able to reason that women entering “male domains” have met opposition when interacting with men in these fields.

The double-bind has been argued to be experienced by women in male-dominated occupations (Demaier & Adams, 2009). Demaier & Adams (2009) suggest that the double-bind means that for women to be accepted and considered valuable at their jobs they must perform so-called male characteristics, like being unemotional and tough, but simultaneously appear in a feminine manner. Many women may choose to attempt to perform as a man would in the work setting in order to survive in the male-dominated environment. For instance, Demaier and Adams (2009) found that women in a male-dominated field of engineering would, at times, choose to ally themselves with the existing work culture and downplay their femininity, and function as “conceptual men.” In addition, these researchers found that women often denied the existence of gender inequality, avoided displaying emotions, and worked to suppress any behaviours associated with femininity.

I argue that this could be a coping mechanism in order for these women to survive in such an environment. While working in the automotive industry a female student came on my line after my initial four months of working there. She behaved in a rather astonishing sexist manner, and after reading the literature, it is easier for me to provide justifications for her actions. For instance, I am able to see that in order for women to be considered to be performing their jobs well, they must demonstrate so-called male characteristics like toughness and aggressiveness, but simultaneously appear somewhat feminine, to avoid being degraded or criticized. Women are expected to be “feminine” on the job, but when masculinity is associated with competence, feminine women risk appearing incompetent (Demaier & Adams, 2009).

Social studies investigating important issues such as discrimination often argue that women working in occupations that are male-dominated may be more vulnerable to violence, discrimination, and forms of harassment. I agree with what I discussed in the previous theoretical

sections that argued that this may result from men's attempts to preserve privilege in these settings (Bobbitt- Zeher, 2011; McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2012). Many studies have suggested that men as well as women developed accommodating practices when women begin working in blue collar occupations (Bobbitt- Zeher, 2011; McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2012). Many men in these occupations make it very clear their personal opinions on male superiority and found it threatening when women were quite capable of performing the jobs to the same level as they could (Bobbitt- Zeher, 2011; McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2012; Gruber, 1999; Swerdlow, 1989; Paap, 2006). They responded by singling out women for minor mistakes that would usually have been ignored if a man had committed the error. I had many experiences of this while working in the automotive industry. For instance, if I would miss something (and we all did at times) on the assembly line I would be singled out. During one instance one of the individuals I worked with mentioned it to my team leader.

Pease and Flood argue (2008) that men "do dominance" in institutions such as the workplaces by employing a variety of strategies to resist women's entry into their workplaces and institutions, or to maintain the subordination of those women already there. Efforts by the men that I worked showed their motivation for the maintenance and entrenchment of male privilege. Male employees may use women's presence to confirm the masculine character of the job by showing that women are unfit for it. This aligns with what I experienced in the workplace. For instance, I was constantly (almost daily) told that I and other women are unfit for the factory life and that we are better suited working in occupations where there were no physical requirements.

There may not always be aggression or outright violence committed against women, however, there is almost always an overwhelming sexualization of the workplace in male-

dominated settings (McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2012; Gruber, 1999; Swerdlow, 1989; Paap, 2006; Pease & Flood, 2008). Often times in male-dominated occupations these settings consist of many forms of sexual symbolism that represents the objectification of women. Sexual narratives are usually communicated in these work settings, and in many instances erotic and pornographic images appear on walls, or in magazines left on tables (McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2012; Gruber, 1999; Swerdlow, 1989; Paap, 2006; Pease & Flood, 2008). In my experience, I often saw graphic sexual pictures that were drawn on conveyor belts, memo boards, and walls. There were also pictures that were drawn of me that included sexual representations. At one point there were so many pictures drawn on the tables that my group leader came up to me and communicated that he wished there were better people working there. I would not regard this act to be a breach of behaviour as I heard the same group leader making sexist remarks about women when he was not aware I was able to hear him.

Pease & Flood (2008) claim in male-dominated work settings a new woman is immediately viewed sexually. The initial form of information that men in these settings will seek out about a new woman is her marital status, usually asking, "What does your husband think of you taking the job?" (Swerdlow, 1989; Paap, 2006; Pease & Flood, 2008). This was exactly my experience during my initial interactions with the men I worked with. At first, their entire pursuit was about questioning me about my personal life and the men would utilize the flimsy cover of asking if my boyfriend was accepting of this occupation to find out private details. Kris Paap (2006) argues that the use of 'manspot' questions are found in the male-dominated field of construction. Paap claims that these questions are used to determine if a woman has a man, wants a man, or is looking for a man (Paap, 2006). Paap also suggests that if a woman is deemed

heterosexual that she is looking for a man to fill the 'manspot' and that is why she is working in that line of work.

Women's exclusion from and subordination in workplaces is also sustained through men's collective social relations. Studies of women in engineering often report that female engineers are excluded from the informal 'men's groups' and may be excluded from certain work-related networks that carry organizational power and influence (Faulkner, 2009; Pease & Flood, 2008). This may not seem to have a huge impact, but some may argue that these networks have influential power. In occupational and professional training, they may create exclusively male in-groups excluding women from bonding experiences and at times refuse to speak to women altogether (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Paap, 2006). Some of the theorists that I read wrote exhaustively about "manhood acts" being a means that males would employ to distinguish themselves from women and thus establish their eligibility for gender-based privilege (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Paap, 2006). Paap (2006) suggested that "manhood acts" are inherently about upholding patriarchy and reproducing gender inequality. Manhood acts often involve collaboration and social bonding among men. Even men who reject hegemonic ideals may feel that they have to objectify and sexualize women in hopes of fitting into the group. Manhood acts that involve displays of heterosexual prowess often entail the sexual objectification and harassment of women (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Paap, 2006). In many instances, these acts depict women as props that men use to prove and acknowledge their heterosexual identity. "Manhood" acts often entail the sexualization of women as a way to signify heterosexuality, to demarcate gender boundaries, and to challenge women's authority. Sexualizing women serves not only to signify heterosexuality, but also marks the boundary between gender groups. These acts are how males distinguish themselves from females/women

and thus establish their eligibility for gender based privilege. In addition, these acts performed by men also have the effect of legitimizing occupational segregation by upholding the illusion that men are more fit for certain kinds of jobs, especially those of power and authority (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Paap, 2006).

“Manhood acts” inherently uphold patriarchy and reproduce gender inequality. This was my experience while working in the plant. I experienced men conversing about women that would walk by or about women that they had relations with in their personal lives as if they were merely objects used for sexual pleasure. I consistently heard stories about the sexual objectification of women including comments such as, “yeah she did what she was supposed to and I sent her home.” There were also certain times when I would bend over and I would hear “while you’re down there” (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Paap, 2006). Men who violate the norms of hegemonic masculinity fail to produce any alterations to the gender order, but instead experience negative consequences such as homophobic taunting. Behaving in a masculine way is simply the familiar activity of men’s daily lives. Sharon Bird (1996) suggests that being masculine means being the complete opposite of all that is feminine. Men have communicated that in male interactions emotional detachment is imperative. Bird (1996) also argues men who express their intimate emotions are excluded. There are repercussions for violating the hegemonic meaning of emotional detachment and could be ostracized from one’s own male group. However, Bird’s argument that men are encouraged to suppress all feelings is not fully accurate. Displaying emotions in the forms of anger and aggression can be an important part of hegemonic practices of masculinities. In the workplace, I saw men get angry and behave aggressive practically every day, and I suggest these are important emotions as well. The relational and situational construction of these hegemonic masculinities is important. Bird also

did not mention that men may shift their practices of masculinity when their partners are around. In waged work men may desire the establishment of the 'male' character of their work space and may intensify some of their practices of the objectification of women. This, in my experience, is very true as I met some of the partners of the men I worked with and the men acted like completely different people.

There is also a fair amount of competition that takes place in establishing masculinity. Competition also contributes to the perpetuation of male dominance. To establish one as not female, young men seek out other men who display "non-femaleness". Men who have social interactions with other men provide feedback and support for masculinity self-conceptualization. Men who describe themselves as less competitive and do not understand the importance of being dominant still recognize the certain expectations of maintaining their masculinity (Bird, 1996; Connell, 1995; Frank, 1987). It is important to understand the competition that is often a part of men's social interactions support hegemonic masculinity which continues throughout life in variety of forms. Among the forms of competitions in which men engage are those that involve the objectification of women. Some of the activities of male bonding are negative towards women who are perceived as being an outsider (Bird, 1996). Men also will make sexist comments towards women perceiving that women are lesser than that of a man. Frank (1990) makes an extremely important statement when he writes,

...Masculinity has conventionally and historically been dependent upon the power that men embody. For these young men power was, quite literally, the embodiment of misogyny, violence, sexist and heterosexism, expressed and practiced in and through the body. For some of them, their bodies became their suits of armor that carried them into the social world to offer them protection (p. 275).

What is important to understand is that hegemonic masculinity has led to a social privilege of men. It is a privilege that they receive everyday/every night through their interactions with

people. This has profound social consequences to men that are aware of hegemonic masculinity towards women, and involves the actual presence of power over individuals. Heterosexual masculine hegemony is the acceptable and most desired form of masculinity. Heterosexual masculine hegemony has become so common place that it is reflected in government policies, educational settings, and the media (Frank, 1990). I find hegemonic masculinity to be relevant for understanding why I was treated lesser than the men I worked with. Hearing sexual comments about me or hearing statements that the factory was ‘only for men’ can be accredited to the fact that men were trying to display their masculinity.

The invisibility of women in male-dominated settings is extremely relevant for women and their careers. Faulkner (2009) argues that women have to work harder to demonstrate that they are just as capable as men when working in settings where they are the minority. Oftentimes, women are viewed as being wives and mothers first and workers second. This suggests that women are less committed to their occupations, and are considered unreliable and less invested in the workplace. Women often experience stereotypes in the workplace and often hear comments about their assumed traits—traits that are inferior in most job occupations (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). Bobbitt- Zeher argues in many instances women in the study often experience negative stereotypes as being unintelligent, hormonal, and overly emotional (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). This was also my experience working in the automotive industry where I was told that I was overly emotional. When sticking up for a fellow worker because he was consistently called a girl or a ‘fag’, the other men communicated that I was babying him.

Resistance

Although I have presented quite a lot of information about women receiving unfair and oppressive treatment in the workplace I do not want to communicate that women and men lack

agency. I argue that individuals do have the ability to resist the hegemonic ideologies of gender and behave according to other beliefs. Individuals who are very much aware of the dominant hegemonic beliefs can act to resist their effects on their self-expectations and behave in a manner that challenges the beliefs. However, for most people this is not a simple task as hegemonic beliefs are institutionalized in many settings and therefore have social costs in challenging them. Martin argues that reflexivity of gender can be said to be the intentional and awareness relative to practicing of gender at work. Martin (2006) argues:

Reflexivity requires individuals to consider carefully or meditate on their actions and their likely effects prior to behaving. To be reflexive about gender entails the thoughtful consideration of one's options and following through with actions that one intends to produce. To practice gender reflexively requires awareness and intention relative to a particular purpose (p. 260).

Despite the variety of ways that gender is performed across workplace cultures, women can be resilient. Although Martin gives a detailed definition of reflexivity, in her article she actually argues that women are (often unwitting) complicit in the reproduction of the dominant gender system (Martin, 2003). She suggests that women may not be fully aware how gender shapes their behaviours. Numerous studies such as Martin's have demonstrated the strength of the dominant gender order in shaping women's behaviours. For example, Martin (2003) found that policewomen must choose between either defeminization and deprofessionalization while working on the force (Martin, 2003). While Martin's study demonstrates the strength of gender dualities in constraining women's actions, others emphasize women's agency in resisting dichotomous gender boundaries. Dennisen (2010) argues "while social forces shape and constrain action, social actors 'do not act toward culture, social structure or the like; they act toward situations. Therefore, the possibilities of resistance and change are always available in how people make sense of, and act toward, particular situations'" (2010: 1054). Dennisen suggests that women have the ability to resist the gender order and allow for some action. I tend

to agree with both of the authors. Although I realize that many women may not realize how gender impacts their social actions and practices, I argue that we can be reflexive about our actions. Denissen (2010) argues that gender identities can be used as a tool and suggests that

...In conceptualizing gender as a tool, the focus shifts to what social actors do with gender rules and meanings as they act toward the expectations of others. I argue that rather than simply accepting or rejecting the gender rules of the job, tradeswomen reflexively manipulate them for their own advantage (p.1054).

Denissen uses her study of how tradeswomen employ gender 'tools' to question, resist, and defy their co-worker's gender expectations. I also think I used gender as a tool in my experiences. I was extremely reflexive about my gendered relations in the automotive plant. I made comments and resisted certain jobs such as sweeping during downtime when the men got to go do hand work. Denissen suggests that women employ numerous strategies that draw on their understandings of the cultural assumptions of gendered behaviour. The tradeswomen resisted when being told to "do it like a man" suggesting that while their way of doing the work is different, they are still competent workers. Other tradeswomen worked to introduce a 'woman's perspective' into highly masculinized forms of interaction such as the sexualization and objectification of women. Tradeswomen at certain instances will be reflexive when they de-emphasize or even suppress gender while in social interactions (Denissen, 2010; Smith, 2013).

Some tradeswomen also challenge the tendency to place themselves in a subservient role by enacting men's activities without waiting for permission. Denissen argued that many women also worked to demonstrate that they had a gender-neutral occupational identity. Although this may be possible according to Denissen, I argue this would be extremely difficult in a male-dominated work setting. I was always aware of my gender at all times when working and I suggest it would have been quite demanding to maintain a gender-neutral identity, although not

impossible. What is important to understand in this circumstance is that tradeswomen, in response to different situations, may manipulate gender rules and meanings by choosing to challenge gender difference, gender status difference, or to suppress gender altogether. Previous research (Demaiter & Adams, 2009) has suggested that women in men's occupations face a double-bind, but Dennisen argues that tradeswomen (and other women working in male-dominated industries) resist certain gender boundaries by challenging gender status differences, and by suppressing gender as a salient category when in social relations with men. What is essential to understand is that

...Instead of accepting or rejecting the gender rules of the job, tradeswomen find ways to manipulate the rules for their own advantage. This shows how gender is both a liability and an asset as structure, agency, and identity come together in women's struggle for inclusion in male-dominated work. While men can use gender to reinforce boundaries, women who seek to transgress these boundaries can use gender as a tool by varying gender practices to counter disadvantageous gender meanings and dualities (Dennissen, 2010, p 1065).

Women can manipulate gender rules by combining gender practices with other sources of identity including a gender-neutral work identity, and also by not being silent in gender relations. (Martin, 2003; Martin, 2006; Smith, 2013; Dennissen, 2010).

Conclusion

I have suggested throughout this chapter that gender is not something that is 'natural' but rather that it is the outcome of social interaction and socialization. Gender is socially constructed and we are taught through a variety of different methods how to perform our genders in social interaction. My view is in opposition to the commonsense understanding as I believe that a masculine self is not a built-in feature of male bodies, but is, rather, the masculine identity results from information that is received during human interactions and social relations. This has devastating consequences for women as they are often treated in a very oppressive manner when

dealing with dominant forms of masculinity. The qualities or behaviours that constitute a masculine self can vary historically and culturally which is important to understand. Many theorists have claimed that hegemonic masculinity is a dominant form of masculinity that seeks to oppress and exploit women (Connell, 1995, Gottfried, 2013; Correll and Ridgeway, 2004). I do not believe that hegemonic masculinities are the only form of male expression, but rather the most socially endorsed (through media, socialization, family, etc.) form of masculinity that contributes to the subordinate position of women. However, I have also suggested that women and men have the ability to resist the gender order and allow for some action. I believe that we can be reflexive about our actions and that individuals do have the ability to resist the hegemonic ideologies of gender and behave according to other beliefs. Individuals who are very much aware of the dominant hegemonic beliefs can act to resist their effects on their self-expectations and behave in a manner that challenges the beliefs. However, for most people this is not a simply undertaking as there are always social costs at resisting any socially accepted behaviour.

