THE VOICES IN THE MARGIN:
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES
WITH ADVANCED DEGREES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative dissertation focuses on an unstudied culture, that of female Civil Service employees with advanced degrees. Eight Ohio State University employees participated in several interviews over a three-year period. I then transcribed and analyzed the personal experience narratives recorded in the interviews. For organizational purposes, the narratives were broken into "themes" suggested by the women's words: these include perceptions of how status is manifested in the workplace, experiences of workplace conflict, views about material situations, reasons for staying in Civil Service positions, and future hopes.

The work is a critical and reciprocal ethnography: ethnographies are in-depth studies of cultures. "Reciprocal" ethnographies are multi-vocal, the researcher incorporating the participants' assessments of the accuracy of transcriptions and interpretations. "Critical" ethnographies aim to uncover esoteric facets of cultures and to improve some aspect of their subjects' lives (thus, the participants' recommendations for changes in the Civil Service system appear in the final chapter). Interpretations of the narratives were conducted using folklore paradigms called "performance" and "cultural-political." I also applied discourse analysis frameworks, especially critical, process-oriented discourse analysis, to pinpoint meanings in the
women's texts. The use of three theoretical approaches and the study's reciprocal aspect have resulted in what is known as "triangulated" research; while "objectivity" or the discovery of one "truth" have not been my objectives, multiple theories provide complementary support for my conclusions.

In narrating, people often project themselves as worthy, intelligent, even heroic, and the participants are no exception. But they also see themselves as marginal in the university--their education makes them atypical of Civil Service employees and they all consider themselves underemployed. Images of their marginality (which can be self-imposed and "positive" and/or institutionally imposed and "negative") emerge in all the narratives through a variety of rhetorical strategies. The participants' abundant "aesthetic expressions" are rooted in their political experiences and their views of their position in the university community. The women's storytelling is therefore frequently used for ideological purposes, to negotiate the boundaries of power between themselves and other staff, and supervisors and faculty who enforce the university's policies.
Dedicated to my mother
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

What follows is an interpretive study of female Ohio State University Civil Service employees who have advanced degrees. My interest in undertaking this project has been inspired by a sense of my own marginality within the university community, a marginality that has partly sprung from the "double life" I lead. For as both full-time Civil Service staff member and graduate student at Ohio State University, I have belonged to two spheres within the same institution for several years, spheres that are linked by the university bureaucracy but not necessarily academic or ideological commonality. Faculty, staff, and students alike must follow institutional policies. Yet while faculty and student conformity to administrative rules is only ancillary to their participation in the university's mission of sharing, receiving, and reformulating knowledge, such administrative rules, both written and unwritten, both explicit and implied, define the nature of staff members' daily routines at Ohio State. The expression of those rules and policies is manifested through the institution's hierarchy, a dynamic that has affected my perception of "self" in my dual roles as staff member and student. So my sense of being distinct, separate from both the Civil Service sector and the student cohort has developed over the years; I have
found that while my academic training has fostered a growing dissatisfaction as a
Civil Service employee, my employee status has precluded full-time coursework or a
Graduate Associate position, and so has prohibited my wholehearted identification
with the academic segment.

My familiarity with Civil Service culture has occurred in two phases, one
passive and the other active. The passive stage began eleven years ago. Accepting
employment as a Civil Service staff member at Ohio State in February of 1985, I
have been unavoidably steeped in Civil Service work life since then, a condition that
has both provoked my resentment and fostered my interest in and loyalty for the
institution. But for the first several years of my employment at Ohio State, I was
unaware that I would conduct this study; and even if I had known back then what I
would ultimately decide upon for my dissertation project, I lacked the training to
observe and ask and interpret in insightful ways. So my early experiences as a Civil
Service employee, wholly personalized and impressionistic, and fraught with
informational and observational gaps, can now be reconstituted only retrospectively.
Nevertheless, several years of exposure, preconscious as much of it might have been,
has provided a valuable base for my subsequent research. When in Autumn 1993 I
enrolled in a graduate folklore course that required fieldwork, I chose to study female
Civil Service workers with advanced degrees. In so doing, I embarked on the second
phase—the active, interpretive phase—of my involvement in the culture of Ohio State
Classified Civil Service workers.
Rationale for the Study

Four general populations make up the university community: students, faculty, and two varieties of staff, Administrative and Professional (A & P) and Classified Civil Service employees. As of October, 1994, A & P staff consisted of approximately 7,000 individuals; Civil Service employees numbered about 6,000 in two broad sub-categories. Three thousand Civil Service staff members, mostly male, are "unskilled or semi-skilled service workers," whose positions include maintenance, janitorial, plumbing, carpentry, security, or technical duties. Another 3,000 Civil Service staff members at the university are "clerical" employees with such job titles as "Data Entry Operator," "Clerk 1," "Clerk 2," "Word Processing Specialist," "Typist 1," "Typist 2," "Secretary 1," "Secretary 2," "Administrative Assistant 1," and "Administrative Assistant 2." More than ninety percent of the clerical Civil Service employees are female. This latter group will be the focus of my study.

In the context of the university, clerical Civil Service employees comprise a highly gendered, and thus highly marginalized, culture. One often hears the complaint that only 26% of the university's faculty are female, yet the unspoken assumption is that clerical Civil Service employees have been, are, and will continue to be female. One must question the origins of the palpable anxiety over a lopsided male-to-female ratio within the more visible professional sector as well as the apparent lack of anxiety over an even more dramatically inequitable female-to-male ratio within clerical Civil Service, a faction whose workers are among the lowest-paid in the university community. With the exception of the highest-ranking jobs (i.e.,
Administrative Assistant) in the sector, the descriptions for such positions are usually written to preclude measurable supervisory or decision-making responsibilities. The group is thus marginalized from both socioeconomic and gender standpoints.

Clerical Civil Service employees may also be prone to yet another kind of marginalization, more insidious and less easily documentable than those having to do with gender or pay scales, but also class-based in terms of the university's own value system, a system that is concerned with academic training. Students and faculty, of course, are intimately bound up with the academic mission of the institution; such is their raison d'être. And A & P staff, with few exceptions, must have at least an undergraduate degree and often have advanced degrees. But although approximately 10% of the 3,000 clerical Civil Service employees took advantage of the University's staff fee waiver benefit during the Winter Quarter, 1996, and although a number of such employees are degreed individuals, no Civil Service position requires a post-high school degree. Whether and to what extent Civil Service staff are therefore perceived as standing apart from the University's academic mission, and by extension, thought to be well suited to their highly repetitious, routinized, protocol-driven tasks that often require little in the way of creative problem solving or decision making--these are some of the questions I hoped to uncover as I embarked on the project.

Scanty research has been conducted on the personal experience narratives of clerical Civil Service employees, evidence that the cohort has either been viewed as unworthy of study or else downright invisible. Carol Warren stresses:
Research in organizations has taught me about the invisibility of the servant female in Western society. Women in organizations have traditionally been file clerks, secretaries, and, more recently, data processors and computer workers. Wandering around settings such as a psychiatric hospital and a court, and even investigating the contents of file drawers, have drawn me hardly a glance from the males engaged in more "important business." Other women fieldworkers report similar experiences of invisibility. After all, the social place of women in Western society has traditionally been to stand behind men, out of their sight: as mothers, wives, nurses, secretaries, and servants. (1988:18)

In a similar vein, Barbara Myerhoff comments on the subtle connection between "stigma" and "invisibility": "It is a truism that severely marginal people are stigmatized and neglected by the mainstream society, subject to dismissal that is usually not even the result of hatred or conscious disdain. Often, it is merely that such people are not seen; they are treated as invisible" (1986:261). If there is a modicum of truth in what Warren and Myerhoff say, the paucity of feminist and critical theorizing of the life experiences of Civil Service employees is distressing. I have envisioned this study as providing the forum for the participants to "articulate their definitions of their situations," and that such definitions will reflexively display "structures of oppression as they operate in the worlds of lived experience" (Denzin 1988:509).

In an evaluative, and elitist, observation, Clifford Geertz says the anthropologist "confronts the same grand realities that others--historians, economists, political scientists, sociologists--confront in more fateful settings: Power, Change, Faith, Oppression, Work, Passion, Authority, Beauty, Violence, Love, Prestige; but he confronts them in contexts obscure enough . . . to take the capital letters off them" (1973:21; emphasis mine). But I suggest that by "Capitalizing" their "contexts," the
realities of the participants can be illuminated. When I began the fieldwork, I hoped to uncover similar themes that would lend themselves to obvious and neat categorization. Driving my study were such unspoken questions as: how and in what ways has the university hierarchy affected the women's self-concepts? what advantages and conflicts have been the result of their employment at Ohio State? do they manifest either covert or overt systems of rebellion within the system? Indeed, such themes have leapt out.

The dissertation will proceed as follows: Chapter 2 outlines my theoretical approaches; Chapter 3, entitled "Situating the Participants," provides biographical information, fieldnotes undertaken in the work places, the participants' "entry tales," in which they relate their reasons for choosing to fill Civil Service jobs, and self-reflexive comments about their own marginality; the titles of Chapters 4 through 7 ("Perceptions of Status," "Conflict and Horror Stories," "Material Realities," and "Resolution and the Future") are suggestive of the themes that emerged from the participants' narratives. Chapter 8, which concludes the study, contains a section entitled "We Recommend," which highlights the participants' ideas for changes in the university's practices and policies. If implemented, such recommendations might benefit Ohio State University Civil Service employees in future.

"Background" and the Self-Reflexive Researcher

Personal information about a collector of personal experience narratives can often define a researcher's motivation for conducting a study as well as the project's
ultimate thematic organization. This project has proven to be experimental and experiential in a number of ways, including the integration of my roles as researcher/subject, for I am simultaneously learning about myself as I study the participants and their narratives. Thus, the inclusion of some portions of my own experiences in the chapters that follow might be useful as comparative devices when juxtaposed to the participants' words. However, the participants' personal narratives will occupy center stage in the study.4

In the paragraphs that follow, I highlight aspects of my past that have had the greatest influence on the development of the constantly changing "self" that I am always still learning about. My sense of my own marginality had its roots in childhood, and resurfaced in various ways during life’s progression.

I had an atypical, sometimes stressful, but not categorically unhappy childhood. I was the firstborn of two daughters; my sister is three years my junior. My mother is an artist and vocal social critic, and I think I have the tendency to view the world through her critical, aesthetically sensitive eyes. We are the best of friends. My father came to the United States from Denmark in 1925; he was a businessman whose job forced our family’s frequent moves, so I was often "the new girl" in school during my growing up years.

At age 18, I married an Ohio State University student and football player who came from a working-class, East coast Italian family. The union produced two daughters and lasted nearly a decade. We moved to New Jersey in 1972 and my husband and I took our respective places within the pecking order of a hierarchical
family. During that period, my identification as a member of the mainstream, northern European-American, upwardly mobile middle class became temporarily displaced within the cohesiveness of an Italian extended family, whose values and worldview I attempted to embrace and emulate. But I keenly experienced my otherness, a sense that heightened as I began to mature emotionally and intellectually.

In 1977, I masterminded my family’s move to southern California, where I envisioned a fresh start for everyone. In many ways, that fresh start was a false start. In California I completed a nursing degree (UCLA 1979) I had begun some years earlier in New Jersey. Nursing had seemed the ideal career in my idealistic youth—I would help others and reap the rewards of gratitude, intellectual challenge, diversity, and steady pay. But the familiar and unwelcome sense of my marginality surfaced again during my practical training, at which time I grasped that I was emotionally unsuited to the demands of the nursing profession. Consequently, I never became certified in the field of nursing. It was during that period of disenchantment and flux that I seriously began to contemplate pursuing a humanities degree, probably history or English, disciplines I had loved since childhood.

On the career front, I found employment as a medical writer/editorial assistant in an L.A. medical center; a few years later my daughters and I moved to central California, where I got an editing job in the public affairs office of Cal Poly State University. I returned to Ohio in 1983 to be with my widowed mother, working as a project planner for a nursing home developer for about a year. The job required extensive travel, and I was often forced to leave my children for days at a time. The
difficulties I experienced forced me to rethink things. Preoccupied by my desire to return to academia, I reasoned that full-time employment at OSU would offer a tuition waiver along with physical proximity to courses. I also anticipated that a Civil Service position, some sort of secretarial job, would be undemanding and allow me the latitude I needed for intellectual development. I typed close to a hundred words a minute and understood the basics of both computer operation and office protocol.

Yes, a clerical position of some kind would be just the ticket, for a year or two. So I put together a résumé that understated my education and previous work experience.

After taking the Civil Service Exam, in which one's potential for alphabetization is rigorously tested, I got an offer to work in the Department of History as Graduate Studies Secretary. The position paid about half the salary I had made at the nursing home company. Yet much to my surprise I liked the job and stayed for several years, appreciating State of Ohio fringe benefits and the accrual of retirement income all the while. My affinity for the discipline of history, my rapport with a number of the department's faculty, and my autonomy in the position contributed to my tenure of more than seven years; my marriage to a history graduate student in 1986 and the birth of our son a year later further strengthened my connection with the department.

I had five male faculty supervisors in the History Department, all of whom encouraged both my academic development and my management of History's graduate program, which effectively freed them—the titular heads of the program—for their research and teaching. Although I recognized the disparity between the size of my
paycheck and the weight of my influence in the graduate program, my autonomy was
a condition of the job that actively engaged and challenged me. During that period of
full-time employment and intensive family life, I completed my second bachelor’s
degree (1989) and an M.A. (1991), both in English. I began my Ph.D. Program in

Around this time, I began to look in earnest for another position in the
university; I decided to accept a new job in the summer of 1992. As a parting gift,
the fifth Graduate Studies Chair gave me a just-published monograph, The New
Historicism and Other Old-Fashioned Topics, by Brook Thomas. The nature of that
gift—a scholarly work chosen by an established scholar for an aspiring one—epitomizes
the relationship of mutual respect that I enjoyed with the History faculty-
administrators. The flyleaf inscription is likewise symbolic: "To Sharyn, the real
Chair of Graduate Studies from the ersatz chair--Congratulations on your award and
your new job, and thanks for all your help to me and the department. We'll miss
you. [signed -- first name]."

And so I took leave of History and joined another unit in the university as
Administrative Assistant. My new office coordinated the functions of the Ph.D.
Program Office and supported faculty and graduate student research; my new
position was an ostensible "upgrade" in the Civil Service system. But the work
environment was vastly different from what I had experienced in the History
Department, and my new supervisor's expectations and assumptions about my role
contrasted dismally with all my previous work experiences. One of the first things I
noticed was that my boss's body language and his encroachment upon my "personal space" seemed to symbolize his dominant role and my subservient status. He habitually walked into my office and, apologizing for lack of a writing implement, physically removed my own fountain pen from my hand. Another frequent move: standing next to me or beside me, perhaps a foot away, while reading some memo or report, he would deeply exhale on me.

My supervisor's controlling management style and the extent to which he would depend on me to organize both his work life and personal life had not been clear at the time I interviewed for the position. I soon found that I had little autonomy in the job; my supervisor insisted on being kept "in the loop" about my every phone call and interaction. If I left the office momentarily, he would invariably walk in during my absence and ask the Graduate Associate who worked with me, "What do we hear from Sharyn?" I was further chagrined to find that in my new position I was expected to open my supervisor's mail, arrange his schedule and calendar, and "screen" his visitors and telephone calls--during which time I discovered the joy of having to lie for the boss.

Some months after I joined this department, in an apparent effort to display his support and concern for me, my supervisor wrote a letter nominating me for a university "Outstanding Staff Award." Yet his letter emphasized what he called my "hostess" qualities and my "clerical efficiency" rather than my adeptness at such tasks as preparing demographic and statistical analyses, coordinating a national symposium, and making policy recommendations, facets of my position that exceeded the
parameters of my job description. It was clear that the primary function of the nomination letter was a (vastly misguided) ploy for currying my continuing loyalty and ingratiation; winning the award was incidental.

In my position, my writing skills were called upon for tasks that did not appear in my job description; these included such ghost-writing endeavors as authoring book reviews, fellowship rationales, letters of recommendation for students seeking faculty positions, and instruments and questionnaires for qualitative research surveys. When my boss discovered that I had artistic skills, I was expected to conceptualize and implement a new theme for the "Research Bulletin Board" every quarter, and was often asked to illustrate memoranda and invitations for the College’s doctoral students. Twice a week, he would ask me to come into his office to brainstorm, presumably about the Ph.D. Program or research. But the meetings invariably metamorphosed into two-hour sessions of convoluted soul-searching: it was not the affairs of the office but my supervisor’s own interests and vexations that took center stage. If I volunteered a personal anecdote (even if to bolster his own account), he listened briefly and then refocused the conversation on his own troubles and triumphs. My supervisor routinely sought my help in planning his personal travel, frequent dinner parties hosted at his home, and, finally, his retirement from the university which included the arrangement of farewell receptions and emeritus privileges. Now, even from the periphery of emeritus status, this former supervisor continues to try to pull my strings.
A steady search between 1992-1994 for another position in the university resulted in a series of dead ends, adding to my discouragement. After two years, I found myself in traction with a severely painful root-nerve compression of the upper spine, a condition I attribute to unrelenting stress and demoralizing working conditions. My hope was restored as my supervisor's tenure drew to a close, yet my relief was marred by the literal and figurative "pains in the neck" I acutely experienced long weeks after he had technically departed the university.

I am currently working for a person whose respectful managerial approach is a pleasure and a boon. And the discontent I experienced for two years in my Administrative Assistant position has led me toward my dissertation topic: when I signed up for the folklore course in Autumn 1993, I thought it would be at least instructive and perhaps self-validating to interview female Civil Service employees who also had advanced degrees and to compare their perceptions of the system, their position within it, and their views of supervisor/subordinate relationships to my own experiences and insights. Such an endeavor has led me to this project.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. This information, provided by Dennis Healy, Human Resources Group Leader, OSU Office of Human Resources, was current as of October, 1995. It reflects faculty members campus-wide; in the Colleges of Humanities, the Arts, and Social and Behavioral Sciences, there are proportionately higher numbers of female faculty. However, Mr. Healy also informed me that the category of "full professor" is disproportionately male at The Ohio State University. The Office of Human Resources reports that 88.7% of full professors at the university were men as of October, 1995 (male full professors numbered 952; female full professors, 121).

2. The exceptions are those employees who enter the system as Civil Service staff members and are then upgraded to Administrative and Professional positions.

3. Craig Berlin, Senior Analyst, Office of Human Resources, reports that 296 clerical Civil Service employees were enrolled in courses during the Winter Quarter, 1996. No breakdown was available as to level of courses or employees by job title. Mr. Berlin, and Leo Rowe, Treasurer, Office of Fees and Deposits, concur that precise data are unavailable on the numbers of clerical Civil Service employees who have either associate, bachelor's, or graduate degrees. They explained that their data bases would not currently accommodate a "sorting" of that information, but that such information may be available "in future."

4. Bette J. Kauffman disapproves of experimental forms in ethnography, suggesting that highlighting the researcher's persona and experience often results in losing sight of the "research subjects." And she believes the "literary" format of some autobiographical ethnographies often fail to account for the political motivations of the researcher. (See "Feminist Facts: Interview Strategies and Political Subjects in Ethnography" in Communication Theory, 2, 1992.) I hope the results of this study prove her wrong.

5. Folklorist Alan Dundes has suggested that "Flyleaf inscriptions are part of the folklore of literate populations . . . . What is suggested by these is that one of the ways individuals define their own identity is through folklore" (1989:2). The Graduate Studies Chair who gave me the book believed he had been inveigled into accepting that administrative post in the History Department. I think his flyleaf inscription went beyond an expression of faith in my abilities as the "real" Chair of Graduate Studies, but more particularly expressed his personal trepidation about the demands of the job and his reluctance to wholeheartedly assume the role, especially given my upcoming departure. Thus, the flyleaf inscription points to his firm identification as scholar rather than administrator.
CHAPTER 2
INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGY

_I dwell in possibility--_
_A fairer realm than prose--_
_More numerous of windows--_
_Superior for doors._

Emily Dickinson

This study has a variety of aims. First, it will describe a community--female Civil Service Employees with advanced degrees--in the so-called "holistic" tradition of ethnographic research. Second, the study will thematically present the personal experience narratives of the participants, and will attempt to pinpoint how the embedded folklore displays the participants' subjectivities and fosters their identity creation. Elliott Oring has noted that folklore's fluid, interdisciplinary quality ("interdisciplinary" implying that folklore both benefits from theories/methods of other disciplines and that its focus is often found in other fields, such as art, history, sociology) may be a condition of its relationship to a central question, that of "identity" (1994:225). Jeff Todd Titon has argued that "personality is the main ingredient in the life story . . . . The most interesting life stories expose the inner life, tell us about motives . . . .Like all good autobiography, as opposed to mere chronicling, the life story's singular achievement is that it affirms the identity of the storyteller in the act of the telling" (1980:290). Discourse analysts are likewise

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concerned with identity: "Ethnographers of speaking have been concerned with the work done by and through language in . . . establishing, challenging, and recreating social identities and social relationships and . . . breaking or more often sustaining physical, political and cultural barriers" (Duranti 1988:213).

I am also interested in uncovering ideological convictions within the narratives. In broad terms, the grist for the interview mill is the question of how white, middle-aged women with advanced degrees perceive themselves interacting and functioning as Civil Service employees within a complex bureaucratic hierarchy. In scrutinizing this folk group's narratives, and particularly the "aesthetic expressions" that occur within those narratives, I have found that "verbal art" often harbors the most potent ideology as well as being the locus for the production/reproduction of "self" within personal interaction. My third objective, then, is to isolate and interpret ideological strands within the participants' larger discursive tapestries.

Folklorist Susan Lanser, alluding to the new "practice"-orientation within her field (a theoretical concern that strengthens folklore's ties to the social sciences), states that one aim of feminist folklore is to "gather and analyze individual moments, decoding and renaming them as political acts" (1993:14). This study will emphasize how the participants' expressions of their experiential, everyday realities are distinctly ideological, politicized expressions. The desire to unveil "historical moments" and historical "selves" has motivated this study. To that end, methods of discourse analysis will accompany folklore theory to assist in the unpacking of meanings. I will especially focus on the organizational aspects and evaluative strategies within the
texts. The critical, contextual focus currently informing and reformulating folklore theory and theories of discourse analysis will be of benefit in this critical study, but I will also incorporate traditional, text-focused, interpretational methods from the fields of folklore and discourse analysis.

The project is framed as a critical ethnography: "ethnography" implies a dedication to the comprehensive description of a culture and usually entails long-term participant-observation. As an eleven-year member of the community being studied, I am an insider and participant-observer in the truest sense of the words. "Critical" denotes a commitment to the participants in the form of advocacy. Critical approaches are usually conducted in some public sphere with the aim of exposing social practices that emerge there; ideally, critical ethnography leads to personal action in historically and socially situated contexts (Giroux 1983). Yet while it has been suggested that "ethnographic writing as a rule subordinates narrative to description" (Pratt 1986:35), the bulk of this study will be comprised of the participants' texts and accompanying interpretations. Thus, while folkloristics will provide the theoretical backbone of the work, methods of discourse analysis will reinforce the folklore theory, and critical ethnography will provide the framework for the field research. I believe that an application of the performance and cultural-political folklore paradigms, the "process" orientation of discourse analysis, and the critical ethnographic stance will together support the goals of the project. Muriel Saville-Troike elaborates on the value of such interdisciplinary research: "A true approach to the ethnographic study of communication in a community must follow the
standards for in-depth research established in ethnographic field work generally, and
must combine it with a level of sensitivity to linguistic phenomena characteristic of
the best work in sociolinguistics and folklore." (1982:250)

Finally, tenets of feminist and poststructuralist theories, currently
reformulating folklore and discourse analysis scholarship, will undergird the study.
Carol Warren comments on the indistinct boundaries between social science theory
and method, and suggests that the interpretive process takes place "at the intersection
of theory, method, discourse, and the historical moment. And gender is one of many
themes within that intersection; as feminist theory, as discourse analysis, and as part
of the historical self of both the observer and the observed" (1988:58).

Genre

The personal experience narrative, an interdisciplinary genre these days but
one that has only recently begun to receive folklorists' attention, will be the focus
genre in my project.³ William M. Clements has documented that from the beginning
of the twentieth century, personal experience narratives have been viewed largely as a
method for enhancing broader ethnographies. But Clements plead the case for the
personal experience narrative in 1980, linking the acceptance of this "everyday" genre
to the broadening of the definition of the term "folk" itself (1980:107). Clements
discredits the necessity of "traditionality" as a criterion for folklore, arguing that
the performance approach to folklore analysis has emphasized the fact that every performance of every folklore item is unique . . . . If we are to permit a folklore status for items which may have had a previous performance history but are unique in terms of a specific performance, there is a good case for accepting material which has no performance history and is created for the interview situation. (1980:110-111)

Hence, performance permits the category of "new" texts such as personal experience narratives, and traditionality loses ground as a critical dimension for defining folklore.

Sandra Stahl points out: "Strictly speaking, personal narratives are not folklore, but they are a primary means by which a special kind of folklore is expressed . . . . The advantage of the personal narrative is that the storyteller chooses the specific situation (plot) that aptly expresses a covertly held value" (1989:19). I believe Stahl's definition of the personal experience narrative is too narrow. First, the values expressed in personal narratives may not be "covertly held" or even "covertly expressed," but are often open, definitive, and the catalysts for the verbal expressions. And Stahl's term "situation" as it relates to plot is erroneously used as a textual and not a contextual entity, and fails to suggests that the "situation" within which personal narratives occur inevitably embue those forms of aesthetic expression with the cultural values of their creators. Further, Stahl's requirements that personal experience narratives both embody the "stable identity" of the narrator and demonstrate the narrator's "stable repertoire" (1985:54-55) seem grounded in a static traditionality, a concept that has been dismissed by most folklorists. Stahl's notions seem oblivious to the "emergent" dimension of culture, verbal art, and personal identity. "Stable"--like "authenticity" and "reality"--is value-laden, implying a static view of the self, and by extension, a static view of the folklore. I believe that in the
production of personal experience narratives, the "self" is remade and renegotiated; how can personal experience narratives elicit a "stable personality" when the circumstances of interview, interviewer, and interviewee are shifting, constantly in flux? I argue that such narratives have an innate potential for spontaneous, perhaps even simultaneous, production of community and individual.

The Personal Narratives Group sees women's personal narratives as both "rich sources for the exploration of the process of gendered self-identity" and "dialogues of domination" in that "narratives of acceptance and narratives of rebellion are responses to the system in which they originate and thus reveal its dynamics" (1989:5, 8). It is telling from a political standpoint that genres such as the personal experience narrative have been long ignored by folklorists. Margaret Mills stresses that personal narratives, gossip, and anecdote "speak theory," but that such "low culture" genres have not received validation from the dominant culture (1993:176); the Personal Narratives Group argues that we "must take into account experience that has previously been ignored, forgotten, ridiculed, and devalued" (1989:262-263); Donald Brenneis has pointed out that by drawing their aesthetic boundaries, folklorists unwittingly separate marginalized groups from the dominant culture, thus perpetuating hegemony (1993:128); and Amy Shuman insists: "Once we observe that views on genre hierarchy correspond with worldviews, the question is, to what extent is this correspondence traceable, and what can it tell us about privileged and stigmatized communication?" (1993b:75). If the personal experience narrative is, or has been, a stigmatized communicative form among white, male, Western, folklorists, and I
concur with such an idea, perhaps the form itself and its subsequent interpretation escapes stigmatization when both researcher and participant are insiders, members of the same race, class, gender, and occupational group.4

Livia Polanyi has argued that the personal narrative, despite its ubiquitous nature, is as elaborately structured as any literary form: "There is nothing structurally 'casual' about an everyday story. Upon close examination, a story told in a conversation reveals itself to be as formally constructed as any carefully worked out acknowledged piece of literary verbal art" (1989:19). Such formal intricacy provides a clue to the importance of the personal narrative as a social genre: Elliot Mishler has remarked, "probably the primary way—human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in a narrative form. . . .personal narratives are the most internally consistent interpretation of presently understood past, experienced present, and anticipated future" (1986:68). And William Labov's observation that the narrative of personal experience is a mode of discourse "in which the speaker becomes deeply involved in rehearsing or even reliving events of his past" (1972:354) provides a rationale for my use of the genre, for a result of this study has been to resuscitate impressions that remain vivid in the minds of the participants—lingering memories are usually the remnants of acutely positive or negative events; the mundanities seem to vanish with the ebb and flow of daily life. Barbara Myerhoff sees both memory-making and community-formation going on as a result of creating narratives: she states that story and personal narrative creation allow the teller to remember both her life and herself. Narration and storytelling thus permit the teller's
alignment with both the past and the present (1984). Judith Stacey's words encapsulate my personal views about theorizing personal narratives:

Feminist scholars . . . express widespread disenchantment with the dualisms, abstractions, and detachment of positivism, . . . the separations between subject and object, thought and feeling, knower and known, and political and personal—as well as the reflections of these separations in the arbitrary boundaries of traditional academic disciplines. Instead, most feminist scholars advocate an integrative, transdisciplinary approach to knowledge, one that would ground theory contextually in the concrete realm of women's everyday lives. (1991:111)

Emergent themes within the participants' narratives that have their roots in the "concrete realm of their everyday lives" have permitted my thematic organization of their subjective realities, an admittedly arbitrary and yet systematic arrangement that has, in turn, provided a jumping-off point for analysis, the beginning of an interpretation of "meanings."

**Folklore Theory**

For the past several decades, folklore theory has stressed the importance of scrutinizing context for approaching textual understanding, and this folkloric study is distinctly idiographic, that is, it describes the effect of context upon narrative "events." Such approaches as Performance Theory have demonstrated the crucial nature of considering context and texture in textual-analysis, resulting in a broadening of the definition of "genre" itself—the ballads, jokes, legends, tales, and
proverbs of earlier typological folklore study losing ground to such "commonplace" genres as the personal narrative. Roger Abrahams' essay "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore" bespeaks Kenneth Burke's influence on performance theory's development, for Burke demonstrated "in a number of works that words have power and that performance . . . is a way of persuading through the production of pleasure." Abrahams stresses that folklore study should emphasize process instead of static "item," and should give equal weight to the dramatic performance, the audience/setting/context, and the text itself (Fine 1984:35). Robert Georges reiterates Abrahams' concerns, stating "the holistic study of storytelling events leads to an understanding of their import in society" (Fine 1984:46). Along with an increasing preoccupation with context, folklore theory has also broadened in the past twenty-five or more years to include the aesthetic expressions that occur within the interactions of virtually every group imaginable.

Hence, folklore is everywhere and the folk is everybody. If one embraces such widespread and trendy definitions of "folklore" and "folk" as being truer than the definitions they replaced (and "truth," like folklore, is also a plastic term today), one might ask, What is folklore's social significance? And who is qualified to decide upon the nature of that significance? In 1969, Robert Georges proposed an inductive, a posteriori model for evaluating the cultural dynamics attending storytelling; Georges' notion that "the whole storytelling event generates its own unique systems of social and psychological forces that exert pressure on the social environment and upon those whose interactions create that social environment" (322) suggests a prefiguring
of the view that discursive events create and alter culture. Not only do stories change with each telling, so does the situational context during and after each telling. Anthropologist Donald Brenneis sees folklore’s aesthetic dimension creating political culture, for in Brenneis’ view, aesthetics and politics are complementary philosophical entities. He states: "aesthetics is not solely an artifact or reflection of the political but also plays a critical role in constituting it" (1993:293). Mills goes one further: beyond mere "communities of speech," folklore’s aesthetic expressions "are communities of action (including political action)" (1993:187).

In a discussion about the necessity of creating new, interdisciplinary models for interpreting women’s folklore, Turner and Young argue that "one can create models that aid in the analysis of one’s data . . . these models are based on expanded perspectives--they illustrate how women creatively negotiate certain situations to transcend a domain traditionally regarded as powerless" (1993:17). In this study, I will examine how the aesthetic expressions of the participants both define and create political culture, a culture in which one member of the group (the participant) articulates for another member of that group (the researcher) her perceptions of living and working within a complex, institutional hierarchy. Hence, both the broad context (i.e. the life/work situations that are similar for both researcher and participant) as well as the more specific, situational context of the interview itself play critical roles in the interpretation.

But how and in what ways do aesthetic expressions create, or disrupt, political culture? The answer to that question lies, I think, in rigorously analyzing discourse
patterns and verbal art that call attention to the positionality of self within a dominant hierarchy; in this study, the most pointed commentary has to do with power and resistance. In "Differential Identity and the Social Base of Folklore" (1971), Richard Bauman suggests that key sites for identity formation are "margins and boundaries" rather than the centers of social and cultural groupings; indeed, the political dimension was palpable in the narratives of every woman in this marginalized group, a condition that has guided my thematic categorization of their words. Beyond merely reporting "the facts," the participants enacted highly elaborate discursive strategies to give voice to their experiences at Ohio State. Their use of gossip and anecdote, and such aesthetic rhetorical markers as temporalization of narrative, parallelism and repetition, quotations, alteration of vocal patterns, metaphor, and epithet have helped me to define their issues.

Because I believe that objectivity cannot be achieved in a personal narrative study nor in any endeavor, I aimed through interactive interviewing for "shared meanings," an ethnographic method that I hoped would empower and enlist the participants as collaborators (Stacey 1991:112). Stahl describes "Private Folklore" as "narrowly culture-specific lore that constitutes part of an ‘idioculture,’ the individual’s impressionistic store of traditions that attach to either her own or another individual’s life history--those subjectively significant items I would call personalore, and the listener’s interpretation of the teller’s identity, personal values, and beliefs as reflected in the story" (1989:45). Although achieving shared meanings has been my aim, I have nevertheless tried to separate individual and group "meanings" in this project.
Discourse Analysis

Many of the concerns and approaches of discourse analysis and folklore scholarship overlap. The theoretical formulations of the two fields have interrelated histories. The movement to theorize folklore as dynamic performance as opposed to static text owed much to such interdisciplinary influences of anthropologists Mallery, Malinowski, and Sapir through their efforts to make ethnolinguistic texts more comprehensive by the study of contextual dynamics; of the Prague School’s emphasis on synchronic and contextual approaches to linguistics; of Parry and Lord’s oral-formulaic study of comparative literature; and interdisciplinary influences that resulted in dramatic shifts in the conception and application of social science theories and methods (Fine 1984:55). Alan Dundes and E. Ojo Arewa’s "Proverbs and the Ethnography of Speaking Folklore" (1964) integrated folkloristics with Dell Hymes' ethnography of speaking, reflecting "a direct link from the Prague School theorists to the performance approach" (Fine 1984:33). Hymes is the symbolic bridge between the disciplines of discourse analysis and folklore scholarship; his "concern for the socio-cultural context of the use of language, with the specific relationship between language and local systems of knowledge and social order" (Schiffrin 1994:213) dovetails with the thrust of cultural/political folklore studies and critical ethnography, and with the recent work of sociolinguist Norman Fairclough. Much current theorizing in both folklore and discourse analysis involves language’s constitutive dimension, which Dell Hymes discusses in "Breakthrough to Performance" (1975), a work that pairs linguistics with folklore (specifically, performance theory).
Folklore theorists and discourse analysts have become increasingly preoccupied of late with the role of communication in spawning identity formation and social change. Laurel Richardson comments on the heterogeneity of communicative forms: "Understanding language as competing discourses, competing ways of giving meaning and of organizing the world, makes language a site of exploration and struggle" (1994:518). In multitudes of ways, language defines, maintains, and disrupts social hierarchies and their power structures; it is also the site where identities and subjectivities are molded. Such "molding" is often achieved by means of markedly creative language use: as Muriel Saville-Troike (1986) and others point out, linguists are concerned with creative language use, a demonstration of linguistic competence that, my research indicates, can simultaneously embody strategies for "bucking power" and "defining the self." Norman Fairclough has found that "ideological creativity is often associated with managing crises of one sort or another" (1989:97); the verbal artistry within the participants' discourse has often occurred during the revelations of particularly difficult situations. The participants' words allow us to step back from the interview and return in space and time to those "situations" in which a speech community demonstrates "not only rules, but also sometimes oppression, sometimes freedom, in the relation between personal abilities and their occasion for use" (Hymes 1974:205).

How do asymmetrical power relations in an institution stymie or enable expressiveness? Does limited opportunity for expression challenge some to become more creative in their discourse, either within the very situation upon which limits are
imposed, or in later accounts of such situations? More specifically, how is consciousness of material status and gender dynamics displayed in the narratives? A number of scholars have stressed the importance of looking beyond the text itself and focusing on the power of the process of text creation to approach inevitably contestable meanings. The work of Norman Fairclough will be especially helpful to the study at hand. Fairclough's scholarship seems theoretically aligned with Dell Hymes' ethnography of speaking in a number of ways, including Hymes' emphasis on praxis; ethnography of speaking's analysis of function always reverting self-determinedly to an analysis of structure (likewise a strategy for analyzing folklore); and its emic and holistic (ethnographic) concerns (Schiffrin 1994). The women in this study can be considered, in Hymes' phrase, a "speech community" by virtue of shared history and group identification (which includes occupation, gender, race, age, social class, and very often, politics); the group also has in common linguistic similarities (Saville-Troike 1982:19).

The idea, then, is that speech communities share social "identities." But identity is an amorphous term: for the purpose of discourse analysis, this study will incorporate the concept of "identity" as defined by ethnographers of speaking and interactional sociolinguists, the former aiming to pinpoint language's role in shaping identity, the latter seeing identity as "locally situated" with a variety of aspects of identity coming into play depending on context and position in life, a view that suggests the potential malleability of the self by the self: "This more dynamic view suggests that identity is open to intentional manipulation by self, and to interpersonal
negotiation between self and other" (Schiffrin 1994:374). While, according to John Gumperz, the goal of ethnography of communication to identify the interrelationship of the "norms and values" of speech events as they apply to specific social groups has failed to consider how group members identify "events" and how "insiderness" and "outsiderness" affect interpretation (1982:155), I believe that the application of folklore and ethnographic methods will correct such ostensible deficiencies.

An understanding of the narratives in this project will be enhanced by a structural analysis; the texts have proven to be more "disorganized," "discontinuous," perhaps, than Labov's (1967) neat linear model or when considered alongside Charlotte Linde's (1993) expectation for linguistic, personal, and even philosophical "coherence." It is clear that the participants are "remaking themselves" (as well as creating folklore and culture) in their verbal expressions. A personal and ongoing negotiation of self and a grappling with the contradictions and discontinuities of their lives seem reflected in their stories. In considering the role of discourse in constituting "selves," Fairclough affirms the need to find a middle ground for emphasizing both discursive "expression" (the textual product) but not to the neglect of "discursive construction" (process), the means by which, he argues, cultures create identities for their members. "Focusing on expression . . . has completely marginalized the identity function into a minor aspect of the interpersonal function" (1992:168). Hence, "text analysis is not something that should be done in isolation." (Fairclough 1992:198). Fairclough, who focuses on the process of text production and interpretation and tries to pinpoint the ways such processes shape social relations
and ideology, takes up Foucault's idea about discourse's power to constitute social subjects: "questions of subjectivity, social identity, and 'selfhood' ought to be of major concern in theories of discourse and language" (1992:44). Fairclough wants to create and sustain a methodological tension, a fruitful dialectic, in the study of discourse and society that I liken to a skillful integration of performance and cultural/political folklore theories. Fairclough argues: "It is important that the relationship between discourse and social structure should be seen dialectically if we are to avoid the pitfalls of overemphasizing on the one hand the social determination of discourse, and on the other hand the construction of the social in discourse" (1992:65).

The field of discourse analysis seems to encourage multidisciplinary analyses: in the case of the ethnography of speaking, Saville-Troike points out, "its contribution to the description and understanding of culturally constituted patterns of communication will be limited if its methods and findings are not integrated with other descriptive and analytical approaches" (1982:11): as stated, folklore theory and critical ethnography are the choices for complementary integration in this project.

**Critical Ethnography**

While it is atypical for folklore field research to follow the pattern of classic ethnographies in which the researcher spends months or years in another culture, folklorists have nevertheless traditionally been interested in the methods of
ethnography. However, as a member of the community to be studied, I see myself as having functioned as an ethnographer for some time, and after the study is completed, I will not retreat from the field, as most ethnographers do. It was more than benign curiosity that led me to my choice of participants. My own perceptions as Civil Service employee—especially the ways in which the university hierarchy restrains, provokes, enables, and rewards, its staff members—have likewise spurred me toward a documentation and subsequent analysis of the personal narratives of my focus group. Thus, ethnographic methods in general, and critical ethnography in particular, have guided both fieldwork and interpretation of the project. The critical slant has affected every aspect of the study, from choice of participants to the ways in which the data are ultimately sorted and interpreted.

Critical ethnography borrows concepts from both general and postmodern ethnographic research. For example, Beverly Moss states that ethnographies are concerned with "daily routines in the everyday lives of the communities being studied" (1992:155), and Bogdan and Biklen, quoting McDermott, remind the fieldworker: "At its best, ethnography should account for the behavior of people by describing what it is that they know that enables them to behave appropriately given the dictates of common sense" (1992:38). Suggestions such as these are of benefit to any ethnographer. Postmodern ethnographic writings such as those by Clifford and Marcus (1986), Marcus and Fischer (1986), and Margery Wolf (1992) have also guided the work at hand by calling attention to the intersubjective relationship between researcher and participants, a dynamic that researchers must take into
account, as it can govern the use and application of methodology. Such studies insist
that, by means of their discursive processes, ethnographer and informant are together
"fabricating," constructing culture and constructing reality; Stacey comments,
"critical ethnographers . . . attempt to bring to their research an awareness that
ethnographic writing is not cultural reportage, but cultural construction, and always a
construction of self as well as of other" (1991:115).

But what is critical ethnography, how should it be conducted, and what are its
goals? There are a variety of views on the subject. John Van Maanen points out that
critical tales are interdisciplinary projects characterized by "the conscious selection of
strategically situated culture in which to locate one's fieldwork" (1988:128)—this
research has adhered to Van Maanen's requirements. Jim Thomas views critical
ethnography as taking some of its cues from conventional ethnography, yet the work
of critical ethnographers ideally supports emancipation or neutralizes oppression, the
first step to resistance being recognition and realization. Thomas remarks that critical
ethnography "is simultaneously hermeneutic and emancipatory" (1993:4). Linda
Brodkey comments that the goal of critical ethnography is negative critique, and says
"the critical ethnographer will consider an event worth recording and reporting
because it exemplifies a hegemonic practice" (1987b:71); Brodkey values the
presence of the critical ethnographer in her own text, thus suggesting that the critical
ethnography should be an experimental projects in both its goal of advocacy and in its
formal construction:
It is in discourse, in the telling of the story, that critical ethnographers are most able to enact a negative critique. . . .some narrative voices are more audible than others, and a narrative voice is made most audible by interrupting the flow of the story and calling attention to the fact of narration . . . . critical ethnographic narrators would interrupt their own stories. (1987a:73)

According to Norman Denzin, a "critical text is judged by its ability to reveal reflexively . . . structures of oppression as they operate in the worlds of lived experience. A critical text thus creates a space for multiple voices to speak; those who are oppressed are asked to articulate their definitions of their situations" (1994:509).

Lawrence Angus sees critical ethnography as operating through a "macro/micro" dialectic that sets out to define and interpret both the influence of social structures and participants' daily interactions; "Such a critical ethnography would attempt to expose the contradictions, located in time and space, that allow for the possibility for organisational and ultimately of social transformation" (1986:66). Simon and Dippo describe critical ethnography as a project guided by specific values and interests, both pedagogical and political--they state that it "seeks to transform the relations of power that constrict people's lives," and stress that critical ethnographic research is interested in "how people are implicated in the regulation and alteration of the terms of how they live together and how they define what is possible and desirable for themselves and others" (1986:196). Requirements for undertaking a "critical" study, according to Simon and Dippo, include developing a critical problematic that focuses on "recursively accomplishing and regulating forms," and the
researcher's recognition and delineation of how critical ethnography--like all other research--will ultimately be "constituted and regulated through historical relations of power and existing material conditions" (1986:197).

Howard Goldstein's assessment of critical ethnography fits in with a general idea of critical inquiry insofar as it is defined by "the assumption of multiple realities, each socially and personally created," the goal of which is "inducing new awareness and fruitful change" (1994:46). Scholars such as Kincheloe and McLaren see Marxist theory as inseparable from the theory that underpins critical ethnography and the realization of its emancipatory goals: "we believe that a Marxian-inspired critical ethnography deepened by a critical engagement with new currents of postmodern social theory has an important if not crucial role to play in the project of constructing new forms of socialist democracy" (1994:142). Martyn Hammersley, by contrast, views Marxist orthodoxy as positing a comprehensive role for critical ethnography, but paradoxically "one that is highly implausible" (1992:119); Hammersley sees no advantage to critical ethnography--he argues that its oppressor-oppressed dichotomy is simplistic, and that the emancipation of a group is an unrealistic goal for social research.

To Hammersley's observation about "oppressor-oppressed" propositions, I would suggest that all such claims are only partial and constructed pictures of a multi-sided whole; this study cannot claim to be more. Hammersley's point about the doubtful "emancipatory" potential for social research projects is a valid one. This work will be an interpretive study and, although it will offer the participants a forum
for making their own recommendations about changes in the university, I will not propose policy changes. I make no promises or predictions about the degree or precise nature of advocacy the participants might benefit from as a result of this study. Nevertheless, the first step toward advocacy or action is the attempt to recognize, understand, document, and expose aspects of inequity, as many of the scholars quoted above have suggested. In this respect, I believe the project will succeed.

Methodology

1. Target Population.

I employed a method of purposeful sampling, seeking out representatives of a specific population for a specific kind of study. Michael Patton defines purposeful sampling as a tactic by which qualitative researchers zero in on small, deliberately selected groups whose "information-rich cases are those from which we can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the research" (1990:169). Lincoln and Guba describe such a sampling technique as especially useful in "politically important or sensitive cases, when the purpose is to attract attention to the study" (1985:102).

The group is composed of eight middle- or lower-middle class white women, all of whom are in early middle age. Before undertaking the project, I was acquainted with a few of the participants, and did not know some of the others. I had never before met "Iz" or "Jill"—Graduate School staff who knew Iz suggested I
contact her, and I found Jill by calling the administrative assistant in her department. "Ariel" is a graduate student in the History Department where I formerly worked, and so I knew she was also a Civil Service Employee, but our interactions had been limited before this project. After I began to interview her, Ariel spontaneously began to network on my behalf: she informed her friend "Ruth," a woman with an advanced degree who works in a Civil Service job on campus, about my project, and Ruth suggested her willingness to participate. Ariel communicated that information, I contacted Ruth, and arranged to interview her. "Emily" is friendly with a co-worker of mine who called Emily and asked her if she would be interested in participating in the project; Emily consented. "Carrie" and I had worked in the same building on campus in the mid-1980s, and had occasionally exchanged pleasantries in the elevator; I had heard of "Meg" from time to time in College of Humanities-related gossip; and I had read about "Hester's" personal life some months before in an article in The Columbus Dispatch about intentionally unmarried mothers.12

I interviewed all the women at least three times for at least one hour per session. I also engaged in fieldnote-taking sessions at each woman's office. Individual and group member checking took place with the aim of both researcher and participants agreeing upon some of the important "meanings" that were articulated.

2. Data Collection "in Context."

I had hoped to interview all the women in their offices on campus. "The phenomena of the study--social, psychological, etc.--take their meaning as much from
their contexts as they do from themselves" (Lincoln and Guba 1985:189); Foster sees "recreation of context" as critical for successful interpretation; such a process involves both interpreter and subject (1990:124). And, in keeping with the idea that folklore is not a static entity but a dynamic process, context is also dynamic, always in flux. In the words of the Personal Narratives Group, context is not a script. Rather, it is a dynamic process through which the individual simultaneously shapes and is shaped by her environment. Similarly, an analysis of context, which emphasizes these dynamic processes, is an interpretive strategy which is both diachronic and synchronic. (1989:19)

Interviewing within context, then, boosts the researcher's understanding of participants' meanings; by "meanings," I am suggesting a particularized, relative set of truths that belong solely to the women in this study. For "truth," as Shuman avers, is an unavailable commodity. Thus, the folklorist's aim should be in "shifting the domain of study from the effort to accumulate empirical truths to the effort to understand the distribution of knowledge, including politics, hierarchies, and entitlements and the interests they serve" (1993a:346); Shuman further stresses that "more contextual detail will not lead us closer to 'the truth.' Rather, contextual information is essential for understanding the grounds on which ownership of 'the truth' is contested" (1993b:75). It is precisely this politically-based contest over truth that I wish to explore from the standpoint of a formerly unrepresented group's narratives, and within the context of their positions in the university. Postmodern feminist scholars stress the importance of defining positionality--and thus subjectivity--
within contexts that are defined by gender, race, and/or class. Identification of "marginals" and "team players" alike, it follows, depends on positionality in relation to the larger institutional hierarchy.