In this chapter I have also provided an overview of theory and relevant literature surrounding issues of gender relations in the automotive and other male-dominated industries. Based on my experience working in the automotive industry as well as the literature surrounding the topic, it appears women and other marginalized groups struggle with the often oppressive and dominating gender work relations. Feminist political economists such as Meg Luxton, Heidi Gottfried, and Isabella Bakker provided me with a very thorough understanding of the arguments of this particular framework of feminism (Luxton, 2009; Gottfried, 2013, Bakker & Gill, 2003). Fortunately, there appears to be a large amount of literature dealing with the inequalities that women face in their relations with the men they work with. Writers such as Kris Papp, Pamela Sugiman, and Ruth Milkman were able to demonstrate and argue that women experience

differential treatment with the men they work with in these male-dominated industries (Paap, 2006; Milkman, 1982; Sugiman, 2004).

The next chapter will provide an overview of the methodology that I am utilizing in this paper so that I can in turn analyze these gendered experiences in the workplace

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design

This chapter is devoted to discussing the methodological design of my research study, as well as the issues I encountered in engaging in this work. I have argued that my experiences were 1) produced by the gendered social structure/organization that disadvantaged me in relation to men's power, and also 2) through social interactions where certain meanings of what it means to be a woman and a man are constructed. The purpose of this study is to understand and analyze my experiences of gender relations in the automotive industry. By analyzing these experiences I mean that I want to be able to give meaning to the social relations I had, and determine the larger implications of these social practices. It is important in any research exploration or investigation to have a methodology that fits with what the researcher desires to accomplish. Through an analysis of the data collected in my personal journal, I will be able to gain a better perspective of the possible explanations as to why I was treated in an oppressive fashion.

The research question to be addressed in this study was based on my own experiences as a woman working in a male-dominated workplace and is mediated via the literature surrounding the topic. The research question is: how to make sense of my experiences of gender relations in the contemporary automotive industry? How can the existing literature assist me in theorizing about this experience? My research methodology and research design section below will highlight how this research study was conducted. In this chapter I am going to discuss 1) the process of autoethnography/ how it relates to my research, 2) justifications for utilizing this method, 3) the application of autoethnography to the research, 4) justifications for chosen method 5) selection of themes, and 6) the strengths/ limitations of the method.

Research Method

Generally speaking, autoethnography is a qualitative approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and analyze personal experience in order to understand and give meaning to a social experience and social relations. A social researcher employs essential functions of autobiography and ethnography to accomplish and write autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2006; Etorre, 2005; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). Etorre (2005) communicates what autoethnography is in a rather excellent fashion. She writes:

Autoethnography is an autobiographical research genre, displaying multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to cultural. Writing in the first person, autoethnographers look through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social aspects of personal experience; then inward, exposing a vulnerable self, refracting cultural interpretations (536:2005).

It is vital that it understood that this method is about critically analyzing and examining particular social experiences that happened to individual/individuals. Taking different social relations and applying them to larger cultural and social processes is an essential feature of autoethnography (Etorre, 2005). My experiences in the automotive plant are important as it begins with the social interactions I had, but also sheds light on a gendered environment. Social interactions signify that we are social beings that often come into contact with other individuals, thus communicate, acknowledge, and influence one another in the process. Navigating the tension between my own identity (white woman) and the social activity taking place in an automotive manufacturing factory is something important to analyze. Within weeks of leaving the automotive industry I constructed a journal based on my thoughts and memories that reflected the everyday working life that I experienced.

The Process of Autoethnography

As was previously mentioned, autoethnography combines characteristics of autobiography and ethnography (Ettorre, 2005). It has been stated that, “autoethnography is a qualitative research method that utilizes data about self and its context to gain an understanding of the connectivity between self and others within the same context” (Mitra, 2010; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010:4). This connectivity suggests that there are a variety of reciprocal influences between people in various settings. Our actions and behaviours influence the actions and behaviours of other people in social setting, thus being connected. As a qualitative research method autoethnography takes a unique approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation about self and the social experiences that involves self. Analyzing the social context and understanding the social relations, this method sets itself apart from other self-narrative writings such as memoir and autobiography. In comparison to other research methods, I as the researcher am at the center of the investigation as a “subject” and in addition I am also the researcher who performs the research (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011; Mitra, 2010; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010)

When writing an autoethnography, a researcher retroactively and selectively writes about past experiences in a certain context. My gendered experiences in the automotive manufacturing plant are the context that is written about and more importantly analyzed. Typically, the researcher does not live through these experiences just so they can write a document that will eventually be published; rather, these experiences are assembled after reflecting on the experience. I did not decide to work in the automotive plant in order to embark on some sort of study, but rather I decided to analyze my experiences after I worked in the male-dominated environment. Autoethnographers such as me must look at the social experience analytically,

otherwise I would just be telling a story of what took place while working in a male-dominated setting. I must accomplish more than just a revelation about my experiences while working. It is important for me to consult other research literature to analyze my experiences, and consider ways that other women may face similar circumstances. I am required to employ my personal experience to illustrate different surfaces of social relations, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a social context familiar for insiders and outsiders of the auto plant (Ellis, 2007; Spry, 2001; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010).

Justifications for Utilizing Autoethnography

Writing has been suggested by autoethnographers and others as a way of knowing, a method of inquiry (Bochner & Ellis, 2006; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). Consequently, writing in this way can be therapeutic for researchers as they write to make sense of certain occurrences and experiences and question their social relations and interactions. However, what is important for me when looking at my experiences in the auto plant is that I improve and better understand the relationships, encourage personal responsibility and agency, and raise consciousness about the problems that may be occurring (Bochner & Ellis, 2006; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). Writing in this fashion allows for the understanding of a problem or experience such as gender relations and oppression. I argue that this method allows a researcher, to identify problems that are generally cloaked in secrecy for instance, damaging gender norms. I choose this method as I argue it offers me a way to talk about a set of experiences that I had while working in the auto industry, and more importantly, analyze my experiences through the development of themes based on my social interactions (Bochner & Ellis, 2006; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010).

Utilizing autoethnography in a feminist research project protects me against a possible harmful situation. It would be very difficult for me to have completed this research using an ethnographic method where I would be seen recording interactions. Ethnography involves sustained observation of people in a particular social context. Some ethnography will involve participant observation (in which you engage in the activity or group you are studying) while other ethnography will be strictly observational. In most cases, however, ethnography requires approval, especially because researchers often use the observational methods of ethnography in conjunction with interviews. This environment could also have been considered a hostile environment for someone such as me trying to investigate gender relations (Bryman, Teevan, 2009; Neuman, 2004).

Approach to Data Analysis

The data was analyzed inductively utilizing interpretive thematic analysis. By “inductive” I mean that there were no specific analytic categories predetermined, and that my themes were created after analyzing my data. I choose to employ inductive research as I felt it was important to allow the patterns/themes to emerge from my data, rather than look for pre-existing themes. I felt that conducting the analysis this way I would ensure that I am considering my experiences to my full capacity in regards to the research. The aim of this research study was not to test a specific hypothesis, but rather to explore the events that can be considered important to women working in male-dominated professions and environments. I analyzed the data produced from my journal using thematic analysis to identify the most interesting and representative patterns that I thought were important to analyze. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within data that is collected through research (Bryman, Teevan,

2009; Neuman, 2004; Maydell, 2010). The choice of thematic analysis in this study was determined largely by the nature of the data. Maydell (2010) writes,

...If theory is necessary to create a heuristic explanation and gain understanding of how research data should be approached by attempting to answer the “why” questions, methodology is needed to answer the “how” questions--the ways the data should be read and interpreted. Autoethnographic research may yield very rich but seemingly unmanageable data, in their unstructured richness and multiplicity of perspectives. Thematic analysis is the very tool that can structure this “stream of consciousness” and allow seeing certain patterns across the data (p.9).

By utilizing thematic analysis, I am able to determine which themes I suggest are important for understanding my gendered relations in the workplace. It is a means for me to categorize my data and move towards analyzing and seek meaning behind the experiences I had working in a male-dominated environment.

This was exploratory research and must be mentioned that prior theory serves as a resource for interpretation of spoken and written narratives (Bryman, Teevan, 2009; Neuman, 2004). By applying autoethnography to my research of gender relations in the automotive industry, speaking from a subjective position about my social relations and experiences, and exploring relations with the men that I worked with for over nine months is important. I began my journal a week after leaving the automotive plant. My research approach consisted of reflexive journaling to produce a personal dataset in the form of field notes. In developing my journal, I jotted down my account of specific events, conversations and daily activities, as well as thoughts and frustrations. Once data was collected, I conducted a thematic analysis whereby I categorized the data using a highlighter into emerging themes and patterns (Bryman, Teevan, 2009; Neuman, 2004). Feminist political economy may be viewed as a relevant theoretical foundation for the study of my experiences, while thematic analysis can be deployed as the

methodological frameworks for guiding the analytical process (Bryman, Teevan, 2009; Neuman, 2004).

Selection of Themes for Analyzing my Experiences.

The themes I developed on the basis of my narrative were represented by several reoccurring patterns. Themes within my journal were established by looking for reappearing aspects between relationships between me and other individuals I worked with. Then I compared the experiences with other women in similar situations, as well as with feminist political economy theory and other literature that deals with male-dominated environments. The four themes I derived on the basis of my journal recordings were: 1) negotiating dominant forms of masculinity, 2) gender stereotyping and gender role expectations, 3) sexual harassment/harassment, and 4) the ways in which women's bodies were considered suspect. I constructed the themes from the data after reading and rereading my journal which sent me to investigate further into feminist political economy literature and sociological theory that allowed me to identify different patterns emerging and create my thematic categories (Bryman, Teevan, 2009; Neuman, 2004).

I wish to emphasize that, while exploratory approaches to qualitative analysis are not designed solely to confirm hypotheses, this is not to suggest that they are not theoretical. Theory, however implicit, gives direction to what we examine and how we examine it. If I had no idea that my experiences in the workplace were gendered it would be difficult to find a starting point for questioning. We get guidance as to what is important to study from existing literature, our own knowledge about a topic, or from someone else (Bryman, Teevan, 2009; Neuman, 2004). My point here is that although I was not searching for pre-determined themes I was able to

discover the themes after going back and forth between the literature/feminist theory and my journal. My research question asks how I can make sense of my experience in the workplace. By reading and rereading over my journal I was able to develop the themes that I felt were important to analyze in order to understand gendered social relations. I then employ feminist concepts/theories to analyze the gendered practices I experienced in the workplace. These theories/concepts as mentioned in other sections are as follows: 1) hegemonic masculinity (Acker, 2006; Bird, 1996; Connell, 1995; Gottfried, 2013), 2) gendered division of labour (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013), 3) gender hierarchies at work (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013), and 4) embodied labour and bodies at work (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013).

I will not use other qualitative techniques, such as content analysis or grounded theory, as they both demand a thorough fragmentation of the data set into initial codes (Bryman, Teevan, 2009; Neuman, 2004). To my understanding grounded theory is based around developing an all-encompassing theory that offers explanations for the findings within the data, whereas themes in thematic analysis seek to capture the data, but does not carry the same aim as developing a theory to offer explanations for the findings (Bryman, Teevan, 2009; Neuman, 2004). I am partial to thematic analysis as I suggest it gives the data analysis process credibility as it allows for important themes and patterns to come from my gendered experiences in the workplace. Furthermore, I believe thematic analysis is well harmonized with the features of flexibility in qualitative feminist research. Although I wanted a deep explanation for my social relations I do not want develop a substantive theory. I knew from the beginning of my study that I wanted to utilize feminist theory for analyzing my gendered relations in the workplace, as I believe it provides me with an exceptional means for investigating why I was treated in often oppressive

manners (Bryman, Teevan, 2009; Neuman, 2004). Below is my rationale for choosing certain themes that I selected by critically analyzing my journal.

Theme 1: Negotiating Dominant Forms of Masculinity

Generally when I am discussing the theme titled “dominant forms of masculinity,” I am referring to the notion that men often engage in certain behaviours and actions that permits them to maintain and reproduce the current gender hierarchy; this allows them to have a superior and privileged position in society. In means of “dominant” I am referring to the prevailing and most powerful types of masculinity. “Masculinity” refers to certain traditional qualities associated with men. “Dominant forms of masculinity” represents behaviours that are loud, domineering, sexist, competitive, and aggressive. In addition, forms of intimate emotions are suppressed, but anger is considered socially acceptable.

I reached the decision to incorporate dominant forms of masculinity in my selection of themes after reading over my journal and found several instances where men behaved emotionally distant, aggressive, engaged in gay bashing, competitive, and sexually objectified women. I witnessed many occasions where the men I worked with would communicate their sexual conquests. I heard comments such as “while you’re down there, you should make yourself useful” when I would bend down. There were also instances when women would walk through our department and I would hear comments such as “what I would get her to do to me”. During one occasion I communicated - in a joking way - to one of the men I worked with to “kill me now” after finding out the next part we had to deal with, he responded “not before I have my way with you.” Furthermore, there were times when I would hear men communicating “don’t be such a pussy” or “you’re acting like such a girl”. These comments allowed me to recognize that these

individuals were behaving in a very stereotypical masculine fashion. These dominant forms of masculinity are important for me to consider when analyzing my experiences in the workplace.

Theme 2: Gender Stereotyping and Gender Role Expectations

When I am referring to “stereotypical sex roles and expectations” I am signifying that through the use of certain discriminatory behaviours and actions it is suggested that women are to perform certain roles in the workplace. By “stereotype” I am referring to a widely held but persistent and oversimplified image of a woman. By “gender roles” I am referring to behaviours, attitudes, and activities expected or common for males and females. Actions and attitudes that suggest women are to be in the home, taking care of children, and performing “light” duties is what I am referring to with the theme “stereotypical sex roles and expectations.”

I recognized this theme after I noticed several instances in my journal where assigned roles and stereotypes of women in society transcend into the workplace and women were expected to adhere to them. The idea of women defying the cultural norms and entering into gender atypical roles within male-dominated professions was still a novelty to some. For instance, I would hear comments when I would make a mistake “it’s okay, this work is really meant for a man”. The majority of individuals I worked with still viewed men as the dominant figure and the breadwinner within the family unit and the expectation appeared to be for women to be submissive to the men and assume careers more orientated to domestic stereotypes for females. Furthermore, I decided to select this theme as I can vouch that I experienced the equivocation of certain types of work with essential male/female characteristics, and in turn the reconstruction of these genders via the workplace (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013). For instance, during downtime I was often sent to sort gloves, clean off the graffiti (which often was about me or the sexualization of women in general), sweep, or mop up oil. Women are often considered to

be “natural” housewives and mothers which impacts their positions in the workplace. Hierarchies are gendered because they are constructed on the underlying assumptions that those who are committed to paid work and ‘naturally’ more suited to responsibility and authority.

Theme 3: Sexual Harassment/ Harassment

Generally the sexual harassment theme refers to actions and attitudes that suggest that women are objects and things rather than human beings. “Sexual harassment” signifies unwelcome sexual advances, demands for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical behaviours of a sexual character. Different attitudes and behaviours in the workplace that suggest sexual harassment include, but are not limited to: leering, discussion of one’s partner’s sexual inadequacies, sexual innuendos, comments about women’s bodies, ‘accidentally’ brushing sexual parts of the body, stories of sexual exploitation, graphic descriptions of pornography, pressure for dates, and sexually explicit gestures. This theme was quite effortless for me to recognize. Although this theme spills over to theme one (dominant forms of masculinity) I argue that it is important to consider on its own. The comments I heard on several occasions can be considered sexual harassment or at least I interpreted them as such. There were countless occasions where women that would walk by and men would whistle and make “cat calls.” There was pornographic graffiti drawn on tables and conveyor belts where women were depicted servicing a man. A comment that I have not been able to forget was on one of my last days at work when one of the individuals I worked with commented “maybe the next student we get will be ‘easier’ than you.” This is an important theme in my experience as women in the workplace constantly are equated with what they could do in order to service a man.

Theme 4: The Ways in Which Women's Bodies Were Considered Suspect

Generally what I mean when referring to the theme “women's bodies considered suspect” is the attitudes and behaviours that suggest that women's bodies are inferior and irregular to that of a man's. Comments and behaviours that suggest women's bodies are weak, passive, unruly, and fragile represent this theme. The selection of this theme evolved out of my awareness of how bodies are constructed in the workplace. For instance, the gender relations I had with the individuals at work often dealt with the subject of women's monthly menstrual cycles being disgusting or cause for ‘bitchy’ behaviour. Men in the workplace were considered strong, muscular, and powerful where women were weak and fragile. Experiences where I had men communicating that I should not be lifting certain automotive parts became a reoccurring event. I also heard comments that suggested that strong women are always lesbians. Students that were women were not allowed to lift the more hefty automotive parts regardless if they had the strength for it or not.

I also came across other themes, but decided not to analyze them in my findings/analysis chapter. I made this decision because I have time restraints and I also felt that these themes I selected were the most important in answering my research question. I was able to recognize other themes such as: 1) women taking on the stereotypical behaviour of a man, 2) the control and domination of workers by people in roles of authority, 3) resistance of the workers, and 4) worker solidarity. I felt that although these themes were important they were not about answering my research question. My research is about understanding and analyzing gender relations in the workplace and I felt that the themes that I selected represented what I desire to accomplish in my research. I feel this way as the themes I choose epitomize my experiences in the workplace. These themes represent the challenges and struggles that I experienced while

working as a woman in a male-dominated environment. These challenges and struggles are important to investigate in order to understand my experiences in the workplace. I suggest it is important to understand these social practices as I believe they are connected to the larger social and cultural processes in society.

The Strengths/Limitations of Autoethnography

To begin this discussion of possible limitations while utilizing this qualitative method it is important to first mention that there are “relational ethics” that I as a researcher must acknowledge (Ellis, 2007). As autoethnographer, Carolyn Ellis (2007) states, “relational ethics recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work” (Ellis, 2007, p.4). Relational ethics requires that the researchers strive to recognize the relational connections with other individuals they engage with. Autoethnographers often maintain and respect their relational connections and interactions with their participants, thus making relational ethics more complicated. It can be considered more complicated as participants often begin as or become friends with others that they write about in their research. As a result, ethical issues affiliated with friendship become an important part of the research process and product (Ellis, 2007; Ettore, 2005; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). For instance, I do not live in isolation, but rather I am a part of various social networks that include friends, family members, co-workers, et cetera. This essentially means that when I conduct and write research on gender relations in the automotive industry, I have already involved other individuals in my research (Ellis, 2007). The excerpts I choose to use in my research could include the pain, loss, betrayal, or family drama, of some of the people I work with. For instance, some of the relations that I write about will contain instances of work colleague’s racist/sexist acts and comments. Although

I will not divulge the names of the individuals they are still involved by me writing about them. For instance, I also conceal the site of the workplace, but it does not require much effort to find out where I have worked, or currently work (Ellis, 2007).

Objectivity, Reliability, Validity, and Memory

The assumption that objectivity is at all possible has been contested for quite some time, as postmodernists have argued that the methods and procedures that are employed in more established forms of research are indistinguishably tied to the values and subjectivities of the researcher (Bochner & Ellis, 2006; Ettore, 2005; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). Nevertheless, a tendency toward a distanced observer role continues to exist within ethnographic work as well as other forms of research (Bochner & Ellis, 2006; Ettore, 2005; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). In the world of traditional science “objective distance” seems to protect researchers and readers from the emotional and intimate details of human lives. In autoethnography, however; the goal is to convey the social experiences and relations that portray a more complete view of life (Bochner & Ellis, 2006). When writing about individual experiences and the social relations, individuals cannot help but to include emotion and personal thoughts; this may cause problems if one desires to demonstrate that they are behaving like a “real” researcher, but it will serve a purpose that cannot be attended to by traditional approaches to knowledge sharing. Many will see that this is a limitation for this type of research method, but autoethnographers believe experience is important and objectivity is not possible, and they embrace that fact (Ellis; 2007; Ettore, 2005; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010).

Autoethnographers consider how a particular narrative will impact the lives of the readers to be important. For instance, it is significant for readers to employ the work of

autoethnographers to better understand their own oppression and domination (Ellis; 2007; Ettore, 2005; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). These researchers acknowledge that memory is fallible, that it is extremely difficult to recall or report on events that exactly represents how those events were lived and felt. Furthermore, it is fully understood that other people in that social event may interpret the social relation entirely differently (Bochner & Ellis, 2006). For instance, when I unravel my relations with the men I worked with I find them to be riddled with sexism, gender oppression, and domination, but they may interpret these events differently. They may believe they were engaging in forms of humour and play.

For an autoethnographer, questions of reliability refer to the researcher's credibility. Could I have had the experiences described? Do I believe that this is actually what happened? Closely related to reliability are issues of validity. Ellis (2008) suggests that for autoethnographers, validity means that a work seeks credibility; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is believable (Ellis; 2008; Ettore, 2005; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). I have asked myself: "How worthwhile are the personal experiences that I am sharing and reporting on?" and "what can be done with this personal journal?" My experience of embarking on this type of research has led me to deal with the legitimization of autoethnography as memory and its distortions. I have had to defend and justify my research method of choice against a certain professor's opinion that memories are considered inadequate for data. It appears that unless data about personal experience is collected and transformed by another researcher, they fail to qualify as legitimate. For example, had a researcher interviewed me about my experiences as a female auto worker and had recorded and transcribed it, it would have been considered a legitimate form of data, despite the fact that both the interview transcript

and my autoethnographic text would be based on the same set of memories (Ellis; 2008; Ettore, 2005; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010).

Frigga Haug (1999) introduces memory-work as a research method. Haug argues that self is socially constructed through reflection – memories. Haug begins with the foundation that experiences of life contain certain contradictions. Life for women becomes a series of compromises in an attempt to find meaning in our social relations. Memory-work becomes a vehicle for bringing about desired change that women seek. Haug (1999) argues:

An important strategy in memory-work is the elimination of contradictions. We tend to disregard anything that does not fit in with the unified image that we present to ourselves and others. This mostly semi-conscious act of eliminating contradictions may become transparent in the written experiences as we document the details that do not fit. Deconstruction work is aimed primarily at drawing out these contradictions and breaking points in our experiences. It presents them in a new light and connects them to other developments, choices, or ways of life. The graveyard like silence of sameness is thus disturbed in order to enable change. A sense of mental unrest is created. If we achieve this sense of mental unrest, we recognize that certain emotions are disquieting and destabilizing; the memory-work is in motion (p.10).

In the first part of this quotation, Haug communicates that the researcher must not be afraid to document certain memories that may not seem to fit with what image they are trying to present. For instance, in my memories of the workplace there are certain reflections that I may not want to include in my paper, but Haug is suggesting that documenting and recording all memories is important for the research. Memory-work should be about understanding the contradictions and presenting them in our work. My contradictions are certain instances where I felt that in order to fit in, succeed, and survive in the workplace I needed to tolerate particular sexist comments and behaviours that were directed at me. In the beginning of my workplace experience I acknowledge that I did not resist certain negative actions and behaviours of the men I worked with. During the first month of working, despite being a feminist and knowing these behaviours

and attitudes that were directed at me were unacceptable, I held my tongue and pretended I was not listening. However, by reflecting on this contradiction I was able to recognize that my behaviours during the initial period working in the automotive industry were about coping in the male-dominated environment. It allowed me to also recognize that other women working in similar male-dominated environments also behave in a certain manner (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, & Graham; 1993; Faulkner, 2009; Paap, 2006). I have to agree with Haug's (1999) last statement where she writes that a "sense of mental unrest is created" (10). Although memories of me not resisting certain behaviours and attitudes made me question whether or not I was a "real" feminist, it lead me to realize something important about women's coping strategies that they may utilize in different male-dominated environments (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, & Graham; 1993; Faulkner, 2009; Paap, 2006). I suggest this is something important for me to always be aware of in my research as I need to be mindful that I should not leave certain memories out in order to present a certain image of myself.

Haug also suggests in her research guide on memory-work (1999) that when conducting this type of research it is a good idea to be familiar with theories that surround the given research topic. For instance, she states that theories may help further knowledge and that a selection of theory is important "in light of the gathered pool of experience" (1999:7). Researchers who are taking on memory-work should be familiar with the theories that are associated with the topic and who at the same time will try to pass on as much knowledge as possible. Allowing for theoretical knowledge to be part of the process ensures critical analysis of the experience. As I have mentioned in other sections that being familiar with feminist theory allowed me to recognize the gender inequality I was experiencing in the workplace. I was already familiar with

feminist theory and educated myself on the research topic through the engagement with feminist and sociological theory (Haug, 1992; Haug, 1999).

Haug suggests that memory-work be conducted within feminist groups for it to be the most effective. Through group memory-work women write down their experiences on certain topics and they collectively analyze the experiences. The women read their memories out loud concerning certain topics. Haug (1999) claims that although women are different there are certain experiences that all women will often share:

Although differences among women have been emphasized in recent years to the point where females with mutual experiences have been disregarded, there is hardly any topic in everyday life that does not mutually touch every woman, independent of age, profession, or social class. For instance, consider the topic of fear. Granted, experiences of fear are individually different depending on cultural background, but all women can report memories of experiences of fear; most are painful and therefore important (p. 3).

I agree that women originate from very different cultural backgrounds and will have divergent experiences. However, I also agree that women share certain mutual experiences that are important to understand and find meaning in. Although not every woman in the workplace experiences sexism, oppression, and discrimination it would be difficult to come across a woman that has not had personal dealings in other arenas with these forms of gender inequality and domination.

As previously mentioned, Haug (1992; 1999) suggests that memory-work can be a means for finding out the meaning of an experience through deconstructing the narrative in a group format. Although there will be a difference of opinions, Haug believes it is important to come to a consensus on the meaning of what the writer experienced. Although I do believe that this form of memory-work is important as it allows for women to gather and seek out the meaning of experience through collective actions, I suggest that what I am doing through autoethnography is

also an important form of memory-work. Although the thoughts and critical analysis of other women would be a welcomed event I suggest that completing the task alone is also important for analyzing experiences. By writing down my experiences and analyzing them through feminist theory I feel this is to be a liberating venture (Haug, 1992; Haug, 1999).

Although there has been quite a lengthy discussion on some of the limitations of this method, it is also imperative that its strengths be presented (Ellis; 2008; Ettore, 2005; Wall, 2008; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010). Autoethnographers argue conducting autoethnography can be used as a source of emancipation for the individual performing the research. Performing autoethnography has encouraged me to examine my experiences and consider myself as the ‘other’, generating critical agency in relations that I have. Tami Spry (2001), an autoethnographer, believes her experiences as an autoethnographer have been a way to transform and also understand her experiences:

In autobiographical narrative performances, the performer often speaks about acts of social transgression. In doing so, the telling of the story itself becomes a transgressive act—a revealing of what has been kept hidden, speaking of what has been silenced—an act of reverse discourse that struggles with the preconceptions borne in the air of dominant politics (p.711).

Autoethnographic texts reveal the fractures of self-interacting with others in the context of researching lived experience. My experiences of gender inequality in the workplace allows for the opening of issues and experiences that others may connect with. In interpreting the autoethnographic text, readers feel/sense the breakages in their own personal lives (Spry, 2001). This kind of research provides avenues for transformative potential for researcher, researched, and the reader. The primary goal of effective autoethnography is to provide the researcher with the means to claim reflexive agency in their interactions with others in different contexts. It can be argued:

In autoethnographic performance, the body is like a cultural billboard for people to read and interpret in the context of their own experience. Performing autoethnography provides a space for the emancipation of the voice and body in academic discourse through breaking the boundaries of stylistic form, and by reintroducing the body to the mind in the process of living research (Spry, 2001:719-720).

Conducting autoethnography research is considered as a way to liberate the scholarly voice from the confines of academic discourse. Being able to write about the lived experiences of self, and others in autoethnographic writing has been argued to allow researchers to integrate their personal and political voice into their work (Spry, 2001). Critically reflecting upon my place in time with others through autoethnographic research has the ability to make an individual, such as myself, feel that I have agency. Being able to hear my own scholarly voice can be considered to be a major strength in employing this particular method (Bochner & Ellis, 2006; Spry, 2001). Spry (2001) suggests “good autoethnography is not simply a confessional tale of self-renewal; it is a provocative weave of story and theory. The tale being told should reflect back on, be entangled in, and critique this current historical moment and its discontents” (2001:713). This is not just the telling of my experiences, but rather it is the analysis of social practices through the use of a feminist theoretical perspective and other literature relating to male-dominated workplaces.

Theorists such as Ellis (2006) and Spry (2001) have argued that another major positive feature of this method is that autoethnographic writing can be seen as a means of resistance. Autoethnographic work usually contains the voices of “others”. Autoethnographic work can give a voice to people that experience racist, sexist, heterosexist, or classist social relations and want to be heard, but desire writing their own words/thoughts down rather than give them to a researcher. Griffin (2012) argues:

As a methodology positioned to embrace subjectivity, engage critical self-reflexivity, speak rather than being spoken for, interrogate power, and resist oppression, autoethnography can be productively coupled with Black feminist thought for Black female scholars to look in (at themselves) and out (at the world) connecting the personal to the cultural (p.143).

This is something that is beneficial for people that have been oppressed and dominated by other individuals in their social relations. Many people may believe that their social experiences are important to reflect and find meaning in. However, people that have had long history of abuse and mistreatment may feel that it would be far more beneficial if they could employ their own voice and thoughts rather than hand them off to a researcher that could potentially harm them (Griffin, 2012). This is something that is beneficial to people that have been oppressed and dominated by other individuals in their social relations. I suggest that it is beneficial for me to employ my own voice and thoughts on my gendered experiences in the workplace rather than hand them off to a researcher who may not develop an accurate depiction of my experiences (Griffin, 2012).

Conclusion

This chapter included an explanation of my methodology and summary of steps I took to conduct the research. The stages that were taken to conduct this study were carefully chosen with the goal of being able to understand and critically analyze my gendered relations in the workplace. The themes that were selected were chosen on the foundation of common patterns and occurrences of gender relations within the workplace. I also represented some of the positive aspects as well as the limitations of pursuing autoethnography as a research method.

Autoethnography offers me a means to understand and analyze the experiences I had while working in a male-dominated automotive manufacturing plant. The themes that represented my challenges and struggles in the workplace were: 1) negotiating dominant forms of masculinity, 2)

gender stereotyping and gender role expectations, 3) sexual harassment/ harassment and, 4) the ways in which women's bodies were considered suspect. In the discussion chapter, I will analyze and explore in more depth these themes I suggest are important to analyze. The next chapter reveals an important analysis in understanding my gender relations through feminist political economy. Ideas and arguments that I find to be important and influential in understanding and analyzing the relations I had are: 1) hegemonic masculinity (Acker, 2006; Bird, 1996; Connell, 1995; Gottfried, 2013), 2) gender division of labour (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013), 3) gender hierarchies at work (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013), and 4) embodied labour and bodies at work(Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013).

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings and Critical Analysis

This chapter presents a discussion and analysis of a qualitative study designed to explore the gendered relations I experienced in the male-dominated automotive manufacturing plant. I will delve into the themes that emerged from my autoethnography and perform an analysis through the feminist political economy theoretical perspective and other influential literature. My aim is that the gendered social experiences and interactions I had while working in the automotive industry will be better explained through conducting a feminist critical analysis. The passages from my autoethnographic narrative are examined in relation to the theme they were categorized into during the analysis. Each excerpt from my narrative is selected for its relevance in addressing my research questions. The excerpts from the journal are also referenced with the theme title to assist the reader through the data. The themes that I selected based on my autoethnographic narrative were: 1) negotiating dominant forms of masculinity, 2) gender stereotyping/gender role expectations, 3) sexual harassment, and 4) the ways in which women's bodies were considered suspect. I will adopt several concepts/ideas from feminist political theoretical perspectives as well as other literature to analyze these themes that I selected. I will employ concepts/theories such as: 1) hegemonic masculinity (Acker, 2006; Bird, 1996; Connell, 1995; Gottfried, 2013), 2) division of labour (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013), 3) gender hierarchies at work (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013), and 4) embodied labour and bodies at work (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013).