In content and sentiment, personal experience narratives are influenced by surroundings; "meaning" can be considered inaccessible when personal narratives about one's role in one's setting are given outside the context within which such narratives find emotional and intellectual development. However, Iz and Ruth chose to share their experiences with me over lunch in a restaurant, and Ariel and Hester elected to speak to me in areas adjacent to their offices. Their reluctance to converse in their offices is understandable as all three women share work space with others. Conversely, Meg, Jill, and Carrie have private offices, where they were able to tell their stories.

Despite the privacy of their offices, however, I acknowledge that my presence altered the "natural context" of Jill, Meg, and Carrie's offices. What follows are presumably authentic stories, yet poststructuralism has decreed a margin of unreliability as an unavoidable condition attending every discipline. As David Carr has suggested, "the idea of authenticity is an illusion of modern individualism and self-centeredness" (1986:84). How can one claim to discern what lies behind every subtle pause and catch-phrase, how can one be sure to have seized all the double-entendres of women being tape recorded by a virtual stranger?
3. Interviewing Techniques.

Although I was initially a stranger, I believe that I quickly became perceived as "one of the group" by all the participants during the interviews. Inequality and "otherness" may indeed characterize all fieldwork, including "woman-to-woman" research, as some scholars contend; however, although I did not presume automatic bonding, neither do I deny experiencing a degree of kinship with all the women, based on a multitude of life and work similarities. The differences, the "otherness," that has historically characterized the relations between folklorist and folk has been documented, but I believe that the participants and I have in common more than the study at hand; while fieldworkers are typically outsiders, the women in my study and I share the same work and academic environment, have had similar life experiences, are of the same race and gender, occupy a similar socioeconomic niche, and belong to the same general age group. So it has seemed to me that our collaboration and identification with each other quite naturally exceeded the boundaries of the study. Further, without exception the women have exhibited a self-awareness and articulateness that, in part, I chalk up to their intellectual inclinations and academic pursuits. Several of them are involved in folklore study, and the others are or have been trained in humanities or social science programs, fields loosely related to my own. Such conditions have, I think, facilitated a high degree of self-reflexivity in the narrative performances.

Nevertheless, Elaine Lawless has pointed out the inherent difficulties that attend collective representation; she stresses it is the researcher’s responsibility to
examine both their participants' truths and their own ideologies/biases in their texts, and "not privilege one interpretation over another." The sense that this endeavor has been a "shared" project "belonging" to both researcher and participants has been one of its fundamental characteristics. I believe I encouraged the sharing by trying to demonstrate my respect of and appreciation for the participants, not only for their time, insights, and collaboration in the study, but for any emotional distress they felt in reliving their experiences. Not the "detached neutral observer" who disappears into the narrative of Van Maanen's "realist tales," I was animated questioner and recipient of responses; I tried, in fact, to emulate Lincoln and Guba's so-called "flexible human instrument" (1985), who attempts to adapt herself to the interpersonal demands of the interviewee, adjusting subsequent questions and responses as the situation suggests.

Patti Lather remarks that "interviews conducted in an interactive dialogic manner that requires self-disclosure on the part of the researcher encourage reciprocity" (1991:60), and I think that my own occasional spontaneous "confessions" about some of my experiences in the university did elicit a heightened state of responsiveness among the women. Collecting the participants' narratives has been the goal of the interviews, yet I often sensed that by briefly divulging some first-hand experience of my own, I reassured the participants and also spurred them on to additional aesthetic expressions. Reciprocal studies encourage polyvocality--Lawless describes the method of her own reciprocal ethnography as multi-layered and polyvocal, a method which produced and in turn is reflected by both "text and subtext
of the women's stories, which are equally multi-layered and polyvocal" (1993:80); such polyvocality, enhanced by reciprocity in interpretation, seems to be part and parcel of women's style of speech, which has been described as

ordered and formulaic, allowing participants, or those present, to anticipate the form and partial content of what is to follow. In contrast to similar styles among men, the women's speech behavior requires the participation of others. The performer role is a floating one. (Farrer 1975:xvii)

Elliot Mishler has pointed out that interviewers would be wise to rethink "the core presuppositions and aims of standard interviewing practice, where respondents’ stories are suppressed in that their responses are limited to ‘relevant’ answers to narrowly specific questions" (1986:68). Accordingly, I devised a series of core questions that I initially thought would elicit more than simple "yes" or "no" answers and promote storytelling. When I devised the questions, my aim was to prompt the women to divulge their perceptions of self-identity and possible insights about their nonconformity within and without their work environment. In retrospect, I now see that the core questions are narrow ones, and suggestive of an underlying agenda on my part; they reveal my own "ethnographic allegory," in James Clifford’s words (1986). In my zeal, I had unwittingly imposed my own "local" experiences upon a "general" if tidy population--female Civil Service workers with advanced degrees.

The core questions are:

1) Have you experienced what sociologists call "in-group bias," in which faculty and more "traditional" staff might display veiled or even conspicuous resentment toward you?
2) Do you have any sense that the professors in your department, or the professors you’ve studied with, look on an Ohio State degree as less valuable than the one from the institution conferring their own Ph.D.?

3) I see it as a paradox that you’ve chosen to live what I call an "intense reality," i.e. to combine graduate work, fulltime employment [and family]. Yet you continue to work as a Classified Civil Service staff member. Are you waiting for other things, or are you willing to settle?

4) Do you see yourself as underemployed? If so, how do you cope with underemployment?

5) You’ve chosen an avenue that is unconventional for most Civil Service employees—that is, to earn an advanced degree. Do you perceive yourself as nontraditional in other ways?

6) Have you gained the acceptance of the faculty in your department?

7) Do faculty ever speak together about private matters while in your presence?

8) Have faculty asked you to do personal work for them?

9) During departmental or college functions, do faculty speak to you?

I used the core questions while interviewing the first three participants; I then dispensed with the questions during the initial interviews with Iz, Ariel, Jill, Ruth, and Emily, as I was interested to see if some of the same themes might emerge in a
less structured exchange. Indeed, the open-ended nature of my conversations with Iz, Ariel, Jill, Ruth, and Emily may explain why their first interviews are substantially longer than Meg, Hester, and Carrie's. I later returned to the last five participants and recorded their responses to the core questions; I also subsequently engaged the first three participants in open-ended interviews, to "even the score." I am now convinced that data emerging from open-ended interviews are of a measurably richer nature than those elicited from a questionnaire. Nevertheless, in conjunction with the open-ended interviews, the participants' answers to the core questions may prove to be valuable for triangulating the project's broad meanings.

4. Coding the Data.

A priori argumentation is anathema to qualitative research; Shirley Heath remarks that field researchers should "write up" their data according to "the basis of boundaries understood by those being observed instead of using a predetermined system of categories established before the participant-observation" (1982:34). Conventional scientific theory uses hypothesis, experimentation, and arrives at results that presumably confirm a theory; conversely, the "grounded" approach that I will apply to the interpretation demands that findings emerge inductively from the data rather than the handling of the data. The "whys" about the emerging themes are then teased out. Hence, advancing any argument(s) about the outcome of the project is impossible at the outset.
To schematize this study, I hand-coded each of the participants’ paragraphs in the margin of their transcripted narratives, extracting one or two of their own words to identify the paragraph’s theme. Although I am quick to elucidate my critical bias, the participants’ themes are drawn from the participants’ words. It is true that my questions and presence have influenced—and perhaps directed—the outcome of the interviews, and it is likewise a fact that I, as researcher, will ultimately determine which portions of the narrative to cull, which pieces of data to incorporate, and how to subsequently interpret the narratives. Still, I will endeavor to "re-present" the views of the participants. Disagreements (whether substantive or interpretative) that the women and I experience during the interviews or the member checking phase will be acknowledged in the text.

The narratives reveal striking thematic similarities, including:

1) reasons for university employment (the "entry tales");
2) views about marginality and nonconformity;
3) demonstrations of status by faculty or other staff members;
4) experiences of conflict or "horror stories" at the university;
5) information about their financial situations;
6) achieving resolution; pointing out advantages of their staff roles;
7) talk about the future.

I identified the themes after the narratives had been tape-recorded and then transcribed. The thematic diversity belies a number of overarching commonalities revealed in the interpretation, one of the most significant being the participants’
discursive projection of their own tenacity, dignity, and insightfulness, despite workplace or life difficulties.\textsuperscript{18}

In the spirit of critical ethnography's commitment to "action research"—that is, a researcher's obligation to advocate in some way for the well-being of the participants, I revisited the participants for a final session, during which time I requested their recommendations for policy and other kinds of changes in the university that would possibly benefit them. Thus, "We Recommend" is a section in the final chapter devoted to the participants' own suggestions which, if implemented in the future, might foster increased equity and opportunity for Civil Service employees.

5. Transcribing the Data.

I used a micro-cassette tape recorder for recording the narratives. I found it most convenient to subsequently transcribe the narratives by hand, and then to key the data into the word processing software. The paragraphs were then sorted thematically by means of a simple word-processing "cut and paste" technique (WordPerfect 6.0 software).
Key to Transcription

Triple asterisks ( ** * ) and single spacing set off the narratives from the text.

[PAUSE]: indicates pauses that are two or more seconds in duration.

Double dashes (--):  
When they occur between words, double dashes indicate hesitations in speech that last one to two seconds. (Slight hesitations of speech are marked by the use of commas.)  
Double dashes occurring at the end of an incomplete word indicate an informant’s faltering speech or immanent self-correction.

Ellipses (...):  
Used to indicate my editing of the narratives. Textual editing in this project consists of the occasional deletion of fillers such as "uh" and "you know." Linguists view such a practice as corrupting the integrity of the utterance. However, I have tried to balance empathy for the reader who lacks training in linguistics with my commitment to discourse analysis as a discipline.

Single bracket after word or phrase ([]):  
Indicates an overlap of dialogue within a conversation.

Capitalization:  
Words or phrases that were stressed during the interviews are CAPITALIZED; when a series of words is stressed, but one word is stressed most highly within the series, all the words will be capitalized with the most highly stressed word also BOLDED.

Information in brackets ([ ]):  
When capitalized, information in brackets indicates an alteration in the normal speaking pattern, i.e. paralinguistic and metalinguistic devices (the former consisting of laughter, changes in vocal tone and cadence; the latter being aspects of communications that self-consciously point to the communicative act itself—in Barbara Babcock’s words, strategies that "lead us away from and then back to the message by supplying a 'frame,' an interpretive context or alternative point of view within which the context of the story is to be understood and judged"[1978: 66]). Such strategies, which signify a "performance" embedded within a personal narrative, are used for emphasis, and ultimately, evaluation. Lower case words in brackets provide a clarification of the participants’ utterances.
Credibility

"Objectivity" and "Fact," of course, belong to the domain of positivist inquiry. Titon sees the life story as "a fiction, just like the story; and even if the story is not factually true, it is always true evidence of the storyteller's personality "(1980:290). It is no surprise that folklorist Titon unabashedly embraces the fictive dimension of narrative. Yet the value of "fictions" has carried over into the social sciences: as sociologist Laurel Richardson has astutely noted: "Language is not the result of one's individuality; rather, language constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific" (1994:518). While Heath states: "The validity of abstract representations of human behavior must rest on reality founded on disciplined observation and analysis" (1982:44), I must question her use of such an absolute term as "reality" in juxtaposition with as slippery an endeavor as field research. As the Personal Narratives Group has noted:

Far from encouraging our ability to think creatively about discovering the truths in personal narratives, our academic disciplines have more often discouraged us from taking people's life stories seriously. Disciplines have mainly done this by elevating some kinds of truth—the kinds that conform to established criteria of validity—over others. Generalizations based on these elevated Truths become norms which are rarely challenged for their failure to consider or explain exceptions. This elevation and generalization serve to control: control data, control irregularities of human experiences, and, ultimately, control what constitutes knowledge. Considered in these terms, the truths in personal narratives cannot stand the tests to which they are subjected, i.e., the tests of verifiability, reliability, facticity, or representativeness. (1989:262)

Simon and Dippo point out that all knowledge is ideological: "hence the issue is not whether one is 'biased'; but rather, whose interests are served by one's work"
Oring's assessment that "The way we make informants talk about their lives profoundly alters the lives we document" (1987:246) encapsulates the problem of representational authority; Geertz emphasizes the fictive nature of cultural analysis, which for him consists of "guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape" (1973:20). Charlotte Linde's ideas about truth's relative state coincide with her aim of explicating textual coherence: "in focusing on coherence, we concentrate on the life story as a text, rather than on either the speaker of the text or the relation of the life story to some supposed set of facts in a postulated real world." (1993:14).

My perception about the "truth quotients" of the narratives studied here mirrors Livia Polanyi's view of her own study group:

I never really wondered who was right about anything, they were all so sure that they were right. There was no other way to be or think or see the world that my father's every word would say, and likewise my mother's and the school's, and the drunken stockbroker's. There was only one world, I could see that, but a thousand views of it. Each view coherent, self-consistent, limiting in some respects, a blessed relief in others. Each existing like a self-satisfied planet revolving around a central star blissfully unaware of who was the center and who the wanderer. (1989:197)

Truth is relative, between/among participants, within any individual's own narrative(s), and certainly among interpreters: "The truths of personal narratives are the truths revealed from real positions in the world, through lived experience in social relationships, in the context of passionate beliefs and partisan stands" (Personal Narratives Group 1989:263). In a similar vein, P.T. Clough recommends embracing
a textual politics that would "refuse the identity of empirical science" (1992:135) while openly engaging social criticism as the privileged form of discourse.

Difficulties surrounding representational authority confound both interpretation and the "validation" process; Polanyi stresses:

because conversational stories are inherently no less ambiguous than literary texts, it is possible for there to be various legitimate interpretations of what the story was really about. In the first place, stories can be thought to be about the main characters or objects involved and they can also plausibly be considered to be "about" the moral which can be inferred from the juxtaposition of the most important propositions. Since stories are complex utterances, a complex of responses may be appropriate. (1989:49)

Hence, it is a subjective understanding of a variety of realities that I am after in this study, not fact. And regardless of how broad and deep and holistic and comprehensive any study becomes, the meanings derived will ultimately be incomplete. Still, I do believe that the women expressed deeply-felt versions of their own "truths" within their narratives; and their individual messages and meanings—not some larger reality—are the foci of analysis in this study. I will thus not attempt to defend the validity issue by theorizing the narratives under the rubric of a modified positivist umbrella, but argue that it is precisely the narratives' fictive contours that permit and produce the richest meaning-making. Viewed in this way, the inevitable gap between "the experience" and "the text" ameliorates to some degree the crisis of representation that literary scholars, historians, and social scientists are confronting in the postmodern-poststructural "moment." As Titon has suggested, "An approach to the life story which recognizes its validity as a fiction, quite apart from its value as a
historical document, places it squarely in . . . a universe which is enlarged, even as
we are enlarged, by the complementary stances of finding out and making, of history
and fiction" (1980:292) (emphasis mine).

The foregoing discussion should in no way suggest my lack of concern for
careful collection, transcription, and interpretation of data. As Linda Brodkey
affirms,

Naming one’s method an analysis or interpretation does not resolve the
disparity between experience and narration . . . . Yet to remain silent is
an untenable alternative to scholarly vulnerability. To stop telling
stories about experience would be tantamount to abandoning one
another to the very intellectual, social, cultural, and political boundaries
that ethnographic narratives labor, however awkwardly and tenuously,
to dismantle. (1987b:48)

Thus, whereas "validity" may be out of reach, "credibility" should remain a concern
for any researcher, and I have tried to ensure a credible study by the systematic
application of several procedures. First, the participants’ narratives were recorded on
tape, transcribed, and coded for thematic similarities. For triangulation, the open-
ended interviews were supplemented by a brief questionnaire; further, I conducted
fieldnotes in each woman’s office for one hour or longer. Member checks
subsequently took place, in which I asked the participants to review the typed
narratives and fieldnotes for errors; member checks have been most useful for
pointing out typographical errors, for clarifying participants’ lexical choices that had
been unclear on my tape and thus transcribed wrong, and factual problems in my
typed descriptions of the workspaces.
A number of folklorists have recently expounded upon both the complications and the ultimate interpretational richness that can result from collaborative research (Lawless 1991, 1992; Borland 1991); further, collaboration arguably empowers the participants in yet another way, in valuing the self-reflexive assessments of their words. Jim Thomas stresses: "By incorporating research subjects to varying degrees as near equals in the projects, knowledge is transformed into a collective enterprise in which its production and use are to be shared by those who are its focus. [Such an approach] assumes the subjects are competent to shape methodological, theoretical, and practical outcomes" (1993:28-9). I shared drafts of the chapters to the participants and have included portions of their input in this study. Upon presenting the women with typed analyses of their narratives, they have either not objected to or disagreed with either the way I have chosen to present their stories or with my interpretation of their meanings, or they have offered their suggestions for alterations. If such changes had to do with the accuracy of the transcription or if they reflected concerns about content, I always complied with the women's suggestions. If the women suggested alterations in my analysis, I made the change if I thought such a change would enhance the "meanings" of the text; if, in my estimation, the changes were likely to confuse or lend ambiguity to the text and overall analysis, I would include that change but alongside my own newly calibrated interpretation. The result is a multi-voiced project whose authority resides with both researcher and researched. Nevertheless, the final responsibility for the interpretations is my own.
Limitations

The study does not purport to represent the "worldview" of Ohio State Classified Civil Service employees as a whole, just as it does not pretend to speak for all graduate students. The coding I have used to thematically categorize the personal narratives has been conducted systematically but is admittedly subjective (as Van Maanen suggests, "materials are organized according to topics and problems relevant to the fieldworker's conceptual and disciplinary interests" [1989:47].) And, while I do believe that a "window" has been opened for scrutinizing the realities of the participants, I certainly cannot claim to comprehensively represent all of their viewpoints about their roles as women, as Civil Service employees, or as graduate students. Another limitation concerns the study's benefits to the participants. The degree to which the women experience individual or collective emancipation--the principal goal of critical theory and critical ethnography--as a result of this project remains to be seen.

Ethics and Confidentiality

Bogdan and Biklen, among others, address ethics issues that arise during the collection and dissemination of fieldwork, and stress that:

1. Subjects enter research projects voluntarily understanding the nature of the study and the dangers and obligations that are involved.
2. Subjects are not exposed to risks that are greater than the gains they might derive. (1992:53)

I have observed these basic cautions for the protection of the participants. However, the feminist, action research quality of this project has automatically compelled my
deployment of more specific ethical considerations, tailored to the culture. I am bound to loyalty toward the women in this study, in part because I am "one of the group," and in part because the interactive nature of the research has enhanced my growing identification with and respect for the women and their words. As Maurice Punch suggests:

> gender and ethnic solidarity between researcher and researched welds that relationship into one of cooperation and collaboration that represents a personal commitment and also a contribution to the interests of women in general (e.g., in giving voice to "hidden women," in generating the 'emancipatory praxis,' and in seeing the field settings as "sites of resistance"). In this sense, the personal is related to the ethical, the moral, and the political standpoint. And you do not rip off your sisters. (1994:89)

Despite Punch's idealism, it should be pointed out that "sisterhood" is itself a social construct--sisters sometimes do rip off sisters, as some of the women's narratives attest, vis à vis stories about female supervisors' lack of empathy and misuse of power in the workplace. In my own case, I admit that personal gain has accompanied my altruism: while I am hoping to empower the participants by providing a forum for them, I am also hoping to "empower" myself "through the use of other women's voices" (Scott and Shah 1993:97). Nevertheless, I am committed to the women and their well-being; engaging in "indirect" interviewing techniques to gain rich texts has thus been unnecessary and undesirable. On the contrary, I think that sharing my perceptions about our shared work culture and being honest about my purposes have encouraged the participants' openness.

In my study, ethical considerations arose in three separate phases of the research. I will discuss those phases in the order of their occurrence.
1. Attempting Access.

First, I encountered an ethical dilemma at the beginning of the process as I sought names of potential participants. I began by calling and visiting a number of offices on campus including the Graduate School, the Office of Human Resources, and the University Registrar. In so doing, I encountered institutional barriers that may exist to prevent leaks in confidential information about university employees and students. I realized that the university's ethical concerns for its students/staff had been translated into policy, and so my early investigations led to dead ends. Neither the Registrar's Office nor the Office of Human Resources could or would supply me with names of employees who fit the categories of my study (both offices, which are outfitted with highly sophisticated computer systems, explained that their "databases are unable to sort information in the ways I needed it to be sorted"). When I inquired of Graduate School employees, I was given a similar message: they did not have the capacity to identify university employees who were also members of their student body.

However, my presence in the Graduate School led to a fruitful exchange. The office manager suggested I call "Iz," with whom she was personally acquainted. I asked the office manager if I could use her name when I approached Iz, and she said she would not mind. Iz responded positively to my request for an interview. I then began to network around campus with friends and acquaintances in order to locate other women who fit my focus. This method led me to "Meg," who is well known in a certain college in the university. Speaking to others also allowed me to recall
"Carrie," who had worked in the same campus building as I had in the 1980s. Then I recollected reading about "Hester" in a newspaper article about unmarried mothers. I contacted Hester in her office of employment, and she unhesitatingly agreed to speak to me. Phone calls to Meg and Carrie yielded similarly positive results.

Months later, after the study was well underway and I wanted to expand the focus group, I decided to call every academic unit in the university and ask the Administrative Assistant or Associate in the department if a Civil Service employee with an advanced degree happened to be employed there. With the aid of the Faculty/Staff Telephone Directory, I proceeded, department by department, beginning with "Aeronautical Engineering." I found "Ariel" and "Jill" using this technique. In each case, the Administrative Assistant promptly provided the name I wanted, and also said I could tell the potential participant how I had learned her name. I phoned Jill and Ariel, and each agreed to participate in the study.

During my initial phone conversations with the women, I explained the nature of my project and emphasized my interest in learning about their experiences as Civil Service employees with advanced degrees. All the women were assured of their continuing anonymity during the research process and afterwards ("anonymity" implying that their true names would not be revealed in either the drafts of the study or in the final document, nor would their identities be revealed to my committee members, friends, or co-workers). Second, all personal names they might divulge during the course of interviews, and all references to their current or past employing units in the university would be disguised in the written texts.
I was also clear early on about my views and expectations about "ownership of data." The women understood and agreed that their personal narratives would be collected, transcribed, and interpreted for the purpose of my dissertation.

2. Ethics in the Field.

Ethical issues in the field are manifold; for me, such issues have primarily been related to the comfort levels of the women. After beginning the fieldwork, I tried to minimize the inconvenience that my visits caused them. When arranging the interviews and fieldwork, I repeatedly urged the women to let me know if my presence would be a problem, and have asked them to reschedule if they discovered at the last minute that my use of their time would inconvenience them or irritate their co-workers or supervisors. (They seem to have taken me at my word: I have received telephone calls from several of the women prior to planned visits, at which time they advised me that my presence in their offices would not be possible that day after all. In such cases, we rescheduled.) When conducting fieldwork in campus offices, I have made a point of being unobtrusive--sitting on the sidelines, not engaging in conversations with information or other staff--as I take my notes. I have also tried to ensure that my arrivals and leavetakings are as brief and quiet as possible.

In my pursuit of personal experience narratives, I admit I have been eager to interview all participants in their offices (the "meanings" one makes about one's role in one's setting are, perhaps, ideally told within the context within which such
narratives find emotional and intellectual development). However, as stated, such has proven to be an unrealistic expectation—several of the women expressed visible discomfort and vocal apprehension at the thought of interviews within their campus offices. I have thus been readily amenable to interviewing them away from their work areas, where they seem more relaxed and open.

Finally, I have been careful to remember the time constraints of the interviews. When arranging interviews or fieldnote-taking sessions, I have indicated for the participant how much time I expect the session to take. This in mind, I have not exceeded the timeframe that I have specified, for either interview or fieldnote-taking, unless the woman herself chose to exceed the time allotment. (In fact, numerous times I have heard, "And this is a story I also want to tell you," after I have made motions to pack up and depart.)

Another ethics issue has to do with my role as insider in the university. It is safe to say that neither my supervisor nor those of the participants would approve (or generally view as necessary) prolonged sessions of fieldwork undertaken during the university’s office hours. Yet my office hours are the same as the participants’. So in many cases, fieldwork was of necessity conducted during lunch hours (among these are all of Iz’s and most of Jill’s interviews; Ariel has spoken to me both during her lunch hour and after work). If, however, the women were at leisure to speak to me during their work day (and in their work areas, a bonus for contextual understanding), I have always jumped at that opportunity. This has posed a conflict: if participants are willing and prefer to talk to me during their office hours, do I pass on those
opportunities in order to fulfill my own work responsibilities? The answer is, No. My decision has always been to "go for the data." I have then consistently made up the lost hours over the next day or two.

It is difficult to document all the private and spontaneous deliberations I have made through the data collection process. I have on occasion found myself in the familiar double bind of simultaneously trying to elicit rich data and yet not wishing to cause the women distress or concern over their divulging personal information. It is true that some of the participants displayed emotions such as anger, irritation, and regret in some of the interviews. Yet all the women have seemed to genuinely relish putting their own "spins" on even the most challenging moments they have experienced in the system. Still, achieving a balance between collecting "thick descriptions" and protecting the participants has remained a concern.

3. Ethics in Interpretation.

As suggested, close scrutiny of context is imperative for a considered interpretation of any ethnographic project. And context, of course, goes beyond the strict physical location within which the fieldwork is conducted. It also extends to the participants: their physical characteristics, ethnicity, age, marital and socioeconomic status, styles of clothing, personal histories, political/intellectual/academic/religious orientations, styles of interaction, and so on. An understanding of such background information contributes to the incisiveness of any interpretation. Therefore, I include documentation on each woman entitled "Participant Information" that contains a
section called "Biography/Personal Characteristics." The women volunteered brief encapsulations of their lives and outlooks for the "Bios." I include that information in the study with their express permission.

Ethical considerations always demand the researcher’s care in deciding what to keep and what to discard in fieldnotes and interview transcriptions. For my project, I have left intact all anecdotes and stories of a controversial nature in order to comprehensively present the culture: for I have found that dissent, resentment, and "coded" kinds of disrespect are part and parcel of the participants’ Civil Service experience. While some might argue that an edited, whitewashed version of the culture would protect the participants, I would suggest the opposite. As David Fetterman stresses:

The single most important guide to protecting participants is doing good work. An honest and thorough job presented in a clear and compelling manner will serve the participant well. A less than rigorous effort will result in misperceptions, misunderstandings, and factual inaccuracies that may confound the most altruistic parties in their efforts to understand and assist a group. Ethnographers must maintain the quality of the process as well as the outcome of their efforts. (1989:136)

Punch points to the "strong feelings among fieldworkers that settings and respondents should not be identifiable in print and that they should not suffer harm or embarrassment as a consequence of research" (1994:92), and I concur. However, because I believe that knowledge of the women’s academic disciplines is a significant contextual factors for understanding their stories, I have not altered their academic fields. I represent such information accurately in my project, with the participants’ permission.
Another aspect of "ethics" resides within the exercise of member checking. As discussed, all the women expressed their willingness to review the transcriptions and scrutinize the final draft for an assessment of my interpretation. Some interpretive errors may be weeded out in this way.
1. "Verbal art" is a phrase that has become synonymous with performance theory's concern with aesthetics as process. Dell Hymes uses the phrase frequently in his 1972 study *Foundations in Sociolinguistics*, and Richard Bauman's pivotal essay "Verbal Art as Performance" (1977) popularized the phrase (in folklore scholarship at least). The term seems to have originated with anthropology, and seems to have first been applied to folklore scholarship by William Bascom in his 1955 article "Verbal Art" (*Journal of American Folklore* 68 [245-52]).

2. At the close of a detailed discussion on discursive evaluation in his chapter entitled "The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax," William Labov stresses that "the most highly evaluated form of language is that which translates our personal experience into dramatic form" (1972:396); Labov's assessment illuminates an issue that touches on both form and function, an issue which deeply concerns folklorists and sociolinguists alike.

3. Along with many folklorists, feminist scholar Claire Farrer has distinguished "male" and "female" folklore models, in which: "(usually male) genres assume the status of 'legitimate' folklore genres. Female expressive forms either fit the male mold or they are relegated to a non-legitimate, less-than-expressive category. For instance, we have 'tall tales,' a male genre of storytelling; the female corollary is exaggeration. Men have 'stories' or 'yarn'; women 'gossip' or 'clothesline.' Women's expressive vehicles are the nonlegitimate forms, even though they are as ordered and as rule-governed as the male forms. Again Ben-Amos provides a definition when he says that ethnic general taxonomies 'are reflections of the rules for what can be said, in what situation, in what form, by whom and to whom'" (1975:xx).

4. In a vote of confidence for the efficacy of "insider" interviewing, Charlotte Linde comments, "Performed narratives are much more likely to be produced when the speaker and addressee share characteristics such as age, occupation, or ethnicity, or when there is a relation of friendship between speaker and addressee" (1993:61).

5. For an introductory overview of performance theory and context-based folkloristics, see *New Perspectives in Folklore*, 1971. Anthropologist Donald L. Brenneis has a keen understanding of performance theory as well as folklore studies' newer social/cultural/political emphases. He summarizes the theoretical shift in folklore studies over the past two decades: "Moving from relative fixity and permanence to a sense of the ephemeral and emergent in folklore, from received
belief and practice to co-creation and negotiation, and from relatively unproblematic views of identity and meaning to the productive interstices of cultural indeterminacy, recent work in folklore has shaped and resonates with broader intellectual concerns and changes, whether in cultural studies, critical theory, or more mainstream social analysis. ("Some Contributions of Folklore to Social Theory: Aesthetics and Politics in a Translocal World" in Western Folklore, V. 52, Numbers 2,3,4, 1993.)

6. Brenneis takes to task social theorist Harvey, who entertains the notion that scholars, especially in the humanities, are so distracted with form these days that they have neglected a vastly more important focus: the political agenda. Brenneis, however, claims a role for both folklorists and anthropologists that encompasses and encourages the theorizing of both the aesthetic and the political, complementary and self-generating entities both of which are tangible in the creation and dissemination of folklore.

7. I use the term "participant-observer" but some scholars have discarded it. Norman Denzin says, "The postmodern author seeks to dissolve that disjuncture between the observer and the observed. The trope of 'participant observation,' which captures the ambivalence of distance and familiarity, is replaced by one of 'dialogue,' showing 'the cooperative and collaborative nature of the ethnographic situation.'" (1994:256).

8. Although largely preoccupied with the "traditionality" of such "item-specific" genres as tale and myth, Hymes anticipates future folkloristic and linguistic concerns with language's power to create culture: "performance is a mode of existence and realization that is partly constitutive of what the tradition is. The tradition itself exists partly for the sake of performance; performance is itself partly an end" (1972:19).

9. A researcher's obligation to the focus group and the need to reveal her/his "agenda" are salient features of critical ethnography. But such ideas are not new. For example, Dell Hymes wrote in 1972: "Who is the problem to whom? Whom does one's knowledge help? What responsibility must one take for the outcome of one's work? The questions are inescapable . . . " And, in a surprisingly "critical" observation, Muriel Saville-Troike states: "Ethnographers, who by the nature of their perspective reach beyond the 'facts' of observable behavior to interpret meaning/culture, have an ethical responsibility to the 'subjects' of investigation." (1986:49).

10. I favor the term "advocacy": in my view, the connotation of "emancipation" renders it slightly too dramatic and ambitious for application to this research project.
11. The women are between 35 and 53 years old. It was not my intention or wish to exclude women of color from the study, but as it turned out, the individuals I identified who fulfilled my overarching category—female Civil Service employees with advanced degrees—were white. I would be interested to expand the study to include women of color who fit the larger category: exploring their "triple marginalization" (marked as female, racial minority, and Civil Servant) would add depth to the study.

12. I have used pseudonyms to safeguard the identities of the participants. In keeping with the "fictive" spirit of the project (and in allegiance to my literary training), I named "Meg," a Wiccan clergymember, after Keats' poem "Meg Merrilies"; single mother "Hester" for Hester Prynne in The Scarlet Letter; "Iz" for a "child of nature" in Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles; "Carrie" for Carrie Meeber in Dreiser's Sister Carrie (each displaying material longings and personal resilience); and "Ariel" for Shakespeare's exiled fairy in The Tempest. When I met "Jill," I asked her if she would like to choose a name; she suggested her pseudonym because people have commented on her physical resemblance to film actress Jill Clayburgh. "Ruth" asked me to name her for a strong woman in the Bible. And "Emily" is a lover of Emily Dickinson's poetry.

13. Charlotte Linde summarizes the dynamics within the "hermeneutic circle," i.e. the relations between the data and its interpretation: "This gap between text and meaning has been widely discussed in the literature of hermeneutics, particularly as part of the notion of the 'hermeneutic circle,' which refers to the relation between the text and the interpreter. The interpreter can never come to a text with an entirely open mind, but must have some preunderstanding of the text—some expectations about the kind of text it is and the kinds of things it says. Otherwise, the interpreter will be unable even to enter into the act of interpretation. This is a necessary part of the process of understanding. It can never be eliminated by more rigorous methodology or more clever experiment design; it can only be acknowledged or swept under the rug. (See Palmer [1969] for a history of hermeneutics and a discussion of the varying definitions of its scope)." (95) Similarly, Mark Poster (drawing on the works of Derrida, Bakhtin, and especially Foucault) points to language's power for both expression and obfuscation: "language has come to be seen as an enormously complicated phenomenon. It is not simply a vehicle for individual expression, a tool to facilitate action, a means to determine truths and falsehoods. It is instead an internally complex yet open world inextricably tied to social action." (129)

14. Judith Stacey writes: "Feminism, Strathern argued, presumes an antagonistic relationship to the male Other, a presumption that grounds its acute sensitivity to power inequalities and has the power to undermine those anthropological pretensions
of alliance and collaboration with the Other upon which new ethnographic strategies for multiple authorship reside. Anthropology, in turn, from its cross-cultural vantage point, suggests the illusory nature of feminist pretensions of actual separation from men of their own culture." She goes on to say, "The majority of feminist claims about feminist ethnographic and other forms of qualitative research, however, presume that such research occurs almost exclusively woman-to-woman. Thus, feminist researchers are apt to suffer the delusion of alliance more than the delusion of separateness, and to suffer it more, I believe, than do most poststructuralist ethnographers." (116)

15. Along with a host of other folklorists, Rosemary Zumwalt notes that perceptions of "self" and "other" have traditionally colored folklore studies: "The folk were for both the literary folklorists and the anthropological folklorists the other" (1988:100).

16. See Elaine J. Lawless, "I was afraid someone like you ... an outsider ... would misunderstand": Negotiating Interpretive Differences Between Ethnographers and Subjects." Journal of American Folklore, v. 105, no. 417, 1992, 302-314.

17. Van Maanen says, "Authorial voice is not, of course, entirely vanished from realist tales . . . . [But] realist conventions restrict the intermingling of the author's voice with the presented reality. The author's essential subjectivity is kept from view" (67).

18. "Self as Hero" is a recurring theme in Lake Erie Fishermen; Patrick B. Mullen and Timothy Lloyd identify this theme in the personal narratives of their informants when an individual exhibits courage, resourcefulness, humor, or resiliency in the face of some negative condition/persona in the workplace (1990:139).

19. The linguistic strategies described here vary in frequency. Some individuals are more dramatic in their presentations, and their narratives are "coded" accordingly.

20. "Insiderness" can also function as a form of triangulation: insiders' familiarity with organizational mores allow them to compare participants' narratives and assessments in contrast to their own evaluations, and can serve as a built-in "check and balance" system for noting (but not necessarily discarding!) erroneous information.
CHAPTER 3
SITUATING THE PARTICIPANTS

*My nature is subdued / To what it works in,*
*like the dyer's hand.*

William Shakespeare

In the next pages, I will introduce the women whose narratives make up the bulk of this study. The word "situating" in the chapter title is inspired by the ethnographic distinction that James Spradley makes between "cultural scenes" and "social situations." Spradley stresses that "the former is the knowledge which actors employ in a social situation; the latter is the observable place, events, objects and persons seen by an investigator" (1972:27). In Spradley’s view, then, social situations depend on an ethnographer’s presumably authentic and authoritative descriptions, and thus may be considered etically realized. Cultural scenes by contrast are emic events embedded in those larger social situations; a variety of interpretations about the meaning of those events could be posited by the participants who enact them. By ethnographically "situating" the participants, I aim to provide a descriptive backdrop that will facilitate comprehension of subsequent interpretations. I hope such groundwork will illuminate later in-depth investigations of the women’s discursive and folkloric forms.
Although ethnographically "situating" the participants and their immediate working environments is a major goal in this chapter, I will also begin to contextualize here. For folklorist Katharine Young, context ideally incorporates participants' historical and ideological baggage; Young calls the proximal elements of an interaction the "surround" and sees "context" as the elements that are relevant to a cultural exchange and implicated in the conduct of that exchange (1989:70). Thus, while "context" might include aspects of the contiguous environment that affect interaction or performance, it also entails a variety of other elements such as incidents from the past, cultural expectations about gender, race, and class, and so on. These and many other factors influence context, perhaps the least of which is the interviewer's agenda.

Successful contextualization is an endeavor whose success also depends on participants sharing their insights and confidences. Charles Briggs speaks of dialogic, negotiated (and thus, emergent) contexts:

Contexts are interpretive frames that are constructed by the participants in the course of the discourse. The presentation of a checklist of elements in the social and physical setting that are seen as constituting "the context" is thus theoretically misdirected, as is the notion that "the collector has a clear duty to place the total situation of record as he observes it". (1988:12)

Young and Briggs drive home their point that the notion of "context" is imprecisely employed when restricted to the description of the tangibles that envelop the interviewing moment. So while I do include a series of "checklists" here, broad ethnographic descriptions that introduce the participants and "situate" them in their
workplaces, I will also "contextualize" the women and their words by exploring, with their crucial assistance, aspects of their histories and personality traits. In addition, I will make an initial attempt to identify the women’s "performance keys"—those conventions of performance that belong to a community (Bauman 1977)—based on their narrative rationales for having accepted Civil Service employment. In Spradley’s words, then, representations of both "social situations" and "cultural scenes" will appear in the following pages.

Information from three kinds of data collection efforts will be scrutinized. First, short biographical sketches will follow the participants’ pseudonyms. In the cases of Meg, Hester, Carrie, Iz, and Jill, bios were recorded on tape during the initial interview. But time constraints did not permit my taping of Ruth or Emily, so I left questionnaires with them which they subsequently completed and returned. Whether taped or written, the data I requested were identical for each participant. I asked for participants’ current job title; degrees (institution[s], years, and disciplines); age; ethnicity; parents’ occupations; familial status; and religion. Such information was conveyed in a few words. I also asked the women to describe in a paragraph or two how they view themselves—their most significant personality traits, their most dramatic life events, their values, likes and dislikes, and so on. Added to these admittedly arbitrary contextualizing "facts" within the bio sketches are some of my own subjective assessments about the participants’ physical features, clothing, and body language.
The fruits of my field research will appear after the biographical sketches. In a tongue-in-cheek and presumably self-reflexive generalization, Henry Glassie stresses: "we folklorists are mediocre theorists and mediocre historians. But we are excellent—without peer—in describing the things out there. . . .The field is where we belong" (1994:241). While I resist out-of-hand dismissals about folklorists' potentials for theorizing or historicising, and while I am likewise loath to accept a blanket laudation about folklorists' capacities for description, I admit to being energized by the field experience and by the subsequent challenge of precisely transforming those "gnomic, shorthand reconstructions of events, observations, and conversations" (Van Maanen 1989:124). The information offered here, gleaned during my fieldwork sessions in the women's offices, provides the physical details of the workplaces: room design, lighting, furniture position, occupational tools (both high and low-tech), personal artifacts. More amorphous environmental factors are also offered, including descriptions of interactions (actors, frequency, content, tenor); sounds (variety, duration, intensity); and pace of activity. Spradley comments, "social situations that are recurrent are especially good places to begin the investigation of cultural scenes" (1972:27); such situations might be found in the classroom, at family meals, and associated with holiday rituals, but it is difficult to imagine a more regularly recurring situation than the workplace. In my desire to encounter "ordinary" slices of office life, I did not schedule fieldwork at either the beginning or end of the day, and also avoided field research on a pre-holiday workday, suspecting that the atmosphere at those times might be more celebratory than usual.
The third kind of data in this descriptive chapter is the participants' "entry tales." Now, it is a familiar conceit for an ethnographer to provide a subjective sketch detailing her or his access into the field and the resultant perceptions and experiences (Agar 1985; Fetterman 1989; Powdermaker 1966; Spradley 1979; Van Maanen 1989). Mary Louise Pratt casts the ethnographer's entry tale into the form of personal narrative; she comments: "Even in the absence of a separate autobiographical volume, personal narrative is a conventional component of ethnographies. It turns up almost invariably in introductions or first chapters, where opening narratives commonly recount the writer's arrival at the field site" (Clifford and Marcus 1986:31). This study's format is similar to that of the prototypical ethnography described above: I opened with two related accounts about my own access (in the introduction, I document my "insiderness"—my entry into the university as a Civil Service employee; in the Chapter 2, I recount the intellectual paths that led me to this project's focus and some of the obstacles I faced in the process). But given the collaborative emphasis of the study, I have enlarged the definition of entry tale to encompass the participants' reasons for joining the university as Civil Service workers. Without exception, they all volunteered this information: that they all prefaced their narratives with an entry tale underscores the extent to which a literary, beginning/middle/ending formula is engrained and expected in everyday conversation. Yet the entry tales could also point to my influence on the women: because by my very presence I am implicitly asking them to account for what are essentially
unconventional life decisions, perhaps they see me as questioning their identities and thus return with explanations whose forms are linear and thus "logical."

Several years ago, folklorists Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth Goldstein noted that text is necessary but not sufficient for cultural "understanding," and that proxemic, kinesic, paralinguistic, and interactional descriptions are also crucial (1975:5). Robert Byington likewise advanced the importance of holistic treatment in narrative ethnographies, calling for studies that incorporate and balance fieldnotes and biographical sketches ("what they do") with a comprehensive assessment of contextual narrative ("what they say") for a multidimensional picture of a culture (1978:194); these ideas mirror William Labov's recommendation of describing "what people DID rather than what they said" in order to uncover the meanings behind evaluative action (1972:373). It seems to me that such admonitions, while lacking the "representational dilemma" thrust that characterizes much recent scholarship, are nevertheless still usefully and validly applied. Introducing the eight women in the following pages via biographical sketches, fieldnotes, and entry tales is a dimension of the holistic method I hope to achieve in this work in its entirety.
The Participants.

"Meg."

Meg is a 41-year-old woman of Eastern European ancestry. A child of poor, blue collar, high school educated parents, Meg’s father worked on the railroad and in construction. Meg’s childhood was, in her words, "lousy; family life was not easy." Meg was born into the Eastern Orthodox religion, but has been a Wiccan clergy member for twenty years. She is married and has no children.

Meg earned a B.A. in Philosophy from Ohio University in the late 1970s and an M.A. in Philosophy at Ohio State University in 1985. She is currently a Ph.D. student at Ohio State, working on a one-of-a-kind Ph.D. with fields in religious studies and folklore. Her doctoral program has been defined by her interest in women’s spirituality and religious issues. She has given papers at conferences for 13 years and reports that she has become increasingly skilled in that endeavor. Meg delivered her most recent paper in October 1995.

An Administrative Assistant 2 in a College of Humanities department, Meg has worked at the University since 1979, and has been in her current department since 1980. Meg wears casual clothes to the office (stretch pants, running shoes, tee-shirts), and often wears silver jewelry (earrings, bracelets, rings, necklace). She has black wavy hair, dark brown eyes, expressive features. During our interviews, she always props one leg on an office chair. Meg’s stories are dramatically presented, with frequent flourishes of head and hands, hearty laughter, and vocal impersonations and impressions. Meg seems to enjoy her reputation for marginality. When I
interview Meg, we talk in her private office. The door to her office is routinely closed during working hours; there have been no interruptions during our interviews.5

Meg's Work Place.

Meg works in an inner, windowless office in a square four-story sandstone building situated in a grassy area apart from other campus structures. The dimensions of Meg's office are about 8 by 11 feet. The floor is covered with clean, new wall-to-wall carpeting in shades of soft red, beige, dark blue, yellow, and white. Two walls are white-painted cinder block; the other two are papered in a design of overlapping squares of pastel gray, pink, white, and blue, creating an overall impression of lavender.

Several framed Japanese prints decorate the walls (one gray and pink print announces "Japanese Art"; another depicts a diving eagle with Mount Fuji in the background--the caption reads "The Matsukata Collection of Ukiyo-e Prints"). A wall calendar displaying a large pink peony is opened to the month of February. Fluorescent ceiling lights are complemented by two desk lamps--a small white one is on the top shelf of a bookcase along the back wall of the office, and a tall gold lamp with a pleated linen shade sits atop a four-drawer black file cabinet in the left corner of the room. Stacks of files and binders also occupy the top of the black file cabinet, and under the lamp is a green-framed photo of Meg standing alongside her tall, cleft-chinned husband.
Figure 1: Meg's Office

Visitors can sit on a black padded vinyl bench on the right wall. On the far wall is a floor-to-ceiling wooden bookcase crammed with books, journals, computer handbooks, and training manuals. Pointing to numerous editions of a scholarly journal that Ohio State faculty have edited, Meg commented that she had served as Assistant to the Editor. On top of the bookcase, a jewelled, golden crown contrasts with a gray-glazed pottery jar. A small electronic typewriter is on a metal work table to the left of the bookcase.

Meg's light wood desk is situated along the middle of the left wall. A beige telephone is on the right corner of the desk. Papers and files are arranged in a wooden shelving unit that sits on the back of the desk; the shelving is about ten inches deep and spans the length of the desk. On the wall above the desk are a tiny blue and
white ceramic plate; a six-inch watercolor in a hexagonal glass frame with a black tassel on the bottom; and a voodoo doll with stiff black hair. Meg told me that a faculty member brought the doll to her from New Orleans; she used to display a sign next to the pin-stuck doll that read "Faculty Member of the Week," but she took the sign down when she redecorated her office.

Meg's computer, with a twenty-inch screen, is to the right of her desk and the printer is to the right of the computer. A screen saver program ("eyes" opening and closing in the dark) is operating on Meg's computer. Meg said that the door to her office is usually closed--students and faculty knock before entering. While I took field notes, she sat at her desk sorting Promotion and Tenure materials. She had taken her phone off the hook during this hour-long period, but informed me that she often gets several calls every hour of the day.

I asked Meg to tell me about the tasks she had been doing before my visit. "I started the morning with an 'ARMS' challenge session. A - R - M - S. You know about that?"

"No."

"It's the 'Accounting Resource Management' --they're trying to redo the way the University does accounting and human resources. And so I was asked, last week, late last week, if I would participate in a challenge group. And so this morning, I spent all morning at the, uhm, 'John Cameron Rehabilitation Center' of the Sports Med area on Kenny Road. We were there with people from all over campus, there were about 15 or so of us; we focused on, it was a Dynamic Group Session, a
Brainstorming Session, focused on the problems, what kinds of things might we come up with to rethink the whole way we do this, or you know, why can’t we rethink the way we do payroll, how we do accounting. And that sort of thing.

"So we were brainstorming. That was this morning. And then, this afternoon, it’s Promotion and Tenure. I have to get this Promotion and Tenure file all done. [PAUSE] That’s the job today."

Meg’s Entry Tale.

* * *

MEG: I came up here from Athens, and the landlord who owned the property that we were renting from wanted to triple the rent because the osteopathic college of medicine came to town and, it seemed like overnight, property values skyrocketed. People who couldn’t sell their homes for $25,000 were selling them to doctors for $50- or $60,000, and, you know, seemingly getting checks out of the clear blue sky. So ALL the property values of rentals just went WAY up.