Summary of the Study

An autoethnographic qualitative study was conducted using experiences from the journal that I wrote a week after leaving the automotive manufacturing plant where I was employed for ten months. The research question is: how can I make sense of my experiences of gender

relations in the contemporary automotive industry? How can the existing literature assist me in theorizing about this experience? My journal was then broken down into reoccurring patterns that I suggest are important for the development of themes. I analyzed my journal using an inductive approach to thematic analysis. Feminist political economy was used to gain an understanding and analyze my experiences in a male-dominated workplace. As previously mentioned in other chapters, I argue the gendered relations that I experienced in the contemporary automotive industry were produced by the combination of structural/organizational and interactional processes. My experiences were produced by the gendered social structure/organization that disadvantaged me in relation to men's power, and also by the social relational process where certain meanings of what it means to be a woman and a man are constructed through social interaction (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013). The ontological approach that I am embracing in my research insists on beginning with actual individuals and understanding that human beings have agency, but also that the activities and actions of human beings are largely connected to social forces and structures (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013).

As mentioned previously in the methods chapter, I choose these specific themes as I thought they were most representative of the gendered relations I experienced in the workplace. Insights and patterns that emerged from the data as well as the critical analysis are presented. The findings are integrated to represent the reflexivity experienced between being both the subject and researcher. I present themes through the use of my journal recordings and immediately afterward I analyze these themes using feminist political economy theoretical perspective as well as other influential literature.

Theme One: Negotiating Dominant Forms of Masculinity

After three days of orientation I was brought into the shift meeting where I was introduced to my new workmates that I would be spending much of my time with over the next ten months. I immediately noticed that I was one of the only women in the department and this made me very much aware of my gender. I observed the men examining me while making quiet comments to their neighbour next to them. During my interview I was told that I should not be bothered by the actions/behaviours and comments from the men that I was to be working with. The male interviewer communicated to me that, “those guys have just been in the factory life for so long and are not accustomed to working with women. After all, boys will be boys.” He continued on suggesting that I should just ignore the comments and continue working even though, “that type of behaviour is not acceptable in this workplace.” I left the interview thinking that the “boys will be boys” mentality was accepted in that particular workplace and could not help thinking, “what did I just get myself into?”

As I have mentioned in previous chapters, it has been accepted by many scholars that women and men perform their gender in social interaction. According to Ridgeway (2009) and West and Zimmerman (2008) people bring their beliefs about gender into social relations without little reflexive thought, thus gendered performance becomes pervasive and taken for granted. Gender is so prevalent in Western culture that we tend to believe it is built into our genetics. I (as well as others) consider gender as a social construction that is naturalized and normalized, and is taken for granted as merely being part of our common sense. However, gender is dynamic and is created and recreated out of human interaction and is an essential way of organizing social life (Ridgeway, 2009; West and Zimmerman, 2008). Like culture, it can be argued that gender is also a human production that is dependent on everyone continuously “doing gender” (West and

Zimmerman, 2008). The interviewer made the statement “boys will be boys” which shows that he believes that men behaving in a masculine manner is completely “natural” and built in to their genetic makeup rather than being part of social expectations and interactions. Gender has become so much a common sense notion that this individual was able to excuse the behaviour of men working within the confines of the factory since after all they are just men, thus they cannot avoid behaving in a dominant masculine fashion. These common sense notions about gender also suggest a state of permanence and the inability to change, rather than considering that our actions and behaviours are relational and stem from social expectations our society establishes (Ridgeway, 2009; West and Zimmerman, 2008).

The individuals that I was introduced to seemed very nice and rather outspoken. They asked me several questions pertaining to my education, hobbies, and family. I was almost immediately asked, “What does your boyfriend think of you working here?” I was told I had to stay on A-shift for the first week and would be sent to C-shift the following week where I would reside. For my first day I was sent to train with the only woman working in the department that I was in. I only worked with her the one day, but she left with me some words of wisdom that had gotten her through the last twenty-four years working primarily with men on the assembly line. She strongly advised me that I should keep my personal life separate and not to share anything that was not work related. She communicated, “female students’ wind-up getting into trouble by trying to fit in and behave like ‘one of the boys’ and it just becomes a bad situation.” After four months of working there another female student was hired for B-line. I witnessed this young woman behaving in such a way that I was advised not to act by my female trainer. The men I worked with were often loud, aggressive, and domineering in social interactions. This young woman was as or even more loud, aggressive, obnoxious, as well as outwardly racist, and sexist.

She was someone that I considered pretty much one of the worst people I have ever been in contact with. She seemed to always want to be noticed and heard at every possible moment. She reminded me of how a man was expected to behave.

Demaiter & Adams (2009) suggest that in order to be successful in male-dominated environments, women often have to resort to behaving in ways that may not come easy to them. Women in male-dominated jobs often downplay their femininity, and function as “conceptual men.” Women may often withhold displaying emotion in the workplace, and consciously hide their femininity (Demaiter & Adams, 2009:34). They often feel that they are required to assume male characteristics and interactional styles to be able to achieve more success and acceptance in male-dominated organizations and workplaces. Many male-dominated jobs have been historically designed for men by men, to draw on masculine strengths and demonstrate characteristics valued in men (Demaiter & Adams, 2009; Gottfried, 2013). For instance, Demaiter and Adams (2009) suggest in the early 20th century that “valued” qualities necessary for manager titles and other positions of authority emphasized stereotypical characteristics for middle-class men. These “valued” characteristics included being emotionally distant, assertive, rational, and having high self-control. Demaiter and Adams (2009) reasoned,

...Good managers, like good men, were unemotional, intelligent, fair, and able to interact well with subordinates and colleagues alike. Male-dominated professions like medicine, law, dentistry, and engineering were similarly typified by “masculine” characteristics including mental toughness, aggressiveness, rationality (and being unemotional), authority, competence, and a commitment to work that entailed long hours on the job (p.34).

I feel this quote applies to my experiences in the workplace. Masculine characteristics were often considered more valued in the automotive industry. For instance, displaying emotions other than anger was deemed “girly” and were not appropriate for the workplace. I suggest that the

automotive industry like other male-dominated professions is considered to be an occupation where 'masculine' characteristics are deemed more valuable. Demaiter and Adams (2009) also claim that this puts women at a disadvantaged when entering male-dominated industries:

Women entering these fields have met opposition as employers, colleagues, and clients question whether they have the qualities it takes to succeed. Women often face what is described as a double-bind. To perform their jobs well, they must demonstrate so-called male characteristics like toughness and aggressiveness, but simultaneously appear somewhat feminine, to avoid being derogated or criticized. Women are expected to be "feminine" on the job, but when masculinity is associated with competence, feminine women risk appearing incompetent (p.34).

I agree with what the authors are communicating in this quote. When reflecting on the situation with this young woman I worked with I suspect that she was trying to display certain stereotypical male characteristics in order to succeed. When I analyze the situation with the young woman I worked with I suggest she was behaving in such a way that would allow her to cope with her present situation (Acker, 2006; Demaiter & Adams, 2009). I later discovered that this was her second time working as a student and had some pretty horrendous harassment and hazing type situations she dealt with in her first run in that particular workplace. For instance, she received notes applied to her back that she did not notice, constant rumors, and a situation where one day she went to put on her work gloves only to discover that there was glue in them. I believe this individual consciously tried to work and behave like a man in order to fit in and succeed. However, this did not work for her as she still experienced aggressive rumors and harassment. As Demaiter & Adams (2009) suggest "women who act as "conceptual men" sometimes pay a price for violating gender norms, and are criticized by colleagues and others for their lack of femininity" (2009:35).

After the initial weeks of working in my department I noticed the individuals I was working with started getting more 'comfortable' around me. Every so often I would hear comments from the guys and would receive more and more questions pertaining to personal information and private matters. Trying to fit in I would answer them if I did not feel uncomfortable and thought that they were just innocent questions with the motive of trying to get to know me. After a few weeks I began noticing that the guys started talking differently around me. They appeared to no longer feel the need to hold their tongues when I was present. I would receive questions pertaining to my boyfriend, my sexual past, what I prefer sexually, lesbian experiences (a topic they seemed to love), and if I have ever engaged in sexual relations with work associates in the past. When I would ignore them or communicate it was none of their business I would hear, "you're such a prude." They communicated it was no big deal unless I was ashamed of it. The topics on the assembly line were often of sports, women, business, and drinking/drugs. Conversations usually were around the Leafs losing or winning the night before or when the next game is. Many of these men grew up in sports families and seemed to know about the facts of the game and enjoyed conversing about it. I had no idea what they were talking about half the time, but I thought it gave them a sense of chumminess. During these conversations I could not help but feel more as an outsider than I already was.

Women's exclusion from, and subordination in, workplaces and institutions is also sustained through men's collective social relations. Analyzing these men's social networks in the workplace I was emerged in generates greater understanding of the interactional, discursive, and structural processes involved in maintaining gender inequality in workplaces (Flood & Pease, 2006). Male workers may maintain sex-based job segregation, male bonding, and male-focused networking by emphasizing boundaries in friendship and group relations. Male workers also may

aspire to exclude women from informal work-related networks. For instance, men in male-dominated environments may impart a greater recognition of each other's presence than of women, in turn communicating to women that they are not worth the acknowledgement (Flood & Pease, 2006; Martin, 2003; Martin 2006). Wendy Faulkner (2009) found in her engineering study that when it came to occupational and professional training, men created exclusively male in-groups. They accomplished this by excluding women from bonding experiences and refusing to speak to women altogether (Faulkner, 2009).

Men also often use women's presence to construct hegemonic masculinities and male privilege (Faulkner, 2009; Pease & Flood, 2006). Men in male-dominated workplaces may signify gender difference both by creating differences and by emphasizing existing ones. Pease and Flood (2006) argue these methods of exclusion are used by members of privileged groups for maintaining these social arrangements where men are superior and women are inferior. The concept of privilege in relation to men overlaps with Connell's (1995) concepts of patriarchal hegemonic masculinity and the importance of male-dominance. Privilege also provides a useful concept for analyzing the intersections of privilege and male-dominance in women's lives. Pease and Flood (2006) suggest the, "unjust gender relations are maintained by individual men's sexist and gendered practices, masculine workplace cultures, men's monopolies over decision-making and leadership, and powerful constructions of masculinity and male identity" (2006:4). My experiences of being invisible can be argued to be a strategic process of the male associates I worked with, as they were merely trying to maintain their dominance and male privilege. In relation to institutions and workplaces, the normalization of men's privilege and dominance is evident in the social relations and interactions of men. Various occupations such as the automotive industry are seen as intrinsically white and male. Women are considered "other" and

are invisible in male-dominated workplace which is maintained through the active pursuit of the men and their social relations with each other (Flood & Pease, 2006).

I began watching interactions with one individual and the rest of my workmates. Certain emotions and behaviours were considered inappropriate and highly stigmatized and were labelled “girly.” Any type of emotion (besides anger) that was enacted seemed like it was absolutely appalling in the workplace. For instance, when we were on the assembly line one day a certain individual conversed a great deal about his wife and personal life to me. However, I did notice that this was only when I was his only company. He communicated, “she is the best thing that ever happened to me.” However, when I would ask about her when there was another male worker present he always avoided the topic and changed the subject. In other interactions with the men we worked with I remember him saying, “Oh I tell her how it is all the time.”

The hegemonic masculine ideal involves detachment and independence. Emotions and behaviours that are typically associated with the behaviour of women are deemed inappropriate within social interaction (Bird, 1996; Connell, 1995; Gottfried, 2013). Among the emotions and behaviours considered inappropriate and highly stigmatized, are feelings associated with feminine expressions of affection and intimacy. For instance, sharing personal thoughts and feelings would be considered unsuitable behaviour for a male to perform especially in such a male-dominated environment such as the workplace I was in. The suppression of feminine emotions is merely a means for establishing hegemonic masculinity (Bird, 1996; Connell, 1995; Gottfried, 2013). Bird (1996) suggests that emotional detachment is one way in which gender hierarchies are maintained. Expressing emotions signifies weakness and is devalued, whereas emotional detachment signifies masculine strength and is valued. Those who express their

intimate actions are often excluded in male interaction and social groups. The repercussion for violating the hegemonic meaning of emotional detachment is to be put on the outside of the group (Bird, 1996). This suggests that there are often “subcultures” in the workplace. Steckley and Letts (2013) suggest “subcultures differ in some way from the dominant culture, but don’t directly oppose it” (67: 2013). Although some of the men I worked with did not directly oppose stereotypical masculine behaviours, their actions still differed from the dominant group, thus creating a type of subculture in the workplace (Letts, 2013).

Bird (1996) suggests hegemony of a certain type of masculinity is maintained through emotional detachment. The distinction separates the men from the women as well as the men who do not fit the hegemonic norm. Through emotional detachment, the meanings formed in regard to masculinity are exaggerated so as to distinguish clearly that men are not female. For instance, men actively suppress intimate emotions in the workplace since displaying emotions are generally associated as behaviours conducted by women. They try not to discuss details of their personal life or feelings, especially in the presence of other men. Difference becomes an aspect of self in which men have a valued investment. This individual I worked with understood that in order to be accepted by our other work associates that we worked with he would have to behave in a certain masculine and dominant way. The reality that he talked to me about his wife in a completely different fashion than when he spoke about her in others presence speaks mountains about hegemonic masculinity and the need to present one’s self in a certain way (Bird, 1996; Connell, 1995; Gottfried & Graham, 1993; Gottfried, 2013). This is important to consider as it demonstrates the strong pressure to conform to gender expectations.

One particular individual that I worked with was constantly harassed. It was almost daily that the other men would call him “fag” and “fudge packer” when he did not care to join in on sexually objectifying women or speak about his sexual conquests. This individual was labelled “emotional” and “girly” by the other male individuals I worked with. He was definitely one of the workers who was at the brunt of most of the jokes and also experienced the most amounts of negative behaviour and social interaction. He decided to laugh it off most of the time, but I could see it bothered him. Many of my work colleagues attempted on many occasions to convince me to engage in sexual activities with him and communicated to him that, “he needed to prove he was not gay.” I could not help but think that this was a strongly heteronormative workplace where the individuals I worked with frequently employed homophobic humour to prove their heterosexual identities. In the workplace words like “fag” and “homo” were constantly used in social interaction. I would hear things like, “you’ve got a fuckin gay car!” or routinely heard the men addressing the other individuals as “you big fag!”

Departures from the norm of emotional detachment and hegemonic masculinity obviously exist judging from my excerpt. There are clearly different individual depictions that will reflect an understanding of the dominant meanings of masculinity and how to behave as a man. However, this does not mean that men who choose not to behave in a stereotypical masculine demeanor do not incorporate these expectations into one’s self-concept (Bird, 1996). Although Bird’s (1996) findings suggest that men generally hide their feelings in the workplace, this was not always the case in my experience. This individual I worked with was kind, and made the decision not to engage in the expected masculine behaviour. However, there were consequences for this individual as there are for anyone who chooses to stray from social norms. The words “fag” and “queer” enforce a patriarchal, heterosexual, hegemony. George Smith (1998) argues:

Within the ideology of “fag,” characteristics made visible by the organization of gender are seen as documenting the “underlying pattern” of “fag.” Here the documentary method of interpretation enforces the difference, required by heterosexual hegemony, between what is properly male or female. Characteristics that blur this boundary (e.g. effeminacy, being “bookish” or unathletic) document the “underlying pattern” of “fag.” This is not just a mental activity, as the documentary method of interpretation seems to imply. Rather, it forms a social course of action contextualized by the relations of gender. Identifying a “fag,” and thereby engaging the ideology, is an activity usually organized within a group of male individuals (p.315-316).