That was an incentive to get out of Athens! It’s like [LAUGHS], very apparent that with a parttime job in Athens, I couldn’t afford to stay there anymore. We looked around here, my husband and I—we were not married at the time, but we were living together as a couple. So we thought, "Well, we’ll look at Columbus." And I came up to Columbus to do a round of job interviews--different places. And I interviewed with some law firms for like a paralegal-secretarial type position. I interviewed different places. And, one of the places was the university. And it just so happens that they were hiring people for, um, "clerical specialist" title in Personnel Services. And I got the job in about a month. (You know, you have to take the test, and then you wait weeks while--who knows what happens? Your name comes up and then you get a job interview. And I got the job.) And we moved up here in August or July--something like that--of ’78.

So I worked in Personnel Services for about nine months. Probably one of the worst jobs I’ve ever had [LAUGHS] in my entire life. It was a very demeaning job. It was basically a lack of money and a lack of opportunity that drove me to the big city—to try to get a
job at another university or another place that would be able to hire me. At that TIME it looked really good. I mean, when you're a student and the highest amount of money you've ever made in your whole life is probably about $3,000 a year, to come up to a place where you're getting $9,000, $10,000, looked WONDERFUL--

So you basically--my husband and I joke about it, it's like, you basically live on a higher level of poverty than before, you know. And so that's progress. You're still not making ends meet, but you're not making ends meet in a grander style, or something! [LAUGHTER]

* * *
Hester."

Hester, age 42, grew up in northern Ohio. Her ethnic background is "one hundred percent German American." Her father was a design engineer for General Motors; her mother, a housewife. Her childhood was "typical middle-class suburban" until she was 12; afterwards, she lived in an alcoholic household and was a witness to domestic violence. When questioned about her marital status, Hester said, "I like to think of myself as single, but technically I'm divorced." She has a sixteen-year old daughter. Raised a Lutheran, Hester now attends the United Church of Christ. She earned her B.A. and M.A. at Ohio State in Family Studies, and is an Ohio State University Ph.D. Candidate in Family Therapy with a minor field in folklore. She is currently writing her dissertation.

Hester is a Secretary 2 and has worked at the university for 24 years. She recently transferred to an office in the Main Library; before that, she worked in a College of Humanities department for 13 years. Hester has chin-length dark auburn hair and blue eyes; she wears glasses. She often wears casual skirts, sweaters and running shoes to the office. Hester is soft spoken and thoughtful in responding to my questions. Her eyes sparkle with amusement during the interviews, but she is reserved. For privacy, Hester chooses to speak to me in a lounge area about a hundred yards from the office she shares with other staff.

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Hester’s Work Place.

Hester works in a campus building that proclaims its age with tall, graceful casement windows and thick oak moldings. But Hester’s inner, rectangular office is windowless--fluorescent lights pattern the high ceiling. The walls are white, and the oatmeal-colored carpet is stained here and there. When visitors walk in, they see Hester’s desk before them; to the right are two burnt-orange office chairs (a big corrugated cardboard box sits on one); in between the chairs is a coat rack. Above the chairs hang three framed prints: a black and white line drawing; an essay by the historian Daniel Boorstin; and a Miro reproduction.

Figure 2: Hester’s Office
On the wall above the entrance to the office is an analog clock (it's 10:30 a.m.). To the right of the clock is a large Hirschfeld drawing, ribbons of motion in soft blacks and browns. Across from the Hirschfeld is Hester's desk. The most distinctive item on the desk (and in the office, too) is a bubbling, illuminated fish tank with pale silvery-green "vegetation" and tiny pink rocks. The lone inhabitant of the tank is a midnight-blue Siamese Fighting Fish named Zodiak--Hester testified to the fish's curiosity when the phone rings or when visitors come to the office. Along with the fish tank and Hester's nameplate, a multitude of files are on the desk, stacked on two sides between a vertical file divider crammed with paperwork.

A bulletin board hangs on the wall next to Hester's desk. Displayed there are the University job listing, called the "Green Sheet"; a flyer, "February Events at the Arlington Public Library"; and a greeting card that proclaims "MOM WANTED! Long hours, low pay, little time off . . . ."

Hester sat on a black swivel office chair and talks on the telephone. Her "Leading Edge" computer (which uses Word Perfect 5.1 software) and the printer are on a rectangular table next to her desk, along the south wall of the office. A typewriter sits on a table farther back on the same wall; above it hangs a framed picture with the caption "Laugh, Clown, Laugh," and a calendar with the slogan "The Magic is in the Details." Farther back still is an unoccupied, dusty desk (complete with black plastic office organizers, a blotter, and a small blue and white planter containing two shriveled brown leaves). Hester informs me that the desk is used in the afternoons by the work-study student.
On the back wall, which has two large, glass-paned doors that are kept locked to curtail unwanted traffic, are two deskless office chairs. A paper bag with the logo "Doubleday" is on the floor; it is full of books, and a scrap of paper with the words "already counted" is stuck to the top book. Two gray file cabinets and two beige ones occupy the north wall. Atop the file cabinets are computer labels, envelopes, plastic diskette holders, books, newspapers, and stacks of colored paper. Hanging on the wall above the cabinets are three large framed black and white drawings; two appear to be original cartoons by Mort Walker (one is "Beetle Bailey," the other, "Sarge"). The unsigned drawing in the center captures in caricature "Tricky Dick" Nixon (ski-jump nose, swarthy beard, arms upstretched in the familiar, furtive victory pose). A second personal computer and a second printer are next to the file cabinets. And a doorway leads to a large windowed work area.

When I arrived to conduct fieldwork, a young East Indian man was working on the second computer, the one along the north wall, across the room from Hester’s desk. Hester informed me, "We’re having a computer crisis." She asked the man, "Can you work from the back-up? I have about 17 disks, I don’t know which would be useful...it’s just a paradox!"

The administrative assistant, a young, fair-haired woman dressed in a plaid jumper, walked in from the anteroom about this time. Trying to help, she peered into one of the file drawers. "What’s this?--[PAUSE] Word Perfect ONE?!
[LAUGHTER] THAT would really be useful!"
Some minutes later, another young man arrived in the office. Hester led him to the printer next to her desk and asked him: "Do you want to put the new toner pack in? I want to see if I'M doing something wrong! [PAUSE] I'm wondering if our machine is just real touchy? I mean, it's got clear directions! Go ahead! I want to see if I'm just STUPID!" [LAUGHS]

The young man asked: "This is new?"

Hester: "It's a brand new package! [HESTER WATCHES THE MAN WORK ON THE OPEN MACHINE; SHE POINTS TO SOMETHING ON A CYLINDER INSIDE] When I got this thing, THIS was broken off. So it may not be my fault."

Hester remarks to the administrative assistant, "We're waiting to see if it prints out any better."

After two or three minutes, the man announced: "All right, you have a printer to go!"

Evidently having had some past contact with him, the administrative assistant then spoke to the young man: "How ARE you?"

"I'm sick."

"You're SICK? You know why you're sick? You remember a week ago? -- you came in with wet hair, you came in here in a leather coat, it was freezing cold, and you were just dripping wet!"

After a few minutes of such small talk, the young man left the office. The administrative assistant returned to her work in the other room, Hester continued
sorting paperwork on her desk, and sometime later took up the memo she had begun on her computer earlier that morning. The Indian man doggedly worked on the broken computer. The phone rang occasionally over the next half-hour; Hester answered, "Good morning!" There were no other visitors during the time I observed.

Hester’s Entry Tale

* * *

HESTER: OK, I was at the University of Michigan, and basically, my parents at that time were both alcoholic, and I couldn’t face going home for the summer. I mean, that was the first time I’d ever REALLY been away from home, and had any kind of freedom, or saw what, quote unquote, NORMAL life could BE without that kind of INGREDIENT involved. And I, so, what I was, I moved down here with my boyfriend. And then got married, basically to escape having to go back home. And while I was married, I wanted to go back to school, and the only way I could afford it was to work at the university to get the fee—at that time, it was a tuition REIMBURSEMENT, where you had to pay for it and then get reimbursed.

S: That was in 1981?

HESTER: Oh no, that was way back in --’72.

S: That’s right, you’ve been here for close to twenty years--

HESTER: Twenty-three--. Here at OSU, things just seemed to fall in place for what I wanted in a program, all the way around, so it’s like I don’t feel like moving somewhere else, because I like Columbus.

* * *
Carrie, a 53-year-old woman whose ethnic background is predominantly Scottish, English, and German, describes her middle-class childhood as "ideal" and her family, "closely knit and supportive." Carrie's father had an M.A. and her mother was a housewife who had a secretarial school education. Carrie was raised Presbyterian but now attends First Community Church. Divorced since 1972, Carrie's son and daughter are 26 and 27 years old. Carrie has a B.A. in English from Baldwin Wallace College and received her M.A. in Counselor Education from Ohio State in 1993.

Carrie has worked at the University since 1980, and has most recently worked in academic units in the College of Humanities. An Administrative Assistant 2, Carrie enjoys projecting a professional appearance, often coming to the office in tailored suits or coordinated sweater and trouser outfits. But she is not rigid in her style: for a change of pace, she might wear a long yellow-and-lavender print jumper over black turtleneck sweater, black tights, and short black leather boots. Carrie's silver jewelry is understated and her light reddish-brown hair is short and neatly styled. She wears a little makeup and her nails are manicured with clear polish. Carrie is self-controlled, not given to dramatic representations or exaggeration, yet she is friendly during our interviews. She makes direct eye contact most of the time, but occasionally looks up at the ceiling, fingertips on her cheeks, when framing answers to my questions.
Carrie’s Work Place.

Carrie works in her own private office on the third floor of a campus building. The office has no windows and is small and shallow; four large gray file cabinets take up most of the space. Carrie’s desk is to the right of the door pushed up against the door wall: visitors see Carrie’s face when they look in. On the other side of the door, a small bookcase displays binders and computer manuals. A coat rack is behind the door. Carrie has a phone and personal computer on her desk. Brown tweed carpet covers the floor. The file cabinets are the newer kind, with carrel-like, hinged tops covered with gray, spongy fabric good for posting notes, cards, recognitions, comics, and signs that announce Carrie’s life philosophies: one reads, “I can be happy with very little. I just choose not to be.” Another depicts a bedraggled knight with the caption: “Sometimes the Dragon Wins.”

The door to Carrie’s office was closed during the interviews and during my fieldnote-taking session, which were all conducted in the early morning. Carrie told me that the door is usually open. She seems to enjoy being removed from the “hustle and bustle of the main office,” as she puts it. Carrie indicated that her office might not “start hopping til 10:00 a.m.” But there was some noise in the hallway: doors opening and closing, faculty and students walking by. Carrie’s phone also rang sporadically; the conversations were pleasant but short. When Carrie supplied the needed information, the callers ended the conversation without extraneous banter.
When I came to her office to observe, Carrie did not pay me any mind; she was intensely focused on the "Excel" spreadsheet program on her IBM computer. She occasionally stopped to check a paper on her desk or to answer the phone, but she did not rise from her chair during my visit.

Carrie’s Entry Tale.

* * *

CARRIE: I came to the University at a time when my children were maybe 10 years old or so—10 or 12, and they were both facing braces, and I was interested in dental insurance, and better benefits. And I also wanted—was looking down the road at college. I also have always preferred a university environment to business.

* * *
"Iz."

At age 36, Iz is the youngest participant in the study. Of German, Irish, Welsh, and Native American ancestry, Iz grew up on the South Side of Columbus in a dysfunctional home. She was the first person in her family to attend college, receiving her B.A. in English in 1987 and her M.A. in English Education in 1993. Both degrees are from Ohio State University. Describing her spiritual tendencies as Pantheistic, Iz is a divorced single parent of a 13-year-old son.

Iz has been employed at Ohio State since 1985, and now works as a Secretary 1 in an academic unit in the College of the Arts. A friendly young woman with hazel eyes and long straight black hair held back with a headband, Iz smiles and laughs frequently. On the day of our first interview, Iz wore a purple gauze shirt with beads and tassels over a black body suit and black leggings. That day, Iz spoke to me at Bernie’s Bagels restaurant on North High Street at lunchtime, between bites of a sandwich and sips of a double chocolate cappuccino. We both had to speak loudly to be heard over the noise of the lunch crowd. When we met for our second interview, Iz was pressed for time and could only spare forty-five minutes with me in the lobby area outside her office on campus. She wore a dark and light blue patterned short dress with black leggings and tennis shoes. When we spoke for a third time, Iz was able to spend over an hour with me in her office. She wore gray sweat pants and a long gray and white sweater that day. Iz openly discloses the most delicate details of her history and goals. She responds well to open-ended interviews.
Iz's Work Place.

Iz works in a modern glass-walled office; she occupies one of two desks in the reception area. But Iz isn't immediately visible: when entering the office, it is the long, deep, waist-high counter that you notice first; underneath the countertop, carpet-covered partitions separate the receptionists from the walk-in crowd. Iz sits behind that partition, which is divided to provide semi-private spaces for the two receptionists.

A big sign on the reception counter announces: "No Whining." Behind Iz's work station is a low file cabinet on top of which sits a vertical file divider and a
printer. Carrels are mounted on the dark green wall above the cabinet; on top of the carrels are displayed an umbrella plant, a variety of pottery specimens, a purple iris silk flower arrangement, and a little plastic man reclining in a black bathing suit. (Iz told me the man was the gift of a faculty member.) A chair for visitors is positioned to the left of the door underneath a lavender, black, and white painting on the wall. To the right of the entrance is the chairperson’s office. A black and white graphic is on the wall to the right of his door, along with a large plant in a stand. The brown carpet is dirty. The office is never quiet—computer keys continue to tap, phones continue to ring, students’ feet continue to shuffle in the hall outside. And for punctuation, occasional loud laughter and tardy bells.

Iz’s own work space is decorated with a large gold star magnet, positioned on a metal edge of the padded divider and used to hold up notes. On Iz’s desk are her name plate, a heart-shaped card with a large gap-toothed smile, photos of her son, a postcard with the phrase, "Earth Girls Are Easy," two plastic dinosaurs. The inscription on Iz’s coffee cup states: "There is only one way to teach a course—MY way."

Some of the interactions that take place: the other secretary gave directions to a work-study student; a Kinko’s salesman visited the office to drum up business (Iz politely informed him that the faculty in her department all make their own class handouts and do not require Kinko’s services); a faculty member handed Iz a roster, and she let him know that one of his students had dropped.
Staff interacted on mostly work-related matters: "I feel dicey about campus mail." "I called all these terrible people, so congratulate me." "Well good, you deserve it." "What am I supposed to type?" "Labels." "Oh, of what addresses?" "This and this."

Yet there were digressions: "These jelly beans taste like grape Kool-aid. Not grape, but grape Kool-aid. The green is also a Kool-aid flavor."

The other secretary stated, "Oh, I'm so excited, I'm whittlin' away at this mess!"

Iz and the other secretary exchanged a private joke about a faculty member: "Good Lord, she doesn't have enough in HER life!"

Then Iz said, "Is that restructuring meeting today?" "Yeah, did you read that proposal?" "I haven't had a chance to yet." "I think it sounds good." Then the other secretary whispered her assessment of the proposal to Iz (did she whisper to exclude me? to exclude the chair?). Sometimes, faculty and graduate students carried on brief conversations in front of the secretaries without including them. In between the interactions, the two secretaries continued to work on their computers and to answer phones. Meantime, faculty and T.A.s continually entered and exited the office; a United Parcel Service man delivered a package that Iz accepted; a faculty member borrowed the master key from Iz. Students requested information from Iz about getting necessary signatures and adding courses.

Iz occasionally spoke to herself out loud: "OK!" or "Now, what was that? -- Oh yeah." "Oh darn!" The chairperson told Iz he was expecting a call and to ask a
woman from New Mexico, "Is she available or not? All I want to know is, 'Is she available or not'?" Iz repeated the chairperson's question, saying, "I can do that."

On the day I took fieldnotes in her office, Iz was dressed in a pea-green turtleneck tee-shirt, a long, yellow, black, and green flowered overshirt, black leggings, and white and green running shoes. During my one-hour observation session, she rose from her chair two times. Once she went into the main office behind the reception area, and once she disappeared for a few minutes in the chair's office. When she walked out, she was saying, "I'm gonna ask her when she comes down." Iz did not seem to be aware of my presence during the period: she did not speak to me or make eye contact. I had prefaced my visit with my need for observation and not another interview (I had said, "You won't know I'm there!"). Still, it is likely that friendly visits are discouraged in busy offices, so perhaps Iz was maintaining decorum in not interacting with me.

Iz's Entry Tale.

Iz got her job at Ohio State after having begun her undergraduate studies at the university.

* * *

IZ: All right, I started to work at OSU in 1985. I was real happy to get a job there because I had, um, separated from my husband, and previously to that, while I was earning my B.A. in English, I um, I had been working at a minimum wage job over at Long's Bookstore, and I had to support my son and, and I was getting child support but it just wasn't enough, you know? to live with a
minimum wage job the way I wanted to live. So. I had gotten my undergraduate degree in English because I like to read and because it was something I could do. I mean I didn't do real well, but I did finish it, believe it or not.

S: Well, you did have a little boy and a job—you had extra burdens to deal with.

IZ: Well, it was—I didn't really work hard. Let's see, what else did I want to tell you. I started here at OSU on my undergraduate degree in 1977. I'm from the South end of Columbus, sort of a working class, Appalachian background. Um, I'm the first person in my family to ever go to college, but it was never questioned to me, you know, my school system kind of wanted me to get into a vocational program, although I never bounced that.

S: Your high school counselor?

IZ: Yeah. Three percent of my high school class went to college.

S: What high school was this?

IZ: Marion Franklin High. So, I came here as your local music major, and I loved performing, but I had a hard time with theory and music history. College was just—a new world—I had never met anyone who was Catholic, let alone. . .my high school was basically Protestant (white and black)—a multi-cultural mix. So I came here, I didn’t even know what a fraternity was, I didn't know what a sorority was. And I felt really out of it. Things got to a point in music where I'd have to make a decision whether I wanted to practice eight hours a day and I just didn't want to do it.

S: What was your instrument?

IZ: Voice. Anyways, I decided—I was getting involved with a guy who was involved in what passed for radical politics on this campus at that time. So I decided to do a little more of what I decided was academic. So I was switching over to political science, and I had moved from my parents' house to campus for the first time, and uh, I got a little promiscuous, and I had to deal with some consequences. I was basically 20 years old, and I got—and I flunked out of school. Never followed any of the advice I got here as far as advising or anything—.
OK, so I flunked out and I decided to get a job, I had to get a job. I didn’t want to move back to my parents’ house. So I got a job HERE, actually [in the restaurant in which the interview was conducted], was night manager for a couple of years, I met my husband-to-be, got pregnant and got married. And I couldn’t take it, he was going to school, and I just felt guilty about it, you know? I was itching to get back into school. And I started taking a course and--and working my way out of the hole I had dug myself in, and I was thinking, "Well, I’ve gotta do something." And I never had the kind of pressure to, you know, "you got to go to college to get a job." I’ve never had that kind of pressure.

S: Did you have a happy childhood?

IZ: No, both my parents were alcoholics, and they were drinking quite a lot from about the time when my brother was born until I was 24--23. So, yeah, reading was kind of my little--I started to read when I was four and I just read addictively, I spent all my summers in the library [LAUGHS].

S: You were working during this time?

IZ: Oh yeah, I worked ever since I was 15. SO. I started to work myself out, and I decided--that--I loved to read. And I have--really, I’ve been one of those people that--reading in school saved my ass.

* * *

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Forty-nine year old Ariel, from Canton, Ohio, was the only child of an engineer and a housewife. Her ethnic background is Scottish and German. She was considered a "high IQ underachiever," and her high school principal urged her to take Home Ec classes and become a housewife. She says she had a happy childhood despite having an alcoholic father (who "wasn't abusive, he just drank and fell asleep"). Brought up a Presbyterian, Ariel now prefers Roman Catholicism. When questioned about her marital status, Ariel stated that she had been married briefly nearly twenty years ago but divorced. Now, "I'm not really married, but there's this man in Russia . . . ." Ariel has no children.

Ariel received a B.A. in English and Political Science from Malone College near Canton, Ohio and an M.A. in American History from Ohio State. Her thesis examined prostitution in Canton during the Progressive Period. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in the History Department. A Typist 2, Ariel has been employed at the university since 1981. Apart from a short stint in the College of Education on a personal services contract, her university employment has been with a department in the College of the Arts.

Ariel is gracious and accommodating in an interview situation, laughs and jokes abundantly, uses gossip and anecdote to illustrate her larger points, and often volunteers without hesitation controversial data. Ariel has hazel-brown eyes and short dark brown hair with one long, thin tail down her back. Small lavender rings decorate Ariel's pierced nostril and right eyebrow. On the day of our first interview,
she wore a loose-fitting black jacket with colorful slogan buttons, a grey t-shirt, running shoes, and spandex leggings. We spoke for an hour late in the afternoon in an empty office in her department. During that interview, the department chair unexpectedly walked through the area in which we were speaking; she walked into her own office and closed the door, yet her physical presence in the department seemed to cause Ariel to modulate her vocal tone during sensitive portions of the conversation.

During other visits, some two-and-a-half months and one year later, Ariel and I stopped to buy lunch near her office before chatting in Drake Union's River Den restaurant. On the day of the second interview, Ariel wore a long black skirt, black running shoes, and black tee-shirt on which the slogan "Save the World" appears in
Cyrillic on the front and in English on the back; over the tee-shirt was a black Indian vest with yellow and orange designs and gold beads. When I met Ariel for the third time, she wore gray jeans, white running shoes, black tee-shirt, and an oversized navy blue sweater with maroon piping ("from the Salvation Army"). We spoke for an hour-and-a-half during the second interview and for one hour during the third. The restaurant setting, anonymous and relaxing, seemed to enhance Ariel's expressiveness. She was even less inhibited and more prone to what folklorists call performance during the second and third interviews.

Ariel's Work Place.

When I asked Ariel if I could take fieldnotes in her office, she requested that I visit on a day when the department chairperson was away, as the chairperson would likely question my presence there. So I arrived at Ariel's workplace on a quiet and snowy Friday morning in early February when the chairperson was at a conference in another state.

Located in a two-story building with wide hallways and wood paneling, Ariel's office is a series of partitions and alcoves. Upon entering the department, you find yourself in a small square space surrounded by dark brown laminated countertop to the left, shelving of the same material to the right, and low swinging gate straight ahead, all of which separate visitors from department staff. Pamphlets are arranged on the counter, and envelopes and papers occupy shelves to the right.
Visitors pass through the swinging gate to enter the department’s work area. A multitude of framed posters decorate the white-painted cinder block walls. The brown tweed wall-to-wall carpet is fairly clean. Straight ahead, pushed against the wall, is a black two-drawer horizontal file cabinet with binders of assorted colors on top. A doorway is to the right of the cabinet. On the right wall is a floor-to-ceiling window covered with white vertical blinds.

To the left of the gate and in the middle of the largest work area sits a spacious, unoccupied desk and chair. On top are two unplugged computers and monitors. On the wall about nine or ten feet to the left of this desk is a wooden counter 15 feet long. The counter has built-in shelves underneath on which are stacked campus mail envelopes and copies of The Chronicle of Higher Education; a large dictionary and electric pencil sharpener sit on the counter. Above it are wooden mailboxes labeled "Pick Up," "Ariel," "Sonja," "U.S. Mail," "Meter Mail," and "Campus Mail." To the right of the countertop and mailboxes, a doorway leads into a hall. An analog clock hangs above the door; it’s 10:45. A Mozart horn concerto emanates from someone’s radio.

Directly across from the computer desk is a partitioned room with a big xerox machine and a yellowing corn plant. To the left is Ariel’s workspace. The area is not wholly enclosed and has no door. It is separated from the xerox room by a carpet-covered divider, and Ariel’s desk—the back of which faces out toward the main work area—provides the front boundary of her workspace. Behind Ariel’s desk is a waist-high bookcase. Three binders, a plastic file box, staples, White-Out, and a
Ariel's personal computer takes up most of the space on her desk, its electrical wires hanging down in plain view. When I came to conduct fieldwork, she was composing inter-office memoranda on the computer. To the right and left of Ariel’s desk are prominent displays of artifacts. To Ariel’s right is a black fabric-covered bulletin board hanging on the cinder-block wall. Arranged there is a calendar with the slogan "Let the Magic Begin" (Ariel and I laugh about the irony of the slogan, given her disdain for her job). Another calendar, with a black-and-white cheesecake photo of James Dean, showcases the month of February.

In the center of the bulletin board are three artistic photos of a man. I noticed that a framed photo of the same man is on Ariel’s desk behind her telephone. I question Ariel about these, and she informs me that they are pictures of her Russian friend whom she calls Sawyer, but whose real name is Sasha. In the bottom photo, Sasha/Sawyer (in Ariel’s words, "a cross between [film actors] Liam Neeson and James Dean") lounges bare-chested behind the rigging of a fishing boat.

Ariel has also tacked some large, newspaper-like captions on the black bulletin board. They include "WORKPLACE HOMICIDES" and "FORMER OSU STUDENT NOW A ZOMBIE" (Ariel told me she got the last caption from The Lantern). And on a white card are the words: "Academic Art is the Refuge of the Artistic Coward." (Ariel said, "I made that up myself.")
A silky, deep-fringed shawl with a brown ground and yellow roses has been diagonally placed on the table to the left of Ariel's desk. On the shawl is a plastic flip-top case holding computer diskettes. Above the table is another bulletin board. A rainbow drawing by the young daughter of a faculty member is displayed along with several post cards that read "Wit and Its Relation to Video," "Dublin," "La Jolla Playhouse," and "You Are Trapped on the Earth So You Will Explode." Two posters from a "hip-hop" club Sasha/Sawyer owned in St. Petersburg are also hanging here. One has a skull with the word "LOVE," spelled with a backwards "E"; another has the slogan: "'The More You Ignore Me, the Closer I Get'--Morrissey." Three gilt-edged holy cards can also be seen on Ariel's bulletin board, two of the Virgin Mary and the infant Christ and one of a radiant woman in armor that I presumed to be Joan of Arc. I asked Ariel, who commented, "Yeah, she kinda got beat up."

While observing in Ariel's department, a number of non-work-related exchanges took place. Ariel and Sonja, the administrative assistant, talked about a letter that Ariel had sent to a campus co-worker, in which she complained about the paucity of food services near the building where she works, commenting that the one eatery within close walking distance is a non-acceptable pizza restaurant. That friend, who apparently agreed with Ariel's assessment, sent Ariel's letter to the pizzeria in question without Ariel's permission. Ariel and Sonja had just learned that Ariel's letter was hanging on the wall outside the restaurant:
"So, how did it get to the Flying Tomato if you sent it to HER?"

"She sent it to THEM! [PAUSE] Well, if you’re tired of overdone pizza that sits under a light for three hours--!"

"And they posted it outside their DOOR? Why would they do that? I’d think it’s bad for business!"

"Well, anyplace that it takes twenty minutes to get a cup of coffee--!"

[LAUGHTER] "Oh no, I’m in trouble NOW!" [BRIEF LAUGHTER]

But a number of the women’s comments concerned the work of the department:

"He just wanted an undergraduate PAC code."

"How many you need?" "Give me a couple."

A gray-haired faculty member in shirt sleeves came in, stopped in front of Ariel’s desk for a moment, and said, "Hi, can I have the letter to ___? [PAUSE] Thanks, I’ll bring it right back." The man left when he got the information he needed.

Sonja squatted down and retrieved papers from the bottom drawer of the black file cabinet. Ariel answered the phone: "Good morning, ____ Department! [PAUSE] Uh, SURE, that’s 292-___."

Ariel’s Entry Tale.

Unlike Iz, Ariel deliberately sought employment at Ohio State precisely because it offers tuition-free graduate education to its employees.
ARIEL: I moved to Columbus to come to graduate school. I had a job, well I was the--claims, I was the claims department of United Moving and Storage. And somebody told me that if I worked at Ohio State, I would get free tuition. So I came to--I interviewed for a couple jobs and I--for two years, I worked in the College of Education in a special desegregation project. It was REALLY nice, I REALLY liked it; we could work at home--we did a lot of field trips and went and worked in the state lodges, it was really, really nice.

S: What year was this?

ARIEL: That was in--I'm trying to think. In '81 and '82, I think. But this was all government money. And when Reagan was elected, we knew we wouldn't get any money the next year. And so, the program was done away with, so I had to go look for another job. So. I'd always liked this discipline [of her current department], so I thought, [ADOPTS A LIGHTHEARTED TONE] "Well, it would be really FUN to work in the ____ Department!" [LAUGHS OUT LOUD] I found out!! [LAUGHS] And so the only reason I came here was for the free tuition. And that's the only reason I'm STILL here.

* * *

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Jill, age 49, was raised in a "stable, loving family" in an atmosphere in which "discipline was always reinforced with love." Of English and Irish background, Jill's English-born grandfather was a state senator from Ohio. Jill's father owned a retail furniture store; her mother, who had one year of college, was an administrator in a factory. Both parents died in the 1980s, but Jill has a close relationship with her older ("nurturing") brother. A housekeeper and her young son lived with Jill's family for nine years, and Jill is still close to them, too. Jill is twice-divorced and has no children. She was raised a Catholic (and made a point of stressing "I had twelve years of Catholic education!"), but now considers herself Unitarian/Universalist.

Jill began her college education rather late in life, and attributes her deep-seated doubt in her academic ability to the fact that she had been stigmatized in grade school as a "slow reader," a label that distressed her for many years. She completed her bachelor's degree in Fashion Merchandising at Otterbein College in 1984, and her Ohio State M.A. in Adult Education with minor fields in Training and Development and Gerontology in June of 1987.

Jill's office is in a department within the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. She has worked at the university since mid-1992--the shortest employment tenure among the women. When she started working for Ohio State, Jill's job title was Clerical Specialist; she has since been upgraded to a Secretary 1. Jill says she is "content, settled, and living a 'whole' life." Yet she admits that an "unsettling career dilemma" hangs over her head, a topic she discusses at length in her narratives.
Jill has blue eyes and short, layered, light brown hair. On our first meeting, she wore a khaki skirt with brown leather belt, yellow knit sweater, beige vest, gold earrings and chain, and brown pumps. On our second interview, Jill wore a full gray skirt and belt, a pale beige blouse fastened at the neck with an ivory rose pin, and cream colored, flat-heeled shoes. And she was dressed in a matching black knit skirt and sweater, a white shirt with black pinstripes, a gold "J" pin on the sweater, gold hoop earrings, and black dressy loafers for the third interview. An ideal participant—welcoming and supportive of my project and always forthcoming with many details, Jill is consistently friendly (even greeting me with a hug now), upbeat, and quick to laugh. Jill confided that, according to the Myers-Briggs test, she is an "ESFJ" type. When I expressed my befuddlement, she said, "That just means I'm an extrovert!"
Jill uses a range of vocal intonations and variations in cadence for emphasis, and employs facial and hand gestures to stress her points. Along with laughter, repetition, and original metaphors, Jill also puts her hands over her heart when she tells an angst-producing incident, she nods to reinforce the truth of her own stories, and she gazes upwards in her efforts to recall details. She says my name often during her narratives, and maintains direct eye contact.

Jill's Afternoon Work Place.

Jill works in two different locations: she spends her mornings in the main office of an academic unit, and her afternoons in a private office in the same large building where she is assigned to an Eminent Scholar. It was in the afternoon office that I first took fieldnotes. You enter the office from the fourth-floor hallway through a small anteroom in which supplies are stocked on floor-to-ceiling black shelving. Thus, two doors separate Jill's office from the hallway, effectively sound-proofing her work area. Both doors have small windows, so Jill can see people in the hallway, and people can look in and see Jill.

Sitting in a gray padded armchair with swivel wheels, Jill attended to word-processing tasks. Her office is small but not cramped. Clean gray tweed carpet covers the floor. On a large, light wood desk on the left wall is a Gateway 2000 computer; a tall lamp with a linen shade sits to the left of the computer, and a printer is in the far corner of the room to the right of the computer. A black desk is against the west wall, directly opposite the entrance door. On the desk are neat stacks of
papers and files; tape dispenser, hole puncher, and stapler are displayed alongside a white ceramic vase holding vivid purple-blue silk violets. A large window on the desk wall faces west, offering a good view of the campus from its fourth-floor vantage point.

A clean blackboard covers the right wall of the office. A strip of cork runs along the top of the blackboard; a calendar is attached to the cork, next to which is a lucite-framed photo of an orange orchid. At the far right, several cards (Christmas and birthday) are thumb-tacked to the cork in a precise, diagonal display. I asked Jill if her treatment of the cards indicates that she is "sentimental," and she said, "Oh yes, I'm sentimental--the cards remind me that I'm appreciated. They're from faculty and graduate students."

During the hour that I took fieldnotes in Jill's afternoon office, there were no phone calls. One graduate student came in and picked up some paperwork. No other visitors came during the period. I asked her about the quiet, and Jill explained that the Eminent Scholar for whom she works is on sabbatical, but that she had spoken to him on the phone and faxed some materials to him earlier in the day. The office is exceptionally quiet: the radio on the black desk by the window was mute, and there were no sounds of students or faculty in the hallway. Even though the double door to Jill's office guards against hallway racket, I did not see anyone walking down the halls during the time I was there. After we exchanged initial greetings, Jill worked on her computer, but occasionally stopped to share a brief anecdote with me (which I wrote down, as I had failed to bring my tape recorder with me).
Jill’s Morning Work Place.

In the mornings, Jill functions as receptionist in the main office of an academic department. The office, located on the fourth floor of a large campus building, is shallow but long. Opposite the entry, the long wall is broken by a regularly spaced series of doors. There are no windows in the reception area. The ceiling has recessed fluorescent lighting. The walls are all beige except for one, painted pale blue. A large watercolor entitled "Wakeshima," predominantly pinks and blues, hangs on the wall. The beige tweed carpeting is protected with rubber-and-fabric mud mats. To the left of the entrance door in the corner is a waiting area. Two dark blue upholstered office chairs and a table occupy this corner, along with a plastic-covered stack of telephone directories (the plastic is torn open, and it looks as if half the directories have been distributed). A large corkboard hangs on the wall across from the blue chairs. Papers and announcements are tacked there beneath a variety of labels: "FACULTY/GTA HOURS," "CLASS SCHEDULES," "SEMINARS," and "MISCELLANEOUS." Under the bulletin board is a stack of old phone books, probably for recycling.

Jill sat to the right of the entry door in a red upholstered office chair with swivel wheels and arm rests. Working on her computer, Jill was ensconced behind a large partitioned cubicle, in which one finds a series of computers, desks, carrels, and the usual office paraphernalia: multi-line telephone (which Jill answers), tape dispenser, stapler, file divider, papers. Fluorescent lights tucked under the top part of the partition illuminate Jill’s work area.
Faculty members milled around. Bits of conversations could be heard: "He's down there locking his bike up."

"Tell him to take that other bike away."

"He still has that down there?"

"Yeah."

"What kind is that?"

"A shitty old gray Huffy."

"Yeah, he should get rid of it."

Staff members remarked: "Talkin' to yourself?!" "As always!" "You shouldn't be doing this . . . ." "The next time you order, just order those. [PAUSE] I'll put his name on here, and next time I'll order it."

Students came tramping in wearing backpacks and snow gear, saying: "You've had your exercise for the week!" "For the MONTH!" They did not speak to Jill.

The chairman came out of his office, stretched, and went back inside.

Jill often bantered with those who came into office. She answered the phone: wrong number. Tardy bells and the opening and slamming of doors coincided with deep-throated conversations going on in the back of the office. A Graduate Associate bent over the partition surrounding Jill's work area and informed her: "I have a quiz to type. I also noticed an error in my office hours of my syllabus." Jill told the student: "OK, I'll correct mine and I'll let Bill know." "OK, thanks." Jill remarked: "Nobody will look at it till at least the sixth week, and then they'll PANIC!" A female voice called out: "Linda hasn't called in again has she?"
Jill's supervisor walked toward the entry door, and Jill introduced her to me. The supervisor smiled and spoke briefly, and then left the office. Jill answered the phone again: "Department of ____. [PAUSE] His name is Mr. ________. He's one of our advanced graduate students."

**Jill's Entry Tale.**

Unlike the other participants, Jill did not combine full-time Civil Service employment and graduate school; rather, she was a Graduate Research Associate while pursuing her Master's degree. It was not until five years after completing her M.A. that Jill became a full time Ohio State staff member. Also unlike the other women, Jill had professional jobs before accepting Civil Service employment at Ohio State, working as Training Director for the Girl Scouts of America in the late 1980s, and briefly as Franklin University's Associate Director of Admissions. Jill says: "I accepted that job in November of '89, I started to work in January of '90 at Franklin. I had a staff of three people, three professionals, individuals that I supervised." The unexpected loss of that job forced Jill to seek employment in any arena for which she was remotely qualified; she worked for a temporary employment agency for some months, and finally had to sell her condominium in order to make ends meet.

* * *

JILL: I took the Civil Service test at Ohio State and--SPRING of '91 I think. And uh, I was working temporary JOBS, I was working as a TEMP? And I had a couple of long-term positions that were three, four, and five months, so that was GREAT, I mean, I went to the same job every day--EIGHT to FIVE, EIGHT to FIVE. And then I took a second job, I was working nights, and the weekends--. So, you know. The exhaustion of that set in, and SO, THAT'S IT!
And so then Ohio State called and they said, "We’ve got this position, but it only pays $15,000, what do you think of it?" And I said [TERSELY], "I think it’s DIRT." [LAUGHS] The offer was in this department, and even from the time they posted the job til the time I interviewed, their whole job needed to be changed. And then they saw what they were dealing with because they had my résumé. And uh, they STILL wanted to hire me as a clerical, you know—that’s what they had, and that’s what I TOOK.

So I decided to TAKE it because I wanted paid holidays, I wanted benefits—here I was, working temporary, WITHOUT benefits, without PAID HOLIDAYS, and health insurance was EXTREMELY costly. EXTREMELY costly. After my mortgage payment it was the most costly thing I paid for, my health insurance. So, I said ENOUGH OF THIS. And, I’m sick of workin’ holidays, and workin’ weekends to make up—. So I was doing a whole MESS of different things, within that two-year timeframe, and I do best with routine and some variety, and I REALLY do best with routine with AUTONOMY. Which is what I have here in this job. So when I came here in September of ’92, uh, I became the eight-hour-a-day receptionist in the department. And then, THIS position changed slightly, plus they gave me [PAUSE], uh, what do you call it? a, uh, promotion, so to speak—

S: They upgraded you

JILL: Thank you. Still clerical, however. So now I’m a Secretary 1.

Oh, in the meantime, all these jobs bouncing around and everything, and working two jobs? -- I was taking a computer class, at Northeast Career Center. Which I really value, and it taught me word processing, it taught me WordPerfect. And um, I took that twice a week at night for—I think it was, my God, I think it was like TEN WEEKS, and finished THAT. And so then I was COMPUTER LITERATE, so to speak. Then I also volunteered and did some training at—an organization called "Forty Plus," which is a group of out-of-work professionals, mid-life out-of-work professionals—not necessarily everybody’s in their forties. And uh, and some are certainly more than that. But I volunteered there, and became the training director.

Anyway, so I landed the job here, and here I am. And THIS position, where we’re seated right now, is my afternoon job, and I
work directly with a gentleman who is a University Eminent Scholar. He has an international reputation in ______, and I serve as his personal secretary. And I want to talk about my experience here at Ohio State, and specifically in this department.

* * *
"Ruth."

Forty-one year old Ruth is 15 to 20 years younger than her sister and two brothers. A first-generation American on her father's side and second-generation on her mother's, Ruth's Italian-born father was an independent concrete contractor. Her mother, of Slovak extraction, ran the business from their home in Akron, Ohio. "Pop" had two to three years of elementary school and "Mom" dropped out of high school. Ruth is the first of her family to earn an advanced degree. She received her B.S. in physical education from Kent State University in 1977; her M.S., also in physical education, was conferred in 1986 by Ohio State.

Ruth has worked at Ohio State since 1989 as a Clerical Specialist in an administrative area of the university. A partnered lesbian, Ruth is a tall, stocky woman with short dark brown hair and deep-set brown eyes. She wears jeans, workshirts, and athletic shoes to the office. She says she has a severe case of the "not-good-enoughs" but otherwise sees herself as "kind-hearted, hot-tempered, and having more resources than she can efficiently manage."

Ruth is a devout Roman Catholic; her spiritual convictions often inform her personal narratives. A lively, uninhibited participant, Ruth performs a variety of personae and accents in her narratives and creates abundant metaphors; she laughs heartily at her analyses of her life and work. Appearing to ignore my presence in the field research that follows, I suspect that having an audience spurred Ruth to "perform" during my observation.
Ruth’s Work Place.

I visited Ruth on a brilliant May morning, but the weather outside was virtually undetectable from within her pie-shaped office, a remodeled dormitory room located in one of the circular twin towers on campus. The office has two desks, one of which seems unoccupied; Ruth tells me that her office mate is on vacation. Dark bluish-green wall-to-wall carpet covers the floor of Ruth’s office. A five-foot high partition divides the room into equal triangular portions. I could see metal floor-to-ceiling shelves stacked with paper, supplies, card files, and two empty boxes labeled "desk lamps" in the part of the office behind the divider.

Sometimes a door opened and closed in the carpeted hallway outside, and chimes from the elevator beyond the office could occasionally be heard. Save a small
fluorescent lamp to the left of her desk, there is no other illumination in the office except the natural light that filters through the small, high window beyond the partition: Ruth is visually impaired and office lights glare on her computer screen, so when her co-worker is on vacation, the lights stay off.

Ruth sat in an upholstered swivel armchair and worked at her computer, the lights and color patterns from the screen reflecting on her face. Ruth's wool poncho hung on the back of her chair. Her desk has a laminated top, metal legs, and is about five feet wide; boxes of Shade computer paper are underneath along with rubber-banded bunches of thick orange and silver wires. To the right of Ruth's computer is a beige touchtone phone, to the right of the phone is a printer, and to the right of the printer sits a wooden table about two and a half feet high and a yard wide. On the table are a black thermos bottle, a bottle of SuperX Extra Dry Skin Moisturizing Lotion, an opened box of Scotties tissues (Ruth had a head cold), and a vertical metal stacking file with eight trays—the top tray has a roll of paper towels, envelopes, file dividers, and a hand-lettered sign, "Ruth's Problem Mail."

To the left of Ruth's desk is a beige file cabinet, on top of which are a Rolodex and a machine I had never seen before. Ruth told me it's a "CCTV" loaded with software called "ZoomText" for visually impaired people. To demonstrate, Ruth placed a document on the flat plate under the big metal arm, and words from the document appeared on her computer screen in three-inch high letters. The CCTV machine also allows her to change the colors and adjust the contrast on the screen, because she is unable to distinguish certain values.
Ruth started to make a phone call, then said aloud, "NOPE. No, I don't." As she worked on her computer with her face only a few inches from the screen, Ruth whistled a tune, then muttered, "Now why do they have a new label?" Information about applicants to the university's Graduate School is clearly visible on the computer monitor: Ruth said that she was working on a "Referral Screen." A dirty yellow binder with the Ohio State logo and stuffed with papers rests on a green swivel chair by the unoccupied desk in the back of the office; a limp black plastic garbage bag is across the chair's backrest. On the wall behind this desk are a Betty Boop calendar, a poster depicting a chimpanzee whose lips are stuck together with chewing gum (caption: "Life is One Sticky Situation After Another"), a button: "It took 40 years to look this good," a troll doll with blue hair, a "Garfield" poster announcing "I Don't ♥ Anything," and a plaque with a drawing of an ostrich stating, "Don't Ask Me to Think, I Was Hired for My Looks." A box of Quaker instant oatmeal packets, a large container of pens and pencils, and a book entitled 1,201 Questions and Answers About Judaism are on the unoccupied desk. And, on the white wall next to the door, a black bullwhip is draped on two plastic hooks about five feet apart, the thick handle hanging down on one side and the end of the whip, twisted to a sharp point, hanging down the other. I asked Ruth about the whip at the precise moment a male co-worker named Jake entered the office. We all laughed, and then Jake remarked, "It goes with the leather."

Turning back to her work, Ruth whistled "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" for a time, then answered the phone and made some comments: "Grad Foreign, this
Ruth! --And whaddya want me to do about DAT? --AWWW! Who is it? --You poor precious little angel.--There ain't no such place. --You'se makin' this up. --Oh, I think this is the real University of Toledo, er, IDAHO!" Ruth looked through a sheaf of files in her hand as she continued to talk: "Heck man, you say it's from MARCH? Wait, wait, wait. Give me the number, I'll look it up on mine. I don't have my ZoomText on, it could be anything--WE don't have it." After the conversation, Ruth directed a metacommunicative comment to me, "This was one of my co-workers next door." A few minutes later, another co-worker came in and said, "Hey, Ruthie! Do you see better in the dark? Here's a fax for you." Ruth: "Oh boy, I'm happy now." Then Ruth said to herself, "It's not over til the paperwork's done."

Ruth's Entry Tale.

* * *

RUTH: I got my bachelor's. I started to teach. I got mad at the system. I became a mechanic. I was working as a mechanic in a bakery, and I heard there was gonna be a strike. So, I thought, WELL, I'll renew my certificate. And then if we go on strike, I can SUB, while I'm on strike. So I went to Cleveland State to renew my certificate, and they said [MOCK PROFUNDITY]: "Oh--you're such a SCHOLAR material, you should go and get your graduate degree--and stick with this." And I said, "Graduate DEGREE! Well, all right!" [LAUGHS] You know!

S: How long ago?

RUTH: This is in '80--?--this is in '70--?-- [PAUSE]. This is in '80, this is in '80. And so, I went all around, there were two schools that had what I was interested in, Western Ontario and Ohio State. So obviously I picked Ohio State--being an Ohio girl. And uh, came down here and started school. . . .
I had picked up this job; I had gone without work—let's see, I used—in our department, they give you two years [of G.A. support] for a Master's and three years of support for a, for a Ph.D. So I'd used up my five years of T.A. Well they had liked my work, and I had kissed enough butt, so they put me on as an A.A., and then I used up THAT time, THAT extra year, cause I was supervising GA's at that point. Then they made me a lecturer. So they were—in terms of money support, they were FINE, and I--I kept my lectureship, cause they liked my teaching. And uh [PAUSE], then, between George [Voinovich] cutting the budget, starting, YOU know, the contraction of the system, they cut OFF all but one of the lecturers in our department, and the one lecturer they kept was the boss's best FRIEND, and I had aggravated the BOSS's boss by saying that her ex-student had made an error in a presentation, which was, YOU know, you're not supposed to say, that students are WRONG. But anyway, I got in trouble for THAT, and so I was asked not to come back; so then I went around a year and a half WITHOUT work; when I was primarily concentrating on writing my [PAUSE] my--DOCUMENT [her dissertation]. Then I picked up this job at--the Admission's Office--

S: As a sort of SEASONAL person--

RUTH: RIGHT, seasonal. And then they liked my work. And so they picked me up again as seasonal the FOLLOWING year and then the job came, the PERMANENT job came open while I was in that seasonal year. And SOOO, I--I was given THAT position. And, that was a little awkward, cause in our department, traditionally, the spot that I'm in right now is given to the [PAUSE] MOST senior evaluator; they just slide her over to the department liaison position. And the senior evaluator was all ready to, like, slide OVER there, and 

] S: And you snuck in, in front of her

] RUTH: Yeah, yeah, and that was WORSE, cause "HIM" took it as a great offense to his "HIM-Ness." [LAUGHS LOUDLY] That was TRICKY! [LAUGHS] So, anyways, I've been at that for a while; [PAUSE] it's easy work, and pleasant. And so that's how I've got here and how I have stayed.

* * *

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"Emily."

Emily is 53 years old. An only child, she was born in Columbus, Ohio to parents of English and German descent. Her father was a design engineer, and her mother was a housewife. Emily is a single woman with light brown hair and wide-set brown eyes. She generally wears dark-colored sweaters, jackets, and trousers with low-heeled shoes; her jewelry consists of small post earrings and a gold watch. Emily enjoys films, music (classical, folk, rock, and New Age), and reading and writing poetry. She has worked full-time most of her adult life, usually as a secretary. She worked for Ohio State between 1963-1966, and returned in early 1990. Emily is currently a Secretary 1.