There is an important relationship between the ideology of “fag” and hegemonic heterosexual masculinity (Frank, 1998; Connell, 1995; Smith, 1998). As I mentioned previously activities that define heterosexual masculinity are usually activated through activities of men in groups. Failure to join in risks initiating the cycle organized by the ideology of “fag” (Smith, 1998). My personal account of working with this individual shows that hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always the same for everyone. Rather, it is the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in most group gender interactions, however; this position is always contestable. Hegemonic heterosexual masculinity can be seen as a gender process that maintains patriarchy which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. Connell (1995) contends that “hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not the individual” (1995: 77). I would argue that institutions that are male-dominated provide a fairly convincing display of hegemonic masculinity that is not shaken by a feminist woman (such as me) or a few dissenting men. Calling this individual a “fag” because he shares his emotions and does not choose to objectify women is a means to maintain hegemonic heterosexual masculinity and group norms (Frank, 1998; Connell, 1995; Smith, 1998). The hegemony of this type of masculinity is upheld when people do not challenge it. This form of masculinity involves overt

homophobia. In order to be hegemonic it requires others not to speak out, to accept and to suppress alternatives to it (Frank, 1998; Connell, 1995; Smith, 1998).

Competition became very noticeable to me while working in this particular workplace. Competition in the form of arm wrestling (during downtime), conversations about who was performing better at their position on the assembly line, who could get a girl to talk to them in the lunch room, or who had the better car was a daily occurrence. There was often competition when it came to the team leader and group leaders acknowledging their work. I could not care less what the team leader and group leaders thought of me because this was a very short term position of employment. For these guys, they were in it for the long haul. They would persistently attempt to get the team leaders to notice when they would catch something like a crack or deform in one of the panels. I caught some of them even lying that they discovered a crack when it was indeed another individual on the assembly line. They would relentlessly struggle to be noticed and would shout or raise their voices just to make sure they were acknowledged by management. When there was a big problem with the way a part was being processed and the managers would approach the assembly line I noticed that the individuals I worked with would make certain they did not make a mistake and would concentrate on the task to a much higher degree than if they were not being watched.

The competition among the male individuals I worked with provides a stage for establishing themselves as 'properly' masculine. This competition also contributes to the perpetuation of male-dominance over women. Bird (1996) argues that "to establish self as not female, young men seek out other men with whom to display 'non-femaleness'. Male group interactions provide feedback and support for masculinity self-conceptualization. In this sense, masculinity

conceptualization is itself a form of competition” (1996: 128). In Bird’s investigation on men in male-dominated environments she claims that the men described competition as a crucial part to their self-conceptualization and preferred to be in competition with others. The norms and expectations of masculinity are that men are to be competitive with each other (Bird, 1996).

Livingstone and Seccombe (1996) can additionally offer an explanation for why I witnessed a worker lie about his locating the crack while working on the assembly line.

Livingstone and Seccombe (1996) state:

People typically seek to justify their actions, to themselves and to others, by reference to their responsibilities of their position. If criticized, they are inclined to defend their actions by claiming that they had “no real alternative” but to do what they did, given the constraints of the situation. In the process, they fuse (and confuse) their identity with the situation (p.134).

This particular worker has come to perceive the world from their position in the workplace, and their identity is combined with an institution or situation. This is not to say that all our viewpoints and personal ideologies are directing infused within institutional contexts that we are in, but it can be argued that most of the time people may believe that “whatever benefits them is consistent with the general welfare of the whole organization or society in the long run, and they act accordingly” (Livingstone & Seccombe, 1996: 135). This explanation can also demonstrate how a worker has a certain self interest in moving up in the work environment.

Another important explanation to consider as to why these men were so competitive with each other in the workplace context can be offered via a materialist rationalization. Livingstone and Seccombe (1996) suggest that the structure of the capitalist economy is built on antagonism. These scholars argue that working environments are intensely competitive. It is important to also offer material reasons for why these men wanted to present themselves in a certain manner for

their superiors (Livingstone & Seccombe, 1996). It is suggested that the subordinate members within work organizations are dependent on their leaders for their livelihoods. These scholars reason that “for Marxists, the personal insecurity of proletarian life under capitalism provides a compelling rationale for its overthrow; for workers, it has normally been a reason for pragmatic compliance within capitalist firms” (1996:158). Although workers may have a vested interest in the resistance of their exploitation in the capitalist system, they have their families and their own security and survival to consider. Subordinates working in the capitalist system are vulnerable to their superior’s opinions of them. After all, there exists a continuous ‘reserve army of labour’ that workers in the capitalist system are aware of, and thus, are reminded that there always remains people that are willing to replace them. This essentially means that the employed have to consistently ‘prove’ their worth in a work organization. Workers have to ensure that they are able to live independently and to secure their living standard for themselves and their families (Livingstone & Seccombe, 1996). It can be argued that ‘in the present economic context “capitalist cross-cutting has led to massive layoffs in large industries of the developed capitalist world, coupled with a drive by the governments of diverse political stripes to make the labour market “more flexible”- that is, to cut back on government social expenditure and income transfers to the unemployed” (Livingstone & Seccombe, 1996:145). These measures make the unemployed desperate to find work which intensifies competition. At the same time these changes also results in less security for employed workers. This results in workers becoming more competitive and more receptive to managements appeals for harder and more efficient work (Livingstone & Seccombe, 1996).

In this particular workplace culture it seems inadmissible to suppress what I considered distasteful conversation topics – at least not on the subject of women, sex or sexuality. Women

would walk by and they would make comments such as, “what I would get her to do to me” or “I wonder what she looks like without her clothes on.” There was also a lot of talk about sexual interactions with prostitutes and one night stands. Men would make comments such as “look at the jugs on her” or “look at that ass” in my daily work experience.

Women are often dehumanized as sexual objects, things or commodities reduced to body parts (Gruber, 1998). A woman becomes something to be used by a man, specifically, an object of his sexual desire. A woman’s humanity is denied when she is objectified. It is not about only treating someone as an object but seeing them as such. Objectification is denying a woman’s rational capabilities and diminishing their worth. This is how I felt when men would talk to me or about other women when we were on the assembly line. When trying to understand this gender relation it is important to have a broader understanding of Canadian society in terms of history, political economy, and culture which are structured through social organization of gender, “race”, and class (Bird, 1995; Connell, 1996; Gottfried, 2013). The social relations I had cannot be separated from both the historical and modern locations of the status of women held within Canadian society. Institutions such as the workplace have been shaped and influenced by the classed, racialized, and gendered policies and ideologies (Bird, 1995; Connell, 1996; Gottfried, 2013). Workplaces are comparable to other environments that people are engaged in. Therefore, it would not be beneficial to consider a place of employment solely as a setting of economic production, but it must also be recognized as a social and cultural environment. In addition, this environment similar to the larger culture is organized through established social relations, social practices, and cultural expectations (Bannerji, 1995). The workplace is a gendered environment where men put their masculinity on display and reassert their sexuality by signifying masculinity in opposition to and through the denial of both feminine and subordinated

masculinities (Bird, 1995; Connell, 1996; Gottfried, 2013). Women's bodies become an object to men's sexual desires. Gottfried (2013) claims,

... Feminist political economy emphasizes how central social institutions, including the economy, the polity, and the family are gendered to the extent that they privilege men and expressions of hegemonic masculinities on one hand, and penalize women and emphasized stereotypical characteristics devaluing femininity and alternative masculinities on the other. The idea of hegemonic masculinities draws on forms of rule in class society. Hegemony signifies economic and political power in terms of traits associated with expressions of masculinity. Control of institutions, through legitimate authority and decision-making capacity, typically rests with men who behave in ways that mobilize hegemonic masculinities and that enhance and entrench their own positions of power (p.30).

This quote from Gottfried sums up this section and my analysis on dominant forms of masculinity in the workplace. Gottfried is suggesting that in most societies men are indirectly, but also directly, encouraged to express a dominant version of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity can be considered a form of social regulation, a central organizing principle that supports present power arrangements. In my particular department all positions of authority were occupied by men. All of the top manager positions including the Japanese and Canadian presidents of the company were also held by men. My team leader also mobilized his power on many different occasions. For instance, when he would communicate by saying such things as "don't question me, what I say goes" or "I have to separate all of you because you all behave like fucking children." Hegemonic masculinity is articulated at many points within the economic, social and political structures of the material world. Hegemonic masculinity is often competitive and reflects a tendency for males to seek to dominate other males and subordinate females I argue some of the gendered relations I had with these individuals can be analyzed through a critical understanding that we unfortunately live in a society that has a certain gender order which privileges men in the family and in the economic sphere. This order impacts the ways that

men tend to behave and how they treat women. Men have a material interest in maintaining this particular gender order and when hegemonic masculinity is mobilized this allows them to maintain their superior role in society.

Theme Two: Gender Stereotyping and Gender Role Expectations

During one of my first interactions I was asked “do you really think you can handle this?” and “you’re a little small for this aren’t you?” I was also asked “did you even pass the physical for this job?” Within the extremely demanding lean production system, groups of workers were often outspoken about their opinions of women’s skills and ability in regards to properly being able to function in the factory. In these negative constructions, my physical characteristics were highlighted quite frequently. I - as well as other women - was portrayed as lacking, as a whole, to carry out the physical characteristics that were obligatory for the job. The exceptionally strong or handy women who can actually do ‘heavy’ jobs were called “lesbians.” My team leader gave me the nickname “princess” and I thought immediately ‘this guy clearly associates physical inability with being a woman.’

In this excerpt women are portrayed as being deficient and weak as they are considered to lack the physical characteristics necessary to carry out the jobs that are expected of them. I was treated with the assumption that physical inability is strongly associated with being a woman. The association is so strong that in the factory the term ‘women’s jobs’ was used to refer to the few jobs that were ‘easy’ and ‘light’ enough to be carried out by women. The assigned roles and stereotypes of women in Western society transcend into the workplace and women are often expected to adhere to them (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013). The notion of women confronting and resisting the cultural norms and entering into roles that are

uncharacteristic for women within male-dominated professions is still a novelty to some (Luxton & Livingstone, 1996). Men continue to be viewed as the dominant figure and the breadwinner within the family unit and the expectation appeared that women are to be submissive to the men and assume careers more orientated to domestic stereotypes for females (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013; Luxton & Livingstone, 1996). Luxton and Livingstone (1996) suggest that in male-dominated workplaces it is assumed that the workers are and should be male. It can be argued that “such ideas are a part of a larger ideology that accepts the existence of a decisive sex/gender division of labour, fundamental to the belief that women should be first and foremost wives and mothers, and men primarily breadwinners” (1996:113). This was my experience while working in the automotive industry. This particular workplace considered men to be the only gender that should be working in the industry. This created a masculine shop floor culture (Luxton & Livingstone, 1996). In the study of steel workers Luxton and Livingstone (1992) maintain that it is much more complex than males wanting to be superior, but is rather about their worth as individuals:

The notion of steelmaking as essentially men’s work is not merely a simplistic assertion of male chauvinism, but is typically bound to a deeper sense of responsibility to provide for their families. Both the wages earned and the very sacrifice and strength required to the work offer a basic self-esteem and self-worth. The wage packet is seen as confirming that the man has fulfilled his obligation as family provider (p.244).

My experience demonstrated that if I were to be accepted into a male-dominated profession like automotive manufacturing, it was on the condition that I was to obey specifically assigned roles and stereotypes that are a large part of our culture and society (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013). I do agree with the above quotation as I suggest that in my experience the individuals I worked with did perceive their work as a way to display that they have to ability to take care of their families, which gave them a sense of self-esteem and self- worth. They felt like

they were providing for their families, and this allowed them to feel competent as men. These assigned roles and expectations are also used as a basis for discrimination against women in the workplace as a means of ensuring that men remain dominant in society. The minority status of women in male-dominated professions leads to forms of discrimination in assigning stereotypical sex roles and expectations relating to women. This originates from cultural and societal norms which require that women play a submissive role to men and follow traditional patriarchal structures within the family unit (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013). These societal norms and social expectations inevitably cascade into an organization such as the workplace, where they are reproduced and maintained through the use of discriminatory role allocations. The organization culture that I worked in, therefore, continues to reflect traditional patriarchal role distribution and expectations of women (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013).

I was known by work associates to engage in swearing and language my mother thinks is profane. I was no different than the men when it came to my use of certain language. If I get angry or am passionate about something I may use language that I have been told on many occasions to be 'un-lady like' or 'unattractive'. This was no different in the workplace for me. I got angry about different things just like everyone else did. For instance, there were several occasions where the guys thought it would be funny to mess around and hide the foot pedal for the lift assist. This meant that the assembly line would go down because I would have to climb under the table to retrieve it. When I would get noticeably pissed off about it they would say, "That's no way for a lady to act." Men would often apologize for swearing in front of me. There is a rather quaint sense that women would be offended by swearing or have to be protected from it.

There is an obvious reason for these comments that I received while working. It is believed by Western society that there are certain properties and personal characteristics that are shared by all women and can readily be identified as “natural” (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013). We have the confidence and belief that there are uniquely feminine and masculine essences which exist independently of our socialization and social interactions (Mandell, 2005). Essentialism easily slides into biological essentialism because women’s necessary properties are most readily identified as innate. Differences between the sexes have been used to justify inequities between men and women. This harms women emotionally, financially and physically. Typically all women are signified by their possession of wombs, breasts and reproductive abilities. Arguably, this dominant belief plays a crucial ideological role in justifying women’s confinement to the domestic sphere as “natural” and necessary (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013; Mandell, 2005). Women are thought as essentially having certain characteristics such as: submissive, emotional, and nurturing. Feminism (liberal feminism for example) is not off the hook when making false assumptions about women’s certain “essential properties.” For instance, the notion of the “unessential woman” has been raised by women of colour for quite some time (Mandell, 2005). The men I worked with assumed that I would have certain “natural” properties and since I was behaving in a fashion that was unnatural for a woman they communicated their opinions on the matter.

During a particularly quiet day I remember we had a lot of downtime and I was sent to mop up oil (the only person that was sent perform this task) once again. When I was being observed by one the drivers to be mopping away he drove up close and made the comment, “you’re finally doing what a woman is supposed to be doing.” That comment, or a similar remark, was made several times to me during that day where I spent the majority of time

mopping up oil. During downtime I was also expected to perform such tasks as sorting gloves, cleaning the graffiti off the table, sweeping, or cleaning out the bins where we had our personal protective equipment in. In the factory these roles were considered 'women's jobs' which was used to refer to the few jobs that were 'easy' and 'light' enough to be carried out by women. I felt that being a woman allowed the men I worked with to place me into certain stereotypically feminine identities – most commonly as (hetero) sexually available or as mother. I also noticed that women were considered 'ugly lesbians' or 'pretty and only out to find a man.' I got the idea women who are really into factory work are not 'real women'. I could not help thinking that in the workplace the notion of a real woman is defined in heteronormative terms: she is heterosexual, attractive to men, and is in the home.

The guys were usually sent out of the department to assist where they were needed or they were expected to do hand work. There apparently was a rule against students doing hand work, but I noticed a male student doing handwork on many occasions. The guys made mention several times that the department allowed the male students to perform hand work in the past and it was just because I was a girl and could not handle it. They often communicated that "handwork takes skill and you don't have it" or "you don't know what you're doing and will just fuck it up." I was also not allowed to use any of the machines including the sander or the drill which were required for certain handwork jobs.

In the past feminists have observed how women's reproductive roles are the source of women's oppression. Biology may separate the sexes, but that division relegates an massive amount of unpaid reproductive labour to women. As women care and nurture the children, men have been freer to participate in public life and social institutions, where they can acquire power and

privilege. This contributes to their superior social status. This seemingly “natural” sexual division of labour (men in public and women in domestic realm) essentially means that women are at the mercy of their biology (Mandell, 2005). Capitalism brought with it a reorganization of women and men’s relationship to the economy and a system of relations mediated by monetary gain. The domestic setting became sharply distinguished from the relations of capital and the public sphere. While women remained at work in the domestic sphere, men were more active in the public sphere that connected them to the market (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013). Capitalism has now shattered the relationships between production and reproduction. Production is largely about the accumulation of capital. Taking care of family and performing domestic duties are not considered to be an important contribution to the main business of capitalism. These views on reproductive labour have not changed over the years (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2013; Luxton, 2006; Waring, 2003).