Emily describes her life as having been shaped by incest. When she was two or three, her mother held her immobile while her father raped her orally. Her father continued to rape her orally until she was twelve, then vaginally until age 24. Emily's mother also molested her when Emily was a toddler. An incident of sexual abuse at age fourteen on a city bus that went unprosecuted by her parents taught Emily that "the outside world could also abuse me without being punished." Raised a Methodist, Emily has lost her faith over the years: "I still believe in reincarnation; I think we should be kind to all living creatures, because we may come back to the earth in some form."

Emily was bookish and shy in high school and college, years during which she was deathly afraid of becoming pregnant by her father. She received her B.A. (*summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa*) in English at Ohio State University in 1963.
Soon after going to work at Battelle Memorial Institute, she "forgot" all of her memories of incest. In 1972, Emily moved to Long Beach, California; she completed her M.A. in English at Cal State Long Beach in 1975. She worked in Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo, California, for 13 years, including two years as a production editor at TRW in Redondo Beach and one year as a legal assistant at Paramount Pictures in Hollywood. When she returned to Ohio in 1985 to care for her terminally ill father, Emily had shadowy suspicions that incest had happened, but no clear memories. She asked her father about it a month before he died but he denied incest. After her father's death, a Hospice grievance counselor guided Emily
into a therapy group for incest survivors, and soon many repressed memories of incest came back to her. The memories explained aspects of her life that had baffled her before.

When I asked her why she chose to link her memories of childhood sexual molestation to this study about Civil Service employees who have advanced degrees, Emily told me that she and her roommate are both incest survivors who see their career potentials being curtailed by incest. "Sometimes when we feel downhearted, we make this comment about the world: ‘the incest perpetrators are out there doing their job, creating future secretaries’." Emily believes that the patriarchy does not really want to end incest because it provides society with a constant supply of clerical workers. Emily also told me she believes that many secretaries and clerical workers are incest survivors, and thinks such a phenomenon is even more pointedly manifest in an environment such as Ohio State’s, where survivors can take refuge in the intellectual atmosphere of a university and the relative job security of Civil Service. Emily admits that job security and an intellectual milieu (both of which have subsequently proved to be pipe dreams) lured her when she applied for an Ohio State Civil Service position.

Emily is overweight, which she sees as both a symptom of the sexual abuse and a precondition for her Civil Service position. She points out that persons who are abused at a young age tend to become compulsive overeaters to quell their emotional pain and rage. Food is their only comfort when they are little and it is where they turn for comfort as adults. Emily is also convinced that heavy women have a better
chance of being accepted and keeping their jobs at Ohio State than they would have in the private sector, where women are expected to be slender. "Our culture doesn't believe fat women can be smart," Emily writes in an attachment to her "bio" questionnaire that she gave me a few days after we began the interview process. She continues:

This is one reason why it is so difficult to get employers to hire fat women. Besides the eyesore factor, there is a cultural consensus that fat women are stupid, lazy, living on welfare in subsidized housing, with ten kids—all with different fathers—all born out of wedlock. There is also a cultural consensus that fat women are dirty and have B.O. In actuality, many heavy women, to counteract this stereotype, bathe especially often and work especially hard to keep their jobs. They know they are pariahs in our society. Studies have shown that heavy people make good employees because they are very dependable and willing to stick with a difficult, frustrating task longer than slender people tend to. One might think this would override the prejudice against them in the hiring market—but it doesn't. I wonder sometimes how much of the resentment that comes my way is because of my intellect and how much is because of my weight.

Emily told me that early childhood sexual abuse is often "abuse that never ends," because overweight survivors are "further abused by society until the day they die." She explained that survivors of early childhood sexual abuse suffer from "learned helplessness": learning in childhood that there is no way to escape the abuse, they come to accept whatever misery comes along later in life. They are unable to remove themselves from inequitable or hostile situations. They do not believe that "things can get better" and so stay for years in abusive marriages and dead-end jobs. Emily insists that the problem of learned helplessness is compounded by low self-esteem. "My life has been a good example of how feelings work in
concert to cripple a career," she says. "I was summa cum laude in English, but here I am, a secretary after working full time for 30 years. Incest counseling has helped me to understand how these problems have affected my life, but it hasn’t helped me to change and have a dynamic career."

Emily was reluctant to speak to me on campus, even during lunch hour away from the office, fearing that we would be seen and/or overheard. She invited me to her home instead, where there would be few distractions. I arrived on a Saturday around noon. Emily and her roommate Laura had prepared lunch for the occasion. We ate homemade tostadas and a large green salad; hot blackberry tea accompanied the meal. The table was spread with a deep pink linen cloth and matching napkins; the hexagonal china plates had a floral design. Emily’s home is immaculate and cozy. She admits her fondness for beautiful lamps, which grace every room. "I like to shed light on things," she laughed. Chinese accent pieces, both furniture and lamps, can be seen throughout the house.

A generous interviewee, Emily’s voice is soft and lyrical. Emily usually expresses herself with polite restraint. But from time to time, the rage and indignation she experiences in the retelling emerge. This is especially true as a long interview unfolds: after her initial nervousness wears off, Emily’s emotions surface. The high-tension moments inspire Emily’s dramatic departure from everyday conversation and her entry into "performance mode," during which she instinctively employs rhetorical strategies--a variety of vocal intonations, repetition, metaphor, and quoting are a few.
Emily's Work Place.

Research in Emily's office required some pre-planning; she did not want her co-workers to detect my purpose, and so asked me to conduct the field research as unobtrusively as possible. Consequently, I stood for an hour beside the faculty mailboxes, an area adjacent to Emily's work area but separated from it by walls, dividers, and file cabinets. There was a three-inch space between the corner of the file cabinet and the wall, and by standing next to this crack, I was able to secretly observe the goings-on within the enclave where Emily works. As far as I could tell, no one noticed me--three students also lingered near the boxes during the time I was there, shuffling papers, writing notes, placing envelopes in the mailboxes. For all anyone knew, I could have been engaged in a similar activity.

Emily works on the fourth floor of an ivy-colored brick building south of the main library. Her desk is in a common work area called "the pool" located near faculty mailboxes and adjacent to a workroom that houses the photocopier and fax machine. The floor of the pool is shiny white and beige linoleum; the walls are white. Heavy paneled oak doors lead to adjacent administrative offices. A long unbroken wall spanning the length of the pool displays a picture of a New England countryside in the autumn. The wall clock above the water cooler tells me that it's 2:45 in the afternoon. There are tall, wide windows at each end of a long hall, but no windows in the pool area itself. Fluorescent bulbs enclosed in metal egg-carton-like casings provide the light. Also hanging from the high ceiling are several mobiles that slowly spin above the heads of the workers. I was curious about the mobiles,
and after researching her work place, I asked Emily to tell me their significance. She didn’t answer my question, but instead said, "Oh yeah, we’re back in preschool."

Emily shares her work area with another secretary and assorted work-study students; their desks sit behind mauve-colored, carpeted privacy partitions about five feet high, but the partition at the front of the pool is only four feet so that visitors can easily speak face-to-face with staff members. Additional partitions inside the pool itself separate the staff’s work areas. Emily’s uncluttered, unadorned work space, which faces south, is surrounded by a four-foot high carpeted screen. The other secretary sits facing north. At the back of her desk are a vase of straw flowers and a ceramic bust of Beethoven; to the right are neatly stacked file folders and papers.

Two beige file cabinets, one two-and-a-half feet, the other five feet, stand between two desks in the pool area. Both secretaries work at IBM-compatible personal computers; they share a printer. Next to the printer is a metal basket in which faculty members place work orders on which they write their instructions for wordprocessing and/or photocopying tasks. The pool secretaries share the work in the work basket.

Emily’s co-worker Ann Marie came out of the workroom and remarked, "Those numbers weren’t correct." The multi-lined phone rang: Ann Marie picked it up: "Good afternoon, Department of ________. --Well, the call rolled up here so I have to assume she’s not in. --Now, I have a note here that she won’t be back until the twenty-seventh. --Okay, goodbye." Emily continued her word processing; Ann Marie bent over paperwork on her desk.
A bearded faculty member walked through the pool area. He directed his conversation to Ann Marie. "I'm about to go swimming now, Ann Marie. Anything you want me to go over before I leave?" He positions himself next to her; it seems as if she is working on his document. She pointed out, "Well, this is about five inches. And I made the margin a little larger here." The man replied, "Oh, that makes a big difference." "Yes, it wasn't working out the other way, so I had to change these . . ." "Uh huh." Brief silence. Ann Marie continued: "Well, if I could figure out how to use all the cells, we might be able to use it the way it was." The faculty member responds, "Well, if they're good enough, I mean. . . I'd like to keep part of those in . . . ." Ann Marie briskly replied, "Well, I'll get it! That's fine!" "Good, I appreciate it. Look, thanks a lot. I have another chess match tonight, so I might have another depressed day tomorrow." "Oh no. . ." "Yeah, I've already lost about ten in a row." He laughed and began to walk toward the elevator, saying as he went, "Yeah, well, that's how it goes. OK, see you later." Ann Marie said, "OK, -bye-bye."

The man returned in a minute, saying, "Look, you know, it's, it's clearing up now. I think I'll take a walk instead of a swim today." Ann Marie says, "Oh, all right. See you tomorrow, Marty."

There are periods of time, several minutes long, during which no conversation occurs. However, there are always sporadic sound patterns: desk drawers rolling open then slamming shut; chair wheels on the linoleum; keys crunching in locks;
the intermittent lull of the Xerox machine; the ripping of paper; the staccato tapping of an electric typewriter in a nearby office. Students get off the elevator and walk past the pool to faculty mailboxes—rapid footsteps strike the linoleum. Doors open and close.

Emily’s co-worker Ann Marie said, "I'm doing all the copywork this afternoon, Emily." Emily: "Well, I could do it." Ann Marie reproached, "Well, I’m finished now. We have to keep checkin’ the tray." Five minutes later, Emily resumed the conversation: "I’m sorry." (Six second silence.) "You could remind me." Ann Marie soberly replied: "I don’t want to do that, Emily. I’m not the boss."

The phone rang again and Ann Marie answered: "Good afternoon, Department of ___. . . . Just a moment please, I’ll ring her office!" Winifred, the chair’s secretary, emerged from her office at that precise instant, and overhearing Ann Marie’s remark, said, "Not ME!" She laughed. Ann Marie laughed back accommodatingly, "No, not you!" Drawers squeak open and closed. The stacking of papers. The Xerox machine roars.

Ann Marie proofread, her lips moving as she compared one copy to another. An occasional "s" or "t" could be heard as she whispered her way through the task. Winifred’s jovial voice issued from her office—she seemed to be talking on the phone. "I missed that first word, yeah!" She laughed. "ACTUALLY, I recognized it!"

More explosive laughter. Ann Marie answered the pool telephone again: "Good afternoon! Well, you’ve reached the reception area. . . . Well, the only thing I can do is connect you with our grad office. We don’t have a career development office or
anything, perhaps they can help you. . . . Well, we have a few professors who specialize in that area. . . . Certainly, one moment." Throughout all this, Emily silently worked.

The chairman briskly walked out of his office and toward the elevators. "See you tomorrow morning." Ten minutes later, Winifred asks Ann Marie, "Did [LAST NAME ONLY] leave?" "Yes--" "Oh, he snuck out real quick!" Winifred laughed and then commented, "I don't know, I STILL haven't taken lunch, I'm STILL not that hungry either! I'm usually starved to DEATH by noon, but not today. [CHAIR's LAST NAME] asked me when I was goin' to lunch and I said, 'I don't know, I don't know WHAT I'm doin' today!' " Both women laughed. Emily did not participate in the office banter.

Emily's Entry Tale.

* * *

EMILY: I came to Ohio State--I had worked at Ohio State from '63 to '66, and I returned to Ohio State in early 1990. I was excited. I was--I had determined that I was going to find a job where I could do what I loved to do, which is EDITING. Uhm. I knew there were scientific papers and books being prepared by the faculty, and I was going to find a job where I would spend--hopefully, fifty percent of my time editing and typing manuscripts.

S: Mainly typing or mainly editing?

EMILY: Well, I like to do BOTH. I, I LOVE to type at the computer; I LOVE to edit them and then type them. This is what I like to do. SO, I came to Ohio State to find a job to do that. I took the Word Processing Operator exam rather than Secretary 1, because I didn't want to BE a secretary. I don't LIKE to process travel. I don't WANT to get you reimbursed for Dutch guilders for your week

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enjoying—[LAUGHTER]— you know!? I don’t WANT to schedule meetings; I don’t WANT to schedule meeting ROOMS. I don’t want to order supplies. I don’t want to do secretarial STUFF. I just want to work on manuscripts. So, I figured, somewhere at Ohio State—. I ALSO don’t like to type equations, or lots of tables. So, I took the Word Processing Operator exam, I scored 97 on it, and I got a job as a Word Processing Operator.

So, I came because I believed if you HAVE a Civil Service job you are pretty much secure in your job; you have great benefits; you have life insurance; you have status--of working at a university; and it’s very hard for them to fire you--. I BELIEVED, when I came in. I thought it would be job security. I thought there would be an intellectual climate where you’d meet all these brilliant people and get to, to TALK with them and know them. And it was very easy, it was an easy drive, you know. I had been going downtown, and it was going to be very easy just to go as far as Ohio State. I BOUGHT this house so I’d be right on the "Number Two" bus line to get anywhere in Columbus to a job.

So, those were my motivations. Uhm. BASICALLY, I could do what I loved to do, I thought, in a secure, pleasant environment. AND humane, I thought. -- I had worked at Ohio State in the sixties, and it was a nice place to work. I have been a LEGAL secretary, and I know THAT’s not--real pleasant. Uhm. But, I thought I could EDIT.

* * *
Individual Selves, Group Selves

The biographical sketches, fieldnotes, and entry tales reveal differences and commonalities among the participants. Carrie, Ariel, Jill, and Ruth say they had relatively happy childhoods. The other four women report difficult growing-up years characterized by alcoholism, poverty, and in Emily's case, continual sexual abuse. Most of their mothers were housewives; Jill's and Ruth's worked part of the time. Three of the women's fathers lacked formal education; the fathers of five others had professional jobs and advanced degrees (three were engineers).

Interesting information emerged regarding the women's degree disciplines: the preponderance of English literature majors might partly explain the high level of verbal competence among the group, and has provided another bonding feature for several of us. Five of the women earned undergraduate degrees in humanities disciplines: Ariel's double major was English and political science; Carrie, Iz, and Emily majored in English; Meg was a philosophy major. The other three women took degrees in Education (Ruth) and the social sciences (Jill and Hester). In their graduate work, three remained in the humanities—Emily persevered with English; Meg stayed with philosophy; Ariel shifted her focus to history. The other five women received advanced degrees in either education or social science fields.

One of the most consistent similarities uncovered in this chapter is found in the participants' rationales for joining Ohio State as Civil Service staff members. Carol Warren has studied women's career trajectories and concludes that their work lives are "characterized not so much by goals and planning, but by drift, and response to
circumstances"—situations that are often beyond their control (1989:51). I believe Warren's assessment is reflected in the women's entry tales. Meg, Hester, Iz, and Ruth all seemed to fall into their positions, offering no specific "career" reasons for accepting university employment beyond the need for a livelihood. Carrie, Ariel, Jill, and Emily gave practical reasons for choosing Civil Service jobs: Carrie needed health and dental insurance; Ariel wanted a tuition waiver for graduate school; after months of temporary jobs, Jill longed for steady, permanent employment with benefits, especially health insurance and paid holidays. Emily was the only one who saw Ohio State as potentially offering her an interesting career ("I thought I could edit," she says wistfully). But none of the rationales seems to reflect calculated grand strategies for ultimate career fulfillment and upward mobility—in itself not surprising considering the participants' general level of employment.

But with the exception of Carrie, the women all highlight their intellectual aptitudes in their entry tales. Jill prefaces her narrative with information about earlier professional employment and her success in graduate school; Ruth opens with a laundry list of personal capabilities (she can teach; she can work as a mechanic) and she self-reflexively points out that she has been called "scholar material"; Iz stresses that "reading saved her ass"; Emily wants to apply her academic training to an editing career; Hester and Ariel both mention their desire for graduate education and their need for a fee waiver. On a more indirect level, Meg indicates her prowess as a performer in her entry tale, which is a way of demonstrating a strong intellect: she displays rhetorical competence when she jokes, "You're still not making ends meet,
but you're not making ends meet in a grander style, or something!" Ruth, also an
expert performer, hints at her capacity for lightning-quick responses and exquisitely
playful rhetoric: "... HIM took it as a great offense to his HIMness!" Highlighting
their native intelligence and academic training seems to be of crucial concern for the
participants, a factor that becomes more apparent as their narratives develop.

Insofar as their university jobs are concerned, Meg and Carrie are
Administrative Assistant 2 staff members and thus occupy the highest rung on the
Civil Service ladder. Ariel and Ruth, a Typist 2 and Clerical Specialist respectively,
have the lowest ranking jobs. Hester, Iz, Jill, and Emily are in the middle, with
"Secretary" job titles. An unsurprising correlation exists between the women’s ranks
and the character of their work areas: Meg and Carrie have private offices. Ariel
shares an office with two other women; Ruth works in a tiny area alongside another
employee whose desk is only a few feet away. Of those in the middle of the Civil
Service ranking, Hester is alone in her office but serves as receptionist for other staff
members. Iz and Emily occupy cubicles alongside other co-workers in reception
areas; both shoulder reception tasks part of the time. And Jill undertakes receptionist
duties in the mornings but in the afternoon enjoys the privacy of a fourth floor office
with a door and a window.

It is a commonplace that shared office space, the absence of doors, and the
general lack of privacy that accompany those conditions, are indications of an
employee’s subordinate status, as the cartoon below suggests.
Jay Mechling has found that the large university "lacks a human scale. We feel detached, 'alienated,' from the institution. Contributing to this alienation is 'reification,' the process whereby institutions lose their 'human-madeness' and acquire a kind of facticity or givenness against which we feel powerless" (1989:342).

Crudely put, the university, like the American private sector, reifies the "value" of its employees by its ubiquitous equation of job rank with size/privacy of work areas. The politics of place that attends the university’s work areas essentializes the class-based identities of its various actors and thus would appear to exacerbate the mutual alienation of those classes.

**Marginality.**

The term "marginality" in my study is meant to suggest an individual’s incomplete assimilation within a social group or social groups (DeVos and Suarez-Orozco 1990), an aspect of outsiderness (Becker 1963; Simmel 1971) that can both empower and undermine. The state of being "marginal," while not indicating
"normlessness" or downright isolation, is indicative of the participants’ disassociation from some of the overarching beliefs, values, and norms that are continually reinforced by the institution’s actors (Sibley 1995). Put in this way, marginality implies some degree of agency on the part of the marginal individual, agency which can be defined in a variety of ways. For instance, by virtue of their education and other factors, most of the women see their Civil Service membership equivocally, and actively separate themselves—in both their discourse and their personal styles—from the larger body of Civil Service workers. By extension, they are also symbolically divorcing themselves from some negative commonplace notions about Civil Service workers. But the participants’ symbolic departure from Civil Service groupness is just that, symbolic. The women are always reined in by material conditions: working in Civil Service jobs, they have all dealt with incomes that are typically among the lowest in the university. And, to some extent, full time clerical jobs have inhibited the development of the women’s academic potentials. Granted, faculty members and graduate associates alike process paperwork required for their courses or their administrative tasks, but for these groups, the intellectual endeavor is their primary concern. Such is not technically the case for Civil Service workers.

Emily’s and Ariel’s assessments of their outsidersness show that a complex combination of life experiences and expectations can preclude "fitting in":

* * *

EMILY: All my life, well, in junior high, from junior high on, I’ve never felt that I fit in. And all my life I’ve really wanted to fit in with other people. Um, I’ve always BEEN kind of different. I was smarter than about everybody in junior high and high school. And I was fatter, than about everybody. And in junior high and high school,
my father was fucking me whenever he wanted to, and I don’t think THAT’s the average life, you know? And so, it’s always been, my DREAM of my life is to fit in with other people. I TRIED to be one of the pool. Now when Becky Wing came in, she was Secretary 2, SHE told me she didn’t consider herself part of the pool. You know. She’s a Sec 2, THEY’RE word processing operators. There’s a DIFFERENCE. But I tried to be, you know, I, I tried to fit in with the others, because I’ve all my life wanted to fit in with others. It’s, it’s a main TROPE of my life [LAUGHTER], to try to fit IN. So, anyway.

When I left [her first office] the first time, I was doing a lot of editing of dissertations. And typing of dissertations. I don’t think it made Ann Marie any more friendly when I was editing all these dissertations. But I think it made it awkward with the faculty, that here I was, I was EDITING these things for the Ph.D. candidates, so I was kind of in the middle: I wasn’t staff anymore, and I wasn’t on THEIR level, but it was just, it was AWKWARD, let’s just say. I was in NO man’s land.

* * *

Emily’s theme is sorrow at not belonging; she perceives that her editing capabilities, among other issues, have led to ostracization. But Emily prefaces her account of workplace marginality with another reference about her subjection to incest, which occurred throughout her childhood. Emily’s earliest and most vivid memory is one of sexual violation by her parents; severe and prolonged childhood victimization seems to have colored Emily’s impressions about all subsequent life situations, and is reflected in her narratives in this study. John N. Kotre states that

What we call a "first" memory means different things to different narrators. To some, the first memory is the childhood recollection with which they open their life story. To others, it is the memory that is chronologically the earliest, the one that reaches farthest back in time. To still others, it is the childhood memory to which they ascribe primacy, that is, the one they see as a prototype or cause of other events. No matter which memory is designated as first, and no matter what meaning the designation has, I have found that it and other early
memories are more than representations of the past. Very often they are metaphors for narrators' unconscious intuitions about major life motifs and about the present conditions of their lives. (1984:143)

Indeed, all of Emily's narratives seem to embody the twin tropes of victimization and need for approval, as her brief assessment of her marginality indicates.

Emily longs for acceptance and approval within the Civil Service cohort, but Ariel consciously and actively chooses to resist identifying with it.

* * *

ARIEL: I've never felt part of the Civil Service. I mean, I HATE Civil Service. I've always felt, I HATE being a Secretary, I just absolutely despise it. It was the last thing in the world I ever thought I would do. Almost I would rather be on welfare than be in such an embarrassing situation.

I don't know, just in my own mind, I mean, when I was in high school I took typing, but I was never going to be a secretary. It's just, I thought it was just a really low paying job. And maybe it was the way I was brought up, too. My Dad was an engineer, and my Mother had worked outside the home. "People who work in factories were low class. People who are secretaries" -- Although I don't remem--- that's from my Mom, I don't ever remember my Dad talking like that. But my mother used to. She came from a very poor family. And [LAUGHS] that had something to do with it! But um, I mean, it's just the way I always thought. It was a low-class, low-paying job for stupid people. And I don't necessarily think that's true now. But it's still that stigma.

* * *

In what is basically a class issue, Ariel clearly does not want to belong--the "embarrassment" of her Civil Service job is the trade-off she accepts in return for a fee waiver and a bi-weekly paycheck. If Emily's workplace perceptions are colored by childhood experiences, Ariel's ironic bias against Civil Service workers and especially secretaries is also partly rooted in her mother's prejudices. But another reason for Ariel's and Emily's less than wholehearted membership in the Civil
Service group has to do, I think, with their intellectual inclinations and academic successes. Strong identification with academia has exacerbated both Ariel’s disdain of Civil Service work and Emily’s sense of workplace otherness (she is eager for intellectually challenging work but believes she would face the criticism of others if she undertakes it). (The same can be said of Jill. Unlike the other women, Jill does not explicitly define herself as marginal or "different," but she does think she is both underemployed and underpaid, given her education and previous professional employment.)

Ariel’s and Emily’s comments suggest the cogency of Elliott Oring’s idea that "situations in which identity is challenged or denied—that is, situations of identity conflict—may prove particularly promising for investigation, as they are the arenas in which the contours of identity become most prominent and visible" (1994:226).

Indeed, in this study, the participants’ discourse is often entangled with identity contests that have arisen in a variety of ways within the university setting, but again, marginality often surfaces much earlier, as Ruth’s words about her own marginality indicate.

* * *

S: Are you unlike the other people in your office?

RUTH: Yeah, um, especially in terms of the bell curve—you know, when I was a youngster and we had our grade cards in grade school: they had the bell curves printed on the sides of our report cards. And then on THIS side of our report card would be the most recent standardized TEST battery that we had taken and where we plotted out on the bell curve. And then there was this diagram of the bell curve. And then they would draw another line through the grade
card which, it said, "Because of the battery of tests that put you at the 97th percentile, your child's grades should come out here," like "A." You know, and my grades always were quite far below that! [LAUGHS] And it disappointed my parents--

S: You're an underachiever in school, you're saying--

RUTH: QUITE so. And, and, one could put forward the concept that I'm maybe an underachiever at WORK as well. And it, and I'm very happy to BE so. Because, um, it's PLEASANT. It's, it's, I PREFER leisure! [LAUGHS]

S: Tell me about that, what do you mean by that? You prefer leisure on the job or you don't want to take your work home with you?

RUTH: I don't want to take my [PAUSE]. I don't want to take--somebody ELSE's work home with me [PAUSE]. You know. The work that I do at Ohio State is Ohio State's work. The stuff I do here is THEIR work that I sell my TIME and labor to help them accomplish. But it's not MY work.

When I was teaching, I thought of it as my work for a while but then it was made quite clear to me that, it was the district's work. It was, yeah. Yeah. It's [LAUGHS] not your work. You're just filling a slot. [ADOPTS COMMANDING VOICE OF "SCHOOL DISTRICT"] "And this is, these are the parameters and you better fit into those parameters, nothing more and nothing less." [MOCK DISCOMFORT, SQUEAKY VOICE] "OOOH! Kinda TIGHT! [LAUGHS] It's kinda, YOU know, I'm not quite this SQUARE!" [LAUGHS] So, I got, I mean, I GOT the picture that my work and their work are two different things. This piece HERE is just, it's just somethin' to--so the LANDLORD'll be happy and Krogers'll let me walk out of there with a sack o' food.

* * *

Ruth's text demonstrates that while dominant social practices have a marginalizing influence on individuals, people also "self-marginalize." bell hooks advises making "a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance--as location of radical
openness and possibility" (1990:153); Ruth's narrative shows that a deliberately chosen otherness can offset less-than-satisfactory conditions, and can help one to make sense of one's position.

While Carrie also embraces views and ideals that she defines as "non-traditional," she speaks about her "marginality" in a much more tentative tone.

* * *

S: Do you see yourself as a nontraditional person in any way?

CARRIE: Uhm, I think I'm a nonconformist in the extent that perhaps a feminist, strong feminist perspective is considered nonconformist; although, it's not that I don't like men, I mean, I DO, you know. I mean, I'm not a FLAMING [LAUGHS] feminist.

I guess I'm not unhappy being alone, and I don't feel the need to have a man to give me a sense of identity or purpose or happiness. I mean, that would be wonderful if it happened. But it's not going to be the end of the world if it doesn't.

* * *

Carrie's narrative shows stalwart self-acceptance but she speaks of both her ideologies and her experiences with "outsiderness" in a hesitant, qualified manner: she is a feminist, but not a "FLAMING" one; she is "not unhappy" as a single woman, but neither does she rejoice at singleness, a state she didn't plan or count on. Carrie's desire for connection, for meaningful relationship, is clear. When she says "it's not going to be the end of the world" if she doesn't remarry, Carrie sends a double message: she is an individual but she is also a social being, and is thus ambivalent about her marginality. Deborah Tannen stresses that indirectness such as Carrie's requires the listener to fill in implied information, thus actively empowering the
listener in a sense-making endeavor (1984:157); much of Carrie's larger narrative is similarly characterized by ellipses, indirection, and pointed, brief assessments. I think that sharing many traits (gender, job, socio-economic status, and general age group) fosters Carrie's tendency for this discursive style. Carrie seems to intuit that the poignancy of her "double bind," to use Bateson's term, does not pass me by.

Hester and Meg reveal that a beneficial sort of marginality can result from the process of embracing personal values that might go against the grain:

* * *

HESTER: I'm probably unconventional, not only in my interests, but the fact that I don't see any reason to hide who I am. So. It's, I think as far back as I can remember, I've just pretty much gone through life feeling like I didn't quite belong anywhere, you know, that I've always been, sort of, set apart somehow, and not quite really, fully, IN anything I've ever been in because I've always felt different.

S: Has this been painful? Or an advantage?

HESTER: Well, at one point I think I thought it was painful because I didn't really understand all my own gifts and strengths. Now that I have a really clear picture of who I am, what I really want, what my interests are . . . uhm, I see it in a lot of ways as an advantage. Because, um, you know, I really have a clear picture of where I--I stop and other people begin, so I'm able to deal with my own issues.

* * *

Hester acknowledges her "difference" and seems to have come to terms with it; her words show her dedication to her values. But her comment that she has "always been . . . set apart somehow" suggests at least past loneliness; she admits that she has suffered as a result of her difference. By contrast, Meg celebrates her marginality.
During our first interview in October of 1993, I pointed out that it is somewhat unconventional for Civil Service employees to earn advanced degrees, and then asked Meg if she perceived herself as nontraditional in other ways.

* * *

MEG: Yeah, I'm pretty weird basically. And I enjoy being a little different, because to me that's more interesting. Just by the fact that, uhm, that I AM going into academics as well as working here. That's nontraditional. You know, my husband and I lived together for six years before we decided to get married, that's considered nontraditional by the really straight people around here. Uh, the fact that I'm a pagan clergymember, uh, is certainly nontraditional, I follow a nontraditional religious path and have talked about it and lectured and given classes on it for years. Uhm--and the fact that I, you know, go to conferences and publish papers, that sort of thing, that's not something your typical secretary, quote unquote, is supposed to do. Jewelry making, you know, also not, not your typical thing. I think maybe the, the most atypical part of it is in the worldview or the perspective, and that's the hardest part to encapsulate in twenty-five words or less. I don't have, I guess, the traditional straight, white, middle-class perspective that a lot of people have.

* * *

Meg's words reveal that marginality can be positive, and empowering. It is clear that Meg's passion for "marginal" spiritual, academic, and creative pursuits come to fruition outside the workplace. Assuming the role of teacher, Meg lectures to a variety of audiences about her spiritual and scholarly convictions and concerns; I think this teacher role enables Meg not only to affirm her commitments to her various life choices but also creates a forum for performance, and consequently, for Meg's creation and re-creation of her identity. Meg's text, and also Hester's and Ruth's, indicate that marginality is more than a site of privation or detachment: "it is also the
site of radical possibility, a space of resistance. It was this marginality that I was
naming as a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that
is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives" (hooks
1990:149).

Along with philosophical and behavioral modes of self-marginalization such as
those variously articulated by Meg, Hester, Carrie, Ruth, and Ariel, I believe that
self-marginalization can be found in such categories as the participants' personal
styles (clothing and office artifacts, among other things) and their performance styles.

My line of reasoning here mirrors that of Michael Owen Jones, who states:

Dress and appearance, the decor and appointments of rooms, language,
ritual interaction, ceremonies, joking, festive events, storytelling: these
and other forms and processes in everyday life . . . provide the cue for
understanding behavior, inferring values and concerns, and predicting
actions. Words, actions, and things: all are capable of conveying
meaning or may be responded to as meaningful. (1987:191)

The categories of personal style and performance style are by no means exhaustive,
but I believe that an analysis of such factors will yield information about the
participants' mindsets. My inferences, although thoughtfully considered, will be
unavoidably conjectural and subjective; I will surely advance my interpretations from
a variety of subject positions, reproducing and reconstituting as I go along (Gregg
1993:177), or in Geertz's words,"guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and
drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses" (1973:20). I agree with
Stephen W. Foster, who posits that "with the problematics of representation come
interpretations that of necessity are local, contingent, idiosyncratic, political,
convenient, tentative, and temporary, derived as they are from a definable occasion
rather than emanating directly from 'the real'" (1990:135). Foster's notion about "definable occasions" is well taken: my analyses of the women's office artifacts, styles of clothing, and performance styles will be influenced by the fieldwork and the content of the entry tales, for I am convinced that scrutiny of the material conditions of an office is more insightfully undertaken when accompanied by an assessment of the complexities of the contextual situation and performances (Jones 1987:182).

Personal Style.

The broad point of schematizing some of the women's so-called marginal traits is to demonstrate how their use of symbolic forms may indicate their disdain or rejection of mainstream groups and ideologies. One of Iz's main tropes throughout her narratives in this study concerns her unwillingness to dress in conformity with the university's expectations.

* * *

IZ: I graduated in summer (1993) and I haven't found a teaching job. But lately I've been thinking, maybe I should apply for more things at OSU, try to move up. But, I've worked at OSU for almost eight years, and I tell you the truth, I don't like administration. I still, you know, have a chip on my shoulder about being from the South end, about being an outsider; I still kind of see myself, in a way, as that. When I go to meetings and hear the president waffle and hear the provost waffle, I'm thinking, "I don't want to do this. I don't want to b.s. people." You know, I think if I move up, I'm going to have to dress. And I'm NOT. I don't want to do that. They can't PAY me enough here to make me want to dress and act and act.

* * *
Joan Radner and Susan Lanser have argued that, as members of a marginalized and silenced group, women sometimes "code" their cultural productions with subtle messages which, when decoded, provide "subversive" commentaries about their positionality. I believe that some of the self-marginalization categories explored here could be considered "coding" strategies that embody the aspect of deniability: "implicit kinds of coding . . . are precisely those acts whose very codedness is arguable" (1993:6). When subversiveness exists in the workplace, deniability usually goes hand in hand.

Some will view the category of personal style as spurious in that there is no University dress code; it could also be suggested that Civil Service employees may not have the financial resources to dress professionally. But these facts support the "deniability" dimension of the women's sartorial coding, for it is precisely the absence of an enforced dress policy and a lack of disposable income that creates the opportunity for subversiveness. Nevertheless, despite tight finances, it seems to me that even lower-middle class women usually find a way to exhibit their values and personality via clothing. So ambiguities about intentionality must be considered when assessing a staff member's clothing style: as Fred Davis has noted, "The sartorial dialectic of status assumes many voices, each somewhat differently toned from the other but all seeking, however unwittingly, to register a fitting representation of self, be it by overplaying status signals, underplaying them, or mixing them in such a fashion as to intrigue or confound one's company" (1992:63).
The "uniform" of Ohio State female staff members is, generally speaking, conventional office wear: dresses, or skirt or trousers and blouse, jacket, or sweater combinations; dressy hosiery; and non-athletic, non-beach, dress or semi-dress shoes. I have observed staff members for a number of years and in my experience, female staff most often conform to the fashion trends that operate silently but powerfully by omnipresent example. In "Lexicon Rhetoricae," Kenneth Burke cautions that dominant discursive formations retain their power by rendering "natural" what is merely conventional; conventional forms are "'natural' only as a path worn across a field is natural . . . . In using the path we are obeying the authority of a prior form" (1931:142). Like discourse, clothing and all other varieties of material culture are symbolic texts, and marginal identities may conceivably be constructed by clothing choices. Emily, Jill, and Carrie dress according to the convention; and although Hester wears athletic shoes, her clothing is generally conservative, simple, and does not call attention to itself. But Ruth, Ariel, Meg, and Iz choose personal styles that seem to differentiate them from most of the other staff members: they wear sweatsuits, tunics and leggings, jeans and suspenders, running shoes and work boots, slogan buttons and nose rings. It may be true that "icons like lipstick, hose, earrings, business suits, neckties and so on. . . announce primary statuses of the individual and predict the types of engagement that might be encountered when so attired," (Finkelstein 1991:127-28); but by their atypical office attire, several of the women in this study seem to be proclaiming, "We are otherwise engaged." By breaking
stereotype, it appears that the women are rejecting a system of control that the majority of female university staff members perhaps unknowingly reinforce.

The kinds of artifacts that one chooses to display in the workplace can be another avenue for self-expression. Jones opines that one of the most overlooked realms for studying expressive objects is in the workplace, where "most of us on an almost daily basis spend at least half our waking moments" (1987:181); my field research indicates that most of the women feel free to exhibit a variety of memorabilia in their offices. Artifacts that I consider to be relatively non-political—such as family photos and flower arrangements—are frequently found in offices. The intentionality behind the display of other items, like ceramic busts of Beethoven, is less clearcut. And utterly unembellished workspaces such as Emily's cannot strictly be said to indicate marginality, although in Emily's case I think it does. However, I do believe that the presence of politically symbolic artifacts in an office setting indicates a maverick inhabitant. As Foster has stressed, "symbols do not come with meanings in tow; meaning is actively attributed to symbolic forms on particular occasions under particular political and historical circumstances" (1990:123).

Hence, when Ariel, Iz, and Ruth all showcase politically-driven slogans and cards--and leather whips!--in their shared work areas, the women could be hinting at their irritation over the lack of privacy, but I think it just as likely that they are celebrating their iconoclasm with these expressive forms. Even Hester's benign greeting card ("MOM WANTED! Long Hours, Low Pay. . .") takes on symbolic importance in its prominent position in her office: Hester is announcing to her co-
workers that she has more important roles in her life. Similarly, Carrie’s side-by-side placards ("Sometimes the dragon wins" and "I could be happy with very little; I just choose not to") ironically demonstrate her personal tensions: she wants life’s rewards but concedes that the bureaucratic "dragon" has the power to deny and exclude and stymie.

**Performance Style.**

Performer status confers instant marginality. The competent performer can be likened to any other talented and productive artist, the power of her verbal art setting her apart from the rest of society. Richard Bauman stresses that gifted performers can be "admired for their artistic skill and power and for the enhancement of experience they provide, feared because of the potential they represent for subverting and transforming the status quo" (1977:45). Incompetent performers are also marginalized, negatively, by their incompetence. But skillful language use, excellent timing, pithy quips, effective dramatizations, and precisely performed paralinguistic and metalinguistic devices set a mood, emphasize, teach, and persuade. And when used in typically staid settings, such strategies can both entertain and create cohorts, underscoring bonds that were previously not fully recognized by either the performer or the insider-researcher. The women who exhibit performance in their entry tales demonstrate uncanny competence. This kind of "marginality" is obviously not a pejorative condition but an exclusive state of being. Thus, "performance" as a guide to the entry tales is better studied as a broad category with its own sub-categories.
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<tr>
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<th>Meg</th>
<th>Hester</th>
<th>Carrie</th>
<th>Iz</th>
<th>Ariel</th>
<th>Jill</th>
<th>Ruth</th>
<th>Emily</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FORM:</strong></td>
<td>Chronological, some description</td>
<td>Chronological, some description; offers practical reason.</td>
<td>Brief; offers practical reason only.</td>
<td>Rambles yet basically chronological.</td>
<td>Succinct; linear; offers practical reason.</td>
<td>Traditional ending formula.</td>
<td>Rambles, basically chronological; offers practical reason.</td>
<td>Chronological, descriptive.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>COLLABORATION</strong> with me; Meta-narration</td>
<td>Parenthetical asides; self-reflexivity</td>
<td>Corrective response to my question.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>&quot;You know,&quot; &quot;believe it or not,&quot; &quot;ok&quot;: call attention away from story and TO narration</td>
<td>&quot;I'm trying to think.&quot; Uses strategy that takes us back in time from idealistic past to the present.</td>
<td>Accepts my clarifying questions and remarks.</td>
<td>Accepts my clarifying questions and remarks.</td>
<td>Accepts my clarifying questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KEYS to PERFORMANCE</strong></td>
<td>Laughter; tonal emphasis; ironic punchline in a proverbial format, for emphasis, evaluation.</td>
<td>Few to none; no chronology simple statement.</td>
<td>Laughter; tonal emphasis; vulgar and irreverent constructs for effect, recurrent theme, evaluation.</td>
<td>Laughter; tonal emphasis; vulgar, self-reflexive, recurrent theme, evaluation.</td>
<td>Laughter; repetition; tonal emphasis; quotation, evaluation.</td>
<td>Laughter; repetition; tonal emphasis; word play; quoting, evaluation; vulgarisms for effect.</td>
<td>Reiteration, tonal emphasis; recurring theme, evaluation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Performance in the Entry Tales
Meg’s entry tale bespeaks her performance abilities, which are richly manifested in later narratives. That she has had training in folklore theory is a significant contextual factor; Meg is acutely aware of her rhetorical strategies and highly conscious of the effect of her stories upon her listeners. Hester, who like Meg has undertaken graduate level coursework in folklore theory, displays relatively little of it in her narratives; she is a serious and straightforward participant. Nevertheless, in later chapters she does dramatize specific events using performance keys. Carrie is also a to-the-point conversationalist who rarely uses performance techniques; but also like Hester, she adopts performance mode when relating emotionally-charged incidents. Ariel and Emily are intuitively accomplished performers; Jill likewise displays competence in narrative strategies; and Ruth is the most flamboyant of all the women in her performance techniques. None of the four has previously taken a folklore course. Thus, while a storyteller’s formal training in folklore theory cannot be overlooked as a contextual factor, it seems that a personal inclination toward dramatic representation stands as a precondition for both frequency and quality of performances.

Another clue to performance behavior lies in the interview setting. I mentioned earlier that Ariel had stressed that I should avoid field research in her office while her boss was in; by conforming to her request, I was able to observe much lively banter that might not have taken place otherwise (of course, I also missed the chair’s presumably stifling effect on the office staff). But as already mentioned, I had taken note of the chair’s influence on Ariel when conducting an initial interview:
when the chair arrived, Ariel physically contracted and began to whisper. By the same token, Emily was fearful of speaking to me in her office at any time. In Babcock's view, Ariel's metanarrative whispers comprise "references to the performance setting which intrude upon the narration itself" (1977:63); Emily's refusal to speak to me "in context" is also a powerful statement. Emily and Ariel curb themselves in response to some perceived threat to their well-being in the office environment, a self-preservation strategy that suggests their feelings of powerlessness within the institution. Richard Harvey Brown comments, "If language is the principal medium of thought for a society--is forms of consciousness exteriorized--it follows that repressive restrictions on the use of language, what Habermas calls distortions of communication, are of their nature ideological" (1987:20). In a real sense, then, the university's ideological commitments are made explicit by Ariel's and Emily's whispers and silence.

The collaborative dimension in the entry tales is a harbinger of things to come in later narratives. One aspect of the ongoing collaboration not readily apparent on the "Performance" chart, but a factor that has encouraged mutual soul searching and narrative sharing, is my insiderness as a Civil Service employee. Throughout the fieldwork, I spontaneously supply answers to participants' metanarrative statements and questions; two examples are my interjecting information about "seasonal" employees during my interview with Ruth and telling Jill that the proper term for a promotion at Ohio State is an "upgrade." On occasion I complete the participants' unfinished sentences and am then usually met with a "Right," "Yeah," or "Exactly!"
Such back-channel collaboration (in Erving Goffman's words) demonstrates "cohort creation" in the making, and brings to mind Bakhtin's argument that discourse is intersubjective, residing "on the borderline between oneself and the other" (1981:293).

Another facet of reciprocal ethnography, to use Elaine Lawless' term, can be observed by Emily offering addenda to her original narratives and biographical sketch, which I subsequently incorporated. These are stories and assessments that she had not articulated during our interviews but on later recollection typed up at home and then asked me to include. Emily's performance style, and the content of both her entry tale and the addenda, set the stage for her role as victim, a theme that emerges in great detail in the following chapters. As Goffman has stressed, talking and writing allows Emily to revisit excruciating experiences in order to meaningfully organize them (1974:503-4). Although John Robinson has claimed that accounts of personal victimization are untellable and cause "shame, anger, often guilt in the victim, and are regarded as secrets rather than as stories to tell" (1981:63), Emily seems to make sense of her current situation by emphasizing the very tortures she has endured, directly and physically at the hands of her parents, and indirectly and more subtly by the Ohio State University work hierarchy.

Although performance is usually studied as it occurs within conversation, it popped up in one conspicuous case during my field research. Meg, Carrie, Iz, Jill, and Emily exhibited a spectrum of performance behaviors in their entry tales, but none of them adopted performance mode during field research: they avoided
interaction with me and carried on as usual; their work requires attentiveness to
detail and so hinders chattiness. Iz and Ariel were sporadically animated in their
interactions with co-workers during my visits, but no true performances occurred.
Ruth, however, proved to be the ultimate performer, both in conversation with me
and later on, during my field research. Now, Katharine Young has pointed out that
"The estrangement of text from context and teller from hearer . . . is not an option"
(1989:163) in either general, mundane conversation or the performance of personal
experience narratives; in any personal interaction, the dynamic between teller/hearer
and context/text is palpable. After conducting fieldwork and reflecting on what I
observed, I believe that the term "personal interaction" should not be restricted to
verbal communication: fieldwork is also "personal interaction" and also dependent on
the researcher/researched dynamic by which it is contextualized. Rosalie Wax is
correct to stress that "good fieldwork is not something performed by an isolated
intellectual or researcher but something created by all of the people in the social
situation being studied" (1971:363).

Hence, Ruth's application of "self-talk," to use Goffman's term, is an
indication of her highly developed self-reflexivity; she expanded on the unspoken
rules of field research (i.e., I was there to observe but not to interact with her),
maximizing one forum in which "self-talk" could be considered acceptable owing to
the "don't interact with me/just carry on as usual" rule of the field (Goffman
1981:81). When Ruth whistled "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" during my field
research in her office, she was likewise cognizant of the presence of a (sympathetic)
audience and thus most certainly aware of the messages embedded in her whistling: whistling ironically comments on "office decorum"; the farcical tune is one every preschooler knows; adding to the incongruity, it's the month of May. The effect is a nonchalant, ironic non-verbal performance that allows Ruth to demonstrate how she views her role and her work. Truth be told, Ruth has undertaken what is often considered to be vexing, straining, repetitive work in a singularly lustreless environment. Nevertheless, shouldering a low-level position characteristic of "women's work" in male-dominated classical capitalism, she whistles cheerfully and whimsically lapses into vernacular Black English with a co-worker on the telephone, strategies that bring to mind Roger Abrahams' view that "conversational genres" such as slang, jargon, colloquialisms, and, in Ruth's case, Black English, can solidify group membership (1976:201).

Ruth is encompassed by a superordinate authority, yet she symbolically rejects her assimilation by the dominant culture with her comic use of Black English, which I see as a metaphor for her own marginality. Mohadev Apte has noted, "the distinctions emphasized in Negro jokes are said to be social rather than ethnic" (1985:125); in portraying herself as a member of a pariah group, Ruth is pointing up the social strata that characterize Ohio State's work hierarchy, symbolically widening the gulf between herself and the higher-ups who use standard English as well as a specialized techno-jargon. When she adopts Black English, Ruth is making an analogy between African Americans and Civil Service workers, and by extension calling up all the gross generalizations that pertain to both groups. I would bet my
life that Ruth—a self-proclaimed "marginal" woman, partnered lesbian, and Civil Service worker—is aware of the error of gross generalizations; further, Ruth intuitively knew that her colleague and I would both recognize the analogy and reject the generalizations in our processing of her performance. I also believe that Ruth was instinctively aware that I would react to her performances with amusement, approval, and admiration for her ability to so lightly yet skillfully criticize the hierarchy that dictates the nature of her motions eight hours a day.

By means of her performances, Ruth is crafting a playful persona whose buffoonery within the power structure ultimately casts that power structure in a ludicrous light and hence creates the climate for change: "playfulness is the deliberate, temporary relaxation of rules in order to explore the possibilities of alternative rules. When we are playful, we challenge the necessity of consistency" (March 1976:77). Ruth's performances temporarily displace the dualism by which the hierarchy functions: in the course of her theatrical "interactions" with her environment during my field research, Ruth succeeds in creating patterns of meaning that have little relationship to the formal hierarchy, thus dislocating our accepted modes of perception. Exhilarated by the power and range of her verbal art, Ruth temporarily transcends her status as "a cog in the wheel."