In industrial capitalism a sexual division of labour takes place, where the female body is stereotypically thought of being permanently placed within the home whereas, the male belongs in the public sphere. Women entering the work environment have in the past and continue to be “undercut by the ideological construction of the two “spheres” and cultural and moral assumptions and behaviours appropriate to that division. This has had dire personal and economic consequences for all women and has been the centre of debates regarding women in ‘non-traditional’ jobs, or the value of housework” (Bannerji, 1999:133). Virtually everything in our society is male-centered and reflects the standpoint of the men. Patriarchy is entrenched in every institution that has been created in society. Just thinking about our laws and our legal system that is patriarchal provides us with an important example. For instance, all mainstream religions have been created by men and are preserved by male authority figures. What is

important to understand is that there are interconnections between institutions in the labour market, the domestic sphere, and the state that all have gender assumptions built into them that work to structure a particular sexual division of labour between men and women (Bannerji, 1999; Gottfried, 2013). When thinking about my relations with men in the workplace I can see that men's ideas concerning women's proper place being in the home as stemming from this historical sexual division of labour. Heidi Gottfried (2013) suggests that in workplaces

...Women tend to carve out a 'private' space away from men and use gossip to demarcate their class and gender positions and identities; while men are more likely to confront women openly by putting their masculinity on public display, excluding women through the sex-typing of jobs. In place of monolithic cooperative culture there emerges subcultures which pattern workers' identities, meanings, and actions in terms of a social distinction between masculinity and femininity, and in so doing tend to ratify stereotypical gender identities and reinforce a transitional sexual divisor of labour (p.615).

A sexual division of labour occurred in the workplace where I was working when I was given segregated tasks along gender lines. I was given duties that were considered 'light' and less physically demanding, tasks that were considered easier and more "natural" for a woman. This sexual division of labour was also upheld by management practices. Gottfried and Graham (1993) suggest men actively reinforce a traditional sexual division of labour by defining and preserving certain aspects of technology and manual skill as male domains. They suggest that "similar to other manufacturing plants, particularly work places with a mixed sex-composition, a heavy/light and dangerous/less dangerous dichotomy differentiated male from female work respectively" (1993: 617). As I mentioned previously, this is exactly what I experienced in the workplace.

In Gottfried and Graham's (1993) study of Japanese automotive workers they discovered that while both men and women performed tasks and made repairs as cars moved along on the overhead conveyor system, men exclusively assembled large parts like the engine and installed them using different tools. Typically women perform devalued tasks such as sub-assembly jobs that were considered light and did not use machines and other mechanical tools. Women's jobs were considered unskilled and less valuable (Gottfried & Graham, 1993). Male anxiety over the disturbance of the bond between factory work and masculinity had explicit ideological expression in the ways that men openly displayed their masculinity. Gottfried and Graham (1993) claim that work teams have the ability to disrupt male-domination by rotating jobs between team's members regardless of their gender, but instead of these disappearing men actively try to maintain a traditional sexual division of labour as they often seek out the control over machines and certain work processes. Men may associate masculinity with 'hard work' thereby maintaining the capitalist production as well-oiled machine. The experiences of women working in the Japanese assembly plants are very similar to what I dealt with working in the automotive industry. It appeared that the men I worked with were extremely well vested in trying to keep me in the roles that they believed were more appropriate for a woman (Gottfried & Graham, 1993).

During one of their routine questionings they asked me "when are you and your boyfriend going to have kids and get married?" When I simply responded, "we aren't" I got the impression judging by their facial expressions that this was a completely unexpected response. One of the guys responded "of course you are its completely 'natural' for women to get married and have children." This discussion went on for what seemed like ages. Even when a driver stopped by and joined in on the conversation I remember him saying "you will change your mind, women

always do.” During many conversations there was mention that women were supposed to be in the home. Their expectation was that since they brought more financial stability their wives are expected to cook, clean, and take care of the children. One of the younger drivers made mention that he had never even touched a diaper and his child was now three! I felt as though the men I worked with never saw a woman outside those walls and could not believe they actually had wives and daughters the way they talked to me. The constant mention that women as less invested workers and cannot perform the same tasks that a man could was a daily occurrence for me. It was also suggested that they have to work much harder at work than their wives at home so the expectation is that the wife completes all the domestic chores and cares for the children.

Meg Luxton (2006) considers the socially necessary unpaid domestic labour that women perform to be one of the largest contributions that women generate to the economy. Judging by the comments I received daily about it being “natural” and “normal” for me to procreate and get married. These men did not feel that it was actually a huge contribution that women make to the economy through their unpaid reproductive labour, it was considered something that I was born to do and that impacts the way I was treated in the workplace. In Canada and others parts of the world, most unpaid work is performed by women. Waring (2003) suggests that unpaid female labour throughout the world is officially considered as being “non-productive” as it produces no progression when it comes to the economy. Waring addresses certain issues such as the invisibility and the lack of value that we associate with women’s work in the home and elsewhere. The oftentimes consuming and strenuous work that women perform in their daily lives goes unpaid is considered officially of no importance (Waring, 2003). Since women’s unpaid work has no dollar value attached to it, the governments have in the past, neglected to measure the time that is dedicated to unpaid work each and every day. For these reasons many of

women's activities are not taken into account in the development of laws and policies. This exclusion is extremely problematic as it has/had the ability to intensify existing social inequalities (Waring, 2003).

Social institutions in Canada, including the economy, are gendered to the extent that they privilege men. Furthermore, the control of these institutions rests on the authority of men who may resort to behaving in fashions that may enhance their dominance within the Canadian society. Within these institutions they may create means of making it so that it is difficult for women to become even close to establishing a form of equality (Luxton, 2006). Marylyn Waring (2003) argues political economy theories conceptualize the capitalist economic system only in relationship to the production of goods and services that are exchanged for money in the market. Feminist political economists claim that productive work depends on reproductive work. Social reproductive work involves the activities aimed at the daily care of human beings including the nurturing, feeding, emotional support, teaching, and clothing individuals. These activities are required to assist workers in their productive jobs. Joan Acker (2004) argues:

The division between commodity production in the capitalist economy and reproduction of human beings and their ability to labor has long been identified by feminists as a fundamental process in women's subordination in capitalist societies. This organization of social life carries contradictory potentials: production is organized around goals of capital accumulation, not around meeting the reproductive and survival needs of people. Women have been subordinate in both domains, held responsible for unpaid reproductive labor and consigned to positions with less power and lower pay than men within the sphere of production. Men, unburdened by reproduction responsibilities and already the major wielders of power, built the factories and railroads, and managed the developing capitalist enterprises. Thus, the structural and ideological division between production and reproduction was shaped along lines of gender and contributed to continuing gendered inequalities (p.23).

The historical development and widespread conviction that women's proper place is within the home and that it is seen as "natural" assists us in understanding women's economic and social position (Waring, 2003). Waring (2003) claims that one of the cultural/structural forms embedded in dominance of men has been the classification that only men identify with production and the economy, whereas women are put into the classification of identifying with only domesticity (Waring, 2003). This ideological construction completely contrasts with the actual organization of production and reproduction, as women are often as much a part of being producers and well as reproducers. This gendered organization of social life provides the grounds for the idea that reproduction is 'natural' and 'normal' which impacts the equality for the lives of women and men (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013; Waring, 2003).

The devaluation and invisibility of care work may stem from a cultural construction of motherhood which is based on the ideology of domesticity that assumes that it is an obligation or that it is "natural" for women to perform this type of work. The ideology of care work appears to function completely outside the market of monetary gain and wealth. I believe that the devaluation of care and domestic labour is rooted in the social construction of housework as a woman's duty rather than a form of productive labour. The family is presented according to the state as if it is private and thus unrelated to the public functions of the state. Theorists have suggested (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2010; Luxton & Lahey, 1998; Waring, 2003) that institutions are organized around the idea that men should be the breadwinner and women's proper place is within the home. In my mind these comments about women being in the home and that it is unnatural for me to work in the factory is because in Western society a woman's place is in the home performing the tasks which are deemed "natural". This protects male privilege through the invisibility of women's reproductive labour within the home. The fact that

reproductive labour that women perform in the home is devalued allows for men to believe that they earn the income which leads to them having more power and privilege inside and outside of the workplace (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2010; Luxton & Lahey, 1998; Waring, 2003).

I suggest that the role of the state in perpetuating patriarchal gender relations cannot be overlooked when reflecting on women's paid and unpaid work. I believe that the state depends on certain social inequalities to be maintained in order for the capitalist economic system to thrive. An example of this would be a feminization of the workforce. The market is contingent on women's unpaid work in social reproduction and inequality in the workplace. The government depends on maintaining a certain gendered order that has been institutionalized in Canada and in other parts of the world. Feminist political economists suggest that it is the material conditions of women's lives (their role in the family and their marginalized role in paid employment) results in their dependence and powerlessness in the social order (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2010; Luxton & Lahey, 1998; Waring, 2003). Comments I received about women's reproductive labour being natural allows for men to receive the income and the power. As I have mentioned before in order for capitalism and production to continue to thrive women are needed to perform free labour within the home. Comments I received while working demonstrate this need for the continuation and maintenance for a certain gender order and economic system based on inequality.

Theme Three: Sexual Harassment/ Harassment

When I first started the job the individuals I worked with tried very hard to censor their conversations and comments while I was around. After a short time this changed dramatically. On many different occasions (too many to count) I had sexual comments directed at me.

Comments like “while you’re down there” or “no, we can’t rotate the line because then I won’t get a view of Meagan’s ass.” I remembered one occasion during a typically long, hot, and dull midnight shift I said, “kill me now” out of frustration and sheer boredom and the response I received was “not before I have my way with you.” There was also a typically disturbing incident when I came in one morning when on the day shift where one of the guys came up to me and said, “you need to buy me a new alarm clock” and I replied, “oh, why is that?” and he proceeded to say, “last night I was jerking off while thinking about you and came all over my alarm clock and it doesn’t work anymore.” At that moment I felt like I was going heave my breakfast all over him. There were other occurrences when we would all leave as a group to walk to the lunch room to have our breaks I would hear comments such as, “Meagan walk ahead of us so we can get a good look at that ass.”

My experience of harassment in the workplace was extensive and ranged from job sabotage and being subjected to various vulgarities. There were many occasions where there was active sabotage of work for which I was responsible. For instance, not pulling out carts in time or bringing me new carts was a frequent occurrence. We also had lift assists for picking up the panels that were in bundles and during many occasions the guys would hide or kick the peddle away from me. I was also referred to as “the bitch” and also got called a “fucking bitch” on several different occasions. I was usually called a bitch when I would request that the men stop their comments or when I would yell back at them during a heated discussion. There were also many different occasions where I was shown pictures of the “sunshine girls” during lunch and dinner breaks.

I started driving in with a fellow workmate as I did not like to drive in the snow and it did not take long for me to start hearing rumors about me having sexual relations with this individual. I was asked constantly if I had given him “road head” on the way to work. This individual began being referred to as “my boyfriend.” I also heard that I had grabbed some guy’s testicles and gave another individual a blow job in the bathroom. I knew I was experiencing an environment that was hostile to my gender. For instance, being bombarded with pornographic pictures on the conveyor belts where women were seen to be giving men oral sex.

A situation that continues to be typically problematic getting over was with a male fellow employee. When I was first introduced to this individual that I am going to call Ben I thought he was extremely friendly but very quiet. He did not say much at first but began opening up. After a while he began making comments to me about the fact he thought I was violent and disrespectful to the other individuals I worked with. He witnessed me joking around with another male employee frequently where we would say things like “oh I am going to get you” or “you will get what’s coming to you”. It was harmless innocent banter that Ben did not like. He made mention to me that “you’re not to talk like that again.” I have never quite felt like I did in that moment. I got this chill up my spine as I got the feeling he was threatening me. I responded to him “we were just playing around.” This happened several times over the next few weeks where Ben would come up to me and quietly say that I was not to act that way with this individual again. I finally asked him why he had not gone up to the male that I was joking around with and tell him not to act that way. He just walked away each time I asked, except for the one occasion where he responded, “why do you have to be such a fucking bitch?” The way in which Ben took such interest in my social interactions at work was unsettling and made me feel nervous. When I would be joking with a co-worker about “getting them” or “giving them their comeuppance” in

an isolated conversation, Ben would intrude and demand that I not address this individual in that manner. Often times Ben would only convey his displeasure about my conversations with other individuals to me in private, conversations he was not privy to, but felt his opinions or concerns were necessary. His unwanted and unwarranted involvement in my social interactions at work as well as my overall performance made me feel like he was making a personal effort to degrade and control me in the workplace separate from the already daunting regulation of the organization. Ben was not my supervisor, team leader, boss or manager, he was simply an employee with too much invested interest in me, and it terrified me.

The interactions became worse over time. For instance, I was told to check some panels for some cracks and when I was seen talking to one of the drivers Ben started yelling things at me from across the hall like, "Meagan, get back to work." He did not say anything to the person I was talking to. On several occasions he would laugh when he would walk by me. I was terrified of this individual. I have never felt this way about anyone I have ever had social interactions with. This feeling would not go away and I was very worried about going into work especially on the midnight shift when we were one of the only departments running. Walking through the plant at night I made sure I was with someone at all times. I was worried about my safety all the time. I decided that it was time to go in and talk to my team leader about Ben. My group leader determined that the best approach to fixing the situation was to go retrieve Ben from his assembly line position so we could all sit down together. The strangest thing happened after this. Ben began saying things like, "Meagan is bending over tables trying to seduce me" and "she is teasing me and is coming on to me." A million thoughts were running through my head at that moment. I felt nauseous and could feel my heart beating through my chest. I could not believe what I was hearing. The situation did not improve and the group leader just said he

needed us to get along and that was it. The situation progressively got worse and I found myself constantly watching for him. I considered quitting my job each day and there was several times I called in sick to work because of this fear. Up until that point people for the most part stayed out of it. However, eventually one of the guys went to group leader about Ben yelling things at me and not pulling out carts (which was his job) and he was eventually shifted to A-line. This is something that still bothers me to this day. I was absolutely frightened of this individual and could not shake the feeling that he was going to harm me in some way.

Work environments are very similar to other social settings in our culture. It cannot be denied that we live in a very racist, sexist, heteronormative, and classed society. It is important to recognize that social issues and perceptions are not surrendered when entering the working environment, and in some cases I argue they are amplified. The men were behaving in such a way that allowed them to sustain their male-dominance that they have grown so accustomed too. They viewed me as a threat to their power and they needed to discard of me even if I was there for a short period of time. To build a more comprehensive understanding of gender discrimination and harassment it is important to consider discrimination as a process connected to the larger gender system. This means exploring the cultural component of gender ideology and the behaviours of institutional individuals in everyday work settings (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Bannerji, 1995; Gottfried, 2010). Men often commit violence and harass women in the workplace and outside in other arenas because their power in society allows them to do so. Their historical property rights over women along with their contemporary position have allowed them to hold the power to oppress and violate women (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Bannerji, 1995; Gottfried, 2013). What I mean here is that the harassment that I experienced in the workplace is a reflection of male power and privileges in society.

Bannerji (1995) argues we cannot separate the work environment from the social world we live in (45:1995). In order to understand our social experiences we need to look at them in relation to how Canadian society is historically connected to patriarchy. I find it to be essential in understanding my gender relations to recognize that the characteristics of the workplace are connected to the broader Canadian society (Bannerji, 45:1995). I argue that Ben and the other individuals I was working with were trying to maintain an organizational culture that is heavily masculinized and unwelcoming to women. I may have been perceived as different from the social expectation and norm of how a woman is supposed to perform her gender (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Bannerji; Gottfried, 2013). Ben and other male individuals I was working with were trying to assert control and dominance by directly using forms of hostility against me. The status quo can be defended by harassing women and using misogynist language. The reasons for men's resistance include the patriarchal privilege and threats to identity that occur with change. If social definitions of masculinity include being the breadwinner and being "strong," then men may be offended by women's professional progress because it makes men seem less worthy of respect. Resistance may also reflect ideological defense of male supremacy (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Bannerji; Connell, 1995; Gottfried, 2013).

Power is an essential part of feminist theories dealing with women and the sexual harassment they experience. I became a target when I challenged my subordinate position in the gender system. Sexual harassment can be seen to be a means for men to police gender in the workplace by using certain discriminatory and sexist behaviour to penalize gender nonconformity. McLaughlin, Uggem, and Blackstone (2012) contend that this is especially true for women in roles of authority in the workplace. They reason that the consequence for women holding positions of authority and power is that it makes them likely targets for sexual

harassment and discrimination. It is suggested that these women directly challenge the superiority of men which is a threat that men consider to be unacceptable. McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone argue “when women’s power is viewed as illegitimate or easily undermined, co-workers, clients, and supervisors appear to employ harassment as an “equalizer” against women supervisors, consistent with research showing that harassment is less about sexual desire than about control and domination” (2012: 641). Along similar lines, females who are “too assertive” threaten the gender hierarchy and are denigrated through harassment. Women’s isolation in male-dominated industries also leaves them in positions that make them vulnerable to harassment. I agree with these social researchers and suggest that the harassment I received while working in the workplace was more about maintaining domination and control over a woman that was not following her gender expectations (McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2012). I do not believe the comments I heard were not completely about sexual desire but rather a way to put me back into my “place.”

Theme Four: Women’s Bodies Considered Suspect in the Workplace

In the workplace I strongly felt that men’s bodies were preferred over women’s. Through social interactions with male colleagues I became aware that women’s bodies were deemed suspect or disorderly. A widespread complaint in the workplace was about how frequently I asked to go to use the bathroom. This was interpreted as a way to take a break from the line. I would hear comments, “what’s wrong with you?” or “how is it possible you have to go to the bathroom again”? Little could be done, however, as “women have their periods.” This seemed like a constant discussion with me and the other individuals I worked with. It had gotten so ridiculous at some points they would actually time my bathroom breaks. My moods were always blamed on my menstrual cycle. I cannot keep track of how many instances there were when I

would communicate my distaste for something such as a conversation topic, the weather, the next part we were doing, and in turn, I was being “bitchy” because I was on my period. I would hear from the guys when I would say something that apparently made me bitchy, “Meagan’s is on her rag” or “Meagan, I think your tampon is up there a bit too far.” The same comments went for when I was being “too emotional.”

During one shift on the assembly line a fellow worker and I were talking about his wife and kids and their relationships. This individual talked about his wife frequently and I had also met her a few times. It threw me off during this one conversation when he shared with me that “the best thing for our relationship was when my wife had a hysterectomy.” I responded to this by simply asking “why do you say that?” and he replied that “she has never been nicer, she is extremely easy going now, and has lost all her ‘bitchy’ and ‘womanly’ ways”! There were also many comments that I heard from the younger men about their wives that recently had children. I asked this one individual how his wife was after the delivery of their new baby. He replied “she is doing well, but her vagina is a mess. I won’t be going near there for a while”!

I always felt that my body was constructed as weak and the men I worked with perceived their bodies to be strong and masculine. I was only ever called out to work in another department on one occasion in the ten months I worked in the automotive plant. Every other worker in my department was called out to do repairs on parts, checks in the lots, or to fix deforms. When I asked why this was my team leader said it was because I did not have the experience. However, I knew this was not the case as I had seen male students leave to perform out of department tasks. I heard comments that women’s bodies were weak and could not perform the tasks that needed to be fulfilled. I was asked several times if I wanted to rotate early

or swap positions on the assembly line so that I did not have to lift the parts. I felt that I was looked at as the weak little girl that could not perform the same tasks that the men could.

Gottfried and Graham (1993) in their investigation of Japanese assembly line workers indicate that women are defined as the “other” because they are considered to lack body strength that allows them to perform their jobs to the same level as the typical production worker who is assumed to be biologically male. I agree with the arguments presented by these scholars suggesting that the construction of hegemonic masculinity includes the subordination of women’s bodies to that of men’s. This often means that women become ‘disabled’ workers (Gottfried & Graham, 1993). Joan Acker (2006) suggests that in spite of the erosion of the old male/provider and female/housewife model, work continues to be organized on a masculine standard of the worker. Although it could be assumed that organizational structures such as the workplace are gender neutral, Acker maintains this is not the case. One can even communicate that their gendered nature is masked through obscuring the embodied nature of work. Acker (2006) suggests,

...Abstract jobs and hierarchies, common concepts in organizational thinking, assume a disembodied and universal worker. This worker is actually a man; men’s bodies, sexuality, and relationship to procreation and paid work are subsumed in the image of the worker. Images of men’s bodies and masculinity pervade organizational processes, marginalizing women and contributing to the maintenance of gender segregation in organizations. The positing of gender-neutral and disembodied organizational structures and work relations is part of the larger strategy of control in individual capitalist societies, which, at least, are partly built upon a deeply embedded subculture of gender difference (p.139).

Work organizations are central locations where much of the social and economic inequality in industrial countries is created and maintained. Organizational theorists have shown that the gendering of organizations contribute to the inequalities between men and women. Gender is not

the only social identity that is used as a base for inequality in organizations (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013). For instance, as I have suggested previously, on the assembly line heterosexuality is assumed in many organizing processes and is reproduced through social interaction (Smith, 1995). Homosexuality can be considered disruptive in organizations such as the workplace as it breaks the assumptions of heterosexuality. Homosexuality continues to carry a stigma that creates inequality for lesbians and homosexual individuals. Other bases of inequality are 'race', age, and physical disability. Generally speaking, feminist political economists claim (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013) that organizational structures such as the workplace are organized and based on the image of a white man who is completely dedicated to the demands of work and is minimally responsible for unimportant tasks such as housework and caring for children. The imaginative worker is able to devote hours of continuous work away the domestic space where they are able to pay complete attention to work and are capable of fulfilling all expectations. In consequence, women are perceived as not being able to perform to the same level as the white male worker as they have more obligations outside of work than men do. It is argued that this gendered organization of work is essential in maintaining gender inequality in organizations such as the workplace and thus, the unequal distribution of women and men in organizational class hierarchies (Acker, 2006).

Organizations will employ different recruitment and hiring processes in order to locate a worker that is most suitable for a job position. Acker suggests (2006) that images of appropriate gendered and racialized bodies influence the perceptions and hiring of those in power. White bodies are often favoured and preferred, however; Acker asserts that female bodies are deemed more suitable for some roles while male bodies for other positions in a workplace. It is important to understand that there is a fundamental distinction that should be made between the gendered

organization of work and the gender and racial characteristics of the ideal worker. Although work is organized on the model of the ideal worker being that of a white man, this does not mean that men are necessarily the ideal workers for all jobs. Many roles within workplaces are considered ideal for a woman to perform. The ideal worker in the form of a female body is preferred when employers believe women are docile and will not question orders or the low wages they are paid, this is often a woman of colour as they are seen most desirable for these positions. Joan Acker (2006) states,

...Hiring through social networks is one of the ways in which gender and racial inequalities are maintained in organizations. Affirmative action programs altered hiring practices in many organizations, requiring open advertising for positions and selection based on gender and race-neutral criteria of competence, rather than selection based on an old boy (white) network. These changes in hiring practices contributed to the increasing proportions of white women and people of color in a variety of occupations. However, criteria of competence do not automatically translate into gender and race-neutral selection decisions. "Competence" involves judgment: The race and gender of both the applicant and the decision makers can affect that judgment, resulting in decisions that white males are the more competent, more suited to the job than are others. Thus, gender and race as a basis for hiring or a basis for exclusion have not been eliminated in many organizations, as continuing patterns of segregation attest (p.452).

Although I was hired into a male-dominated work setting (as many women are) this did not mean that I was not subject to gender discrimination and bias. Although I was employed in this organization I still was given certain jobs based on their expectations of my abilities. My body was considered disabled when compared to that of a man's. Even though women are now hired more in organizations this does not mean they do not experience certain views and stereotypes based on their level of competence and skill level (Acker, 2006).

Organizational logic has become an important feminist tool for looking at gender inequality and bodied labour. It has also been a means that I have employed in understanding the comments I heard about women's bodies. Acker (1990) argues:

In organizational logic, both jobs and hierarchies are abstract categories that have no occupants, no human bodies, no gender. However, an abstract job can exist, can be transformed into a concrete instance only if there is a worker. In organizational logic filling the abstract job is a disembodied worker who exists only for the work. Such a hypothetical worker cannot have other imperatives of existence that impinge upon the job. At the very least, outsider imperatives cannot be included within the definition of the job. Too many obligations outside the boundaries of the job would make a worker unsuited for the position (p.149).

Acker suggests the concept of a 'job' such as in the automotive industry can be argued to be implicitly a gendered concept, even though organizational logic states that it is gender neutral (Acker, 1990). A "job" already contains the gender-based division of labour where men are deemed appropriate for the productive sphere and women are in the domestic sphere. The concept of a 'job' assumes a particular gendered organization of domestic life and social production. Acker (1990) continues by suggesting that

...The closest disembodied worker doing the abstract job comes to a real worker is the male worker whose life centers on his full-time, life-long job, while his wife or another woman takes care of his personal needs and his children. While the realities of life in industrial capitalism never allowed all men to live out to this ideal, it was the goal for labor unions and the image of the worker in social and economic theory. The woman worker, assumed to have legitimate obligations than those required by the job, did not fit with the abstract job (p.149).

Hierarchies in the workplace are gendered because they are constructed on certain underlying assumptions. Those who are committed to paid employment are "naturally" more suited to this type of responsibility. Those who must divide their time between work and home are considered disabled workers and are treated as such (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013). It is suggested that the

gender-neutral status of a job which is based on the idea that the worker is abstract and disembodied is a façade as workers are deeply gendered and bodied. Although women may work in male-dominated fields it is clear that the worker represents one sex and one gender. Women still stand in opposition to the universal individual who is constructed from a male body who identifies as being masculine. The concept of a white universal worker excludes woman and other marginalized groups who cannot achieve the qualities of a 'real' worker (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013).

In organizational logic (Acker, 2006) the abstract, bodiless worker has no sexuality, no emotions, and does not have the ability to procreate. The absence of sexuality, emotion, and procreation in organizations is important for reproducing and maintaining gender relations. Sexuality, procreation, and emotions that are considered 'girly' all impinge upon and disrupt the ideal functioning of the organization, which tries to control such interferences. Since, the abstract worker is actually a man and is minimally responsible for procreation and has high control of emotions they are considered the ideal worker (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013). Women's bodies and their ability to procreate are considered suspect and this is used for the justification of control and exclusion. The selection and dispersion of women's jobs is often justified on the basis of women's ability to give birth and their domestic obligations. Women are devalued and considered inferior workers in the workplace arguably because they are unable to conform to the demands of the abstract job. The maintenance of gender hierarchy is achieved partly on controls and on arguments about women's reproduction, emotions, and sexuality, helping to legitimate and maintain the gendered organizational structure (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013). More overt control such as sexual harassment, discrimination, and penalizing their emotions also reinforces this gender hierarchy. Acker argues, "while women's bodies are ruled out of order, or sexualized

and objectified, in work organizations, men's bodies are not" (1990:152). Gender processes in organizations work to maintain gender stratification.

I heard comments about my reproductive abilities and my assumed emotions daily while working in a large male-dominated organization. Those comments I heard about my reproductive and emotional characteristics can be suggested to be based on the goal to exclude me in the workplace, and to make it very apparent that it is impossible for me to be considered the ideal worker as I cannot forgo my sexuality, emotions, and reproductive capabilities. The image of the perfect routine male white assembly worker is in complete opposition to the docile and young woman that can never quite compare to the ideal worker (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013). The capitalist system continues to rely on the economic base for the old male/provider – female/housewife model. It is still organized on a masculine model of the worker. This model has a fundamental lack of fit with the more complex demands for nurturing and earning money of most women's lives. This model for work organization is predicated upon the separation of production from other aspects of life. These concepts and ideas seem to provide an accurate understanding of my experiences in the workplace that surrounded my body (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013).

Another reason for my unequal treatment in the workplace could be explained using the arguments suggested by Acker (2006) and Gottfried (2013) that organizational restructuring and reprivatization of the past 30 years has contributed to increasing disparity in inequality systems. Restructuring has impacted the lives of white working- and middle-class men, as well as white women and all people of colour (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013). Downsizing and exporting jobs positions to low-wage countries has made for some dire living situations for countless people

around the world. White men's advantage and privilege seems threatened by these changes but are still able to find jobs more readily than women and people of colour when downsizing occurs. Furthermore, it is not surprising that the wage gap still exists between women and men and that white men continue to dominate local and global organizations (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Stephen Gill, 2003).

Despite the restructuring and downsizing white men are still in advantaged positions in industrial societies. Acker suggests "organizing processes that create and re-create inequalities may have become more subtle, but in some cases, they have become more difficult to challenge. For example, the universal male worker as the model for the organization of daily work and the model of the excellent employee seems to have been strengthened" (2006: 253). Men still hold the majority of the professionals and managers positions where they work long hours and often are evaluated on their willingness to put the job first before family and domestic responsibilities. Excessive or unpredictable demands are easier for men to meet as they are not expected to perform daily family responsibilities and household domestic labour (Acker, 2006). Employers can no longer legally exclude women in hiring and promotions because they choose to have children or refuse to put the job first, nor can they openly exclude people of colour. However, this does not mean that informal exclusion and unspoken stigmatization are still widespread and still difficult to document (Acker, 2006). I have first-hand experience and knowledge of the stigmatization and exclusion as I was permitted to work in a male-dominated workplace but was considered inferior and less valuable as a worker than the men I worked with.

Another important component to consider for exploring the gendered relations I had in the workplace is that the particular manufacturing plant I worked in was a non-unionized

organization. Although I cannot guarantee that my experiences would have been different if there were a union present, I suggest that it is possible. I felt my workplace was deficient of support services for issues and challenges I was experiencing while working in the male-dominated industry of automotive manufacturing. Woodhall and Leach's (2010) research with workers in the automotive industry in Ontario demonstrates that a union and especially a women's advocate program can work to improve the lives of women working in manufacturing industries. The organization that I was employed in was absent of any union and definitely did not have any sort of women's advocate located within the plant. As my experiences have shown sex segregation, sexual harassment, and gendered role expectations were just some of the challenges I experienced in the workplace. These challenges had important consequences for my work relations and experiences. Although I may have had many of the same concerns as the male associates I was working with, I suggest that women such as me have particular gendered concerns.

Woodhall and Leach (2010) argue that there are positive effects that unionization can bring to women's livelihoods and work experiences. However, they also note that women are often discriminated against within unions and this could be greatly improved through the presence of a women's advocate. Taking into account that unions can have an important impact on worker wage rates, seniority rights, and grievance procedures, the lack of a union in my workplace could have contributed to the gendered experiences I had. These researchers found through their research that women working in non-union auto manufacturing plants are more likely to experience inferior workplace conditions than the unionized workers. Woodhall and Leach (2010) also maintain that although the presence of a union is important, a woman's

advocate and could have a further positive impact on working conditions of women working in manufacturing industries. Woodhall and Leach (2010) argue:

The term “women’s advocate” has been used for a long time to refer to those who promote women’s issues and equality. More recently, it is a shorthand term for positions in anti-violence organizations whose major responsibility is to provide information, support, accompaniment, practical assistance and safety planning to women seeking to leave violent partners (p.51).

A woman’s advocate in my opinion would provide a great addition to any workplace. As previously mentioned, there was no presence of a union in the workplace I worked in, and I believe this could have contributed to issues I experienced. Woodhall and Leach (2010) suggest that the CAW takes pride in its dedication to human rights issues. These scholars maintain that unions have a positive impact on the lives of working people. For instance unions have policies and regulations relating to a variety of issues such as: pay equity, sexual harassment and racial harassment, job security, benefits, and complaints. Unions like the CAW exist to represent the rights of the worker and work to have a reputation of being a highly democratic organization. However, as Woodhall and Leach (2010) claim this is not always the case and the presence of a women’s advocate would assist in making the lives of women working in manufacturing occupations better. A women’s advocate would align with the commitment to equality and rights for the workers that the CAW wishes to maintain. I suggest after reading this article that a unionized plant can offer different experiences for women, especially where there is a women’s advocate present. I felt that when I was experiencing issues of gender oppression and domination there was no one that I could talk to about the issues I was having. Unions exist to give a voice to workers and I feel that the absence of a union could have impacted the experiences I had working in the automotive industry. The study conducted by Woodhall and Leach (2010) demonstrated the success and goal of the women’s advocate plan:

In 1993 the union negotiated with Ford, GM, and Chrysler to fund full-time union sponsored women's advocates (CAW 2000) in the assembly plants. By the summer of 2009 the union had negotiated women's advocates at about 137 workplaces, ranging from auto to health care to retail to transportation. The goal of the women's advocate program is to create safer workplaces and communities for women by recognizing and providing support and resources for women experiencing violence and/or harassment (p.52).