Based on the data collected for this chapter, Ruth's performances may be the flashiest and thus most politicized as they occur within the work sphere. But the subversion of power is a subtle undercurrent in the everyday micropractices of all the women in this study, revealed by their evaluative words, irreverent attitudes,
performance strategies, and/or their visible badges of nonconformity such as placards and "non-professional" clothes. As we will see in later chapters, the messages embedded in the bio sketches, the entry tales, and the field research are reflective of the women's narratives as a whole. Indeed, while the next chapter explores the participants' views of "status" in the workplace, I noted a number of status-defined incidents while conducting fieldwork along with many displays of comradery and equitable treatment. For example, in Emily's office, a faculty member lightheartedly discusses with Emily's busy co-worker the details of his chess games and his emotional state and then announces his plan to go swimming in the middle of the work day. Then, the co-worker, who shares Emily's rank but who has had a longer tenure at the university, subsequently displays her own relative status by chastising Emily for not attending to the work basket tasks in a timely fashion.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. I would be remiss to neglect mentioning, even briefly, Bronislaw Malinowski’s profound influence on scholarly concerns with context in this highly context-dependent project. He noted back in 1923: "the meaning of the expression . . . is determined only by taking it in the context of the whole utterance. This latter again, becomes only intelligible when it is placed within its context of situation, if I may be allowed to coin an expression which indicates on the one hand that the conception of context has to be broadened and on the other that the situation in which words are uttered can never be passed over as irrelevant to the linguistic expression. We see how the conception of context must be substantially widened, if it is to furnish us with its full utility. In fact it must burst the bonds of mere linguistics and be carried over into the analysis of the general conditions under which a language is spoken." (The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages, in The Meaning of Meaning, C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, Editors, page 306). Malinowski’s ideas have paved the way for Spradley and other mid- and late-twentieth century ethnographers (not to mention folklorists and sociolinguists).

2. Sociologist David Harvey sees different conceptions of "situatedness"—some one-sided and "vulgar," residing "almost entirely on the relevance of individual biographies: I see, interpret, represent and understand the world in the way I do because of the particularities of my life history." Other interpretations of situatedness, ostensibly more profound in their dialecticism, hinge on "Hegel’s . . . master and slave and Marx’s labor and capital dialectic which promotes a subversive science of the proletariat" (1993:57). I hope the cultural relativist, essentialist thrust of the first kind of "situatedness," which I think does surface in this project, is offset by my folklore training, which imparts a degree of "otherness."

3. The self-introduction in earlier chapters might seem an outer shell of an "embedded" text. Barbara Babcock (1977) explains that embedded texts consist of an overarching story (like Scheherezade’s) that simultaneously tells a tale and provides a coherent thematic framework for the stories that occur within it (such as Sinbad’s, Ali Baba’s, and Aladdin’s). Yet I introduced this study with my own narrative for explanatory purposes. I liken all the texts in this study, mine included, to beads in a necklace: individually worthy but more so as parts of a larger whole, each lending contrast, relationship, and relevance to all of the others.

4. Feminist theorists have questioned the use of narrative for women’s oppositional writing, yet a linear narrative seems ubiquitous and unconsciously used. The Personal Narratives Group comments: "Notwithstanding the critique and revision of this scenario by numerous theorists (e.g., Chodorow 1978, de Lauretis 1984, Kaplan 1983, Mulvey 1975, Silverman 1983), this Freudian notion of women’s ‘necessary’ self-objectification is certainly inscribed in the canons of narrative, and in the processes of comprehending narrative, as well. The question, then, remains
whether and under what terms women can use language or images if the overarching mode of signification, as a form and process of patriarchal narrative, is grounded in female objectification" (1989:184).

5. Interviews and Fieldnote Sessions took place as follows:


6. For views about how clothing and dress codes influence identity formation, see also Rubinstein (1995); Smith and Peiss (1989); Gaines and Herzog (1990); Lennon and Burns (1993); Lauer and Lauer (1981); and Barnes and Eicher (1992).

7. Gabriele R. Pirozzi, Employee Relations Specialist in the University's Office of Human Resources, states that there is no university dress code; issues concerning work attire are handled within employees' work units.

8. Joanne Finkelstein notes how clothing helps to regulate social norms: "most males wear business suits with a shirt and tie, most females wear dresses or skirts with stockings and heeled shoes. . . . [Some] occupations are so thoroughly gendered that we expect a secretary, sales assistant and office worker to be female and to be clad in a dress." Finkelstein goes on to point out that, while people accept certain deviations in dress code (for example, professors who dress uncharacteristically "up" or "down"), such "anomalous instances in clothing styles more often reinforce the axiom that we use appearance to reflect character because in instances where we are mistaken or misled we are forced to see the ubiquity of the assumption that character can be fashioned by appearance." (The Fashioned Self, 1991:128).

9. The media's proclivity to emphasize the verbal blunders of public figures is a case in point. Such personalities are subsequently defined by the nature of their faux pas. Vice President Dan Quayle's spelling bee "performance" ["P-O-T-A-T-O-E"] and advice columnist Ann Landers' reference to the Pope as a "Polack" come to mind: Quayle's name becomes synonymous with scholastic ineptitude and Landers' advice is henceforth rendered specious by her bout with "foot in mouth" disease.

10. Black English has been the subject of a variety of folkloristic and anthropological studies. See a number of Roger Abrahams' works, including Talking Black (1976), as well as works by Apte (1985), Percelay (1994), Gates (1988), and Butters (1989) for insightful discussions on this topic.
CHAPTER 4

PERCEPTIONS OF STATUS

_I was told that the Privileged and the People
formed two nations._

Benjamin Disraeli

Jay Mechling, calling to mind the notorious false dichotomies of "public versus private" and of "local culture versus culture as a whole," suggests that folk groups within universities mirror society, and that the ivory tower is subject to the same gender, ethnic, political, and socioeconomic dilemmas that plague the larger community.1 Mechling opines: "it may be useful to treat universities as laboratories for the study of many of the forces, values, and conflicts that characterize the civilization" (1989:347). From my vantage points of both staff member and graduate student, I am convinced of the wisdom of Mechling’s recommendation; and indeed, reports of both "Conflict" and manifestations of "Status" within the university comprise significant portions of the participants’ narratives. I have distinguished the closely interrelated themes of conflict and status by two criteria. First, the narratives in the next chapter, which is called "Conflict and Horror Stories," are most often just that: stories or anecdotes with beginning and ending formulae; while "status" reports may be in story form (Jill’s and Emily’s accounts are cases in point), they tend to be more loosely constructed assessments embedded within the larger narratives. Also,
stories about conflict are ultimately stories about injustice. While both conflict and status narratives are rooted in contests over individual or group identity, and although status-governed powerplays invariably produce some degree of internal conflict for the participants, status displays do not often erupt into verbal confrontations and/or precipitate momentous life changes, as conflict situations may.

The status reports in the following pages have not directly provoked major disruptions in the work lives or personal lives of the women in this study, but nevertheless have seemed to spawn verbal art of surprising complexity and vehemence. I will scrutinize the women's perceptions—and especially the verbal art that accompanies those perceptions—of how the institution's hierarchy with its built-in varieties of status is enacted in the workplace. To the extent that art, all motivation, for that matter, is the result of some underlying discontent, the participants' creation and use of rich specimens of verbal art often seem directly related to the reminders, both subtle and overt, of their position in the workplace hierarchy. The women's perceptions indicate that status-driven interactions are at once pervasive, consistent, and unavoidable; further, their aesthetic responses to the powerplays are frequently designed to reverse the perceived power imbalance. Barbara Babcock calls for folklore scholarship to "examine the dialectic of creativeness and constraints, the sociocultural consequences of as well as conditions for creativity, and the politics as well as the poetics of innovation" (1993:225). This study focuses on the circularity inherent in Babcock's proposition, for while the participants' verbal art stems from political discontent, their aesthetic expressions simultaneously create a new political
milieu. In thus scrutinizing the participants' folklore, we can see both "what is" and "what could be," which is the realm of critical ethnography (Thomas 1993).

Jim Thomas points out that there is a widespread misconception about how "subjectivity" and "objectivity" are defined in critical ethnographic research:

Critics confuse reports on subjective phenomena with the objective reporting of those phenomena. Subjective ethnographic data do not mean "whatever the researcher thinks"; they mean objectively reporting on the subjectivity of our subjects. Objectivity, in this sense, does not mean the absence of bias or a researcher's perspective. (1993:16-17, emphasis mine)

The specific roles I play in the university have influenced both my experiences within it and the ways I have processed those experiences; every aspect of this study has been driven by my admittedly biased interests. Whether a researcher can objectively treat the subjectivities of her research interests seems doubtful, and I am even more skeptical that such an endeavor is as straightforward a task as Jim Thomas suggests. It is my sense of oneness with the women in my focus group that has produced this uneasiness over the assumptions about the viability of "objectivity" or "objective reporting." Margaret Mills stresses that the folklorist needs to understand the dynamic between self and other; she points out that "We all must find ways to be simultaneously subjects and objects of gaze" (1993:181). I am initiator, collector, and interpreter, yet have undertaken this project with a high degree of self-reflexivity; my "otherness" in comparison with the group I am studying is perhaps far less measurable than the "otherness" folklorists generally experience in the field. As stated, I am a member of the cohort in a variety of significant ways: my Civil
Service position in the university, my advanced degree, my race, gender, and age group, and my socioeconomic status, all confer insiderness. Hence, I am gazing at my own subjective and material positions as well as those of the participants; and of course they are in turn gazing at me, further complicating the matter.

In her essay on subjectivities in the workplace, Nina Gregg has stated:

the concept of subjectivity assumes that an individual does not possess an essential, coherent self, but rather that individual subjectivity is situationally and temporally specific, constructed and reconstituted continuously through a variety of signifying practices. Subjective experience is understood, then, as both the sites where individuals "inhabit" numerous discursive positions simultaneously (O'Sullivan et al. 1983:74), and places in which established (everyday) discourses—those of class, race, gender, age, and sexuality, for example—give meaning to subjective experience by suggesting appropriate subject positions from which to make sense of one's life. (1993:177)

Experiences situated against the backdrop of the university's hierarchy reveal a variety of subjectivities conferred by class and gender; themes of anger, resistance, and autonomy emerge. Emerging at a site of contestation, the narratives and the verbal art embedded within them embody discursive strategies that both create and define identity.

I begin with Meg and Hester, who have the longest tenure as staff members among the women. Their responses to my question, "Have you experienced demonstrations of status by either colleagues or faculty?" are telling. Meg has not experienced status conflicts with other staff members, but alluded to the snobbery of some faculty:
MEG: . . . for the faculty, it depends--it’s a varied situation. You have faculty who are just regular folks, I don’t have a problem getting along with them at all, in any way. I’m just as much their colleagues as anybody else, and I feel respected by them, and I respect them in turn. There are some faculty--I don’t even know if I’d call them TRADITIONAL, but they’re HIERARCHICAL, and their sense of hierarchy is offended by that, especially if you put it into the context of the culture of the department that I work in. . . But you have, you have a situation where, where some of the, some of the more deeply-entrenched hierarchical types might be a bit--they might not know what the hell to do with me, but I’ve been around so long that they’ve had to deal with it one way or the other. So.

I think the worst situation was having a boss that pays lip service to a very liberal stance, but when push came to shove, would--would actually take it out on other staff and work-study students whenever I was gone to class. So that’s an indirect problem.

In the first paragraph, Meg begins with an even-handed assessment, indicating a general atmosphere of equality in her work experiences. She becomes more specific, implying that the clear-cut status between staff and some faculty is blurred when the staff member is "different," perhaps indirectly commenting on her level of education, her self-assertiveness, or a combination of those aspects; she goes on to stress her longevity, thus assigning to herself a particular kind of status that one gains with seniority. In the second paragraph, Meg expresses the notion that faculty status may be more dramatically manifested toward staff members of lower ranking.

Like Meg, Hester emphasizes her long-term employment with the university and also stresses her educational attainments, constructing a self that presumably does not correspond to some people’s expectations for the category of "staff".
HESTER: Well, a lot of faculty sort of ignore the fact that I'm highly educated, or that I'm not what they consider the norm for the staff. They just don't deal with it at all. They treat me at the lowest level they can in terms of what they see as staff.

S: Are they pretending or don't they comprehend? Is it an effort to ignore?

HESTER: I--I don't think they have to make an effort, they're so trained in thinking of a staff person as a staff person, that they really, really don't want to know. I don't even know if it's a conscious thing for some people. Other people who are a little bit more aware--and know the struggles and stuff that I've had, and even have helped me along--, they still have a problem; even though they've tried to be supportive, it's like you can tell sometimes that they're very torn, they don't exactly know how to relate to me in certain situations, that--that don't quite fall into work--; it's like, am I almost an equal? Not only for me, at almost a Ph.-- done with a Ph.D., but I'm forty years old, too. So, I mean there's an age thing there, too. So that, for a lot of faculty, it's like, not only am I maybe their peer in terms of age, but I might be older than they are. So, there's a lot of factors that enter into it.

* * *

As does Meg, Hester creates a positive self by juxtaposing it alongside flawed faculty members. Yet Hester's perception of faculty status is more negatively constructed than Meg's. Some faculty simply aren't aware (Hester's double use of "really" implies an almost concerted effort by some faculty to avoid connecting with staff members); and Hester becomes more specific when she says that other faculty have known about her struggles and have helped her but are nevertheless subsequently "very torn" and unsure of how to interact with Hester in "certain situations." The initial attributes of comprehending Hester's struggles and even helping her become barbs: Hester implies that despite their awareness, these faculty are guilty of
subsequently excluding her. Hester also points out that faculty, like any other group, are prone to cultural indoctrination ("they’re so trained in thinking of a staff person as a staff person"); she depicts those faculty as blind to their double standards. Meanwhile, Hester’s portrayal of herself via her own three-pronged status claim—she has longevity with the university, she is the age of the offending faculty members or perhaps older, and she has achieved nearly their level of education—creates a paradoxical state in which bleeding boundaries seem to give rise to relational and thus behavioral and interactional quandaries.

Carrie speaks of a faculty member in her department with whom she could not work were he ever chosen as department chair.

* * *

CARRIE: there are certainly people I know, that if they become chair? like when we have a chair search, I knew this person would become chair? I would be out the door—VOLUNTARILY! I mean, I would be gone the moment I could. I mean, he was one of those who kind of, "You’re invisible except when we need you" type, and also, you’re the person they blame—ANYTHING that goes wrong, they’re going to turn it around so that it’s your fault— I mean, PUBLICLY make it your fault. I mean, that was the feeling I had about this person. He was a user. I guess being a user is about as negative a word as I can come up with. Certainly, YOU know—ASSHOLE.

* * *

Despite years in the system and the need for job security, Carrie stresses her potential agency here in insisting that she would not tolerate being supervised by the offending faculty member. A variety of "loaded" words stud the brief passage: for example, Carrie’s repetitious use of "certainly" and "blame, fault, and fault" are negatively evaluative. Under the supervision of the man in question, Carrie would
either be "invisible" or a workhorse/ scapegoat, the latter indicated in the stressing of the word "PUBLICLY," which also alludes to unprofessionalism: everybody knows that supervisors should not broadcast employees' shortcomings. The coda, which begins with the first "user," proceeds to the second "user," and is capped off with "ASSHOLE," reiterates Carrie's abstract, which is located in her first sentence. Carrie models herself in opposition to potential exploitation in this excerpt; her power lies in both her determination to VOLUNTARILY walk away and also in her ability to judge and name in insulting terms he who would insult.

One's degree-granting institution may be a factor in the expression of status within the university. During the course of Meg's interview, I asked whether an Ohio State University degree is perceived as less valuable than a degree taken elsewhere.

* * *

S: Do you have any sense that the professors in your department, or the professors you've studied with, look on an OSU degree as less valuable as the one from the institution conferring their own degree?

MEG: . . . not so much from the teachers, because I've chosen my teachers pretty carefully to this point, but on the part of some of the faculty, you have the idea that, it's like, especially if they come from an Ivy League school: [EXAGGERATED, LOUD, POMPOUS VOICE]: "Well, I got my degree from HAAARVARD, or YAAAALAE, or [DRAMATICALLY CLEARS THROAT] or PRINCETON," you know--they kind of look down on the very fact that they're here--it's kind of an inferiority complex, in a weird sort of way. YOU know, it's kind of like, "if I'm really as good as I should be, then I probably should be teaching at Princeton or Yale or Harvard but I'm not. Therefore, I'm at this--backwater school."

* * *
The fictive quality of Meg's "professorial" performance in the segment above is pronounced: the remark is obviously a composite of similar remarks that most certainly would have been far more subtle in actual conversation. Along with her "concentrated" content, Meg applies a specific texture—exaggerated tonal quality and ludicrously elongated vowel sounds—to backhandedly evaluate faculty members who point up their Ivy League "difference" within the workplace. Meg then cleverly provides a putdown with her extrapolated coda that resides in the Ivy Leaguers' supposed inferiority complex at working at a "backwater school": by means of the collective yet first person "backwater school" remark, Meg points to the ingratitude of the Ivy Leaguers toward their employing institution and also begs the question "Is OSU really a backwater school?"

A faculty member or supervisor sometimes requests a staff member to perform a task that is not technically part of the staff member's job description—arguably, a phenomenon that could be the result of that supervisor or faculty member's idea of his/her own status in the institution. Hence, "Taking Advantage" becomes a sub-category of this chapter about status.

* * *

MEG: One of my old bosses—several bosses ago, several chairs ago—would have me do a lot of his dictation, and a lot of them were, PERSONAL—what I felt were personal letters. I mean, they were about his personal projects, or his personal stuff, and one was even to "Dear Uncle Herbert, blah-blah-blah-blah-blah."

I was the only secretary in the department at the time, and I said, "You know Chet, my job would be a helluva lot easier if I weren't doing all this massive personal dictation of yours." I said, "I've got enough shit to do around here without doing this too." And
he got really ticked off and said [DEEP, POMPOUS VOICE]: "Well, anything that I have you do is for the good of the department! and blah-blah-blah-blah-BLAH." Which of course is just absolute bullshit.

* * *

Meg's irritation emerges by her use of the evaluative "a lot, a lot," and particularly the five references to "personal" in the brief passage: the argument for the inseparability of politics and culture and of public and private spheres is ironically underscored here with Meg's reference to the boss's expectations that his "personal" objectives be fulfilled in the "public" domain via the work of his subordinate. Meg remedies the situation in a number of ways. First, addressing one's discursive partner by name is always an indication of social equity, and in this passage, it is especially significant that Meg depicts herself as calling her superior by his given name, "Chet," instead of "Professor So-and-So." Meg then unhesitatingly incorporates two vulgarisms in her complaint, a discursive strategy that further establishes her relational power. This is true of both the narrated and storytelling events: Meg demonstrates her power then as well as establishing her attitude toward similar situations now. Norman Fairclough has noted a number of factors that disrupt the societal orders of discourse, one such element being

an apparent democratization of discourse which involves the reduction of overt markets of power asymmetry between people of unequal institutional power—teachers and pupils, managers and workers, parents and children, doctors and patients . . . . These social and discursive tendencies are established through struggle, and they are furthermore established with only a limited stability, with the prospect that their own heterogenous elements will be experienced as contradictory and lead to further struggle and change. (1992:98) (my emphasis)
The "struggle" and "limited stability" of which Fairclough speaks are tangible in Meg's excerpt: for, despite her assertiveness and familiarity, or perhaps because of it, "Chet" refuses to acknowledge Meg's complaint but is depicted as quoting the proverbial "party line," full of emotion but lacking in substance.

I believe that the two instances of "blah-blah-blah" in the excerpt do not serve as fillers but rather bolster the semantic coherence of the passage in that they suggest the superfluous nature of both "Chet's" letter and his subsequent hypocritical rejoinder. Both Meg's and my "appropriate" response to her assessment of her workplace subjectivity was the exasperated sort of laughter that one indulges in when self-reflexively reliving difficult, even desperate situations--the comic relief stems in part from the acknowledgement that the offending incident is in the past; the humor also comes from Meg's breach of protocol in her blunt retort to her supervisor's exhibition of status. Meg's editorial comment at the end of the text corrects "Chet's" untruthful remark about "the good of the department"; this concluding statement ("which of course is just absolute bullshit") functions as a coda for her narrative performance. Thus, the identity and value of Meg's storyworld self are reflected in the personal qualities reiterated in the final sentence--Meg the narrator projects herself as being as resilient and forthright as the storyworld Meg.

Faculty and supervisors who ignore a staff member in her own office while carrying on conversations with others also represent a manifestation of status:
S: Do faculty ever speak about private matters in your presence?

HESTER: . . . that's happened several times and I was basically considered to be intrusive because I just would then join in the conversation. It's like right in front of my desk. It's like I almost don't exist or anything. But I just assume that if they're there doing this in front of me, then I'm part of the conversation. Which obviously, they didn't consider. But I'm doing this on purpose, you know—and then, obviously, this is my problem, not their problem.

* * *

Hester is self-conscious of her "invisible" position and keenly aware of faculty members' expectations; she also perceives faculty members as blaming her for her decision to interact with them. Meg likewise alludes to having had such experiences; but when asked whether faculty converse in her presence without including her, Meg's response suggests her strongly defined sense of self:

* * *

MEG: Not really. If I'm there, I'm part of the conversation!

* * *

Thus, while the substance of Meg's and Hester's experiences of "workspace intrusions" is identical, their evaluations of their identities within such status-marked situations are different. Meg stresses the primacy of the self and does not register either annoyance or self-consciousness; Hester affords the faculty members greater power, portraying herself as unable to dissuade their activity yet reluctant to join their conversation.
Ariel indicates the existence of many levels of status in her department. First, she sees it enacted by the department chair, who exhibits a less-than-encouraging attitude about Ariel’s academic endeavors, despite the fact that Ariel typically tackles her studies in her office only after working hours.

* * *

ARIEL: I have the feeling the chair doesn’t like it.

S: You mean, AFTER work?

ARIEL: Yeah, I mean, she’s never SAID anything, but she’s always [DEMANDING AND SUSPICIOUS]: "Well what are YOU doing here?" But it’s not like [SYMPATHETICALLY], "Why aren’t you HOME?" I mean, I just get a funny feeling about it. I don’t have the computer equipment at home to do it, I’m not hooked up. . .But I’m guilty about everything I do, nothing seems to be good enough.

* * *

Like the "guilt" to which Hester refers, the meta-remark at the end of Ariel’s excerpt is a highly evaluative, self-derogatory "contextualizing state clause" (Polanyi 1989) that serves to evoke pathos and elicit sympathy. Ariel concomitantly bespeaks her supervisor’s absence of altruism and the power relations the supervisor chooses to enact by her indirect questioning of Ariel. Both Hester and Ariel create the sense that they work in suspicious and disapproving environments; the most salient quality of their depictions is that of unfairness: it is unfair of her bosses to blame Hester for joining in conversations held in front of her desk; it is unfair for Ariel’s supervisor to monitor her after working hours and to ostensibly withhold approval for Ariel’s work, as her concluding remark "nothing seems to be good enough" suggests.
The narratives demonstrate that powerplays often emerge at the department level—between the women and their supervisors (faculty and non-faculty) and their co-workers. But displays of status also arise as a result of the inner-workings of the larger university system, as the following two narratives reveal. First, Carrie voices her animosity at not receiving a long-awaited promotion:

* * *

CARRIE: I can either put up or shut up over the Linguistics job or can continue to—be ANGRY and talk to Lucy Tan about how many people are getting promoted from Civil Service. I just think it's pretty TELLING that two of us that have the experience in the job, you know, have been DOING it, we have PLENTY of history at OSU, we have the backing of our COLLEGE. We go OVER there, SHOW 'em what we can do; and then they take the two people that have no experience but have Ph.D.s, and bring them in for a second interview.

I mean, to me, they're DEGREE SNOBS. And it REALLY was frustrating to ME because not only do I have a bachelor's degree in English, but I also have a master's degree. So they don't need to be such Degree Snobs.

I would have given them some intellectual credit if they had chosen to interview one of—either Marnie or me, and one of the Ph.D.s. Then they would have been seriously looking at the alternatives of what two different types of people could give to them. They'd be looking at, what supposedly a Ph.D. person could do, and they'd be looking at what an administrative—a TRAINED administrative person could do.

So, it just said to me that they don't really WANT somebody who knows how to do it already, who HAS a proven track record; they're NOT interested in being responsible to the principles of—PROMOTING from within, and—so I have nothing against Christine PERSONALLY, but I just think—I mean, I've HEARD that—somebody, a friend of mine, said to me that the non-published reason that they wouldn't hire somebody like me or Marnie?—is that they have been very HAPPY being DUMB and not having the information and not being able to make their own decisions; and kind of hide it because of
their inefficiency. And so if they hire somebody who the COLLEGE knows can pull it all together, they can’t PLAY that game anymore.

[PAUSE] Interesting.

S: Very much so.

CARRIE: Interesting perspective, isn’t it? [TAG QUESTION]

S: Well, it’s a SCREWY perspective.

CARRIE: VERY screwy. Yeah, I, I found it really horrifying. I mean, if I find out she’s being paid more than I am? I mean, it would be CLEARLY nearly grounds for a lawsuit, in my estimation. I mean, I wouldn’t probably DO it, but—I—I don’t understand how they can bring somebody in from the outside, pay them more, they don’t know the job (—I mean, she was in a beginning "Excel" course over the break; you know, I’ve been using "Excel" for two-and-a-half - three years). It just doesn’t make much sense.

So they wonder why we’re angry all the time, why we carry around a lot of anger. I mean my boss tried to justify the fact that—I told him I was interviewing, he KNEW that I was interviewing and he thought I had a really good chance. And I said, "Well, you’ll be happy to know that I DON’T have a really good chance," I said, but, I—you know, I was very UPSET. And he was trying to wishy-washy, to find a reason to justify why they might want to look at a Ph.D. And I just told him, "I don’t want to hear it. There’s NO reason why they need to look at a Ph.D. for this job. It’s an administrative-clerical job, and it doesn’t require a Ph.D." And there are two people in the College that have the ability to do the JOB. And we are supposed to be promoting people, giving people an OPPORTUNITY, in this university.

* * *

Carrie constructs a circular story that begins and ends with references to lack of promotion opportunities in the university. After Labov, Charlotte Linde states that narratives are made up of four structured parts: the abstract summarizes or evaluates the narrative to come (Carrie’s first sentence serves as an abstract for the remainder of the narrative); the orientation clauses establish circumstances (Carrie skips over an
"orientation," the result of our having discussed the interview topic earlier); the narrative clauses provide the order of events and are characterized by simple past-tense verbs (Carrie's initial energy and eagerness for the job are conveyed by the first two narrative clauses: the phrases "We go OVER there, SHOW 'em what we can do" are followed by Carrie's subsequent rejection at the hands of the "Degree Snobs"); and the coda, which signals the end of the story, "may be a purely formal marker, like 'that was it' . . . . Or it may give the effects of the events narrated" (1993:69-71) (Carrie's coda, found in the final paragraph, does indeed provide "the effects" of her story).

Most of the remainder of the narrative is comprised of evaluative clauses; Polanyi (1989) terms these "Durative-Descriptive Clauses," which function to point up the salience of the event clauses. Linde calls the unordered parts of the narrative "evaluative material" which she argues are "socially, the most important part of the narrative" (1993:69-72). The key points of Carrie's evaluation can be described as follows: the metaphor, "Degree Snobs," effectively deprives the hiring team of the characteristics that they should demonstrate: thoughtfulness, sensitivity, discernment. Rather, the "Degree Snobs" are rendered faceless clones, a comic exaggeration of the university's academic value system. Carrie subsequently draws an ironic parallel between the "Degree Snobs" and their lack of "intellectual" acumen. They have the power to hire key staff members—in this case, what would have been for Carrie an entrée into the A & P sector, for which she has been grooming herself for some years. And yet the "Degree Snobs" have "been very HAPPY being DUMB."
Carrie's double use of the word "interesting" also begs interpretation. The word functions not as understatement but as irony. The tag question "isn't it?" after the second "interesting" is a metanarrative tactic that demonstrates Carrie's dissatisfaction with my initial response--"very much so" was an insufficient rejoinder to her first "interesting." But when I recalibrate my response to Carrie's second "interesting" and acknowledge the department's misguided hiring tactics with my comment, "Well, it's a SCREWY perspective," I validate Carrie's words and experience, which allows her to proceed with more commentary and evaluation. In Gender and Discourse, Deborah Tannen argues that linguistic strategies do not function the same way in every situation but are polysemous. She states:

one cannot locate the source of domination, or of any interpersonal intention or effect, in linguistic strategies such as interruption, volubility, silence, and topic raising, as has been claimed. Similarly, one cannot locate the source of women's powerlessness in such linguistic strategies as indirectness, taciturnity, silence, and tag questions, as has also been claimed. The reason one cannot do this is that the same linguistic means can be used for different, even opposite purposes and can have different, even opposite effects in different contexts. (1994:21)

The function of Carrie's tag question demonstrates the cogency of Tannen's argument. For, far from displaying the "typical" feminine discursive strategy of lack of commitment to her proposition, the tag question functions to force my recognition of, and agreement with, the validity of Carrie's gripe about the university's internal hiring policies.

Carrie stresses key words in the story, including action verbs that demonstrate her personal efficacy ("doing," "show," "do"); she uses evaluative adverbs and
adjectives ("clearly," "really," "trained"); and she makes pointed reference to both her general history with the university and to her proficiency at the specific duties the sought-after job required. With her repetitious use of "anger/angry," Carrie gives voice to her perception that she has little or no power to remedy that anger in the existing system. Yet she constructs herself in opposition to her portrayal of the intellectually vacuous Degree Snobs (including the hireling with the supposedly superfluous Ph.D.) by means of her on-the-job training and her track record. Her financial position and her age are two reasons she will stay in her relatively secure Civil Service job. Yet she acknowledges her frustration and impotence with her words, "I can put up or shut up," and "It would be... clearly grounds for a lawsuit [but] I probably wouldn't DO it..."

"Status" has many different faces within the university hierarchy. Ariel also talks about her career disappointments, but in Ariel’s narrative, the status of a graduate education functions diametrically to the way that it functions in Carrie’s assessment. Ariel’s remarks show that a graduate degree does not always guarantee upward mobility for Civil Service employees. Job-related stumbling blocks that have complicated Ariel’s quest for both her M.A. and Ph.D. have been accompanied by obstacles in securing a promotion within the university. Ariel is working at Ohio State for the specific aim of attaining her doctorate, but paradoxically, her academic status has worked against her in career development. In the following excerpt, Ariel
explains that in fourteen years with the university and despite her education, she has never received an upgrade or a promotion from her Typist 2 position.

* * *

S: This is hard to believe. Have you tried?

ARIEL: Oh yeah. Last it was at the Wexner Center. And they told me that—it was just the receptionist job but it’s a, it’s a Secretary 1. It’s more money. And they told me I had too much education, I was too smart, and I’d be bored.

S: So you’re in a real Catch-22.

ARIEL: Yeah. And I’ve been told that repeatedly. I don’t even apply that much, ’cause I know what—they’re gonna say. I applied for, to be an assistant editor of—I don’t know what journal it was, "Great Lakes" something or other. And they called me, they said, "we would love to interview you. You’ve got too much experience. You’re exactly what we want, but we don’t have the money to pay you. We have to hire somebody at the low end of the pay range."

S: And you’re making more money now in this job than you would have started out over there?

ARIEL: Yeah. You know, we talk about reclassification, and Kathleen keeps encouraging me to do it, but there’s no time to do it. And you have to go through the Dean’s office. And, with a certain person up there who [SMILES--SARCASM] "WE FEEL" is not—YOU know, what she says and what she does are two different things, and she will throw every obstacle in the way. One of his "YES GIRLS." (We call them the "YES GIRLS" up there).

S: I know them because I interviewed for a job up there—he—he’s speaking French together. No kidding, he saw that I speak French on my résumé, so we’re speaking, conversing, in French for at least five minutes. Then after that he says, "You’d have to be making my barber’s appointments"

ARIEL: [GASPS SHARPLY]

S: I thought [LAUGHS] I was going to fall off the chair!
ARIEL: Well, we don't have anything that bad HERE [LAUGHS]! He's a wonderful musician, and a wonderful composer; I love his music. I've got his latest CD. And why is he wasting his time? [ARIEL ANSWERS HER OWN QUESTION] Well, he's getting a lot of money!

* * *

In her discussion on metanarrative framing, Barbara Babcock suggests that parenthetical asides are one indication of embedded stories: Babcock claims that the speaker employs this tactic as a "means of establishing an implicit dialogue with his [sic] own and other narrative texts" [1977:73]). Ariel's parenthetical "WE FEEL," and "We call them the 'YES GIRLS'" are prime examples of the weightiness of parenthetical messages. Residing along with the Dean in an amorphous, Mt. Olympus-like "up there," the "YES GIRLS" are characterized by a metaphor that depicts their sycophantic tendencies within the larger hierarchy. "YES GIRLS" suggests both immaturity and frivolity; applying such traits to powerful staff gives Ariel subtle glee. Yet Ariel's hard-won academic "status," poignant when contrasted with the more tangible power and status of the "Yes Girls," has precluded either a promotion in the Civil Service ranks or a more professional position within the university: she is supposedly "too highly educated" to be suitable for the former, and the pay ranges of the lower-level professional positions would offer her even less money than she is currently making. Ariel's final clause, "Well, he's getting a lot of money," serves as self-correction and provides one more parenthetical and metacommunicative remark which underscores that most basic indicator of status: economics.
In another excerpt about status, Ariel reveals her view of the status-governed behavior of administrative faculty in her department, and, surprisingly, that of students, too:

* * *

ARIEL: That's—that's one thing, some, I'd say, that the people who are in the History of Literature Criticism, they can respect me for my degrees and my knowledge, but these other people—the designers tend to leave me alone, but the ACTING PEOPLE—[WHISPERS]—they think they're so— "COOL"!! [LAUGHS SOFTLY]

S: The administrative faculty?

ARIEL: Yeah, well, the acting people—yeah. And they [HAUGHTY AND PETULANT TONE]: "Do this, Do that! Look up this phone number! Well, I— I can't FIND this!" And, they have just, they're incapable of doing anything. And uh, I mean, there was a fallout, when I heard, many years before I came here that some of these people couldn't even read a phone book—. I don't know if other faculty are like this—I can't imagine Dr. Burns coming downstairs and— it's just the general, snotty— .

But I just feel that they, you know, treat my academic credentials like it's a little hobby. [PATRONIZING VOICE] "Oh, isn't that cute! She's getting a Ph.D.!"

S: Absolutely. Well, it's a hobby if you're only taking one class a quarter.

ARIEL: And they'll say [PATRONIZING VOICE]: "Oh, are you still—? —aren't you FINISHED yet?" And, GTA's! Now, I haven't had this for a long time, and it wasn't directed at me personally. I mean, I would get really angry, though. It was these— GTA's would come in and they'd start complaining that they had to work twenty hours a week. And they said, "Well, why should I bother with this?"

S: They've ALWAYS had to work twenty hours a week.

ARIEL: Yeah! It drove our former chair CRAZY to hear this, because he went to school when assistantships were for the needy [LAUGHS]. And he said he was in Wisconsin? in the late 1940s,
after the war. And he swept floors, he put up posters, he did anything
they told him to, and he was GRATEFUL for it. And here these
people are complaining about working their little twenty hours a week.
And I get really mad sometimes! I said, "LOOK! I'm working forty
hours a week, I'm working FULLTIME, and then I'M going to
school." And, you know, they've never had much to say about it.
And, I've had people say things to me like--well, I forget how much
money I was making at the time, maybe $18,000-19,000, and this
snotty--undergraduate, said, "I'd never take a job for under $20,000 a
year!" Well, last I heard, he was selling T-shirts at a MALL!
[LAUGHS] But, I mean, these people
]
S: how did he know how much you were making?

ARIEL: Well, I don't--I don't know, 'cause I didn't tell him.
It was just some kind of--I guess he just guessed at it. Yeah, and it's
[CONDESCENDING]: "When are you GOING TO FINISH?"

* * *

In the preceding excerpts, Ariel points to discursive displays of status by
administrative staff, administrative faculty, and students alike. It is Ariel's repetitive
use of emotionally-charged words and phrases such as "Really angry, really mad,"
"snotty," and "complaining," as well as her textural richness, especially her dramatic
vocal shifts to indicate various personae, that demonstrate her sense of her low
prestige within the workplace.

Ariel contrasts her lack of status to her superior work ethic, a theme that she
develops in large measure by intertextual references. Fairclough is of the view that
"intertextuality sees historical texts as transforming the past--existing conventions and
texts--into the present . . . . this may happen creatively, with new configurations of
elements and orders of discourse, and new modes of manifest intertextuality"
(1992:85); we saw the same dynamic in Meg's story a few pages back. Such a
strategy is evident as Ariel injects historical veracity to her narrative by contrasting the 1940's work ethic of her former chairman to the deficient work ethic of currently employed Graduate Associates. Babcock's remark that a function of intertextuality is to set up an implicit dialogue between narrator and "other" is reiterated in Bauman's insistence that "performance genres, acts, events, and roles cannot occur in isolation, but are mutually interactive and interdependent" (1977:31); the creation of personal narratives apart from socio-cultural norms and assumptions, "realities," and constraints is therefore an impossibility.

Indeed, the self-identities propounded here may express disapproval and rejection of certain workplace practices, but certainly not freedom from them. For example, another aspect of intertextuality consists in Ariel's reference to her own dialogue with the complaining students, in which her comment about "forty hour work weeks" is contrasted to their apparent disdain for work. Ariel "performs" the students' comments and questions ("Oh, isn't she cute"); "Oh, are you still--?", and especially the remark about salary) as patronizing, intrusive, and status-motivated; at best, their remarks are midly condescending, thinly veiled as "interest" in Ariel's program. The implicit meaning that Ariel projects in her reconstitution of the students' comments is that they perceive Ariel's quest for a Ph.D. as incongruous with her staff role (which is, in fact, her primary role in the university's eyes). Yet given their own positions as "students first, G.A.'s second," it would not register if Ariel were to direct similar messages toward them.
However, Ariel constructs her story to set the offending students up for a symbolic fall: the mock sympathy shown to her with the too-familiar comments about her program is remedied by turning the tables at the end, for what position could be more unprofessional than selling T-shirts at a mall? When I attempt to learn how the student discovered the amount of Ariel’s salary, she glosses over my question and redirects the conversation to the main point of the discussion: that some students in her department enact a discursive familiarity they seem to assume Ariel’s status, conferred by her job, allows them to adopt.

Jill defines her senses of propriety and obligation to both the Eminent Scholar for whom she works and to her department in general in the next story about the department’s Christmas lunch. In the following passage, Jill depicts her own strong work ethic in direct opposition to her supervisor’s and co-worker’s attitudes about work and about play.

* * *
"The Christmas Lunch."

JILL: The day before we left for Christmas break--it was a Friday--the department had pre-planned to go to lunch together as the guests of our department chairman. . .we have a WONDERFUL meal at the Japanese Steak House downtown. So the decision was made at what time of day we would be allowed to go home early--this is a "let’s let our staff go early today"--it was a Friday. So, I’m--we come back from lunch, and then I come over to THIS office, to this afternoon location, and I begin my afternoon work, and I had prearranged that I would phone the man that I’m working with, because he’s now at a different location for the whole quarter. So, I had to give him an update as to his E-mail, and things that he and I are working on
together, and go through the mail with him, EDIT the mail (what to send along and what to keep here--what's not important).

So I'm doing all of this and a couple of people come by to say hello and one thing another, and I'm dillyin' around, and so I DO get this gentleman on the phone, and he said, "OH, by the way," you know, "Have a good holiday. Before you go, I want, I would like you to send an E-mail to this person, and here's the response, here's what I want to say. And I need you to send a FAX, and here's this." And then there were two or three or four other things. Well, it's AFTER two o'clock. And I go around to the other office and--can you guess what I'm gonna say?!-- They're GONE. EVERYBODY'S GONE.

Nobody bothered to tell me we were allowed to go home at two o'clock. We got back [from lunch] close to one o'clock. And not that I couldn't have been more productive in the hour, but I was choosing to do other things. Because I had said to my, to Dr. ____, the boss-person who's in Florida, I was saying, "I'll call you around two, I think two will be good." So I waited. Anyway, so I go around to the other office to duplicate some information and to send a FAX that he'd asked me to do, and the [QUIETLY] office door is locked. And I don't have keys for that office--I carry a separated kind of key ring: two sets of keys, two reasons for carrying one and not the other. So anyway, as it so happens, somebody [CLIPPED, STACCATO] was coming OUT to leave, COAT ON, "GOODBYE. I'm LATE." [IN A WISTFUL TONE] "Wait a minute, can we go now? We can GO?" [LAUGHTER]

So, I'm agitated at this point. And I had had a WONDERFUL DAY! And so anyway, that was, I thought, well. And the person leaving the office who let me through the door said to me, "Oh YEAH, they decided this morning what time they were going, didn't they TELL you? Didn't they tell you AT LUNCH even, sitting WITH them, at a dinner table ACROSS from them?" [CLIPPED, TERSE] Nobody said to me what time we were leaving. I didn't feel--I'm not the kind of person who would just ask, [BOLD AND BRUSQUE] "Hey, what time can we get out of here today?" That's just--not--the way I work. I'm a worker, and I have a really high work ethic, and I'm going to be here til you tell me I can go. [LAUGHS]

But another interesting incident the same MORNING! I chose to dress very out of character for me, which was very flamboyant, apparently, to all of my co-workers and anybody who saw me that day. I wore a denim wrapped skirt, a long straight sheath, wrapped skirt.
had on red tights. The wrap happens to be from the left hip down to the right leg, perhaps, so IF I sit down, perhaps, it could unfold, but I was—very—modest. Anyway, I wore red tights. And then I wore the red cotton worker socks, with boots. My hiking boots. And I [SMILES] wore a red turtleneck, and I wore [WHISPERS, LOOKS UP]—did I wear a sweater? -- Anyway, the scream of everything were these earrings that I wore. Which—on each ear, one was red and one was gold, and they were the lightbulbs that you find on a Christmas tree—the BIG kind, the former kind that WE grew up with, THAT size.

S: That's right!

JILL: Yeah. Well, dangling from each ear [LAUGHS]; and now, here's what I want to tell you. You know, I regarded that as a FUN, "I-Feel-Like-a-Kid-Again" kind of fun little outfit. And it's very out of character for me, as I've mentioned before. I always wear skirts to the office, I never wear slacks. However, this was EXTREMELY casual, and, I had many [VOICE GOES INTO CRESCENDO] favorable comments, including the department chairman, who said [VOICE LOW, DEFINITE]: "You look really SHARP." He said, "It's GOOD to see you like this!" You know?

So, but earlier in the morning, my supervisor and the other two gals—(do you remember how I've split my cohort into the team that was here before and then those of us who came later? The LONGSTANDING Threesome who have been here for, I think the least amount of time is 18 years, at the university)—so in the morning, these three women? They're all wearing business suits. They're dressed up—to the NINES. They're wearing HEELS—[CLIPPED, MONOTONE] they never wear heels. Business suits, stockings. And I'm dressed like this, you know, like I just described to you. And my supervisor and I happen to share a hot water pot in the morning. Either she'll fix it, or I mostly fix it, and she gets her instant coffee, and I drink tea and so on. So she's coming out, and she looks at me with this outrageously—OFF-CHARACTER look, and . . .I said, "HI!" [SINGSONG] And I was real cheery and I was excited, you know, it's the day before Christmas, I'm a little kid again, I'm gonna get off early—I'm gonna have a good time, the sun's shinin'! And she said [POMPOUS]: "You are just REBELLING, aren't you? . . .You're rebelling. You're rebelling by dressing-- "

S: She wasn't serious--
JILL: [RAPID FIRE] Oh she was very serious. She was EXTREMELY serious. And I said, "I don't think I'm rebelling. I'm just having FUN. I'm comfortable. I decided I was gonna--"

S: It's the twenty-third of December!

JILL: I know. I said: "I'm gonna be comfortable today. I don't consider this rebelling." So that's an interesting story.

But I found out in the middle of the morning of the 23rd, that my supervisor was very concerned over her mother-in-law being ill, and having traveled quite a distance to visit and to spend Christmas. And so I KNOW that my supervisor is the kind of person who allows outside concerns to REALLY intrude into her business day, and the way she thinks and interacts with people. And I see her as quite a worrier. She's very worried about a number of things. And--

S: Job related?

JILL: I think it's personal, mostly. Yeah. I'm sure it's personal, 'cause she's in the "Golden Seat." She's fine.

S: What's the "Golden Seat"?

JILL: The "Golden Seat" is that she was very well established in her position with the prior department chairman. She was--given a very fascinating amount of raises. This woman is making close to what some of our low-end faculty are making. [LOWERS VOICE--TERSE] She has a high school education . . . . Given the raises that I imagine HAVE BEEN FORTHCOMING, I'm sure she's up there.

So that's the "Golden Seat." The Golden Seat is just simply my term for--you know, it's like a Golden Spoon. She's been enriched, in MY opinion, for maybe previous work capabilities.

* * *

Jill's story framework--with tangible beginning and ending--is strongly suggestive of "performance mode." Jill begins by concretely situating herself in time ("the day before we left for Christmas break--it was a Friday. . . ") and then in deictic
terms, points to the space in which the action occurs ("I come over to THIS office, to this afternoon location, and I begin my afternoon work . . ."). Jill ends her two-part tale with the familiar, "So, that's an interesting story." As Barbara Babcock points out, a story's beginning and ending markers are

most important metanarrative devices. . . . 'Beginnings' and 'endings' are of crucial importance in the formulation of systems of culture . . . . the narrator sets up an interpretative frame which tells us this is play, this is performance, or more specifically, this is such and such type of story and should be understood and judged accordingly. . . . explicit metanarration . . . deliberately calls attention to the narrative performance as performance. (1977:71)

It is indisputable that social discourse informs literature and vice versa—among many other devices, the speaker and the writer both employ beginning/ending formulae, repetition, parallel constructions, and so forth. As Kenneth Burke insists, literary and discursive forms "have a prior existence in the experiences of the person hearing or reading the work of art. They parallel processes which characterize his experiences outside of art" (1931:143). And Deborah Tannen notes that "literary language, rather than being maximally different from ordinary conversation, builds on and intensifies features that are spontaneous and commonplace in ordinary conversation" (1984:153). For the sake of argument then, let us say that Jill's narrative is loosely modeled after the Cinderella story. Like Jill's tale, "Cinderella" is a status story, but it incorporates a reversal of positionality at the end that Jill's story lacks. Nevertheless, a reversal is created in a number of ways in Jill's story. Adjusting her chronology to more coherently portray the Cinderella theme of "worthy victim," Jill begins in medias res with the exodus from the office for the holiday.
which casts her uninvited and alone (Cinderella tending the hearth while the stepmother and sisters revel at the ball). Jill then recounts her version of the morning's events: like Cinderella, she "dresses out of character," is reprimanded by the "stepmother" (her supervisor) for breaching the hierarchical code, but not before being "discovered" and singled out by the "Prince" (department chair) who seems to "see" her for the first time, clear in Jill's definitive, commanding vocal tone when describing the chair's reaction to her outfit ("'You look really SHARP!' He said, 'It's GOOD to see you like this!' You know?").

The "Longstanding Threesome" are, of course, Perrault's wicked stepmother and stepsisters, who form a collusive unit by their similar attire, their positions of privilege (which Jill subtly implies are undeserved, given her "Golden Seat" sentiments), and their action of leaving the office early yet withholding the news of the dismissal from Jill. Jill's projected demeanor in the story also parallels that of "Cinderella": she is modest ("I was--very--modest" [the pauses indicate that one must be reluctant and hesitant when reporting one's own modesty--self-portrayal thus matching self-assessment]); hard working (she reiterates her loyalty and work ethic throughout); cheerful ("I was real cheery and I was excited . . . I'm gonna have a good time!"); in the face of confrontation by the supervisor, Jill reacts evenly, and when deserted, she is only "agitated" and not angry or vindictive. Further, Jill refrains from indulging in name calling or deprecation--to do so would detract from her identity as a worthy and gracious person.
I include this systematic argument for an analogy between "Cinderella" and Jill’s tale to highlight the danger of willfully reading too much into an account. Elaine Lawless opines that reciprocal methods help to keep in check a "writer’s tendency to confiscate the material and run away with it" (1993:283) and I agree wholeheartedly. For when I presented my tidy parallel to Jill, she expressed surprise and said that if such an analogy exists at all, it is purely coincidental or else the result of subconscious motivation. Although I think the "Cinderella" interpretation could still be be valid—intentionality being only one part of meaning— the boundaries of this study prohibit an exploration of literature’s effects, subconscious or otherwise, on personal experience narratives. So let us return to a more practical and less fanciful analysis, one more closely supported by discursive evidence.

With this fundamentally ironic, two-part story, Jill underscores her own sense of obligation to the department while depicting her supervisor’s deficient work ethic. The metanarrative comment in the first paragraph ("can you guess what I’m gonna say?") allows Jill to momentarily escape from the framework of the narrative and inform her listener of the story’s most significant point: "They’re GONE. Everybody’s gone." She then creates a sense of lopsided power relations without naming names or describing characters. For example, Jill’s loaded phrase "Nobody bothered to tell me we were allowed to go" points to a general lack of courtesy, loyalty, and cohesion among the employees in her office; further, Jill states "somebody was coming out to leave," conjuring an image of one of several faceless
characters in her office, all more privileged than she. Similarly, Jill contrasts her own unassuming wistfulness ("Wait a minute, we can go now?") with the surefooted brusqueness of her co-worker ("Goodbye, I'm late.").

The clausal arrangement of the second story serves to complement the first in terms of Jill's identity construction and correspondingly functions to emphasize Jill's perceptions about status in her department. In a preface to the key action clauses, Jill is careful to point out the department chair's positive attitude toward her Christmas attire--her metanarrative comment, "You know?" seems to suggest the importance that his approval holds for her; next, her extended metanarrative remark about the "Longstanding Threesome" simultaneously grounds Jill's credibility as a trustworthy narrator and foreshadows the ensuing tangle. Jill depicts a homey scenario complete with tea kettle and morning beverages that dovetails with her joy and serenity, but when juxtaposed with the coming tense exchange, it recreates for the listener the dramatic context that Jill experienced, in which her Christmas ebullience is nipped in the bud by the vitriolic "You are just REBELLING, aren't you?" Jill's Christmas outfit, symbolizing the upcoming holiday and worn in the spirit of fun, conspicuously contrasts with the "non-rebellious" business suits of her co-workers.

Yet Jill's narrative reveals an inverse relationship between all the staff members' Christmas lunch attire and their everyday work ethic. The other women apparently view the Christmas lunch as a forum for displaying their workplace status, along with their competence and seriousness, via their "serious" attire. Jill's supervisor's disapproval over Jill's clothing is another pathway for revealing
seriousness, and structural superiority. By contrast, Jill’s own guilelessness—and ethical superiority—are crystallized in her representation: she sees the holiday as the “dominant theme” as her “feel-like-a-kid-again” outfit attests. But upon returning to the department, the seriously-attired staffers depart without delay while whimsically-dressed Jill, whose co-workers neglect to tell her about the early dismissal, lingers over her duties. As the lowest person on the staff totem pole (a position that contrasts with her boss’s own spot in the “Golden Seat”), Jill surprises and offends her supervisor by her departure from “the norm,” eliciting the verbal castigation. Thus, Jill’s “So that’s an interesting story” provides a metanarrative coda similar to Carrie’s, the word “interesting” functioning ironically.

Ruth’s story about status also links ethics to Classified Civil Service employees and ethical emptiness to the Administrative and Professional (“A & P”) supervisors. Ruth depicts the A & Ps’ frivolity alongside her own ethical seriousness. A continuous paralleling of these two themes occurs throughout Ruth’s narrative.

* * *

RUTH: . . .the primary thing that separates the Classified Civil Service and the A & P are, the A & P’s are BIG Rah-Rah Girls, Rah-Rah Chicks, and Rah-Rah Boys. And the Classified Civil Service are GRUNTS. [LAUGHS] You know, they’re, they’re--. OK, you give me a pencil and a paper, I’ll get the paper on this side of my desk to that side of the desk, and if this is the practice you want me to under--, to underTAKE to get it from here to there, I’ll DO it. I’ll do it WELL, I’ll do it efficiently. I’ll WORK. Now if you want me to giggle with you and, and talk about what you DID last night, and--you know, "Oh did you see Jim at the Faculty Club?" [FALSETTO LAUGHTER] “Tee hee hee hee hee hee hee!” [RESUMES SERIOUS TONE] NO. HUH unh. That’s not IT. Uh, and, not only is it not
IT, it’s not what I want to DO, and I resent having that kind of PERSON in authority OVER me. Because they don’t KNOW as much as I do, they don’t DO as much as I do, and all they’re able to produce is FROTH.

Well, they produce a LOT of FROTH. And it’s SWEET [LAUGHS] froth, and so it’s attractive to, no doubt, their superiors. It’s an insult to ME! And sooo--FINE, you keep that. I--there are SOME people, I think, that would like to be Civil Service and then step up to A & P, and jockey themselves around until they--fit under the wing of--some--BIG shot that will see to it that they get to go to all the BOWL games and, you know, come to every little dinner that they have, you know--THAT sort of thing. I like the work. You know, and--. And the work I--the work I did before as a cler--, as a SEASONAL, was JUST, PLAIN, GRUNT work. I had to process FORMS. Had to check all the data on 'em, and move 'em through.

The job I have now is, um, like a LIAISON, and so I have to take people’s requests and COMPLAINTS and RESOLVE them. And so, when I’m WORKING, I’m working with people that are equal to me. Clerical--clerical people in the DEPARTMENTS. And that, "I’ll make your life as easy as I can."

NOW, if a Department chair calls me, and says the same thing? --I get this ATTITUDE! Like, "what do you WANT, Buster? Mr. Leather, Leather Elbows! What do you want?" [LAUGHS] Generally speaking, he’s calling because he thinks his clerical isn’t up on what THEY’RE supposed to be doing. . .when a Civil Service person is doing their job, they do it expeditiously. When somebody comes and twists their tail, they--it goes all KERPHLOOEY. And so when a Civil Service person’s talkin’ to me on the phone, I get the job done. But when one of these BIG shots come along and try to [PAUSE], you know, "DO IT MY WAY ’CAUSE I SAID SO" --what a mess! It’s just, it’s so, it’s just kinda fun. But so far I haven’t alienated anybody yet.

Now the A & P that I worked for when I was in Phys Ed, she, was, a good person. She was, a worker, that had an A/P position because that was handed down, because what they did, was, when they mixed the men’s Phys Ed program and the women’s Phys Ed program, they had two directors, two assistant directors, two--they had two of everything when they put the two programs together. So as you well KNOW, the boys--"this is the boys, this is the girls," the boys--so the BOY becomes the director, the GIRL becomes an ASSISTANT.
director. Well, they couldn't, they couldn't, put their budget together that way cause you can't, for the size of that program they wouldn't allow two faculty, uh, "Professor" rank for that small of a school, because of that. So they TOOK a girl and shoved her over to A & P, so that she'd have, she'd be able to still be a director without violating the faculty structure. --She HAD been a professor. They moved her over to A & P so that when she RETIRED (she was OLDER when they merged the programs), they wouldn't have to, they wouldn't HAVE to, YOU know, if they had a professor rank that was to be the chair, and then they had this extra WOMAN who was the chair of the OLD department, they couldn't put another professor there to be a VICE chair cause the budget wouldn't, wouldn't HOLD it. So they took this person and slid her budget line over to A & P, and so when she, so when the one that they did that TO retired, cause she retired on her regular salary as a professor, the next person they put in there they could put in a much lesser PERSON--with that rank, so that, that, uh, the TITLE stayed the same, you know, the JOB classification stayed the same but they could put lower and lower people in.

So by that time the person I had was the THIRD person that had that position; she was all the way down to just a regular person with a BACHELOR's. But, it, she was a friend of a friend that got put in there. BUT, she was a WORKER BEE. And she was great to work for. But the um--. And like the A & P person that I had before the one I have NOW, was a--HE is a COMPLETE petty bureaucrat. He's PERFECT. He--his picture is next to "Petty Bureaucrat" in the dictionary! [LAUGHS] HE IS--the MAN! [EXTENDED LAUGHTER] Uh, but you know what? You know, he is the easiest guy to WORK with, cause he is ENTIRELY PREDICTABLE. He's, he's ethical within the, within his bureaucratic structure--he sees things bureaucratically, and he IS a bureaucrat. So it's very comfortable. And he's, he's SWELL! And he makes all the mistakes that a bureaucrat MAKES! And does all the right THINGS that a bureaucrat can do, that a fundamentally righteous bureaucrat can do, he DOES! He's, he's, all RIGHT!

But he was moved UP, and this new person came in from this, from the MBA program. And THIS GIRL IS FROTH, man! She's like a cappuccino! [LAUGHS; USES THUMB AND FOREFINGER TO MEASURE] She's THIS much coffee and THIS much froth!" [LAUGHTER] "Okay baby! Come on! Just PUT it out here, COME on, let's play with it!" She has NO ethics whatever. NONE. She is ALL FROTH. But she, she picks up on it cause she's NOT stupid. But she's QUITE frothy. And I, OH, I LOVE working for her, cause
she, cause she can--I mean, you can blow froth around quite a lot!

[LAUGHS] It's very much fun to [SHE BLOWS] "WHOOOOOSH!"

[LAUGHS] watch her pile up on one side. Turn her around, "WHOOO!", look at her all piled up on the other side! And, she's been dealing with me for a YEAR now, DOIN' this, and she's just now startin' to figure out that I'm--blowin' her off! [LAUGHS] So I have to be a little careful! [LAUGHTER] Oh, she's so fun! Uh, --I'm annoyed that, I'm ANNOYED to work for her cause she IS frothy, and she HAS no ethics. BUT, it's not, it's not BAD--it's not BAD work, and it's not bad WORKIN' for her, it's just--

S: Well, when you say she has no ethics, how does that affect you? Uh, does she treat you unethically, or just the way

RUTH: No

S: she manages the office and so forth?

RUTH: NO, she doesn't treat ME unethically, cause [PAUSE]

S: She knows you would know.

RUTH: Well, not only THAT, because I, cause I, SEE who she IS, I don't do anything that would put her in a position to TREAT ME ANY WAY AT ALL. You know, I don't give her an opportunity to interact with me as a BOSS. Which, she has, she's, she KIND of noticed it, but she can't quite put her finger on it? [LAUGHS] So, it's, every now and then she gives me one of these looks, like: "AAAGH! How do I get you where you belong?!" [LAUGHS] And I won't GO, so [PAUSE].

S: So you're not going NOT by doing your work. You're DOING your work. It's just that you're not going by, uh, exhibiting the appropriate deferential

RUTH: That's right

S: manner to her.

RUTH: OH, that's exactly correct. And she's YOUNGER than I am so I can get a little bit away with it. Because she is physically younger than I am. I defer to her in SPEECH [PAUSE] very graciously, BUT--and I, whatever she says to DO, of course, I do
it [SNAPS FINGERS] like THAT. I mean, I'm [PAUSE] that's what I--when I SELL myself, I sell my OBEDIENCE. And when, if you tell me to jump, I'll jump. If you tell me to do something wrong, I'll DO something wrong. I'll TELL you I'm doin' somethin' wrong, and I'll say, 'I'm doing this wrong under the orders of [LAUGHS] whoever was tellin' me to do it wrong. But I--I'll DO it. And, YOU know, cause I understand that, that's what I SELL when I sell, sell my TIME to you. . . . Her primary motivation is what’s expeditious and what will make her look good to her superiors. And see, sh-, that's all, that's ALL that's THERE. There's no more, uh, uh, CONSCIOUSNESS within her than that mere pleasing her supervisors and getting it done expeditiously.

An-, you, YOU know, you push her and prod her and you want to see if there's something in there that, that thinks ethically? And there ISN'T. It's just, it's, not even, IN there! [LAUGHS] That's PROBABLY why she went into MBA in the FIRST place. Because they LIKE those kind of people! [LAUGHS] So. It's, it's CURIJUS then. But see that, an ETHICAL person is always superior to an UNethical one, because they live in a, they live in a consciousness that the other person doesn't have access to. And so they're, so that gives them a superiority, cause you, if you have a CONSCIOUSNESS, you can compare things if you have someplace to go from. But if all you've got to GO from is EXPEDITIOUSNESS and, and, pleasing SUPERIORS, you can't compare and CONTRAST anything, cause, the-- cause you're not COMING from anywhere. . . .

Even if it, even if that was all there WAS, if it was ACTUALLY a valuable system and not, com--FUNDAMENTALLY expeditious, if there was something underneath it that WAS OF VALUE, then you could get AT some comparison. But there, it's just not THERE. And so, you can BUFFALO her. If you, if you go to the moral HIGH ground, you can get her and she can't DO it. See, she's on her BACK. Helpless! [LAUGHS] So you, it's FUN! It's just fun to PLAY! YOU know, so--

Although it, one of the, we have a little metaphor; a friend of mine, who’s a bureaucrat downtown, th--, the supervisors in bureaucracies are ALLIGATORS. And you have to get 'em out of the water, grab 'em by the snout, and rub their bellies, and then YOU'VE got an EASY life! [LAUGHS] * * *
Along with documenting what seems to be a blatant case of sex discrimination in the Physical Education job reassignment case—a certainly a status issue of another kind, Ruth systematically creates her own identity against displays of workplace status. She continuously stresses her work ethic and the generally positive work ethic of Civil Service employees as a whole, suggesting her deep-seated identification with her working-class cohort. Ruth’s excerpt, crammed with value-charged language, is notable for its elaborate patterning system: Ruth methodically sandwiches derogatory metaphors defining the higher-ups between the markedly non-figurative terms by which she defines herself. Ruth thus stresses her superiority, and empowers herself in doing so. The following grid displays some of Ruth’s figuration patterns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisors and A &amp; P</th>
<th>vs.</th>
<th>Ruth/ Civil Service Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rah-Rah Girls/Chicks/Boys</td>
<td>Grunts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They giggle, compare social calendars</td>
<td>&quot;I'll WORK&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They produce FROTH</td>
<td>Ruth &quot;knows and does more&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Shots, bowl games, dinner parties</td>
<td>Ruth &quot;likes the work&quot;: checks data, resolves problems, will &quot;make your life easy&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Leather Elbows twists tails everything goes KERPHLOOEY</td>
<td>Ruth stresses customer satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Froth on Cappuccino</td>
<td>Ruth takes the moral high ground</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers are like alligators--slimy and cold-blooded, but malleable on their backs</td>
<td>Ruth sells her &quot;obedience,&quot; yet points out errors of the supervisors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Ruth’s Oppositional Metaphors
Ruth's strategy of paralleling her own qualities and competencies against the abuses of the higher-ups is a self-reflexive strategy that Babcock would call "a conscious form of self-commentary" (1977:63). Ruth's patterning brings to mind Bruner's idea that "narratives are not only structures of meaning but structures of power" (1986:144).

Linda Dégh might call Ruth's narrative a "schwank," a relatively long, well constructed, easily understood, humorous yet realistic narrative. Dégh explains that the target of the Schwank is human frailty. Its aim is not simply to make people laugh by telling an hilarious story about ridiculous characters or about clever tricksters who make others look ridiculous. The Schwank is also highly didactic, trying to reform people of bad habits by magnifying them or to express disapproval by scoffing at persons of bad conduct. It is dramatic in its rendition with minimum epic and maximum dialogue presentation, accompanied with gestures and body and facial movements imitating the ludicrous actors. (1972:70)

It is clear that Ruth wants to teach me, and she concomitantly separates herself from "other" and boosts her ego by naming, in highly comic evaluative metaphors, the instigators of her workplace frustrations; Ruth's repetitious strategy of deliberately disrespectful "naming" seems to be a unifying theme in her all her narratives and is the major key to performance in this text. True, a "petty bureaucrat" is ethical according to the agenda of the bureaucracy, and a former A & P supervisor's description as a "Worker Bee" is favorable within the rubric of Ruth's values. Yet Ruth's metaphoric images of most of the higher-ups in the system relegate them to cheerleaders, non-human animals, inanimate objects that can be blown here and there and manipulated at will, and in the case of "Mr. Leather Elbows," a contemptuous metonymic creation that relegates the professorial caste to its most symbolic article of
professorial clothing. With this schwank-like narration, Ruth emphasizes that the behavioral and ethical frameworks guiding administrators and faculty members need an overhaul.

Privileges that Ruth assigns to the A & P's (one example, in parallel form, is: "All the Bowl games, every little dinner") contrast sharply, and intentionally, with Ruth's construction of her own humble yet productive role in the university. The verbal karate Ruth applies to the holders of status is situated alongside her use of action verbs to demonstrate her competence ("process," "check," "move," "resolve," etc.); Ruth consequently distinguishes herself from the higher-ups by comparing her production to their ostensible dissipation and frivolity.

Anthropologists and folklorists view the "Trickster" as both chaos-bringer and cultural hero. Ruth, projecting a self-image of working-class woman who lives by her wit, guile, and intellect, exhibits some of the Trickster's traits in her narrative. Her representational "essence," like the Trickster's, is often ambiguous and incoherent: "The work is fun" yet it's "grunt" work and Ruth is underpaid; she "gets an attitude when 'Mr. Leather Elbows' calls for help," yet promises to "make your life as easy as I can"; and, she "resents" working for a supervisor who knows little, is ethically empty, and produces only "FROTH," yet she defers and "OBEYS," even when (especially when, perhaps) the supervisor's directives are ill-advised. Paul Fussell claims that a casualty of the first World war was "feudal language" characterized by a system of "high" diction; among such euphemistic abstractions as "comrade" (friend), "deed" (action), "the fallen" (the dead), and "vanquish"
(conquer), "the brave" is a catch-phrase for "obedient soldiers" (1975:22). While "the brave" is certainly not part of the general lexicon any longer, the word "obedient" itself is dated in a democratized world, has lost popularity in the child-rearing discourse, and in fact seems regularly applied only to dog training these days. "Obedience" is anachronistic, especially in the workplace: While everyone is aware of the existence and the power of the hierarchy, obedience is never overtly called for within it. I believe Alan Dundes is correct in pointing out that "Leadership" and "Egalitarianism" are paradoxical folk ideas; he says,

Americans in positions of authority may be forced to give orders in a nonauthoritarian way in contrast to leaders in societies who do not share the folk idea of egalitarianism ("anybody is as good as anybody else") and who are free to lead in autocratic, authoritarian fashion. This may be why in American culture one may ask rather than order a subordinate to perform a certain task. (1971:22)

Ruth's pointed reference to her obedience calls to mind Irving Goffman's observation about in-group and out-group communication devices. Using the term "teammates" to designate insiders and the term "audience" for outsiders, Goffman claims that communication out of character occurs where one member of a team performs his part for the special and secret amusement of his teammates; for example, he may throw himself into his part with an affective enthusiasm that is at once exaggerated and precise, but so close to what the audience expects that they do not quite realize, or are not sure, what fun is being made of them. Thus, jazz musicians obliged to play 'corny' music will sometimes play a little more corny than necessary, the slight exaggeration serving as a means by which the musicians can convey to each other their contempt for the audience and their own loyalty to higher things . . . By mocking the audience or
teasing a teammate, the performer can show not only that he is not bound by the official interaction but also that he has this interaction so much under control that he can toy with it at will. (1959:188-9)

It seems clear that Ruth's reference to her "obedience," when directed to me, her "teammate," becomes tongue-in-cheek, a campy insider's joke, for we both know that Ruth is underemployed and that her "obedience" is evoked to emphasize the illogical power relations within the situational context. Ruth portrays her boss as not being able to put her finger on Ruth (amorphousness is a Trickster trait), yet the supervisor is also presented as sensing that Ruth is breaking the hierarchical code by which institutional cohesion is maintained (Ruth fictively assigns confusion and anxiety to the supervisor with the remark, "every now and then she gives me one of these looks, like 'AAAGH! How do I get you where you belong?!'"). Although the supervisor likely suspects that Ruth's "subservience" is neither genuine nor appropriate, she is nevertheless "not sure what fun is being made," in Goffman's terms.

Thus, Ruth as "chaos-making Trickster" gives rise to her boss's psychological confusion; Ruth as "cultural hero Trickster" defines her loyalty to Classified Civil Service employees and the work ethic. The trickster role, related to Ruth's evaluative metaphors which undermine authority, is a double-edged sword, for Ruth's storytelling renders her a trickster in the present as well as in the past. From Ruth's vantage point, employing her "Trickster" persona seems to be an avenue for rescuing an appropriated self from the confines of a narrow binary structure. Square pegs need survival kits. Margaret Mills warns that "indistinct subject/object boundaries within hierarchical systems provide a breeding ground for continued hegemonic
expression" yet she notes the dynamic by which hierarchies (including academic and political ones) are generated and remade by the tensions between subjects and objects, "the site at which a constant negotiation and contestation of boundaries occurs" (1993:183). In this vein, Ruth's constructions of narrative self and other simultaneously depict and redefine her workplace boundaries.

Emily worked in a department in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences from 1990-92, then transferred to the Medical College for three years. She returned to the first department in 1995. Emily has experienced a number of "status" incidents which I include here. While the second and third narratives are specific stories with beginning and ending formulae, Emily's first narrative is a somewhat generalized assessment of her experiences as a Word Processing Operator that serves as a "lead-in" to the more specific stories that follow:

* * *

EMILY: Well, there's my "early" job in the department; I worked there from '90 to '92 and then in the College of Medicine from '92 to '95. And then there's this department NOW. And--um, they're three different experiences. I went in there full of hope--this was EXCITING. I thought working in the department would be meaningful, because I am an incest survivor. I figured they'd HAVE papers I could edit. Suzanne La Mer was very NICE at the interview. She had TOLD me I would work for six professors in Lazenby Hall, and that I'd be very busy for a while, uh, typing--a hundred and eighty syllabi into WordPerfect. And I thought, "Well that's just FINE."

So I went in, and then--um, the first computer I had didn't work. I was sitting there crying after a few days, about a quarter of five, I was sitting crying, because the computer was a piece of shit. And, the fellow came over from the Computer Lab and looked at the computer and he said, "YES, it's terrible." So they got me the second
computer, and the second computer was just HORRIBLE. The only way you could tell you were underlining anything was to look for these little blips on the screen that showed where the underlining began and ended. And I don’t know HOW it happened: Fred Belsen got me the best computer they HAD in the computer lab. And he was a MONSTER-type human being. But, um. He did that nice thing for me. Then I had a good computer.

But I felt I was not important. I felt I didn’t matter. I had a horrible dot matrix printer—that went [HIGH PITCHED MONOTONE, RAPIDLY] REEEE REEEE REEEE REEEE REEEE REEEE REEEE when it printed.

S: Oh my gosh, and there’s a hundred and eighty syllabi you’re supposed to be doing

EMILY: TOP speed. Top speed. At top speed. I OFTEN stayed til seven at night. Poor Laura, would, would arrive. She walked from her job at Lincoln Tower. She’d get there, hot and SWEATY and ready to go home. And I’d say [MOCK PEPPY], "It’s gonna be an hour! Gotta finish this syllabus!" You know.

So, I had the feeling in the first two years in the department that our feelings didn’t matter, what we THOUGHT didn’t matter. We were just to work hard. And the workload was HUGE. I would type like a twelve-page syllabus and then have to print it onto a ditto master. And—you had to print it in BOLD on the ditto master to have it show up when you DITTOED it. And the dot matrix printer would go over the line twice to do bold. So you go SCREEEEE SCREEEEE SCREEEEE SCREEEEE SCREEEEE SCREEEEE SCREEEEE SCREEEEE, and after half an hour you had the syllabus printed. And then you had to take it over to CAMPBELL, and there was no air conditioning if it was summer. And you had to turn this ditto crank. And you’d SWEAT, with sweat fallin’ down your face, turnin’ the DITTO crank. And THEN you had to go back to Lazenby Hall with this THING that you put the pages in? and collate it for maybe an hour? Which was OK, but there was a real HEAVY workload.

And, when I’d been there about six months they hired a supervisor named Lisa Koopman. Who made SURE that I worked at top speed eight hours a day. And she would never TRUST that I worked hard all day, never trust me. When I had to go to the bathroom, I had to call Campbell and tell them I was going for a PIT stop. So, I was up a flight of stairs in Lazenby. There was no
women's bathroom on the floor where I worked. So to get to the
bathroom I had to go either up a floor or down a floor using stairs. So
I would go to the bathroom when I was coming to Campbell. Lisa
wished me to come to Campbell at ten in the morning and at three in
the afternoon. And I usually also went at noon time. And then I, a
SLOW day was eight times up the stairs; a heavy day was twelve
times up the stairs. BUT, if I had to go to the bathroom and it wasn't
on a trip over, and it wasn't [LAUGHS] when I went to lunch, I had to
CALL and say [COMIC EXAGGERATION], "PIT STOP! I'm
GOIN'!" for about the first six or eight months.

And then finally I asked Suzanne if I could please stop doing
that. She said YES, you can stop doing that. Suzanne knew I worked
hard and trusted me, but Lisa would come CREEPING up the hall, and
BURST in the door, and LOOK to see whether I was [STACCATO]
WORKIN' HARD, you know, was I goofing off? And I would get
LIVID. Because, I mean, you could just SEE what I turned out per
day. You would know I WORKED hard. USUALLY, you heard
FOOTSTEPS come up the HALL, [SOFTLY] but you wouldn't hear
HER, at ALL. She'd TIPPYTOE up that hall and [HIGH PITCH]
BURST into the room! And oh I HATED it.

S: How old was she?

EMILY: She was probably—28. And she had us do a study
where we had to write down how much time we spent word processing
on each job; how much time we spent TYPING and PROOFING it;
how much time we spent COPYING it and COLLATING it. I worked
at top speed, wrote down everything I did for three months in the
summer, and gave her a weekly tally. And I THINK maybe it MIGHT
have gotten us the big photocopier. And ABOUT the time we got the
big photocopier, I got a laser printer. So it was wonderful. My
workload became DECENT. So I could PRINT on the laser PRINTER
and take it over to Campbell and PHOTOCopy it. It was
WONDERFUL. So my job got a lot better, THEN, when we got that
large PHOTOCOPIER.

But I found that the, the faculty and the higher staff didn't
WANT you to relate to them really as a person. They wanted you to
TYPE and do your job. And THAT was painful. I mean, the faculty
were not interested in INCEST, which, I thought they'd be interested
in. I had just gotten the memories back from repression during
counseling. And, I was SHOCKED that they weren't really interested
in incest. And I think I made 'em uncomfortable because I kept, well,
there was—I, I kept mentioning incest. I was in the talky stage right after I got my memories. Now I rarely speak of it. I know people don’t want to hear.

So I think I made them UNCOMFORTABLE. I also made ’em uncomfortable because I could edit them. Some of the faculty don’t like it, when you can edit them. And I also made the STAFF uncomfortable because I could edit. Direct quote from Ann Marie is: "We are TYPISTS. We are NOT EDITORS. We are paid to type. We are NOT paid to edit. We don’t have TIME to edit." So, I have been resented by the faculty because I change what they think is perfect. A LOT of faculty are God-complex type of people who don’t want anyone to find out any, anything WRONG with them. So if you can edit their prose, you’re showing that there’s something that they’re not PERFECT at. And some of them resent it, and then the other STAFF resents it also.

Now, Paige Rountree told me the first day I was there, "My name is PAIGE. Not DOCTOR Rountree. MY name is Paige. You call me PAIGE." So I DID. But she was the only one who--kind of reached to me as a person, and kind of, in a way, put me on her level, with "Call me PAIGE." But the others [PAUSE]. I don’t know, they were, like DISTANT, and if I tried to TALK to them, because I consider my MIND to be ABOUT equivalent to theirs—if I tried to ask them something to communicate on their LEVEL, they HATED it.

One time, I said I didn’t want to do something because I was an incest survivor. And Peter Wakefield said [FORCEFUL, DRAMATIC], "QUIT BEIN’ A BROKEN RECORD ABOUT YOUR ABUSE. AND GET ON WITH YOUR LIFE. Nobody ever SAID life was gonna be EASY." And it REALLY HURT. [PAUSE] STANLEY BLUMHORST yelled at me one time. When I asked him if he’d PLEASE give me some word on the page that it’s a ROUGH DRAFT, when all he needs is a rough draft, ’cause I would spend like an extra hour making it perfectly formatted? And I asked him one time [HIGH, DEFERENTIAL], "Would you please write ‘draft’ on it, or ‘rough draft’?" And he YELLED at me. And I can’t remember what he said because I, I go away at the threat of violence.

Oh, the person BEFORE me in Lazenby Hall had been a Secretary 1, and when they hired me they were trying to save money so they downgraded the position to Word Processing Operator. So I was NOT a secretary, I was BELOW a secretary. And when I gave notice there after two and a quarter years after working very HARD for them,
I told Dr. Steele? that I was going to be leaving? I had another job?
And he said [EXPANSIVE], "OH well, secretaries are a dime a
dozen." And I didn’t answer him. And he said, "Isn’t that what
people usually say? ‘secretaries are a dime a dozen’." And it really
hurt me, and I came home and told Laura and Laura said, "Well,
YOU’RE not even a secretary. You’re a WORD PROCESSING
OPERATOR! YOU’RE not even a SEC-retary!" So, it was, VERY
painful.

* * *

If Ruth is trickster, Emily is victim: each woman portrays herself in
conformity to those tropes throughout their narratives. In Emily’s passage above, the
theme is explicitly one of victimization, the thematic coherence partially derived from
a "positive-to-negative" pattern that repeats itself through the passage: "bad" realities
always surface directly after a report of equity or satisfaction (although the "Monster-
type human being" is helpful on one occasion, Emily feels "I was not important";
while the large copier was wonderful and her job got better, neither faculty nor staff
cared to establish a relationship with her; and even though a faculty member reaches
out and urges Emily to call her "Paige," most of the others were "distant" or
irascible). The victimization theme also extends to the narrative as a whole, the
optimistic preamble at the beginning highlighting the poignancy of Emily’s plight in
the paragraphs that follow; in terms of "qualitative progression," Emily introduces
one attribute, that of hope, and in so doing prepares the listener for the presentation
of a related--if antithetical--quality, that of disappointment (Burke 1931:125).⁶

Emily’s first paragraph depicts her own good intentions and strong work ethic:
she was encouraged by the interview and eager to type and edit papers in a
department that she believed would be sympathetic to her incest background and
working-class positionality. Emily uses a number of evaluative words in this passage: she was "full of hope," and thought the work would be "meaningful" and "exciting." The supervisor seemed "nice." The information she gleaned in the employment interview, tempered by her own wishful anticipation, led Emily to conclude that, in both the quality of social interaction and the character of her work, a staff position in the department would be satisfying for her.

Emily begins her reversal at the beginning of the second paragraph; the downward spiral continues to the end of the passage. Emily presents herself as being duped on many levels: by grinding working conditions; by faculty members who either berate or ignore her; by a supervisor who invades her personal space and insults her dignity; and by co-workers who ostracize and preach. Although Emily was initially told that the typing would be heavy, there was no indication she would be forced to use outdated and substandard equipment (she strongly evaluates these as "horrible," "terrible") which rendered the workload nearly untenable. Emphasizing her capacity for turning out a great volume of work, Emily casts herself as dehumanized machine: "So you go SCREEEE SCREEEE SCREEEEE . . . .And you had to turn this ditto crank. And you’d SWEAT, with sweat fallin’ down your face, turnin’ the DITTO crank." Emily, not the equipment, noisily cranks out the horsepower. And, as does a machine, she works tirelessly at "top speed," a phrase she forcefully reiterates. But while Emily portrays her unflagging productivity, she also shows her personal powerlessness and the antagonistic traits of her superiors by emphasizing the childlike role she implicitly accepts in her Word Processing Operator
job: she asks for permission to use the bathroom and depicts herself as forced to
tolerate the daily intrusive checking of a (much younger) suspicious supervisor.

In the next story, Emily continues to develop the theme of victimization by
dramatizing how status exhibitions can take shape between staff members of different
ranks.

* * *

"The Queen Bee and the Bathroom."

EMILY: Suzanne kind of liked to "Queen Bee." I have a
Suzanne story, kind of an--. We had, what's his name, [development
officer] Art Sheskey? Well, I was going to the restroom in Campbell
about ten-thirty in the morning and I was under a lot of pressure. It
was a real busy day. And if I had NOT been under a lot of pressure, I
would have noticed that the memo by the bathroom door was a joke.
But I BELIEVED it.

It looked like an Archer House memo, it had Archer House at
the top, and it was to all staff. [SLOWLY, FORMALLY] That
"BECAUSE people have been spending so much time in the restrooms,
um, we are going to IMPLEMENT a new procedure. Um, we're
going to have--a, a, a THING at the door that will be voice activated.
And to get IN to the restroom, you will have to speak INTO this
VOICE-operated thing and it will open the door. And you will have
to record your voice somewhere, you know, at Human Resources, so it
will, it will make a match with your voice. And you can spend two
minutes in the STALL, and after two minutes in the stall, the door will
fly open and you will be photographed. --And also, because people
have been making too MANY trips to the bathroom each day, we are
GOING to limit bathroom trips to FOUR a day. If you have to go to
the bathroom more than four times a day, you will have to go off
campus to do so."

[PAUSE] Now, I'm SORRY. I believed it. If I hadn't been,
well, I'm an incest survivor, and I think the idea of being photographed
in the stall kind of shocked me into an infantile state, and I BELIEVED
it. I don't know what happened. But I thought, "This is the last
straw." And the, the department was actually such an awful place to
work that I accepted it and believed it. I thought, "OK. I’ll have to go and have my VOICE recorded," [CONFIDENTIAL TONE] but I have to go oftener than four times a day, I know.

ANYWAY, BELIEVING this memo, I came back to stand right where people fill out the work orders. And, Suzanne came out of her office. She was standing there too. And, there, with Ann Marie where the work-studies [work-study students] are, and Carol was over there. And I said something about [WISTFUL], "WHAT IS THIS NEW BATHROOM POLICY?" And I remember Suzanne looked at me kinda funny, and I think what she was doing, it was registering with her that I believed it. And I said to Suzanne, [WIDE-EYED, BREATHELESS], "You know, Suzanne, I have to go to the bathroom OFTENER than four times a DAY. I don’t know what I’m gonna DO," I said. "I TRY not to drink water." And EVERYBODY could hear: Art Sheskey had come out.

So we had Suzanne hearing it, Art Sheskey heard it, Ann Marie and Carol heard it, and ANYBODY else standin’ around heard it. And I said [HIGH PITCH], "You know? I try not to drink water at night so I can MAKE it to 9:30 or 10 to go down the steps to the bathroom, until I come over to Campbell. And I don’t know HOW I can manage just FOUR times a DAY!" And what did? [PAUSE] Suzanne said something like [PATRONIZING], "YEAH! That’s not very many TIMES!" And I said, "And GEE, I don’t want to have to walk to McDonald’s to go to the BATHROOM!" And Suzanne said [SUPERCILIOUS, VOWEL-LENGTHENING], "Well, PEEERRSONALLY, I think I’D go to Ar-AAA-bica."

[LOUDLY, CRISPLY] Now, I CONSIDER THIS BETRAYAL OF A FEMALE. I mean, I think at that point either Ann Marie or Carol or Art Sheskey said, "Emily, it’s a joke." And the women said, "Yeah, we all got those in our mailboxes today. The female staff got those in our mailboxes today from Art." And I said, "JUST the FEMALE staff got ’em?" And they said, "Yes." And I said, "THAT is sexual HARASSMENT." And Art Sheskey’s FACE went [LAUGHS; GUTTERAL] WHITE. [DISPASSIONATELY, EVENLY] I said, "That’s sexual harassment if you just put those in the women’s mailboxes." And he was, I could tell, [LAUGHS] kinda sorry, he’d done it!

So the incident was over. I felt ABSOLUTELY like a FOOL, I thought Suzanne had BETRAYED me, because she should have said right away, or PULLED me by the ARM into her office as soon as I
said, "What is this new bathroom policy?" She could have said, "Come with ME!" That's what a woman, who, well, your SUPERVISOR ought to do, you know [LAUGHS], "Come with me, my dear!" But she liked to get you STRUGGLING in front of her, like a cat and mouse. She liked to see you SUFFER, PUBLICLY, in front of people. And then she would humiliate you more. So, THAT's my Suzanne story.

* * *

Even before the story's "beginning" marker ("I have a Suzanne story"), Emily converts a noun-noun phrase ("Queen Bee") into an infinitive verb ("Suzanne likes to Queen Bee"), thus neatly driving home her impression of Suzanne's personal power. Emily's word-making capabilities demonstrate that "Scientists and scholars may give themselves airs with high-bred affixes borrowed from classical languages, but they are linguistically no more sophisticated than the common speakers who are satisfied with leftovers from the vernacular" (Bolinger 1968:88); Emily heightens Suzanne's agency by converting the noun phrase to the verb, for not only is Suzanne a Queen Bee but she does what Queen Bees do. And because Suzanne "likes" to "Queen Bee," Suzanne's image is that of a potentially dangerous mover and shaker (bees can use their stingers). Emily, depicting herself as markedly vulnerable in all her narratives, portrays Suzanne as callously taking advantage, a trickster who "intentionally manipulates features of a situation in such a way as to induce another person or persons (to be called victim or dupe) to have a false or misleading sense of what is going on and so to behave in a way that brings about discomfiture (confusion, embarrassment, etc.) in the victim" (Bauman 1986:36). In Bauman, however, the person who pulled the prank is the person who tells the story, lending the teller power
in both the narrated and storytelling event. In revealing the details of her storyworld victimization, Emily continues to project her vulnerability during the interview.

Nevertheless, by casting Suzanne and the development officer in so negative a light, Emily recoups a modicum of the personal dignity that she lost in the original interaction. While not strictly an incidence of "gossip" (I am not personally acquainted with the characters), Emily's strategy here mirrors Roger Abrahams' notion that gossip "is a tool by which the gossiper exercises personal control over the talked-about person, if only because he is licensed to call the person's name" (1970:300). Not only does she call her abuser by name, she provides vivid and specific details surrounding the "Queen Bee's" misuse of power to which she fell victim. Although recounting the events is undoubtedly painful, Emily is not completely "re-victimized" in the telling. Acknowledging her gullibility in thinking the memo was an official one, she nevertheless provides details explaining just why she believed it (she had as usual been coping with a heavy workload that day, and as an incest survivor, she was psychologically shocked into "an infantile state" when confronted with the spectre of being photographed in a bathroom stall). Thus, Emily portrays herself as a reasonable, hard-working, and innocent person who is duped by opportunists. Emily's story is the kind of story that victims of pranks often choose not to tell. But I think Emily openly shares painful events with me because she perceives my empathy and approves of the critical goals of this project.

Emily also regains a portion of personal control with her expert performance of the "Queen Bee" story. Her formal delivery of the bogus memo mimics the
faceless voice of the institution: her use of the word "implement," rarely found in spoken casual discourse, is emblematic of the bureaucracy. Emily’s pause after her recitation of the memo shows her excellent sense of dramatic timing: she waits for me to process the ramifications of the memo’s contents before returning to her own voice. Emily adopts several metanarrative strategies in the passage, including her recognition of Suzanne’s sly calculation ("And I remember Suzanne looked at me kinda funny, and I think what she was doing, it was registering with her that I believed it"). It is clear that, after taking stock, Emily realizes that Suzanne was eager to capitalize on Emily’s shocked confusion, demonstrating for the onlookers that she, Suzanne, had the upper hand. Suzanne gets her wish: Emily falls squarely into Suzanne’s grasp with her breathless, frightened confession, "I have to go oftener than four times a day!"

Still, by means of her performance strategies, Emily demonstrates the intersubjective dynamic that accompanies the retelling of an embarrassing story, which is, as Abrahams stresses, "to take a situation which, while it was happening, was out of control, and to impose on it a sense of order after the fact" (1970:312). Also critical to her sense of personal control, Emily shows herself as appealing to rationality—and legality—when she discovers the bathroom plot. Vehemently identifying the chicanery as sexual harassment, Emily turns the tables on her conspirators and regains a portion of her pride. All of this brings up an interesting legal point: would charges of sexual harassment be mitigated by the satiric/ironic
nature of Suzanne’s message? Was the notice meant to make fun of the women
workers’ need to go to the bathroom, or was the prank meant to make fun of overly
zealous bureaucrats by exaggerating the degree of their workplace control?

Considered this way, might Emily herself have approved of the joke had she not
fallen victim to it herself? Such questions are complicated by the specific context in
which Emily reveals her innocence of the ironic intent.

After depicting how staff status can manifest itself in the workplace, Emily
subsequently shared two narratives about faculty status that she has experienced while
on the job.

* * *

"It’s How They Call Cattle."

EMILY: The most frustrating part of my job was the way one
faculty member would call the Word Processing Operators "boss." Dr.
Hunter called all of the Word Processing Operators "boss," and I asked
the others how they felt about it, and they said, "Oh, we just shine it
on. We just go on with our WORK." But it bothered ME. Several
times I asked Dr. Hunter NOT to call me "boss" anymore, but he
continued to. [LIGHTHEARTED] "Hi, Boss! How are YOU?" "Hi,
Boss. How are YOU today?" "THANKS, Boss," he’d say, when you
gave him his memo. And I asked my incest counselor, "HOW can I
get him to stop?" She said, "Give him an ‘I’ message: ‘I’d rather you
called me Emily! I HAVE a name’, or something." I tried this but it
didn’t work.

So what I FINALLY did, was Laura’s suggestion that they call
cattle "boss." It’s their genus, b-o-s. That’s why it’s "Bosse" the
cow. And when they call cattle, it’s "Here boss, here boss, here
boss." So one time, standing down there on the first floor, Roger
Hunter called me "Boss" again. [LAUGHTER] And, I said, "Would
you please NOT call me ‘Boss’?" And he said [INNOCENTLY]:
"Well, WHYYYY?" You know. And we’ve BEEN through this, so
many times. And I said, "Well, okay, I’ll tell you." [SLOWLY,
EVENLY, LOW PITCH] "It’s because that’s how they call cattle."
And he got—he was SORRY. [DISTRESSED] "I'm SO SORRY. OH! I don't MEAN it that way," and [DRAMATICALLY APOLOGETIC] "OHH, he'd NEVER call me 'Boss' again!"

So he DIDN'T. She was right, she DID it! You know? Just say it's how they call cattle.

* * *

It is self-evident that this story has been told and re-told. A look at the intertextuality indicates that Emily has rehashed bits and pieces of the "boss" dilemma with a variety of people, including co-workers, her incest counselor, her roommate Laura, and Dr. Hunter himself. The rhetorical smoothness also bespeaks repeated tellings. In the seamlessly reconstructed chronology, Emily slides in and out of several voices, dramatically deploying the dialogue with apt tonal emphases and few false starts; the coda-punchline ("Just say it's how they call cattle") is perfectly timed.

Roger Hunter's thrice-repeated mock cattle call ("Hi, Boss!/Hi, Boss!/Thanks, Boss"), which effectively evokes both Emily's loathing and Hunter's obliviousness to her loathing, is matched by the "true" cattle call later in the narrative ("Here boss, here boss, here boss"). At that point, Laura's etymological savvy gives Emily the ammunition she needs to draw for Professor Hunter a parallel between the two kinds of "bosses," thus alerting him to her own keen awareness of the cultural dynamic that underpins his use of the appellation. Fairclough (citing Pecheux) reminds us that "semantic variation is a facet of and factor in ideological conflict" (1992:186), and Laura's "cattle" analogy shows how the nickname functions in its social situation: in calling the workers "boss," the true boss emphasizes his higher ranking by invoking a
conspicuous incongruity. According to Emily's text, this state of pseudo-
democratization conferred by the "boss" nickname is not lost on any of the Civil
Service staff members Hunter names, the unequal power relations persevering, indeed
exacerbated, with his use of the honorific.

Emily's story demonstrates the veracity of Foucault's theory about the
interrelatedness of knowledge and power: by "naming" Emily and her co-workers,
Roger Hunter pigeonholes them and thus retains his control. It is both Professor
Hunter's repetitious use of "boss" and the underlying meaning of the term as it is
used in context that normalizes Emily's and the other workers' personae as Civil
Servants. As Sally McConnell-Ginet stresses, "social privilege leads to a kind of
linguistic privilege, making it appear that the language itself supports the interests and
reflects the outlook of those with privilege (by virtue of sex or class or race). . . . it
is not a language (an interpreted system) but language (use) that helps subordinate
women (and other dominated groups)" (1988:91).

This "victim" narrative is also ultimately a text about personal dignity and
empowerment. As in the "Queen Bee" story, Emily appeals to rationality at the end,
when Roger Hunter is portrayed as taken aback by her even-handed explication of his
generic nickname. Emily engages in symbolic role reversal by becoming "teacher" to
the professor: she simultaneously offers arcane information about animal husbandry
and uncovers for him the asymmetrical power base that sanctioned the naming in the
first place. In so doing, Emily effectively stifles Roger Hunter's future impulses to
engage in the derogatory naming of his subordinates. Bruner has suggested that, with
our storytelling, we "dabble in the subjunctive" (1990:53); I believe Emily’s desire for respect is impressed on her listener with every reenactment of this story. Yet while the "Queen Bee" and "Cattle-Call" stories may have positive endings for Emily, her subsequent "status" narratives lack such a dimension, the victim theme palpable. In her next job in the Medical College, Emily worked with a faculty member who displayed his status in a number of ways. The following anecdote shows that words alone do not make "meaning," that the manner of discourse can also be crucial in conveying assumptions about positionality.

* * *

EMILY: Um, Dr. Torvill would laugh at me if I asked questions. Um, there was a man who used to work in our lab, just part of the time, he was a doctor from Children’s Hospital. And, when I’d only been there about three weeks, I asked whether a letter was to go to "Dear Dr. Hill" or "Dear Bob." And he and Abdul were sitting at his desk, and he looked over at me and he said [BOOMING, JOVIAL]: "WELL, he works in our lab sometimes on Fridays, so I guess that makes him ‘Dear BOB,’" [DRAMATICALLY GUFFAWS] "Haw! haw! haw! haw!" But, you know, a NICE person, you know, would say [RESPECTFULLY], "Well, it’s ‘Dear Bob,’ he works in our lab sometimes on Fridays." But, you know [AGAIN ASSUMES DEEP, SUPERIOR TONE]: "I guess that makes him ‘Dear BOB,’ ha ha ha." That was a typical comment.

* * *

After I interviewed Emily, she voluntarily typed up several addenda with more details about status problems she has faced in the university, two of which are characterized by weight discrimination. Emily provided me with the following written summaries:

* * *

It was often painful to me that Dr. Torvill and his lab staff (all slender) wouldn’t ride up in the elevator with me when we returned from celebratory lunches. We went out to lunch to celebrate all eight of our
birthdays—plus Boss' Day and Christmas. It was a way to get us all together for friendliness and camaraderie and to boost morale. I could climb down okay when we went to these lunches at local restaurants, but my weight made it difficult to climb back up to the fourth floor.

I was amazed the first time we all went to lunch together. I headed for the elevator to ride down, said something like, "I need to use the elevator...", but the others all dove for the stairs. Okay, I thought, and went down the stairs with the others. Then coming back, I started for the elevator again with a similar comment, expecting at least some of the others to follow me. To my amazement and dismay, no one followed. I rode up by myself—and reached the fourth floor just as the others were emerging from the stairwell. I continued to ride up after all of our celebratory lunches until I moved to another building. During all of that time, I don't remember anyone ever riding up the elevator with me. Even when we went out to celebrate MY BIRTHDAY, I got to ride up in the elevator BY MYSELF. I thought this was unbelievably rude. Wondered what they would have done had I been in a wheelchair. Just another example of how much fun it was to work in the College of Medicine.

* * *

Emily documented another occurrence of weight discrimination that took place at the home of her supervisor. Emily casts the episode in story form, which she entitles "The Night of the Farewell Party for Brad."

* * *

Dr. and Mrs. Torvill were both very weight conscious. They were proud of their trim, slender bodies. When I had worked for Dr. Torvill for over a year, there was a farewell party after work at the Torvill residence for a post-doc named Brad who was leaving for a job in Chicago. It was customary for Dr. and Mrs. Torvill to hold office/lab parties in their back yard after work.

I was extremely tired after working all day at top speed and didn't feel like going to a party, but I thought it best to go—so I did. There were about twenty people sitting around card tables eating dinner and talking quietly. On a table across the patio was a large sheet cake with "Good Luck, Brad" or some such sentiment decorating it. I happened to be sitting at a table where twenty or so extra forks for the cake were laid out in rows. The other three persons at my table all either had or would soon have Ph.D.'s.
We finished the main course—I always ate very lightly at the Torvill residence because I knew their abhorrence of fat people. (At a previous party at the Torvill home, Mrs. Torvill had made a big deal of offering the pretzels to guests on their way out the door because "We might eat them and get FAT"—right in front of me—loudly—I assumed for my benefit.)