If there were a women's advocate present in the workplace I was employed in I could have discussed the sexual harassment and gender discrimination I was experiencing. There would have been proper repercussions for the behaviours that I had to deal with on a daily basis. I suggest that the individuals I worked with may have behaved in a different manner if they felt that their behaviour was considered inappropriate and unacceptable. However, I do feel the individuals I worked with considered me an 'outsider' and that there was no recourse for their actions. In workplaces where there is an advocate present their role maintains that "there is a referral agent for a woman 'in crisis' who is dealing with issues of violence, abuse or harassment at home or at the workplace" (Woodhall & Leach, 2010: 52). Although I did take measures against one of the particular individuals I worked with, I felt that the measures that were taken were not adequate and that this type of behaviour was not considered inappropriate in that particular non-unionized workplace. I feel if there was a union and especially a women's advocate in the workplace my experiences may have been different or I would have at least had the support I felt was required. After I made the complaint to my superior I was forced to sit in the same room with the harasser and my group leader who were both men. However, with the presence of a union and women's advocate in the workplace I could have been provided with assistance with my grievance against my harasser.

Conclusion

This chapter reflected a discussion of the results of this study, which highlighted the data collected from my journal thus creating a link between my experiences and the existing literature and theoretical perspective. The main aims of my study, as outlined in the first chapter, were to explore the prevalent issues via a set of themes in my personal experience working in a male-dominated profession. I sought to discover emerging themes and succeeded in adequately depicting the experiences of working in male-dominated environment as informed by my journal. This then enabled a critical analysis illustrating my experiences working in male-dominated environments through the use of feminist political theoretical perspective and other relevant literature. As related here and in my journal my experiences in a male-dominated profession illustrated that I was faced with a host of challenges. For instance, male colleagues were often unwilling to integrate and accommodate me into their environment and were seemingly determined to maintain the masculine status quo. Different patterns and challenges that I experienced in the workplace were put into four main themes: 1) negotiating dominant forms of masculinity, 2) gender stereotyping and gender role expectations, 3) sexual harassment/harassment, and 4) the ways in which women's bodies were considered suspect. The next chapter will capture the conclusion, strengths, limitations of the study, and the implications of my analysis and research.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Final Thoughts

This paper explored the gendered experiences and relations that I had while working in the male-dominated profession of automotive manufacturing. This study was conducted through a qualitative research method identified as autoethnography. My goal in the writing of this final chapter is to provide a thoughtful recapitulation of the literature that I reviewed, as well as my investigation conclusions and what I learned through my analysis. Furthermore, I wish to provide a summary of this study's limitations and strengths. In this work I have argued that the gendered relations that I experienced in the contemporary automotive industry were produced by the combination of structural/organizational and interactional processes. My experiences were produced by the gendered social structure/organization that disadvantaged me in relation to men's power, and also by the social relational process where certain meanings of what it means to be a woman and a man are constructed through social interactions. In this research study I desired to understand my experiences through conducting a careful and succinct analysis that would allow me to theorize about the social relations I had while working in the contemporary automotive manufacturing industry. The theoretical underpinnings of this study, feminist political economy, assisted me in understanding my experiences while working in a male-dominated environment.

Conclusions from the Literature Review

The specific aims, as outlined at the beginning of the study, were to analyze my gendered experiences in the automotive industry. I sought out literature that specifically dealt with women in historically male-dominated occupations. I wanted to identify dominant patterns, similarities and differences between my experiences and that of influential literature. A background on the

socio-economic impact of women and work illustrated that patriarchal structures and systems in society play a role in women's inferior positions in the workplace (Acker, 2008; Sugiman, 1994; Gottfried, 2013; Luxton, 2006). Women's entrance into the workplace, specifically into male-dominated professions, was found to produce a variety of challenges for working women (Acker, 2008; Sugiman, 1994; Gottfried, 2013; Luxton, 2006). The literature on women and their careers revealed that women's career patterns were unique to those of their male counterparts (Acker, 2008; Gottfried, 2013; Mandell, 2005). Organizational dynamics such as organizational structure, politics, culture and norms were found to work against women for the most part (Acker, 2008; Gottfried, 2013).

Literature specific to studies conducted on women working in male-dominated environments covered various male-dominated professions such as engineering, construction, and automotive assembly (Faulkner, 2009; Paap, 2006, Gottfried, 2013). There were similar patterns and themes established in the literature of women in male-dominated environments to what I discovered in analyzing my experiences in the automotive manufacturing industry. For instance, these themes included a general lack of acceptance of women, stereotyping, an absence or deficiency of support within organizational structures, exclusion from social networks, and destructive/hostile behaviours towards women (Faulkner, 2009; Paap, 2006, Gottfried, 2013). In terms of differences within the literature, I found there were not many stark contrasts between my experiences and what was found in studies I looked at. I believe that as the body of literature on this subject increases, a wider scope and different aspects and experiences will emerge. It is important to mention that I am a white woman and also recognize that if I was a woman of colour my experiences would have been entirely different (Bannerji, 1995).

Conclusions from my Autoethnography

The main aims of the qualitative study, as outlined in the first chapter, were to explore the prevalent issues and challenges that I experienced working in a male-dominated profession and environment. I sought to discover emerging themes that were developed in my personal journal and were based on my gender relations in the workplace. This enabled a theoretical analysis of these experiences through feminist political economy and other influential literature. The conclusions drawn from the research analysis in relation to the main themes are presented below.

My experiences working in a male-dominated profession illustrates that I encountered a host of challenges daily as I struggled as a woman to succeed in the workplace. Male colleagues were often unwilling to integrate and accommodate me, and the workplace culture seemingly was determined about maintaining the masculine status quo. There are various ways these challenges presented themselves. The themes and patterns that emerged from my journal represented different gender relations and the challenges that I experienced as a woman in a male-dominated profession and organization. The four main themes were: 1) negotiating dominant forms of masculinity, 2) gender stereotyping/gender role expectations, 3) sexual harassment/harassment, and 4) the ways in which women's bodies were considered suspect.

Being treated like I was a sexual object, experiencing being an outsider, witnessing men gender police other male men allowed me to understand that the parties I was working with were engaging in forms of dominant hegemonic masculinity. Witnessing forms of hegemonic masculinity was reflective of the fact that in our society men are taught and expected through social norms and socialization that they are to behave in a certain dominating and oppressive fashion. Hegemonic masculinity is often competitive and reflects a tendency for males to seek to

dominate other males and subordinate females (Bird, 1996; Connell, 1995; Gottfried, 2013). Social and cultural institutions such as the economy and the workplace are gendered to the extent that they privilege men and expressions of hegemonic masculinities (Bird, 1996; Connell, 1995; Gottfried, 2013). Making visible hegemonic masculinity provided me with a critical means for analyzing my gendered experiences. It allows me to understand why I was treated in an often dominating and oppressive fashion in the automotive manufacturing industry.

I experienced stereotypes and strict role expectations based on the notion of women's essential characteristics and the historical sexual division of labour. I was expected to fulfill certain functions in the workplace that were considered to be the "natural" roles and expectations of "women's work." By analyzing personal experiences and comments I heard from individuals in the workplace I understand why this is. These comments represented certain expectations based on notions of gender role beliefs and ideologies (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2010; Luxton & Lahey, 1998; Waring, 2003). In a patriarchal culture the female body is stereotypically thought of being permanently placed within the home whereas, the male body belongs in the public sphere. Women entering the work environment have in the past and continue to be challenged by the ideological construction of the two "spheres". The separation of the public and private sphere impacted the social relations I had while working in a male-dominated organization. In my experience I argue that this division of labour had dire personal consequences for me and has the ability to have economic consequences for women working in these environments (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2010; Luxton & Lahey, 1998; Waring, 2003). Women are less likely to have as much success in workplaces as they are often considered only appropriate for certain roles. These functions are usually devalued roles and are considered "unskilled" in the workplace. When reflecting and analyzing my relations in the

workplace I can understand that men's ideas concerning women's proper place being in the home stem from this historical sexual division of labour. Stereotypical sex roles and expectations emanate from cultural and societal norms which demand women play a submissive role to men and follow traditional patriarchal structures found within the family unit. (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Gottfried, 2010; Luxton & Lahey, 1998; Waring, 2003).

I also experienced harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Hearing sexual comments directed at me became a frequent and daily occurrence. Women experience harassment and bias in many different organizations (Faulkner, 2009; Paap, 2006, Gottfried, 2013). I believe that women experiencing harassment in male-dominated environments to be attributed to the minority status of women in these professions. Through the use of feminist theory I was able to analyze the possible explanations of why this happened to me (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Bannerji, 1995; Gottfried, 2013). My social experiences showed me that there are men within male-dominated environments who are endeavoring to accommodate and support their female counterparts, but that there are also male colleagues that are hostile and dominating. Men that I had negative and damaging gender relations with were behaving in such a way that allowed them to sustain their male-dominance that they have grown so accustomed too. They viewed me as a threat to their power and felt they needed to defend their dominance. Men often commit violence and harass women in the workplace because their power in society encourages them to do so. Their historical property rights over women along with their contemporary position have allowed them to hold the power to oppress and violate women (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Bannerji, 1995; Gottfried, 2013). The sexual comments and the harassment that I experienced in the workplace is a reflection of male power and privileges in society.

Comments that were directed at me in the workplace made me strongly aware that men's bodies were preferred over women's. Through social interactions with male colleagues I became aware that women's bodies were deemed suspect and were highly stigmatized. I was often considered less skilled and less physically capable of handling certain tasks in the workplace. I believe that in spite of the erosion of the old male/provider and female/housewife model, work continues to be organized on a masculine standard of the worker. Although it could be assumed that organizational structures such as the workplace are gender neutral, in my experience I suggest this is not the case. I was considered weak and unable to perform to the same level as the white male worker because of the gendered organization of work (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013). The concept of a 'job' such as in the automotive industry can be argued to be implicitly a gendered concept, even though organizational logic states that it is gender neutral. My body and my ability to procreate was considered suspect and this was used for the justification of control and exclusion (Acker, 2006; Gottfried, 2013).

Limitations and Strengths

There are limitations that I considered important to acknowledge in my research study. For instance, as a researcher who was employing personal memories of complex social relations with actors in the workplace, I acknowledge my memory is fallible. It is extremely difficult to recall or report events that exactly represent how those happenings were lived and felt. Furthermore, it is fully understood that other people may have interpreted the social relation entirely differently (Bochner & Ellis, 2006).

There are several strengths of my research study that I consider significant. Performing autoethnography has encouraged me to examine my experiences and consider myself as the

'other', generating critical agency in relations that I have. I believe that engaging in this type of social research can be considered a means of resistance (Bochner & Ellis, 2006).

Autoethnographic work usually contains the voices of "others". I felt that in the workplace I was considered the outsider and the "other" and by sharing my experiences I feel that it is an act of resistance. Furthermore, I feel that by disseminating excerpts from my autoethnographic journal transfers the new knowledge to others to develop the use of reflective practices. I suggest that by sharing my autoethnographic account it can assist others to explore their experiences through this methodology. Another positive feature of my study is that it allows women to relate to my experiences in their own social environments. Keeping my experiences visible in the research was vital for me. It must be understood that this research did not set out to establish truths but rather to share my experiences of working in the automotive industry as a woman. In doing so the end point is an authentic account of my experiences analyzed through feminist theory and other significant literature.

Implications

The larger implications of the gendered relations I experienced are important to discuss. Gender mediates organizational structure and culture. The division of labour separates work spaces and roles in occupational organizations. The division of labour encourages women and men to perceive themselves in opposition to one another. In addition, the construction of hegemonic masculinity pushes workers to maintain a male-dominated work culture. Scholars such as Bannerji (1995) and Hennessy (2000) have argued that we continue to live in a racist, sexist, and homophobic culture that spills over into different organizations such as the workplace. What is important to understand is that these inequalities are intentional byproducts of a capitalist system (Bannerji, 1995; Hennessy, 2000). The capitalist system deprives people of

their power and agency and impacts the social relations we have with other individuals. What cannot be denied is that racism, sexism, and homophobia are intentional for the production and maintenance of capital accumulation (Bannerji, 1995; Hennessy, 2000). My experiences while working in a male-dominated organization indicate that the workplace is another environment where women are considered to be the inferior gender and are less valuable in terms of their skills, intelligence, and abilities. As my research suggests there are social relations of power operating in the workplace. Feminists have argued that social relations of power are glossed over in the workplace as well as other environments (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Bannerji, 1995; Gottfried, 2013). The larger implications of my study findings is that although women are hired into male-dominated industries such as the automotive manufacturing industry they continue to be treated with contempt and may have hostile interactions. The implications of my research are that work environments are not separated from the outside culture that continues to be classed, 'raced', and sexed. Class and gender relations are reproduced and maintain in workplace organizations (Acker, 2006; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Bannerji, 1995; Gottfried, 2013).

Provisional Solution

As I mentioned in the literature and data analysis chapter I agree with the ethnographic findings of the study conducted by Woodhall and Leach (Woodhall & Leach, 2010). Their findings suggested that the presence of a women's representative in a CAW organized plant could offer an encouraging approach to secure the safety and security of women working in male-dominated manufacturing industries (Woodhall & Leach, 2010). I am not indicating that this is the absolute solution to the challenges that women experience in the workplace, nor do I desire to imply my experiences would have been completely different if there was a presence of a union and a women's advocate. However, based on the findings in Woodhall and Leach's

study that suggested that the CAW's women's advocacy program benefitted women's experiences in the workplace I believe it could be a start and is encouraging. Women have reported positively, on their experiences with the women's advocate. Women said that knowing they would be able to deal with a woman relieved the stress they were feeling about their situation (Woodhall & Leach, 2010). I feel that this would be beneficial for women working in male-dominated manufacturing industries and that it may offer an alternative experience for women autoworkers.

Final Thoughts

My analysis rests on the assumption that gender is a social institution (Connell 1987; Lorber 1994; Risman 1998). Along with other social constructionists, I view gender as being a part of a social structure and produced through social relations. These related practices have a history that entails opportunities and constraints, expectations, actions/behaviours, resources, and discourses that are fluid and shifting yet persisting. The gendered practices of people through their interactions are central to its perpetuation (Ridgeway 2001; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Concentrating on gendered bodies, spaces, and experiences has the ability to produce knowledge about the lived experiences and oppression that women face in their lives. Focusing on lived experiences of women has the power to make visible the gendering processes, which grounds the analysis in forms of male power in relationship to class and other hierarchies. Shedding light on the specific challenges that women experience in the workplace and other spaces allows for feminist critique and resistance. My findings imply the need to continue critically examining class and gender divides in order to understand the lived experiences of women and other marginalized groups.

As a researcher, this study took me on a personal journey. Leaving that particular workplace I desired that my memory be erased and I could just move on. However, by engaging in the qualitative method of autoethnography I was able to understand the social dynamics that were at play in the male-dominated environment of automotive manufacturing. Having had experience working in a male-dominated industry, I feel that the voices of women in such positions was rarely heard and feel this is required in order for people to understand what women experience. It was also liberating to do an exploratory study as that allowed me to delve into challenges that I faced daily in the work organization that I found myself immersed in. My experiences were unquestionably different from those of my male colleagues due to my gender. In order for there to be a deeper understanding of why these gendered differences exist within these social contexts, researchers need to continue looking beyond individual circumstances to examine how this continues to happen to many women. Through our social relations with others, the male gender is privileged and masculine values are deemed more important. We cannot dispute that people have evolved in our society in their thinking and that there has been more of an apparent effort to accept all people equally in all roles. Unfortunately, my experiences of being a woman in the automotive manufacturing plant demonstrated that men are the “norm” against which women are assessed (Ettorre, 2005; Smith; 2005; Taber, 2005).

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