Anyway, as we finished the main course, Mrs. Torvill stood up and said something like, "Now for dessert—let's see—where are the forks? Does everyone have a fork?" She looked from table to table, spotted the forks next to me, and continued, "There are the forks, over by Emily. I BET EMILY WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A PIECE OF CAKE TO GO WITH EVERY ONE OF THOSE FORKS, WOULDN'T YOU, EMILY?" She sneered the last three words, drawing them out for a long time, especially my name. Or so it seemed to me.

I didn’t realize at first how badly I was hurt by the remark. I started talking animatedly to the others at my table about my weight and how much of a problem it has always been, and then realized I was being a fool and stopped talking. Twenty minutes later I thought up an excuse to leave the party. The remark was especially painful because my co-workers had heard it.

* * *

Kim Chernin articulates the irony of the "less is more" philosophy: "Consider what it means to persuade a woman who is depressed and sorrowful and disheartened by her entire life, that if only she succeeds in reducing herself, in becoming even less than she already is, she will be acceptable to this culture which cannot tolerate her" (1995:244). Without doubt, being "overweight" is a significant facet of Emily’s marginality. Along with her femaleness, her Civil Service status, her age, and her incest history, Emily perceives that her weight gives society yet another way to negatively "mark" her, to dismiss her as less than worthy. Emily’s angst at being both singled out and excluded as a result of her weight comes through loud and clear.
Questions about the adequacy and accuracy of such "representations" are inevitable: does Emily's own "victim" mindset lead her to exaggerate the character of the insults? Perhaps Emily has misconstrued the intentions of Dr. Torvill's wife and staff, who, if confronted, would likely deny their roles in reinforcing weight (and other kinds of) discrimination. But we might also ask, does Emily's Civil Service status partly encourage overt ostracism and cruel, clumsy barbs? If she were faculty or an A & P staff member, would the slights and taunts have been more subtle, less frequent, even non-existent? By eschewing Emily because of her weight, to what extent are members of the dominant class simultaneously constructing and reinforcing the "difference" between themselves and Emily?

Emily's stories and all the stories in this project will be evaluated in different ways by different readers. Incredulities and questions, about Emily's perceptions of weight discrimination as well as many other issues the participants bring to light, will vary according to the agendas and associations of the auditors; if postmodern legitimation is "plural, local, and immanent" (Fraser and Nicholson 1990:23), it is clear that Emily's and the other participants' highly evaluated observations and stories demonstrate the value of private and highly personal ways of knowing, and further blur the already fuzzy boundaries between objective and subjective realities. Global truth claims aside, Emily's narratives all evoke the world Emily inhabits. In conforming to Margaret Mills' idea, folklorists and other scholars need "to address the intransigence of the experience of the abuse of power" (1993:185) which Emily's stories so passionately document.
Although Carrie, Meg, Hester, Jill, Ariel, Ruth, and Emily all identified the existence of status-motivated interactions in their work areas and with their supervisors, Iz volunteered information of a different sort. Iz's loyalty to the faculty in her department is clear with her use of the inclusive "our" in the following assessment; here, Iz portrays the university administration and other departments' faculty as exhibiting their status in more obvious ways than the faculty with whom she works.

* * *

IZ: We had a meeting—the Department of _____ had a meeting with the Board and the provost last week—and we got sandbagged! Our faculty are not typical academics, for the most part. The Art History people are; the Music History people are; the Art Ed. people are; you know, they're all traditional academics, they have their Ph.D.'s—and there's a big class difference there, a BIG class difference. You know, the budget cuts are coming around. So they ARE restructuring our department. We might get merged with Industrial Design. And I.D. are really tight-assed; they're more academics, you know, they're very status--.

* * *

When Iz notes "a big class difference there, a BIG class difference" between her faculty and other faculty within the university, she symbolically aligns herself with the non-traditional faculty members in her department, the implicitly lower-class group. Iz's assessment therefore offers testimony to the existence of parity between one department's staff and faculty members.

As an insider among Ohio State's female clerical Civil Service employees with advanced degrees, the scrutiny of my own perceptions of the university hierarchy may be instructive. I have consequently decided to disclose and interpret a "status"
incident that I experienced first-hand in the workplace. Gregg suggests, "The combination of placing oneself and being placed in social reality contributes to identity, through the negotiation of subjectivities in order to develop a coherent and powerful story about one's life" (1993:177). Situating myself within the framework of my own research heightens my understanding of the process of identity creation; further, if this collection of discourse samples is representative of the experiences of all of us, then my impressions are inextricable from the impressions of the group. The difference here is that I have neither performed a narrative nor transcribed another's, but have set down my own impressions of a discursive event. But I believe that the exercise of recording the following incident has allowed me to "re-experience, re-live, re-create, re-tell, re-construct, and re-fashion our culture," as Bruner has advised (1986:11).

I must stress that, with the exception of the male boss I described in the first chapter, most of my interactions in the university, either faculty-to-staff or supervisor-to-staff, have been either benign or positive, and lacking the degree of "status" displayed in the isolated exchange I will explicate here. Nor would I identify any aspect of the passage as folklore per se--beyond the "Raises, Not Roses!" comment at the end of the excerpt, there is no measurable production or reiteration of "aesthetic expression," and no real "groupness" involved other than the hierarchical dyad of faculty member and staff member. But the brief exchange is ripe with possibilities for an analysis of how hierarchy is expressed and reinforced at the discourse level.
The situational context for the incident is the observation of "Professional Secretary's Week" (and my word "observation" is used advisedly here, for observation can be cynical or innocent, self-conscious or not, depending on one's station and corresponding ideology):

* * *

On April 25, 1995, Ann Shellhammer, a faculty member in the department, came to my office wearing an expensive-looking new dress, gold pin at her throat, smiling smugly. Although I was at work, Ann as usual did not apologize for interrupting but walked up to my computer, standing about 18 inches from me. She waited expectantly for me to turn and give her my full attention, something she expects and something I have always provided. (In a "meta-metanarrative" comment, I admit here that despite my ongoing irritation with Ann, my personality is such that I try to avoid conflict; I have also been unsure how to jettison from my office a faculty member who wants to chat about her own concerns even though I am busy.)

I looked at Ann. As she stood above me, smiling and expectant, her body language told me that she was ready to launch into a long-winded story about her dog or her prowess on some University committee. This time, however, Ann's message-for-the-day was spawned by "Professional Secretary's Week" (an oxymoron?). Ann said, "If you were MY secretary, I'd have gotten you this little 'Snoopy' card I saw . . ." I responded, "I'm not anybody's SECRETARY." She back-peddled a little: "Oh, you know what I mean. I know you appreciate dog cards. Even if your category isn't exactly secretary." Then she told me all about the card.

Ann brought in her usual 3-lb. box of chocolates today, too, which she earmarked for Rhoda and Evelyn. As Rhoda wryly commented, a "token" box would have been plenty, but the 3-pounder symbolizes Ann's own "heft" within the scheme of things. Rhoda says there's divisiveness among the staff about "Secretary's Week." Although she herself claims to "detest" it, Rhoda suggests that many staff probably "eat it up" (both the "recognition" and the candy, I gathered). I told Rhoda I thought that "Secretary's Week" is a forum by which the hegemony is reinforced under the guise of chocolates, cards, and "free lunches." Then I left Rhoda with an expression I've used occasionally during the past few years: "Raises, Not Roses!"

* * *
Taken as a whole, Ann’s sentence in the second paragraph above functions on several levels: on the surface, the sentence seems to convey that Ann is feeling benevolent and thoughtful toward me. But I argue that, for Ann, the remark’s raison d’être lies in pointing up my lower-ranking position in the university, thus underscoring her own higher-ranking position. The design and use of Ann’s sentence and consideration of the context in which it occurs beg critical analysis. Norman Fairclough identifies the illuminating value of critical research methods which depart from non-critical approaches in not just describing discursive practices, but also showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants. (1992:12)

Jim Thomas reminds us that "All thought and language is, at root, ideological" (1993:9); citing Bourdieu, Thomas reiterates that "institutions of power lie behind behavior and cultural meanings that construct and limit choices, confer legitimacy, and guide our daily routine" (1993:6); similarly, Fairclough describes the particularly "critical" thrust he envisions for the analysis of discourse: "Hegemonies within particular organizations and institutions and at a societal level are produced, reproduced, contested and transformed in discourse" (1992:9-10).

A critical look at Ann’s message might therefore demonstrate just how such institutional power is mechanized. First, a look at context. In terms of both the broad, "historical" context and the immediate situation, it is Ann’s faculty status that makes the remark possible. For the sake of argument, consider Ann’s reaction if I walked into her office without apology and stated: "If you were MY secretary . . .".

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If the order of the addressor/ addressee were reversed, the clause's power would be neutralized—it would be nonsensical, unregisterable, and in fact impossible within the framework of my and Ann’s positionality in the university’s power hierarchy. Moreover, that Ann considered presenting me with the Snoopy card—embedded as it is with a specific message of power relations—is likewise iconic of asymmetrical social relations; what would on the surface appear to be an act of politeness is in fact an act of domination. As Brown and Levinson comment, "An English country gentleman, like an Indian landlord, to this day can feast his tenants, but would refrain from accepting food from them" (1987:46).

Next, a review of the nuts and bolts of discursive power plays: Fairclough suggests that "particular structurings of the relationships between words and the relationships between the meanings of a word are forms of hegemony" (1992:77), and a systematic dismantling of the lexical and semantic relations within Ann’s sentence uncovers a distinctly hegemonic format. The use of some of Fairclough’s seven tools for the analysis of discourse will assist here: I will look especially at the cohesive properties of Ann’s clauses and the force of her utterance. Fairclough points to the multifunctional nature of clauses: they are at once ideational (e.g., signifying an individual exerting a physical force upon an entity), interpersonal (e.g., either declarative, interrogative, or imperative, which in turn sets up the subject positions within the clause), and textual (e.g. topical or thematic) (1992:76). All three functions are operative in Ann’s clauses, emphasizing her identity as agent and, correspondingly, my identity as object. In ideational terms, the second half of Ann’s
clause ("I'd have bought you a Snoopy card") suggests a vision of Ann as the would-be agent and I as the would-be recipient of her agency. Ann depicts herself as having thought of buying a card for me, which implies the would-be buyer's generosity as well as her discernment in being able to choose an appropriate card, both of which are conditions that stress Ann's agency. In much the same way, the interpersonal dimension of the second half of the clause is declarative, also a means of expressing agency, for to declare is to claim subjecthood.

However, both the ideational and interpersonal aspects of Ann's sentence are semantically subordinate to the textual, or thematic, aspect, which is plainly found in the first clause. I argue that the parallel constructions of the pronouns ("you" and "my" in the first clause, and "I" and "you" in the second) provide the student of discourse analysis an important clue to Ann's motivation for the utterance, which I believe is her wish to underscore the binary relationship between subject (Ann, the "I" of the sentence) and object (me, the "you" of the sentence). What is syntactically the main clause in Ann's overall sentence ("I'd have bought you a Snoopy card") becomes semantic second fiddle to the preface, "If you were MY secretary," conveying as it does the opposition between subject (Ann) and object (me), an opposition that can be pinpointed in the parallel construction. The subjunctive "IF" in Ann's phrase becomes less important than the possessive "MY," casting the word "secretary" as object. Hence, the message embedded rather transparently within Ann's phrase can be presented syllogistically:
1) I am a secretary (or occupy a secretary-like category of employment), and secretaries lack power;
2) Ann is a faculty member and so is powerful;
3) Therefore, the potential exists for Ann to own me.

When my "turn" arrived in the "conversation," I attempted to offset the thrust of Ann's comment by stating mildly (in other words, "appropriately" in the context of the staff/faculty hierarchy) that I was not a secretary; furthermore, my use of the possessive "anybody's" implies that I do not "belong" to anyone. Ann made a small concession, but then went on to describe the "Snoopy Card." In my view, this was not a strategy to cajole me out of my indignation--if she did comprehend that I had reacted negatively to her comment, I believe that the extent of my indignation was lost on her. Rather, Ann's rejoinder effectively steered the conversation away from my protest. The above "exchange" exemplifies the dynamic of "asymmetrical power relations," as Thomas puts it (1993:43), for by rejecting the validity of my protest by choosing to ignore it, Ann's status is reinforced on yet another plane.

Class Struggle and Emergent Aesthetic Forms

Fairclough, in sketching out the ways discourse functions in relation to ideology and hegemonic struggle, points to Althusser's "unresolved contradiction" between domination ("in which ideology figures like a universal social cement") and class struggle: "it is the former vision which is predominant, and there is a marginalization of struggle, contradiction and transformation" (1992:87) (emphasis
mine). In their discussions about "status" (both its hierarchical emergence and its
effects upon their subordinate positions within that hierarchy), the participants speak
to occupying just such a marginalized position as Althusser identifies, a position
where their struggles are not acknowledged, and where the transformation of
positionality seems so tenuous. The narratives indicate that life experiences in which
one's lower status is emphasized by various discursive practices and material
conditions seem to spawn a desire to depict and remake that self in opposition to those
who demonstrate their greater status. Binaries characterize the work lives of the
women in this study: male vs. female, A & P staff (male or female) vs. Classified
Civil Service (female), marked academics (faculty members) vs. unmarked academics
(the staff members in this study), and so on. But the participants' verbal art achieves
a momentary reversal of the binaries. The participants, typically marked in a local
(hence pejorative) sense, empower themselves by trivializing and thus marking their
trivializers (as Goffman states, "backstage derogation of the audience serves to
maintain the morale of the team" [1959:175]).

The emergent aspect of the performances herein reveal their topical saliency
for the women. Richard Bauman stresses that the emergent form "resides in the
interplay between communicative resources, individual competence, and the goals of
the participants, within the context of particular situations" (1977:38). I take
Bauman's combination of "communicative resources" and "individual competence" to
mean, first, the communicative competence that Dell Hymes sees as going beyond
syntax and semantics to a sense of what is appropriate given the circumstances; and
second, rhetorical ability--both the skill at moving among genres, and the "development of a heightened pragmatic sense" (Briggs 1986:43,88). The "goals of the participants," of course, vary according to situation and players; the "communicative resources" and "individual competence" should likewise be fine-tuned to the requirements of the performance context.

The emergent quality of the speech events in the participants’ narratives lies within a number of dynamic processes. First, the richly abundant metaphors reveal communicative competence of the first order. Ruth’s "Froth on Cappuccino" and "Mr. Leather Elbows," Ariel’s "Yes Girls," Jill’s "Golden Seat," Carrie’s "Degree Snobs," and Emily’s word-making ("she likes to Queen Bee") fit both the immediate situation and the women’s individual performance personae; such figuration in performance mode indicates measurably developed intuitive judgments about what "works" in a situation, and also demonstrates semantic and lexical talents.

In terms of delivery, the women likewise display their competence. Charles Briggs points out:

The best speakers select an utterance type, such as a joke, a story, or 'just words,' that best fits the social context of the conversation and the predominate topic. Likewise, the utterance does not falter (through slurring of words, a lapse in memory, etc.) and is accompanied with appropriate gesticulation, body movement, facial expression, and prosodic features. (1986:88)

In many cases, the participants’ enthusiasm, their paralinguistic expressiveness (including laughter, changes in intonation, vocal impressions, and quoting), and their smoothness of delivery indicate repeat performance. Further, the denseness of evaluative components (often termed "indexical features of speech events"
(Briggs: 1986:42) within all of the narratives suggest emergent forms, for evaluation is said to be the most important element of a narrative in social terms (Linde 1993:72). Two examples of the application of indexical (or, non-referential) meanings within the narratives are Ariel’s comments that her department chair is unhappy with her after-work studying in the office:

I mean, she’s never SAID anything, but she’s always [DEMANDING AND SUSPICIOUS]: ‘Well what are YOU doing here?’ But it’s not like [SYMPATHETICALLY], ‘Why aren’t you HOME?’ I mean, I just get a funny feeling about it’.

And, a measurable indexical dimension accompanies Jill’s and Emily’s changes in vocal pitch, timbre, and rhythm as they alternate from their own voices to those of their co-workers in their stories, "The Christmas Lunch," "The Queen Bee and the Bathroom," and "'It's How They Call Cattle'.”

Bauman says, "what is important is the contrast between performance and other ways of speaking in an informant’s own community" (1977:20): it is almost impossible to imagine any of the women indulging in such self-reflexive and oppositional performances in the company of their supervisors or while on the job when professional circumspection is the norm. In this respect, the metacommunicative aspects of the performances also point to their emergent nature. "By focusing our attention on the act or process of communicating, such devices lead us away from and then back to the message by supplying a ‘frame,’ an interpretive context or alternative point of view within which the content of the story is to be understood and judged" (Babcock 1977:66). Because context and content are
infinitely changeable, metacommunicative framing takes place for a variety of reasons. For instance, it can play up the comic aspect, which then implicitly reminds the listener of the less-than-jolly world the performer generally inhabits. A look at either Meg's "professorial" take-off, in which she boasts: "I'm from HAAARVARD, or YAAALE, or [POMPOUSLY CLEARS THROAT] PRINCETON," or Ruth's performance of "blowing the froth off the cappuccino" can illuminate this concept. Both events enact playfulness, whimsy, and spontaneity, behavior that is diametrical to the regimented and official context of their daily work lives. Meg and Ruth gleefully manipulate their superiors in symbolic form, exposing the supervisors' limitations, and by so doing, construct in performance terms the socially unimaginable. Such forms are fictive and self-consciously fictive. The storyteller's strategy is to force an implicit, ironic comparison between the burlesque within the performance and the less-comic domain of everyday life. As Babcock states, "the storyteller not only must create an illusion of reality but must make certain that we are aware that it is an illusion, and for this metanarration is essential." (1977:70).

Another sort of metacommunication takes place on behalf of didacticism. Carrie's interview-about-an-interview is modeled after the instructive parent-to-child or teacher-to-pupil interaction: Carrie's pointed metacommunicative comments, "you know?" and "I mean," are not fillers, but force either a verbal reply or an appropriate non-verbal response indicating cognition such as attentive gaze, fixed eye contact, head nodding, and so on. As Briggs has noted,
pedagogical discourse is dialogic in nature. The elders often query their junior(s) as to whether she or he is comprehending what has been said by ending a statement with such questions as . . . 'you see?' . . . 'do you know what I'm telling you?' or . . . 'right?' Similarly, the 'student' is free to ask for reiterations or further elaborations. Younger persons use questions (e.g. . . . 'really?') or such exclamations as 'yes,' um hum, and the like in signaling the elder that they are comprehending the 'lesson.' (1986:84)

Carrie, like a number of the other participants, became so caught up in her communicative performance that she would sometimes fail to acknowledge a brief rejoinder that I offered, and I believe this is a positive sign. In the context of the interview, the women behave appropriately by dominating the spotlight—they are taking their role to heart, and telling me "the way it is."

The rhetorical distancing between self and other can be viewed as a theoretical nexus between "performance as aesthetic evaluation" and "performance as linguistic utterances that create social realities" (Mills 1993:179); at the very least, such a condition has resulted for the folkloric dyad within which the communication has taken place, and it can be argued that the residual awareness of the exchanges will continue to influence future discourse by means of intertextuality. Fairclough stresses "Once critical linguistics has established ideological meanings for a text, it tends to take their ideological effects for granted" (1992:28).

Indeed, the "status" narratives here have achieved their coherence in large measure by the inner workings of their components of intertextuality, which Fairclough describes as "Text Production" (i.e., texts consist of prior texts to which they respond); "Text Distribution" (texts are transformed as they shift from one channel to another); and "Consumption" (being the addressee's interpretation,
evaluation, and appropriate or inappropriate response to the text) (1992:71). The three facets of intertextuality as Fairclough presents them can be roughly aligned with three crucial facets of performance theory: "Text Production" is loosely commensurate with the folklorist's concern with texture and context upon texts; "Text Distribution" speaks to the particular performance mode that is employed by particular performers for particular texts in particular situations; and "Consumption" underscores the necessity of an appropriate response by the folklorist, interviewer, or addressee for a satisfying exchange.

For narratives to be successfully shared, the teller's point must be met with listener appreciation or concurrence. Listener approval, moreover, can and does make itself known with very little input from that listener and can occur with limited interaction. As stated, the narratives of the women in this study are my focus; my feedback in the narratives generally occurs only for clarification, or to convey approval or understanding (there are exceptions: my interjecting the story about my own job interview during Ariel's narrative comes to mind). Jay Mechling's recommendation that we be "alert to the asymmetrical, complementary relationships we may find in a folk group (1993:276, emphasis mine) is well taken. I believe the interactions within this study have indeed been asymmetrical yet complementary, resulting in a sense of commonality. Commonalities between the interactants thus established, the reinforcement of folk groupness arises alongside self-identity.

For the participants, "creating insiderness" seems to occur by establishing otherness, specifically, opposition to the status-wielders in the workplace. The
researcher and participants, through shared experiences that help confirm the existence and boundaries of the problems, thus achieve a measure of "liberation" (Kalcik 1975). The "differential identity" I have pinpointed here veers from Bauman’s references to either exoteric or esoteric expressions of conflict within folk groups; rather, the "difference" is confined to the reconstituted experiences between "Civil Service self" and "Superior other" in the workplace. Thus, while "difference of identity . . . can be at the base of folklore performance," the difference here is manifest outside the folk group and then remade via the narratives and especially the performances (Bauman 1971). When reconstituted in a such a way, the difference becomes demystified and manageable, for both researcher and participants.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Robert Bellah et al. comment: "The most distinctive aspect of twentieth-century American society is the division of life into a number of separate functional spheres: home and workplace, work and leisure, white collar and blue collar, public and private. This division suited the needs of the bureaucratic industrial corporations that provided the model for our preferred means of organizing society by the balancing and linking of sectors as 'departments' in a functional whole, as in a great business enterprise" (1985:43).

2. As James L. Battersby says, "it is often the case that the 'intention' occasions or realizes the state of affairs it 'intends'. . . . the state of affairs represented as desirable in my mental state causes the state of affairs that is the satisfaction of that representation . . . and when this happens (when, as John Searle says, 'the mind brings about the very state of affairs it has been thinking about'), the 'mind' creates its own conditions of satisfaction" (1991:189).

3. In The Fashioned Self, Joanne Finkelstein explains that "Women, wearing the business suit, are taken to be expressing a degree of seriousness that is associated with the corporate world. The assumption is that a similitude exists between the appearance of the individual and the demeanour, even personal characteristics, which s/he can be expected to possess. . . .the suit of clothes is symbolic both of the individual's intentions to act in a given way and his or her private system of values and attitudes." (1991:109)

4. Ruth depicts the university's department chairs as a derogatory composite, as the metonym "Mr. Leather Elbows" suggests. With this technique, Ruth shows that status is often demonstrated in physical terms in occupational settings—in fact, folklorist Richard Dorson wore leather patches in the field to establish difference between himself and the "other." But Ruth's rhetorical strategy turns the tables, rendering the elite "other" ridiculous. As Goffman remarks: "Sometimes members of the audience are referred to not even by a slighting name but by a code which assimilates them fully to an abstract category. Thus doctors in the absence of a patient may refer to him as 'the cardiac' or 'the strep'; barbers privately refer to their customers as 'heads of hair.' So, too, the audience may be referred to in their absence by a collective term combining distance and derogation, suggesting an in-group--out-group split" (1959:173).

5. See Apte (Humor and Laughter: An Anthropological Approach) for a comprehensive account of the trickster's folkloristic and anthropological moorings; for a well-reasoned study of the trickster in mythology, see Hynes and Doty, Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticisms.
6. Kenneth Burke differentiates a form's "syllogistic progression" from its "qualitative progression" by stating that the former is a more definite state of affairs, with premises followed by consciously anticipated conclusions. In the case of qualitative progression, we are not as likely to expect a specific event, but rather are "put into a state of mind which another state of mind can appropriately follow." (1931:124-25).

7. Consider both Emily's experience with a "naming" faculty member, and Ruth's use of the word "obedience," in light of the following observation by Richard Harvey Brown: "The dominant classes in early industrial society sought to get their inferiors to do what they wanted them to do. In contemporary societies elites try to make their subordinates be what they want them to be (Laing 1969). The first form of domination can be achieved by giving coercive orders. The second is enacted not through orders but through naming. Attributions are powerful directives for constructing identities" (1987: 52).

8. The crucial nature of considering texts alongside contexts is a commonplace in folklore scholarship, at least since New Perspectives (1971) and arguably long before. Discourse analysis has similarly turned to context for more incisive interpretation; Norman Fairclough suggests that "The concept of discourse and discourse analysis is three-dimensional. Any discursive 'event' (i.e., any instance of discourse) is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice" (1992:4).

9. Citing Foucault, Fairclough reminds us that "the relationship between an utterance and its verbal and situational context is not a transparent one: how context affects what is said or written, and how it is interpreted, varies from one discursive formation to another" (1992:47).

10. Fairclough encapsulates the aim of the critical endeavor as one of search and discovery: "Critical' implies showing connections and causes which are hidden" (1992:9). He points out that critical linguistics has to date been overly concerned with "text as product" and should emphasize as well the "processes of producing and interpreting texts" (1992:28). In this work, I am also grappling with the production of texts and their subsequent interpretation based on the situational and larger context.

11. In Chapter Three of Discourse and Social Change (1992), Fairclough advances the view that there are four dimensions of text analysis (from the smallest unit to the largest, they are: vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure); further, Fairclough defines three dimensions by which discursive practice may be analyzed (these are: force of utterance, coherence, and intertextuality).

12. In his article, "Differential Identity and the Social Base of Folklore," Bauman does acknowledge the validity of the well-worn notion that folklore is a "mechanism contributing to social solidarity" as well as a vehicle for flexing difference (1971:38).
CHAPTER 5
CONFLICT AND HORROR STORIES

_The past not merely is not fugitive,_
_it remains present._
Marcel Proust

Over two centuries ago, the Italian philosopher Vico affirmed that "every metaphor is a fable in brief," and we have so far encountered a "Queen Bee," a "Mr. Leather Elbows," "Degree Snobs," and other characters whose vivid monikers seem to match their storyworld behaviors and mindsets. Isaiah Berlin, defining Vico’s views on creativity, remarks that "at the heart of Vico’s thought is the contrast between two worlds: the recalcitrant external world which we can manipulate only within limits set by Providence, and the world of men (sic), which their creative spirit ‘makes’" (1976:123). Vico stressed that the creation of myth, elaborate metaphor, or rite can be taken as an act of defiance "to some social pressure . . . or craving for unity or security or victory of a rival group"; such creations "may take diverse forms, mythological, metaphysical, authentic--different types of spectacles through which reality is apprehended and acted upon" (Berlin 1976:57). Vico’s perspicacity about the human potential for metaphoric creativity dovetails with my own interest in discovering how a "creative spirit" helps the women in this study to make sense of
their positions and interactions within the university. With the benefit of recent scholarship in folklore theory and discourse analysis, I also want to consider Vico's idea that, when the creative moment occurs in response to social pressure, "reality" can be acted upon, that aesthetic performances facilitate both identity creation and some alteration in the social fabric.

The participants all spoke of conflicts that have arisen during university interactions, and some of their accounts are so metaphorically vivid that I have come to call them "Horror Stories." The use of metaphor implies the storyteller's profound internalization of an experience, and by extension, her transformation by it. In performance theory, metaphorical construction suggests the recurring nature of the folk expressions in which such constructions are found; the extent to which verbal art is told and retold gauges the importance of the original event to the storyteller. In discourse analysis, metaphorical usage demonstrates the vigorous evaluation of a situation. The participants' metaphors contribute to the comprehensiveness of their texts by affirming some relationship, analogy, or identity that may not have been obvious in the events that their stories describe; the women thus display insights that go beyond the conventional view of things.

As was apparent in their "status" texts in the last chapter, the women are experienced cultural critics with decidedly critical viewpoints. Metaphoric usage of exceptional creativity and complexity was part and parcel of the women's "status" narratives and recurs within the "conflict" stories, for good reason. The metaphorical constructions in the next pages are most often used to comment on power structures
within the university, structures that are constantly reinforced and maintained in a multitude of mundane ways. As Fairclough points out, "metaphors are not just superficial stylistic adornments of discourse . . . . How a particular domain of experience is metaphorized is one of the stakes in the struggle within and over discourse practices" (1992:195).

In the following conflict story, Meg’s struggle for subjecthood is strengthened by her use of metaphor and other evaluative strategies.

* * *

MEG’S STORY: "Working in the Back Room"

1 MEG: First of all, when I was VERY underemployed at Personnel Services, it got to be difficult, for that year—nine months, actually. Was the hardest nine months of my life. When I first came here, let’s see, I was hired at Personnel Services, which at that time was run by Helene DeMal, who is still a Vice President in the University, although they’ve moved her out of Personnel. "The Iron Claw in the Velvet Glove." And you know, it’s really kind of funny, I think she went out of her way to hire fat women and older women, and women who had been out of the work force for a while, and had empty nests at this point and were coming back, or had been divorced or something.

2 And she’d hire us and put us in the back and work us to death. And then she’d hire these little disco queens and fluff chicks to work out front. And, you know, [BREEZY VOICE] you’d see them come to work with their little disco slides, and their fluffy little dresses, and their three-inch long fingernails, and they’d go [FALSETTO], "OOOH, Hello! I’m at THE Ohio State University," and you’d be like, "OH, Jesus-fucking-Christ!, who the hell ARE these people?"

3 You had to fight MIND DEATH there, just SURROUNDED by Woody Hayes and cheap Harold Robbins novels. You know? And you’d be working your ass off in the back room, and stuff. The thing was, that we were all supposed to be very quiet and docile, right?
There must be some sort of an image of, of low self-esteem and we’re all supposed to participate in that stereotype. And I didn’t. It was probably pretty obvious that they had not hired another fat cow.

When I first started, I was grateful to have a job, mind you, because I had been looking around in Athens for a while, and there was zip down there. But when I, when I came up here, here I was—I was a philosophy graduate, and I had thought about going to law school. And I was in charge of alphabetizing cards from "A" through "D." [IN AN ARTIFICIALLY BREATHY VOICE, MEG THEATRICALLY SLOWS THE CADENCE OF THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE.] And I was so good at it that they gave me ANOTHER LETTER. I mean it was like--HEY, the high point of my day was being able to bundle cards up into stacks of fifty and send them downstairs. I mean that place was the pit—it was absolutely hell to work there. So, getting out of there and getting into an academic office was much better.

* * *

It is evident that this story has been told more than once, and when I asked her, Meg revealed that she had related it to another graduate student some time ago. Meg frames the story with the familiar metanarrative devices "first of all" and "so"; the graphic metaphors ("disco queens, fluff chicks, fat cow, ‘Iron Claw in the Velvet Glove’") and deliberately shocking vulgarities are instantly retrieved from Meg’s performance repertoire; the interior dialogues and alteration of vocal patterns grab the attention; and Meg adeptly leads her listener from the story setting (for example, with her dramatization of the "fluff chicks" quote) back to the interview with her metanarrative evaluations. Meg’s forceful asides, "I mean," "you know?" and "right?" prompt the listener’s agreement with her own evaluations. All such devices point to Meg’s overarching message—that she has been grossly misused in the workplace.
It is significant that only one "key event clause" appears in this text ("I was hired at Personnel Services"); the other clauses are durative-descriptive, contextualizing state clauses that allow Meg not only to assess the situation but, more important, to portray herself as being qualified to evaluate the cultural dynamics that attend working in the back room (Polanyi 1989). Deictic evaluators, lending circularity to the story's theme, appear at the beginning and end ("I was VERY unemployed" and "that place was the pit--it was absolutely hell to work there"); content evaluators include information about the two groups of women who were hired and then segregated by the calculating supervisor. Meg documents this supervisor's power by using three modes of action in her parallel construction, "she'd hire us and put us in the back room and work us to death."

With her inclusive and repetitive "us" ("hire us/put us/work us"), Meg alludes to her membership in the first group of women, drawn as socially undesirable and financially vulnerable with yet another of Meg's repetitive constructions, "fat women/older women/women who had been out of the work force for a while." With her emphasis on "work," Meg links this stigmatized group with the trope of productivity, a connection made more forceful by the introduction of the "little disco queens and fluff chicks," interchangeable labels suggesting the existence of an office hierarchy and which also symbolize frivolous consumption. On display in the office with their "little disco slides, fluffy little dresses, and three-inch long fingernails," the fluff chicks'/disco queens' visible and audible "littleness" (the latter derived from Meg's falsetto performance) is symbolic of "little" productivity in the workplace.
which Meg contrasts to the enforced invisibility but corresponding productivity of the "heavyweights." With her disparaging storyworld evaluation ("OH, Jesus-fucking-Christ!, who the hell ARE these people?"), Meg also suggests her disapproval of "The Iron Claw in the Velvet Glove," who not only hires the vapid fluff chicks/disco queens but further marginalizes those women whose appearances and résumés are not up to snuff by exiling them to the back room. Segregating workers according to appearances is not "funny" at all, as Meg’s ironic "it’s really kind of funny" clause implies.

Meg’s membership in the productive group of women extends only to her capacity for productivity. She hints at her own intellectual leanings by tacitly rejecting the football fervor and the "cheap Harold Robbins’ novels" that "SURROUNDED" her in the office, and because she doesn’t say whether the novels and football mindset belong to the fluff chicks or to the back room workers or to both, Meg effectively sets herself apart from both groups with her rejection of those icons of pop culture: she is clearly intellectually superior to the "fluff chicks" and the "backroom workers" (as well as morally superior to the "Iron Claw"). Also unlike the other women in the back room, Meg’s story indicates that she challenged the status quo in the office, her outspokenness overturning the "stereotype" of docility and passivity ("it was obvious that they had not hired another fat cow"). Further distinguishing herself from the others, Meg calls upon her educational background to underscore the ludicrousness of her "underemployment": she is a philosophy graduate who had considered law school, yet is expected to shuffle alphabetized cards from A
through D. Meg's use of irony ("HEY, the highpoint of my day was being able to bundle cards up into stacks of fifty and send them downstairs") once again stresses the unjustness of her employment in the back room.

While Meg's incident took place early in her career at Ohio State, Hester's occurred after years of employment in an academic department. Hester was Graduate Secretary in a College of Humanities unit from 1980 to 1993. She knew all the graduate students in the department, and as a graduate student herself, she was (and is) empathetic with the "graduate student condition." In 1992, a student encountered difficulties during his Doctoral Candidacy Examination (popularly called "General Exams" or "Generals"); the student subsequently failed the examination and then asked the Graduate School for a hearing on the matter. Around this time, Hester heard two of the student's committee members openly commenting about him in the department's main office ("a serious mistake on their part," as Hester puts it). Hester believes that her willingness to corroborate the graduate student's testimony against one particular faculty member was the catalyst for the abolishment of her job.

* * *

HESTER'S STORY: "The Set Up"

HESTER: Faculty brought up a private matter in the main office, um, issues concerning a graduate student in the department, and they made comments about his performance on his written Generals and also about his character. And it was very prejudicial and very inappropriate on their part to even be saying things like that, and so I testified against one of the faculty members. And that's one of the things that led to my downfall, although OSU would never admit that. They abolished my job because of my testifying; they didn't see me as
a team player. The student is supposedly the consumer, but faculty
don't perceive them that way—they think the student is here for their
benefit.

I just want to preface what I’m gonna say, that, at this point in
time, it’s like I think I’ve come to some sort of peace with all this?
That BEFORE, when I would get emotional talking about it, I-, I’m not
at that point anymore, and partly because I can see the end of my
dissertation, and everything’s working out THAT way, and so.

Well, a graduate student from Scotland was in my former
department, I had known him for several years. And he was taking
Generals. And, uh, we had gotten a new batch of faculty and assistant
professors, and one of them on his committee was saying very
inappropriate things in the halls and in the office, where people could
hear, about him as a person and his performance, which is very
inappropriate. Then, other things happened in the Generals itself which
were prejudicial. In a nutshell, the student failed TWICE. And so he
brought the case before the Graduate School, and I agreed to testify for
this graduate student. The student is at this point, a couple weeks ago,
had a [SOFTLY] psychotic break. The doctor who evaluated him
found out the break was directly related to what happened in this
Generals process. And this Generals process continued several, several
times, at several different levels.

And THIS wasn’t the only student that was having problems.
We had a student from Yugoslavia who was supposed to take Generals.
And that’s when the [Bosnian] war broke out, and all his family was
over there, and he was feeling the pressure, wondering they were alive
or dead. Then he asked for an extension and they wouldn’t give it to
him. And they took his support away.

Then we had another student from Puerto Rico who had been a
priest and left to get married but wanted to get his Ph.D. He, they
were starting to give him a hard time, the same chair was on his
committee and he was saying that this student was totally inappropriate,
you know, because he wouldn’t give up his Catholic values and all that.
Well, luckily the Graduate School found in favor of THIS student,
especially after all the other things that were coming down the pike,
because in his autobiographical statement, that he submitted for
admission review, he said that he had no intention of giving up his
Catholic values, that he wanted to incorporate what he wanted to learn
about [the discipline] into that worldview. And the Grad School said if
they didn’t want him in the program they shouldn’t have admitted him
to begin with. And, students were leaving in droves. Women, especially, were getting out. And it, that’s the point for me where I couldn’t stick around and watch it happen anymore.

6 Uh, during this process of my Scottish’s friend’s grievance before the Graduate School, during my testimony for him, uh, strangely enough, the chairmanship of the department changed. So, the FORMER chair, who had supported me very strongly had, I mean, I had gotten like the highest marks you could get on evaluations for the whole time he was chair, for eight to ten years. And I was there for three years before THAT, even. Um, this new chair was starting to give me lower, lower—evaluations after I did this testifying. So that was the FIRST step towards what happened to me.

7 So, stuff happened, like on my evaluations, supposedly, uh, the professor that I had testified against that I heard talking about this student. Um, the chairman said that he had been getting complaints from this, this faculty member all year, about my performance and my attitude. But he didn’t bring them up to me until the day of my evaluation. Which is NOT according to procedure to begin with (um, when complaints come in, they’re supposed to be given to you immediately). So, THAT procedure wasn’t followed.

8 Um, ANOTHER professor who I have known for a long time who basically came up at ONE point, this was a LONG time ago, under another chair, and made some comment about, uh. Being overweight, they, there are some people in this department that are veerrrry, you know, FAT-PHOBIC? okay? And he made a comment to me, or something, just came out in the office (and there were other secretaries who saw and heard this): about how I "just sit out at my desk all day and GRUNT." [PAUSE] Uh, the other chair had taken CARE of that. This was brought up AGAIN under the NEW chair, several years after the occurrence, saying that he knew this faculty member, and he would never have SAID such a thing. Well, this faculty member came out and APOLOGIZED to me, ADMITTED he DID it, under the old chair. [TERSELY, RAPIDLY] This NEW chair, who was trying to set me up, said that he KNEW this faculty member and he knew he wouldn’t say anything like that. I mean, I hadn’t brought this up at all. He was DIGGING for stuff, OBVIOUSLY. And that, if I were going to lie about THAT professor, I would CERTAINLY lie about the professor that I heard say something about my friend.
Then I was in a car accident. And I had medical documentation that I was not able to--carry on with, a normal, load of work. And on the same day I gave them the doctor's letter, they told me that my job was abolished. Uh, so it was like--. And they didn't even follow the rules for abolishment, I found out later after talking to Ron Frederick in Personnel. They WEREN'T supposed to do it on Fridays because they wanted people whose jobs were abolished to have access to support on campus; they wanted it to be done on other days so they didn't have to go through a weekend without being able to talk to somebody. And things like that. They did my abolishment at about like two o'clock Friday afternoon--.

So right down the line it was very suspect. And in my process I went to OSU's legal counsel, you know, I did a grievance to protest the abolishment of my job. Um, I went to the ombudsman, who said that everything that was done was obviously, a reaction to my testifying. Because when you looked at the KIND of work I was doing and the AMOUNT of work, I should not have been abolished.

So of course then I was forced to look for a new position in the university. And the abolishment continually came up in the job interviews when Personnel was trying to place me. People would sit there and go, "If this was what you were really DOING," you know, "why would they abolish your job?" They said "this is exactly the kind of position and person WE would want to keep." So that it was making ME look bad in the process. And I had NO written documentation from the department, as to what they were SAYING to people.

So, I was being set up all the way along here. Now THIS all happened in, like, April and May and June of '93. My grievance came up in December. So I get over to the GRIEVANCE procedure, they admitted that what happened during my job evaluations under this new chair was totally, um, inappropriate? But they couldn't deal with it cause too much time had passed? Even THOUGH I had attached a six-page single-spaced document to that negative evaluation, saying what I felt was unfair at the time it was submitted to Personnel. So, they DID have some idea that there was something grossly wrong with the evaluation THEN and didn't DO anything.

So, as far as I'm concerned, I DID what I SHOULD have done at that time. I attached my rebuttal. And that if I brought this grievance up, they should still go back and, and DEAL with it. When we were in the grievance procedure and the arbitration, um, the
chairman lost his temper, and it was obvious that he was at fault and that, um, the problem was his, his PREJUDICE against me. He was very childish, very emotional, and, he started yelling he was gonna sue me and all this stuff. And the guy—I can't think of his name, who was in charge looked at him and said, "I would not bring that up again, and," he said, "I strongly urge you to sit down and keep your mouth SHUT." So, that happened in there. So, I KNEW that there was something DEFINITELY, DEFINITELY wrong, and that it, you know, this should go in my favor. Well ULTIMATELY they didn't want to DO anything cause he's FACULTY. And this would have caused too much trouble.

And one of the things that happened in the grievance procedure, I mean, you have to understand that the documentation that I turned in to this grievance procedure, was a, about a 50-page, single-spaced, typed document, with about eighteen appendices, with all this documentation, and support from other students who knew what was going on. So, the guy who was in charge asked me whether I had seen anything in writing, uh, gotten anything in writing from my former department to give to the people in these interviews where I was going on to try and get placed. And I said, "No. It's all being done VERBALLY." He said, "Well, THAT was inappropriate, too." I should have been given something in writing so I knew what they were saying to other people, and, you know, to protect me in case they turned around and said something ELSE.

I thought that was just part of the process, that he was laying groundwork, saying, "Now this is just one step you did wrong." But the guy in charge of the arbitration thought he had made the final deal for me, thought he would satisfy me by forcing my former department to provide some, um, written documentation testifying to my, uh, --to the quality of my work in the department, so that I could get another job. And the unspoken decision was, "Let them [the faculty] GO." But I didn't know what was going on at that point in time. I didn't understand that that's what he was doing. It was never framed to me that way. So he closed the whole thing, said, "DROP the rest of it," that was it. And by THAT time my daughter was getting ill, I couldn't deal with it any more, I had to focus back on my daughter.

So, uh, it was crazy. It's crazy.

* * *

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Hester's metanarrative comments clearly reveal that this story has been told in numerous formats: she suggests in paragraph two that she has become emotional when recounting the incident; and she talks about the fifty pages of documentation and appendices she prepared in order to detail the circumstances of the job abolition. Owing to its various retellings in various venues and for various audiences, Hester's story could thus be called "traditional." Folklorists have long argued whether "traditionality" should be a criterion for the identification of folklore.¹

In the early 1970s, Dan Ben-Amos stated that "the traditional character of folklore is an analytical construct. It is a scholarly and not a cultural fact. The antiquity of the material has been established after laborious research" (1971:13). Ben-Amos was—and is—correct that such exoteric definitions of "traditionality" are unknown to performers of folkloric events, yet tellers of personal experience narratives are definitely not ignorant of the history and evolution of their own forms. Hence, while it is perhaps true that "tradition should not be a criterion for the definition of folklore in its context," the traditionality of personal narratives is an aspect of the text's importance to the teller and is also a way to gauge "what's going on" in the situational context and with respect to the narrator-folklorist dynamic. In this light, identity creation and traditionality can operate in tandem.

Ben-Amos continues to hold the view that folklore's "historicity" is not an "objectively intrinsic feature" but something added by scholars (1993:220). Richard Bauman has claimed a more collaborative and constitutive role for "traditionality," stressing that "the collective, the communal, the conventional are not forsaken here . . .
rather, the individual and the creative are brought up to parity with tradition in a dialectic played out within the context of situated action, a kind of praxis" (1986:4). I like Bauman’s idea, and think "a kind of praxis" is achieved when Hester recounts her horror story; from my vantage point of sympathetic interviewer, it seems that she experiences a catharsis during the dramatization of workplace injustices. Further, I would argue that the cathartic effect of retelling the story grows as its "traditionality" metamorphoses: in this telling, for example, Hester adds new intertextual data corroborating her position, confiding in paragraph three that the graduate student she supported had a "psychotic break a couple weeks ago." This information lends yet more force to her charges against the faculty.

The traditionality of Hester’s narrative can also be seen in its formal aspects. It embodies a "progression of action" which Roger Abrahams suggests makes it "recognizable" and thus subject to "approval." Abrahams has long held that folklore’s traditionality depends on both familiarity of expression and a community’s knowledge for the dissemination of the expression (1971:20). Hester summarizes the "plot" against her in a highly complex series of clauses and paragraphs, yet her narrative development is concise and logical. Hester’s metanarration explains this richness of detail and the remarkable coherence of her story; having recounted it a number of times in writing and orally, she is able to develop the complicated chronology without hesitation or confusion. One example of her sophisticated technique is the elaborate abstract in the first two paragraphs. The abstract incorporates a resolution, which are most often found at the end of stories; in sharing
her resolution early in her narrative, Hester stresses she has survived the upheaval she is about to depict. In so doing, she symbolically deflects the power of those who literally "wrote her off" (as Hester explains, "the final deal" was struck when Human Resources insisted that her boss provide "written documentation testifying to . . . the quality of my work in the department" for the purpose of future employment).

Heavily evaluated background information and durative-descriptive clauses positioned throughout the narrative suggest both the intensity and the lengthiness of the graduate student's conflict and of Hester's own conflict. Hester's crisis resulted from the graduate student's plight, and the narrative development of the earlier conflict is paralleled in the development of the one that followed. Hester documents the specifics of the graduate student's difficulties in paragraphs one and three, and then provides a summary ("this Generals process continued several, several times, at several different levels"). The repetition here clearly "intensifies and suspends the action" (Labov 1972:378). Hester treats her own crisis in a similar manner. Paragraphs six through eleven each incorporate a specific way in which she was "set up" (the new chair gave Hester lower evaluations; a faculty member complains about her "attitude and performance"; the chair accuses her of having lied years before about a faculty member's slur against her; Hester's job is abolished but the proper procedure for abolishment is not observed; she is informed that, given the amount and kind of work she did, her job should not have been abolished; finally, she realizes she had received no documentation explaining her abolishment to potential future employers). Another summary follows: "So, I was being set up all the way
along here. " Making sure that I comprehend the seriousness, Hester rhetorically
leads me step by step, using intensifiers (especially repetition and vowel lengthening)
and emphasizing each complicating action with emphatic metanarration:

**FORM OF METANARRATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metanarration</th>
<th>Paragraph Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;And that’s one of the things that led to my downfall&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;So that was the FIRST step towards what happened to me&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;So, THAT procedure wasn’t followed&quot;</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;This NEW chair, who was trying to set me up&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;He was DIGGING for stuff, OBVIOUSLY&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;So right down the line it was very suspect&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I was being set up all the way along here&quot;</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I DID what I SHOULD have done at the time, I attached my rebuttal&quot;</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I KNEW that there was something DEFINITELY, DEFINITELY wrong&quot;</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;you have to understand…I turned in…a 50-page, single-spaced…document&quot;</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I didn’t understand that that’s what he was doing”</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Metanarration in Hester’s "Horror Story"

Additional aspects of Hester’s narrative expertise can be seen in her projection
of some pre-conditions for the abolishment: “we had gotten a new batch of faculty
and assistant professors” (paragraph three); and her ironic, "strangely enough, the
chairmanship of the department changed” (paragraph six). Further, Hester’s canny
embedding of the three vignettes in paragraphs four, five, and eight provides a web of
evidence that simultaneously supports her innocence and points to the corresponding
guilt of the faculty. Hester’s specific information about the Puerto Rican and
Yugoslavian students whose life experiences and "values" were denied by some of the
faculty enhances both the progression and the point of her overall story. At the end
of paragraph five, Hester collapses her remarks about these students into a
generalized summary, suggesting that the conflicts they experienced were symptomatic of a larger breakdown occurring throughout the department: "students were leaving in droves. Women, especially, were getting out."

Hester's third subplot occurs in paragraph eight. In a poignant aside, she evenly recounts a "fat-phobic" faculty member's slanderous remark against her. Hester does not condemn this faculty member, nor does she allude to having experienced hurt (although her pause after reenacting the attack is timed to allow its gravity to impress itself upon my mind). Rather, the "facts" speak for themselves. As they function in her larger horror story narrative, these specific indictments create a sense of systemic corruption, a general absence of humanity and morality. Hester has implicitly called into question the value system of the academics in her former department; their qualifications for judging students—and staff members—are impugned by Hester's accounts of their actions. The subplots concerning the Puerto Rican and Yugoslavian students and the long-ago verbal slur against Hester function to demonstrate that high-handed discrimination and arrogance were already alive and well in the department at the time of her job abolishment. Hester's sub-plots also emphasize the morality of her choice to speak up and the adverse implications that follow her testimony. At the end of paragraph six, Hester provides her story's "violation" aspect (to use Vladimir Propp's term); she says, "I couldn't stick around and watch it happen anymore," implying her impending agency. Hester is a whistle blower, but not only on behalf of her friend: she is an advocate for all the graduate students in her department.
In her first interview with me, Hester reported that faculty members have spoken in the workplace about personal matters in Hester’s presence without including her in their conversations (I included this information in Chapter 4). Goffman’s (1959) notion about "frontstage" and "backstage" performances is telling here. Goffman opines that elite classes enact their "official" performances "frontstage" (for faculty, frontstage would be the classroom, the committee, and other places where rationality is expected). Backstage performances are opportunities for expressing emotion, subjectivity, and subversiveness; Goffman points out that while lower classes always operate via backstage performances, elites usually guard their own backstage performances from observation. But Hester’s narrative indicates that the faculty in her office were less than careful about their own "backstage" actions; apparently, they did not consider the implications of Hester’s presence as they spoke about the graduate student. So her earlier comment about faculty garrulousness in public spaces foreshadows the chain-reaction in her narrative that begins with her own "inappropriate" cognizance and culminates with the unraveling of her job.

Hester’s horror story has many points: Hester is not only fully aware of the treachery that goes on in front of her and of the far-reaching implications of that treachery, she is also a survivor, and her integrity is still intact. But another, perhaps larger, point is that the faculty and the university as managed by the Office of Human Resources are power sources that can decide the fate of a worker’s life. Despite the fact that Human Resources advertises itself as impartial (and indeed, as the champion of both minorities and women in Affirmative Action and other policy positions),
Hester's story emphasizes that Human Resources advocates for faculty. When Hester says in paragraph ten that "I should not have been abolished," she means "my job should not have been abolished," but this discursive construction succinctly points to the precariousness of her situation. William Labov suggests that speakers become deeply involved in reliving important past events through the telling of narratives of personal experience, a condition that may hamper their ability to closely monitor their own speech (1972:355); I believe that Hester's comment, "I should not have been abolished," supports Labov's claim: with this remark, she suggests her profound vulnerability while at the mercy of an unsympathetic power structure. Hester's on-the-job expertise and productivity over a thirteen year period and the consistently excellent evaluations of the former chairman are irrelevant. Hester suggests that she lost her position because she is neither blind, deaf, or voiceless. Nor is she blindly obedient. These were her fatal errors. Hester comments, "they didn't see me as a team player," but her story holds evidence that the faculty didn't "see" her at all until after hearing her testimony.

Some months after she shared her horror story, Hester brought up information about the composition of the faculty in her former department. At the time of the job abolishment, only two among 24 or 25 full-time faculty members were women, and none were minorities. Hester commented that a sizeable group of new assistant professors had joined the department in the few years before the incident, and that these junior faculty comprised the "faction that got the new chair in." Some of the faculty on her friend's doctoral committee were part of this group.
Carrie’s story about conflict offers her view that the expectation for simple respect in the workplace can result in office conflict. But as her narrative also suggests, refusing to back down can sometimes diffuse such conflicts.

* * *

CARRIE’S STORY: "Holding My Ground"

1  CARRIE: There were occasions—I mean, Suzanne Herder is not the easiest person in the world to work for—. There were occasions when I had to—to be assertive--. And I would just hold my ground.

S: Could you give me a specific so that I can--?

2  CARRIE: OK, well, --I worked over in the Ohio Union. And in the Ohio Union you punch a time clock no matter what level you're in. And so anyway, it's a very--different environment, when you come from an academic office to go into an area like that.

3  Well, my discussion was with Jack Eifinger? Who is now with the College of Agriculture, who was the director of the Ohio Union. So, they didn't like the fact that my children would call me in the morning, this was in the summertime, and they were mid-teen years—you know, 14, 15 years. And Jack said, I can remember the conversation was, "do your children have to call you?" And I said, "Yes, my children have to call me." (They would call when they woke up and tell me what their plans were for the day. It was kind of their way of touching base. And, they were old enough to be alone, but they needed to know there was somebody aware of what they were doing.) And I said, "Yes." And I remember Jack Eifinger saying, "How do you perceive yourself? As a worker? Or --?" And I said, "I perceive myself as a woman, as a mother, and as a worker, and in that order."

4  And I had to stand up for myself once—about taking a call—a motherhood

1

S: A motherhood issue?

5  CARRIE: A motherhood issue—. And actually about being a daughter with an ailing father. What you're doing is important enough
that you stand up for it. And if people see that you really believe that they tend to back off. Although I've been cut off at the knees! I mean I was the same person who was cut off at the knees in the College of Education in a staff position.

S: What happened?

CARRIE: They just basically thought I was inappropriate, I don't know.

S: But you're polished and polite!

CARRIE: I don't know, it was, I don't know. I wouldn't recommend to anybody to work in the College of Education. That's why I won't go on for another degree.

* * *

Scrutiny of Carrie's overall discursive style indicates that she is not readily disposed to performance, yet in her other texts she provides more details. This text contrasts sharply with Meg's short, tightly constructed story and Hester's long, detail-packed story sequence, both highly dramatic in their contentual and performative aspects. There is a story in Carrie's text (short enough to qualify it for anecdote status), and it is an instructive one. But it is not the content of the story as much as what goes on around it that provides a valuable lesson, for students of discourse and of institutional culture alike.

The story about the supervisor's imperious objections to Carrie's telephone calls is embedded within a series of isolated fragments, which, although heavily evaluated, are vague, unspecific, and lacking in contentual and contextual detail. Time and again, Carrie leads me to believe that she is about to divulge juicy information: it is as if she wants to elaborate, but stops herself before becoming too
specific. Carrie begins by stressing it wasn't easy working for Suzanne Herder, with whom she had to "hold her ground"; when I ask for an example, Carrie hedges in her second paragraph with what appears to be a non-sequitur, providing information about the time-clock punching atmosphere in the Ohio Union. In paragraph three, she then shifts to the children's phone calls episode, which also has as its theme "holding her ground." After delivering the punchline ("I see myself as a woman, as a mother, and as a worker, and in that order"), Carrie alludes to having locked horns over another motherhood issue, but when I question her, she changes the topic to that of being the daughter of an ailing father, which she likewise hesitates to develop. Instead, she reiterates the maxim she has been developing all along despite the absence of supporting detail ("What you're doing is important enough that you stand up for it. And if people see that you really believe that they tend to back off"). True to the pattern, however, Carrie once again throws out a tempting phrase ("Although I've been cut off at the knees!") only to once more reneg, supplying instead a series of noncommital "I don't knows." This despite my "But you're polished and polite" rejoinder, which, although heartfelt, was calculated to encourage a substantive response. (This strategy shows how a researcher can simultaneously project a sincere and "fictive" persona: I am "pushing" a bit to gain information that will serve my own ends, just as Zora Neale Hurston did when she feigned ignorance of "toe-parties" while conducting fieldwork in rural Florida in the 1930s.3) I request elaboration with my remark, yet Carrie does not provide it.
Carrie's reluctance to share specific details might have stemmed from her fear of being identified in this project. Perhaps time constraints stymied a more detailed and dramatic performance. Or maybe it was too painful for Carrie to verbally recreate events that were acutely distressing at the time they occurred. Livia Polanyi discusses the narrative technique of her informant whose style seems akin to Carrie's: "the hesitation and self-correction are unusual and evaluatory in the sense that they almost act out the effects of being afraid and under the spell of that experience" (1989:99). The predicament of rendering difficult situations "storyable" seems amplified by Carrie's text, the lack of narrative flow seeming to match the arationality of the life period she is describing.4

Carrie provides positive self-evaluations in her narrative: she casts herself as self-respecting, assertive, a good mother and daughter. Yet her thrice repeated moral, "you have to hold your ground," is ironically overturned at the end, when Carrie confesses that she was deterred from pursuing a doctoral degree as a result of negative experiences in her academic department. Carrie's pauses and parentheticals, as well as the absence of story development, show her discomfort in admitting that she occasionally loses some of the ground she tries to hold. I think Carrie's lack of details and the spasmodic referential development also show her discomfiture at the recollection of accommodating herself to an artificial, regimented, bureaucratized way of life whose technical requirements were at cross-purposes to her moral obligations to her family--the text can be taken as a disjointed but powerful testimony to the psychic burden of juggling a variety of roles. As Richard Harvey Brown comments:
Inconsistency of roles, publics, and intentions is a central feature of modern society, a society characterized by instability of identity, by the difficulty of achieving an integral biography, and by the reduction of the person to a factor of production. All these conditions are inhospitable to narratives— to the conceiving or comprehending of texts about the unfolding of the character and destiny of agents. (1987:160)

Even the time-clock punching information, although it seems at first glance out of place, symbolizes the restrictions that the institution has placed on Carrie. Northrop Frye remarks that as work becomes less creative and more alienating, "the more completely it becomes an observance of time, a clock-punching and clock-watching servitude" (1980:19); I think Carrie's testimony bears out Frye's idea.

When I asked Carrie to comment on my interpretation of her stories of conflict in the workplace, she responded briefly in writing: "Sharyn, this is fine. I like the analysis." I must therefore surmise that my explication of Carrie's words sheds some light on how performance allows her to make sense of particular conflict situations.

Some women spoke of horror stories in their personal lives that carried over to their work lives, as Iz rather circuitously elaborates:

* * *

IZ'S STORY: "'Like a Dickens Tale'"

1 Iz: A week after I graduated we went to my mother-in-law's house in Ann Arbor, supposedly having a little vacation, and my husband admits, he announces that he thinks he wants a divorce, that he doesn't love me anymore, blah blah blah—. I'm devastated, so it's obvious that things aren't going to work out, so I find an apartment, and my number comes up in the Civil Service thing, and I get my job. I'm a Clerk 2 in Microbiology. And, it was a whole new world, I
didn't know anything about science, and it was interesting! I learned a lot! I got to see microbiology organisms growing! So that was kind of cool.

So. I'm working at the hospital, uh, and my husband and I are still seeing each other—. Very bad year, talk about bad year. It accumulated in my moving back into the old house we first moved to when we were first married, talk about sick! And, so I ended up, um, having a little tiny breakdown. And my sister, who had worked with alcoholics for a while, called me up on the phone and and I told her I felt just awful and she asked me if I wanted to go to treatment, and I laughed at her! And I finally did, and it just changed my life.

So. I got a lot of breaks. They called my employer and they were very sympathetic, and allowed me to keep my job, blah, blah, blah. It was real rough, but they were very supportive. When I came back to work, I was just so thrilled and nervous and still real shaky, and my, my supervisor, asked what she could do for me. And we went over—I had a problem with migraine headaches, and we went over to the counselor and we talked to the counselor about coming back to work, stuff like that, blah blah blah blah. So, I worked there until '88. I was basically getting, you know, getting a life, getting sober. And, I was real tied up with my son—.

So then I got a job at the College of ____, and it was just--, I walked into that job and there were these stacks of requests for information about grad programs about a foot high. Nobody exactly had an idea of what I was supposed to do, really—my supervisor was on vacation, and his G.A. was there and kinda gave me a vague idea of what I was supposed to do, so I ended up calling the woman who had had that job and asked her for help, and this was lucky, because we hit it off and we're still friends today, and she helped me. She could've just said, "Screw you, I've got my job now, and it's pretty demanding," but she didn't. She's got a great sense of human compassion. Real bad, bad place.

I used to, I was in charge of evaluating about 750 M.A. candidates every year, and it was—it was—HARD. There were time conflicts all the time. And I had to answer the phones. And, the College of ____ needs to know they're gettin' it right up the butt with the budget cuts. They have a helluva lot of students. They have an enormous amount of graduate students. Teachers have to get out—you know, CERTIFIED—to make some money. And, even though I'm a
teacher, teachers are some of the most difficult, persistent, and whiny people to try to help in this world. I mean, they know how to work the system --.

S: Did you have any strategies to help you survive the situation?

IZ: I had a lot of help from other people. Nancy, who trained me in the job. And there for a little while was a guy working there—.(I'm kind of irreverent, you know? And I don't—I got into trouble over there because I don't dress professionally enough. You know, they're paying us, what, fifteen-five a year? and they're telling me to dress professionally? I'm sorry! And, it's real straight [the College of ____].) He was more of an artsy type, he liked to make films, and knew a lot about computers. So, he had a sense of humor. It was a very humorless office. Because we were as busy as hell. He helped me keep on the lighter side. The person we got to replace him—they always had a lot of trouble keeping people—it was a hellishly stressful office. A woman who used to be the associate dean was grim. She expected perfection.

S: Did you give her perfection?

IZ: Oh, well, NO, because I'm not perfect. But I sure tried to jump for every damn command. Anyhow, she had a little sign in her office that said, "Everybody Causes Happiness: Some People by Coming, Some People by Leaving." And I thought --! [ROLLS EYES] She used to yell at her poor little secretary—a hunchback! [LAUGHS] she was real religious, bless her heart! I mean, it's like a DICKENS tale—if she let her phone ring more than twice. Crazy! Insanity! And I pity the poor fool that doesn't answer her phone, because she'll go out of her office and answer it, and she has this cold, glinty-eyed squint that just puts the fear of GOD in me!

S: Did anybody have a nickname for her?

IZ: I called her the Iron Maiden. There was another woman who was very religious, Catholic—I called her, the--Attila the Nun.

And, let's see—with me coming in late, I got written up for that, got docked for that. Never really got a good evaluation, although I did my job pretty well. I worked next to a woman that kept criticizing my clothes all the time, told me I looked like a slut. See, her [ASSUMES AN AFFECTED VOICE] Faaaather was Vice President of Fiiliinance here for a while; the woman is an administrative assistant now, and

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she's had no college. So the guy's gone, but his name still carries--. Don't know how good she is, I was always angry that she felt the need to talk about my clothing. I like attention, but not that much. So, it was--it was WEIRD.

I wanted to tell you this story: I started my real grad program while I was still in the College of ______. Luckily, Ed. has a lot of classes at night, um, and that helped. But I did have to take a class that was during the day. It was a Psych class, and I got it at noon, so I asked for my lunch hour at noon, and my supervisor acted like she was doing me the biggest favor in the world. [IZ ADOPTS THE LANGUID, SUPERCILIOUS VOICE OF HER FORMER SUPERVISOR] "She didn't know how it would work out," and I just thought, oh, you have to go through so much BULLSHIT!

S: They perceived you as breaking a rule in some way.

IZ: Right, because I was using my lunch hour to take this class. My supervisor then did not have a college degree. And she was really wanting to be powerful; she wanted people to respect her, and you know how that is, it's like what teachers do, they humiliate students--I've seen it happen in the public schools. I think she was doing that. She was just trying to show me she was boss--.

S: Did you do anything to retaliate?

IZ: Well, I tell you, you know what? I've never been to work on time! [LAUGHS.] This is my way of thumbing my nose. Which is BAD, because, you know, it's my job! And, and I still dress the way I want to.

* * *

Her transcript is nearly three pages in length, yet Iz includes only nine main event clauses (she went to her mother-in-law's house/ her husband admitted he didn't love her and wanted a divorce/ she got a job as a clerk in Microbiology/ she ended up having a breakdown/ she went for treatment/ Iz's supervisor asked what she could do for her/ she got a new job/ she called the woman who had had the job before/ she
asked for her lunch hour at noon to take the psychology course). That the text is largely comprised of elaborately evaluated contextualizing material is in itself not unusual. Bauman, citing Labov, remarks that evaluation is what turns personal experience narratives into "performances," the evaluation inevitably stemming from an informant's deep feelings about a topic (1977:26); indeed, all the participants' stories about conflict are heavily evaluated. What sets Iz's narrative apart is the consistency with which she positions thematic "negatives" alongside their corresponding "positives." If textual coherence is accomplished when two sets of relations hold (Linde 1993:12), we see Iz's text marked by a series of simultaneous or near-simultaneous occurrences that are rarely neutral but either highly negative or highly positive. Discourse units above the sentence are inversely linked, the alternative positioning of positive and negative themes lending coherence to this conflict narrative. Such a format allows Iz to portray herself as both tenacious and optimistic; in Burke's words, she uses "patterns of experience" that distinguish her as a "character" (1931:151). Forthcoming with many details, even information that must have been painful to recall, Iz demonstrates her gregariousness, her honesty, and her willingness to comply with the expectations that attend the interview situation; she develops this persona of candid, resilient survivor throughout her larger narrative.

I have broken Iz's narrative into paragraphs that I think are logically demarcated by beginning and ending markers, especially her use of the "so," a dual-function word that can signal either the opening or closure of a conversational topic. In the first paragraph, Iz's crumbling personal life, conspicuously underplayed with a
simple, resounding "I'm devastated," is coupled with overly effusive commentary about her impressions of the Microbiology department ("a whole new world," "interesting!", "I learned a lot!", "kind of cool"). Iz's words ring hollow in their immediate juxtaposition. Her marriage disintegrates but her feelings are largely unreported; instead, she waxes poetic about her experiences in a strange new milieu. The listener intuits the importance of what Iz leaves unsaid in this passage. Iz has been stung by the breakup of her marriage, and new jobs, even if interesting, are often stressful and impersonal scenarios. But in emphasizing the "good" and deemphasizing the "bad," Iz may be divulging a tactic that she used for self-preservation at a difficult time, distracting herself with life's positive (albeit mundane and miniscule) elements: "I got to see microbiology organisms growing!" As Katherine Borland points out, "associations . . . to a circumstance critical to the narrator's life, even if not consciously highlighted in the narrative, may reinforce its memorability" (1991:69). It should also be mentioned that talking about life's too-personal aspects, and especially of personal "failure," is commonly considered verboten in general conversation (and strictly prohibited in the etiquette books!); such reports thus require downplay, at least initially.

Therefore, Iz's first paragraph, offering few grisly details, delicately broaches the subject of her personal difficulties. But in the text that follows, Iz permits herself to become more specific. The second and third paragraphs are likewise both negatively and positively evaluated, but they offer more concrete examples and generous evaluation than we find in the first paragraph. Iz's personal misery is made

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clear by her lexical choices: "very bad year, talk about bad year, talk about sick, little tiny breakdown, I felt just awful, it was real rough." Yet a ray of sunshine pierces the gloom with Iz's statement that "treatment . . . just changed my life." Iz's third paragraph is also studded with both positives and negatives. But her preface, "it was real rough," is softened by Iz's emphatically positive endorsements of the people with whom she worked in her first department. For, despite her lack of tenure on the job, Iz's employer "was sympathetic," "supportive," and, in a heartening instance of altruistic role-reversal, Iz's supervisor "asked what she could do for me."

Iz's proclivity for juxtaposing the positive with the negative also extends to her lexical choices. For instance, the pairing of the diminutives "little" and "little tiny" with the wife-dumping "vacation" and her "breakdown" emphasizes the shock of those events, because the relational values of the quantifiers are at odds with the experiential, semantic import of the breakup of Iz's marriage and the subsequent breakdown of her emotions. Similarly, her innocuous filler "blah, blah, blah" accompanies details of situations that were either potentially chaotic in their outcome or acutely distressing, allowing Iz to avoid specificity and thus taking the edge off painful memories. When Iz states, "he announces he wants a divorce, that he doesn't love me anymore," she also seems to suggest that her husband's reasons for breaking up are the usual male clichés offered in such situations. Iz documents the ambivalent mental and emotional states that accompanied her as she took a new job at the university by commenting that she was suffering from migraines and was at once "thrilled and nervous and still real shaky." Summarizing this period by stating that
she had begun to "get a life, to get sober," and was "real involved with her son," Iz clearly implies that her newfound equilibrium resulted from both the care she received in treatment and the emotional support of her co-workers.

Iz's first three paragraphs form a general "horror story" framework that situates her story-self in historic and emotional terms, the variety of life difficulties lending saliency and pathos to her subsequent horror stories which are more specifically work-related. At the beginning of Iz's fourth paragraph, she begins her new job in the "College of ___." and the positive/negative juxtapositions continue. Along with evaluative descriptions such as "it was--HARD"; "real, real bad place"; "teachers are . . . some of the most difficult, persistent, and whiny people to try to help in this world," Iz uses quantifiers to provide credibility in the depiction of her workload ("750 M.A. candidates every year"; "stacks of request . . . about a foot high"; "an enormous amount of graduate students"). The looming, tangible presence of Iz's tasks contrasts with the faceless, "shift-the-blame" aspect of the university: when Iz arrives on the scene, no one is familiar with her job, her supervisor is vacationing, and a G.A. could offer only vague guidelines. Despite all the deficits, Iz receives the support and "human compassion" of the woman who had previously held the job, is helped by another woman who trained her, and is befriended by a witty, "artsy" man. Iz projects the power of her co-workers' humanity against the ineffectuality of the "straight and humorless" office atmosphere. Iz casts further insult on the institution with her comment, "The College . . . needs to know they're gettin' it right up the butt with the budget cuts." The sentence is thematically out of
place yet fits ideologically. Iz notes her own irreverence in another passage and she strongly demonstrates it here with her forceful threat to the non-entity that has constrained her; the institution may be "faceless," but Iz anthropomorphizes it, recasting it as supremely vulnerable, subject to defilement.

When Iz calls herself "irreverent," she shows that her loyalties do not lie with this particular "straight" department and particularly not with the "grim" associate dean, "irreverent" being roughly antonymous with both "straight" and "grim." Iz uses a variety of literary and paralinguistic devices in paragraph seven for the forceful evaluation of the "Iron Maiden," whose nickname compares with Meg’s "Iron Claw in a Velvet Glove." The femaleness of the supervisors is symbolized by "velvet glove" and "maiden"; and "iron" equates with hardness of heart (Iz’s supervisor is especially so considering her treatment of the hapless hunchback). Defining powerful but apparently heartless women, these sexist stereotypes reduce the women being described. Iz’s rapid-fire use of paralinguistic techniques (rolling her eyes and laughing, and varying the tone and pitch of her performance), citing the words on the plaque in the "grim dean’s" office, her use of metaphor and simile ("a hellishly stressful office," "like a DICKENS tale"), and the comic scene that is brought to mind by her comment, "I pity the poor fool that doesn’t answer her phone, because she’ll go out of her office and answer it, and she has this cold, glinty-eyed squint that just puts the fear of GOD in me!"—all create a picture that is simultaneously credible, owing to the variety of specific details, and caricaturized. Iz’s supervisor becomes ridiculous as a result of Iz’s aesthetic depiction of her unapproachable pomposity and
deadly seriousness; and her office operations, by extension, become a joke.

Variations of the same idea hold true in subsequent paragraphs. Iz’s narrative oscillates from staccato matter-of-factness with her revelation that a co-worker criticized her clothes ("told me I looked like a slut") to mock-superciliousness and vowel-lengthening ("See, her Faaather was director of Fiiiiinance"). The brevity and lack of embellishment of the first phrase denotes it as factual, "real."

But when Iz appropriates the voice of the co-worker and then exaggerates it to absurd proportions in the second phrase, her change in tone and register show her cognizance—and rejection—of the manifestation of caste in the workplace. In paragraph ten, Iz describes a supervisor who docks her for lateness and offers seemingly gratuitous resistance to Iz’s plan to take a class at noontime. This supervisor tries to show Iz who’s "boss" by "humiliating" her like a school child. Yet, once again, by juxtaposing the negative against the positive, Iz portrays herself as having the last laugh: for she continues to thumb her nose at the university by habitually arriving late for work. Furthermore, "I still dress the way I want to." (So, while Iz’s relatively low salary might play a part in her clothing choices, this narrative makes it clear that her dress style is more a matter of personal volition than of financial constraints; in the university’s context of relative formality and "conservatism," Iz’s particular mode of attire can therefore be viewed as "anti-fashion that seems to celebrate protest" [Davis 1992:133].)
Ariel works at Ohio State for the precise aim of furthering her graduate education. Like Iz, Ariel has perceived conflict in the workplace as a result of her decision to take courses, made clear by the following revelation. Here, the contrast in vocal tone is marked: one second, Ariel speaks animatedly about her coursework and her Ph.D. Program; in the same breath, she contracts physically and assumes a whisper as she relates her opinion that the chair of her department is displeased by her academic endeavors:

* * *

ARIEL'S STORY: "The Price of One Woman's Education"

1  ARIEL: (LOW VOICE, SLOW CADENCE) Our new chair, she's really good about a lot of things, but she told me that she's not, she, she came, she's never been in a situation where a staff member was a student. And she is not pleased with this.

S: Hey, if the university says that we can now take two classes per quarter and it's paid for--.

ARIEL: Yeah.

S: What is the problem?

2  ARIEL: Well, I know. [BRISKLY] I was going to make up my time. I had DONE this, I had taken a class from Werner Von Tassel, um, Winter Quarter, and one day a week, so I came in early, I came in an hour early, and then I came back and I stayed an hour later and made up the time. And there didn't seem to be any problem with this. [TERSE TONE, LOWERS VOICE] But, (and I had never done that! All the years I have been in the Graduate School, I took courses that didn't have any relevancy to anything that I was doing, so I wouldn't [SWEETLY SARCASTIC] "INCONVENIENCE" anybody--.) And what REALLY UPSET me about this, and maybe it was just, I don't know if she meant it this way, well, she said she didn't know if she would "LET" me take this course. And then I just, "Well, we're only going to meet--we're going to meet one more time together at the end of the quarter. [RESUMES NORMAL TONE] So, it's been no problem.
But what really made me angry was, for five years, back, let's see, woman who, was it, an administrative assistant, went back to school. She was also on the Staff Advisory Committee, and going to the Police Academy every night of the week to become a junior--COP [LAUGHS]. There were days when she wouldn't come in at ALL. -- She would come in at 2 o'clock in the afternoon when she had to do student teaching.

This went on for FIVE YEARS. All her classes were during the day almost, and I had to do HER work. And the two people who have been bookkeepers in the department for years and years had to do her work. (And this was under a different chair who really stressed that education was important for the staff.) And nobody, she never made up that time. And HERE, I was going to take off, you know, MISS--, two lousy hours a week and work through lunch, whatever, and I was getting flak about it. Really made me mad.

But I don't see anybody, you know, part of my problem working here [WHISPERS] these people, back-stabbing and nasty.

S: Oh, the faculty--

ARIEL: Yeah, and they're constantly at each other, and I mean they're at everybody, and there's lots of tension in the office because--We've got a man who's written a 28-page memo attacking the faculty person by person, and issued it to everybody, and told them they were Fascists. He's gone off the deep end. He has me doing his work for him, I mean, he does most of it, but I have to run it off for him, or every once in a while he'll write a nasty memo and I end up typing it for him.

* * *

In their conflict narratives, Meg, Hester, and Iz describe incidents of self-affirmation: Meg stresses that her supervisor quickly learned that she was not just another passive and docile worker; Hester has the courage to speak up for a student, ultimately losing her job but guarding her integrity; Iz symbolically rejects the power of the institution by her mode of dress and habitual lateness. And amid the aporic stops and starts that characterize her narrative, Carrie engages in successful verbal
sparring with the supervisor who complained about her children's phone calls. These
story-selves that balk at the status quo achieve role reversals and thus symbolic
defection from subordinate worker membership. Yet in both her "status" and
"conflict" narratives, Ariel depicts herself as reluctant to engage in verbal contests
with the higher ups; she is a non-combative witness to asymmetrical power relations.
Ariel's storyworld self seems self-determinedly stuck in a role that is circumscribed
and reinforced by the hierarchy. In her thickly evaluated metanarrative commentary,
Ariel angrily documents inequities in the perks offered to staff members, and
passionately recounts her department's shifting policies on staff members' educations.
But her storyworld-self is even-tempered, reliable, tolerant, and apparently willing to
accommodate the powers-that-be.

As is true of all the women's narratives, Ariel's story-self embodies "positive"
character traits. Ariel pits her own probity, fairness, and work ethic against the
shifting values of the department and the opportunism of other workers. She projects
herself as a team-player, undertaking some of her co-worker's duties for five years.
She shows her deep-seated responsibility to her job: "I came in early, I came in an
hour early . . . and I stayed an hour later and made up the time." And, she is
principled: before criticizing people, she often gives them the benefit of the doubt.
For example, although she resents the new chair's objections to her coursework, Ariel
calls into question her own powers of interpretation, implying that she could have
read the chair wrong: "maybe it was just, I don't know if she meant it this way."
Ariel similarly comments that the chair isn't all bad: "she's really good about a lot of
things." But as her story unfolds and Ariel's anger becomes more palpable, she is less inclined toward impartiality, branding the faculty in her department "nasty back-stabbers" and describing one man as having "gone off the deep end." Still, Ariel depicts herself as assisting him, typing and distributing his memos.

The text is non-linear, and by backtracking in her fourth paragraph, Ariel shows the department's historic waffling over the issue of staff members' opportunities for taking coursework. Ariel's parenthetical aside about the former chair's policy of encouraging staff's academic development exemplifies how changes in management can create rifts in staff members' assumptions and in management's expectations. Stressing her own selflessness in consideration of her co-workers and the department (she took irrelevant courses so as not to "INCONVENIENCE" anybody), Ariel's sarcasm highlights the abuses of the administrative assistant who was training to be a "COP." Ariel laughs because, while "Cops" are official watchdogs and gatekeepers, the administrative assistant emerges in the text as a self-seeking bounder, almost intentionally oblivious to the rules. Ariel's use of specifics in the passage lend a believable quality to her story--she cites the precise hour of day the "guilty" staff member came to work and presents a litany of the woman's outside affiliations; we learn that Ariel and the bookkeepers kept up with the neglected work for five years (not a whistle-blower in the bunch, it seems). And, during that period of taking advantage, the co-worker apparently received the former chair's blessings for her personal development.
Ariel approaches the supervisor about the course she wishes to take and is met with a surprisingly blunt remark: "she said she didn't know if she would LET me take this course." In itself, the comment mirrors the operative power relations: the supervisor's unvarnished lexical choice, "LET," like "obedience," is rarely used in that it too-rawly exposes the disparities between rank in a supposedly "democratic" work environment. Case in point: when Iz's supervisor objects to Iz's plan to take courses, her rhetoric is more subtle, but no less discouraging--Iz portrays her as hedging with her petulant, "I don't know how it will work out." Yet, despite the negative messages of her chair's response, who reverses a long-standing policy concerning staff members' course opportunities, Ariel does not try to get to the basis of the objections. Rather, she portrays herself as smoothing things over, explaining to the chair that her class would only meet once more. Then Ariel says, "So, it's been no problem."

But "no problem" for whom? It obviously is a problem for Ariel, who testifies to her anger three times; Ariel's stridently repeated "FIVE YEARS"--indicating the period during which the other staff member abused the coursework privilege--contrasts with the "two lousy hours" that she requests for taking her own coursework. So despite her positive self-characterization, some questions linger about the mismatch between Ariel's story-self and her narrational self. Given the incongruities in her character development, is Ariel projecting an inauthentic self or selves? To what extent has Ariel's willingness to accommodate herself to the inequities in her office reinforced her marginality as a subject within the workplace?
The second question is probably unanswerable in quantifiable terms, yet I would hazard that, yes, Ariel is to some degree reinforcing her own marginality in the work hierarchy by her willingness to accept inequitable treatment, and it is an unwelcome sort of marginality we're talking about here. To the first question, I can only comment that Ariel's story-self testifies to the power contingencies that are clearly manifested in her office. Rather than setting her own agenda, Ariel's story-self reacts to her supervisors' agendas; it seems that tangling with her supervisor and other faculty members is not an option.

Whether recounting stories of inequity reinforces victimization or ameliorates it presents a recurring problem for the folklorist, an issue that surfaces more frequently in some of the women's cases than in others (case in point: Emily's "Queen Bee" text in Chapter 4). The issue arises again in Ariel's text, above. That Ariel recognizes and resents the inequities via her narration yet hesitates to contest the inequities as they occurred does not inauthenticate either the (partially fictive, partially factual) storyworld Ariel or the (partially factual, partially constructed) narrator Ariel; rather, the very structure of her narrative mimics the double bind she finds herself in, Ariel's metacommunicative "text becoming a metaphor for context" (Ben-Amos 1993:211). To the larger question, What do we make of the fact that Ariel's story-self does not match her narratorial self?, I would give the following roundabout answer: All of the participants' "conflict" stories are "pecking order" stories, stories about power, powerlessness, and the yearning to breach boundaries (or, in the case of the powers-that-be, to guard those boundaries from invasion). This in mind, it should
not be forgotten that the production of verbal art offers the performer both power and
pleasure. Charlotte Linde could be describing Ariel when she comments:

Our own internal experience . . . is of a self without armor—perhaps
without boundaries as definite as we would like—walking around in a
world of others who appear to have proper boundaries and effective
armor. Hence we may perceive ourselves to be in an alarmingly
vulnerable position that must be remedied. And the remedy is to
narrate, to create a self as other, replicating our experience of the
actual others we seem to experience (1993:121).

Ariel creates her self as "other" not in her *histoire* but in her *discours* (Babcock
[citing Benveniste] 1977); she confronts her own struggle with the hierarchy by
engaging in counterhegemonic discourse with me during the relation of the story.
Ariel’s replication of the injustice, her creative enactment of the powerplays, her
unmasking of the social scene where the expression of power is reiterated in a myriad
of ways, was most certainly an occasion of exhilaration for her. However, I think
that her exhilaration might be undermined to a degree when Ariel admits to her
marginality in the narrative. Thus, while Ariel’s storyworld self might be
accommodating and reliable and non-combative, that self is only half of the whole,
for Ariel the narrator openly critiques the individuals whose overreaching has
interfered with her academic goals; as Margaret Mills has commented: "the
communal self, constituted (performed) in a nuanced manner in a fairly manageable
variety of intersubjective circumstances, may be both ‘authentic’ (because appropriate
and inevitable—it’s all the ‘self’ we have) and multiple without being fragmentary"
(1993:184). Ariel’s story shows how power is culturally constructed in her office,
and in so doing, she does disrupt the hierarchy, if only momentarily, by becoming
conscious of the essentialism that "upper" classes try to assign to "lower" classes. Ariel's story also shows that discontent among faculty members can filter down to staff. Yet by locating the demonstration of power in its everyday conditions and expressions, Ariel self-authorizes her critique of the abuses, and her specific, incisive assessments of the inequities allow Ariel to find her own power.

Unlike Ariel, Jill has experienced little in the way of direct or indirect conflict with faculty members (in other segments, she expresses a wholehearted appreciation for the faculty in her department). Yet Jill has encountered disapproval from her supervisor, a Civil Service employee who occupies the highest rank within the category. In the following stories, Jill intricately defines herself in opposition to her supervisor, distinguishing herself in terms of her dignity and work ethic.

* * *

JILL’S STORY: "The Working Papers"

1 JILL: I have had PROBABLY, I would say maybe close to a year, or a year and a half, of having what I consider fairly normal, most respectful interactions with my supervisor, until sometime in November--. I'm responsible for the working papers, and a working paper in an academic department, it's my understanding, is work-in-progress, research work-in-progress that the professors have done. And these papers are printed, and duplicated, and circulated, from this department. It's my responsibility to do that, and we have a mailing list that consists of about a hundred institutions, 75 of which are in the U.S. and 25 are international institutions. NOW, I had six papers, five of which had already been duplicated--and we're talking a HUNDRED copies per paper. So, I have 500 copies of papers...

2 Well, at any rate, given that my arm has been injured, and that we've had little, if ANY, help with work study students, and given the fact that my job responsibilities are split in two--I am INTENSELY
busy. I mean, REALLY. I am, I, there's very little time for--actually, some days, there's very little time for any sidelines, personal thing, at all.

So at any rate, when we had this staff meeting in November, and I asked my supervisor if I could put the subject of these working papers on the agenda (and what I wanted to do was to start out and ask the group if any of my co-workers would help with the task). --NOW, not this--not the three gals who have been here forever, because of course they don't DO, they WON'T do, "production" kinds of things. They have very specified job tasks and responsibilities, and I think there's just certain things they won't do. They'll never xerox ANYTHING! EVER! I mean, they could sit there for 12 days and they won't ever touch it. Because that's just not what they do. It's the lowly subordinates who do those kinds of things.

Now, you know, I think at the end of the--there was not a printed agenda. But I think at the end of things our supervisor opened up the floor for us to participate and raise questions. And then she said, "Jill, you wanted to say something about working papers?" And I said, "Yeah, I DO," but I said, "FIRST of all, I wanted to thank"--(and I named two people who, and I named them specifically, who helped me when I was so busy with tenure and promotion, which is another area that involves a VOLUME of paper, and another way that I probably continued to injure or at least irritate my arm). So, I began by thanking those people for helping me with the tenure and promotion responsibilities. Then I said, "YES, I want to talk about the working papers."

Well, the supervisor interrupted me and I believe she made a fist and she made a loud pounding sound on the table--and, I think, we were all seated but she was standing, which is an interesting dynamic. And she, I don't actually recall anything that she said, but I DO recall the gesture of the hand being pounded on the table. And I generally think that when people pound their hand on the table, and have a certain look about their face--once we interact with somebody on a regular basis, we understand looks and SIGHS even, and phrases, and such. Well, this was not a happy-looking person. And, before I was able to say anything, she said to me: "I just want to know what all these papers are here in boxes, and stacked up. And what's done with them? And why haven't they been mailed?" And so on and so forth. And I said, "Well, I was,"--you know. ACTUALLY, I don't recall that I defended myself at all. I think what I said was, "You know, we've had a lot of delays. And we've been understaffed. We haven't
had any students to help." That, that might be--maybe somebody would consider that to be defensive. I said, you know, "THESE have not gotten done."

"Well why HAVEN'T they gotten done?" And I think the table was pounded again. And actually, I think her words--I don't recall the actual words at this point in time, but I do recall the essence, the feeling, that I had from the interaction. First of all, I was not given a chance to explain. And I also choose--I choose in some public settings not to try to defend myself. Because I think that's very DEMEANING? I don't NEED to defend myself. You know, I know what the reasons are, and for the record, if we need to write them down, we can do that. I mean, if this is brought up at some future point, say in an evaluation mode or something, I certainly have my opinion.

S: To get involved in a defense would be playing her game?

JILL: I think it would be. And I know a little--from what I know of communication, in fact, from what I KNOW about interpersonal communication--a good way to disarm someone who is attacking you is to AGREE with them. However, I chose not to do that either. But what I chose to do, and she kept staring at me, and I don't know that she actually asked me for a response (--in other words, "Give me an answer!" or "Do you hear me?"--I can't recall that). In fact, I don't think she asked me for a response. She was simply continuing to make--agitated statements. And the only thing I responded, the only thing I said to her once she began and until she was finished, was "I hear you," "I hear what you're saying."

Now, by choosing to do that, I was not choosing to defend myself because I didn't think I needed to; I was also NOT choosing to agree with her. I was simply acknowledging that I was hearing what she was saying.

* * *

Jill's opening formula is a subtle but powerful attention holder ("Once upon a time, there was harmony throughout the land. Until November, that is."). This opener sets up a state of suspense, creating listener anticipation for what is bound to come after the explanatory information that Jill offers about "working papers." Jill's
next discursive tactic is to build a rationale to support her side of the conflict that follows: she documents the size of her workload and then contrasts the enormity of her task to the constraints she faces (her physical impairment, her segmented job, and the lack of student help). Jill's first and second paragraphs are highly evaluated in their lexical and tonal aspects. By pointing out that she has no "time for any little sidelines, personal thing, at all," Jill simultaneously underscores the demands of her job as well as her integrity (she might want to indulge her own needs, but doesn't, and instead focuses on her responsibilities).

As is true of all the other women's conflict narratives, Jill's textual patterning balances her competence and blamelessness against the contemptibility of a nemesis. In paragraph three, for instance, a polite and businesslike Jill requests her supervisor's assistance in locating someone to help her with the working papers. Then, beginning with her forceful "NOW," Jill sets up an implicit comparison between the indifference of the "three gals who have been here forever" and her own capacity for working in the trenches. Jill's pointedly negative parallel constructions and forcefully intoned repetitions ("they don't DO, they WON'T do, they won't do, they'll never, EVER!, they won't ever touch it, that's just not what they do") imply that she, Jill, not only "will" but "can" and "does." This workplace dichotomy is brought into sharp focus with her ironic, explanatory summary at the end of paragraph four: "It's the lowly subordinates who do those kinds of things"--she might be a "lowly subordinate" vis-à-vis the university's categorization scheme, but Jill's self-portrayal as a virtuous, ethical worker, and her corresponding depiction of the
indolence of the higher ranking, better paid "longstanding threesome," permit her symbolic invalidation of, and escape from, that classification.

In paragraphs four and five, Jill's directness and politeness are once again counterbalanced with the supervisor's rudeness and irrationality. Assuming a benevolent and authoritative voice at the staff meeting, Jill publicly thanks co-workers who had helped her in another project. In itself, this is a subtle "border-crossing" tactic which lets Jill assume the persona of a higher-up. Next, Jill casts in parallel form the two non-verbal gestures of physical combativeness displayed by the supervisor—"she made a fist" and "she made a loud pounding sound on the table"; and Jill refers to the supervisor's interruption yet she does not recall that the supervisor actually said anything. These evaluative messages contrast the supervisor's tongue-tied vitriol with Jill's articulate politeness and control. Recognizing the implications of the supervisor's standing versus the subordinates' sitting postures, Jill provides an understated metanarrative comment (it's "an interesting dynamic") and then more specific metanarration: "And I generally think that when people pound their hand on the table, and have a certain look about their face—once we interact with somebody on a regular basis, we understand looks and SIGHS even, and phrases, and such. Well, this was not a happy-looking person." Jill's metanarrative strategy allows her to gain power in the interview by demonstrating her comprehension of both the motivation for and the effects of her supervisor's paralinguistic display. Jill's ability to construct a positive self-identity is also partly derived from her self-restraint: she does not engage in (metaphoric or any other kind of) name-calling and
refrains from making pejorative value judgments about the supervisor’s deficiencies. (Compare Jill’s narrational tendencies here to those of Ariel, who says, "these people-back-stabbing and nasty"!) For the most part, Jill simply reports the specifics of the situation, albeit with frequent repetition and forceful tonal emphases, rhetorical devices that allow Jill to crystallize her negative evaluation of the situation.

Jill’s detailed explanation for not defending herself (paragraphs five through eight) sets herself apart from both supervisor and subordinate: she is neither combative nor defensive, but merely refuses to get sucked into the imbroglio. This strategy also suggests Jill’s need to defend herself in the present, to defend herself for not defending herself in the past. Symbolically demonstrating her affiliation with the "official" aspect of the institution (which further dichotomizes Jill’s level-headedness, on the one hand, and the supervisor’s markedly unofficial nonverbal expressions of anger and frustration, on the other), Jill comments that she can attest in writing to the reasons why the working papers had not been sent. Jill’s intelligence and education are important aspects of her self-portrayal in this text (she has already made it clear that she understands body language; she now implies that she knows something "about interpersonal communication"). Continuing to highlight her own qualities and her supervisor’s irrationality, Jill reiterates that the supervisor refuses to give her a chance to explain and continues to use intimidating body language ("she kept staring at me"). The supervisor’s non-verbal aggression and non-dialogic tirade are rendered absurd and ineffectual at the end with Jill’s stalwart refusal to take up a defensive posture. Because she neither agrees with her supervisor (i.e., admits to some
personal failing) nor defends herself (i.e., allows herself to become inflamed over a problem that "belongs" to her supervisor), Jill maintains a dispassionate stance in the face of a distressing assault. I believe that Jill achieves a degree of separation from her workplace subjectivity by means of several of the behaviors and practices documented in her narrative, including her expressions of courtesy and appreciation during the staff meeting toward other workers: it is Jill, and not the supervisor, who enhances the stability of the work group with her self-possession and expressions of gratitude. Jill's depiction of self-control in the face of her supervisor's rancor, and her refusal to either defend herself or to challenge the unregulated attacks, also effect her separation from the caste in which the institution pigeonholes her.

In the following excerpt, Jill effectively resolves and concludes her story about the working papers, once again emphasizing her own workplace competence and ethics and the absence of the same characteristics in her supervisor and other workers.

* * *

JILL'S STORY: "Just 'Get the Job Done'."

1 JILL: I have found a graduate student friend of mine, who donated about two and a half hours on a Saturday (I think it was a Saturday)--, well anyway, it was early in December. And we both came to the office and we worked on those papers. They were probably 96% done, and then I spent the time putting the labels on, stamping them, and so on and so forth. Rubber stamped.

S: Why did you do that?

2 JILL: I did that because I wanted the task to be finished before the quarter started. I don't have the choice in delegating the work to the work study student; even when they come back, there's no way that I can, I can MAKE THEM help me with that task.

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S: Did you get Comp Time for that?

3 JILL: I— No. I didn’t. And I didn’t even say anything about it. Just "get the job done."

S: Talk about work ethic!

4 JILL: Yeah. Actually, there’s three of us who begin to work at 7:30, and I’m one of the three. And I unlock the office, that’s my responsibility. And I generally arrive at the office by about twenty after seven. And I turn on machinery first, and turn on lights, and do certain things. And then I unlock the office. And my two co-workers who also come in at 7:30 are chronically late, every single day, ABSOLUTELY every day. In fact, it’s a RARE occurrence, it’s a RARE OCCURRENCE, if they’re ever there at 7:30. I--I would say, probably in one calendar year? --they’ve each probably been at the office at 7:30 maybe two times? So, and one of these people is my supervisor. And not only that, but I find it very interesting--and something that would never be allowed in a business environment?--is that after my supervisor comes in to work, she sits and reads The Columbus Dispatch for an hour.

S: After being late?

5 JILL: After being late. And not only that. THEN she photocopies the crossword puzzle and distributes it, to three of her friends and volunteers—you know, asks ME if I want it, and I said [DIGNIFIED, SLOWLY] "No. I don’t." And I DON’T read the paper, and I DON’T do the crossword puzzle at my desk.

* * *

Jill again suggests a symbolic role reversal in this excerpt: choosing to resolve the working paper crisis by herself and on her own time, she shows her capacity for self-direction and managerial prowess. She anticipates what needs to be done and she does it without consulting her supervisor. Jill may not have the workplace authority
to request work study student help, but she alludes to her interpersonal successes when she confides that a graduate student friend helped her to mail out the working papers on a weekend.

Jill's repetitions and qualifying modifiers in this story are deployed to underscore disparities in accountability of staff—including supervisory staff who presumably should set examples for their subordinates. To demonstrate the extent of the abuse, Jill first applies repetition, depicting her supervisor and the other worker as "chronically late, every single day, ABSOLUTELY every day." Jill then contrasts her own work ethic with the emphatic parallel construction that serves as her coda: "No, I don't." And I DON'T read the paper, and I DON'T do the crossword puzzle at my desk." So when she says, "Just 'get the job done,'" Jill could subconsciously be suggesting that workers should both "SIMPLY get the job done" (i.e., "Just DO it!") and "ONLY" get the job done" (i.e., "Don't spend the day occupied in non-work related activities").

As the narratives demonstrate, conflict often emerges at the department level—between the women and their supervisors (faculty and non-faculty) and between co-workers. But Ruth's Ohio State horror story occurred when she was a doctoral candidate, before she accepted Civil Service employment. The story, detailing a conflict that was played out between Ruth and her faculty committee members, might shed some light on why Ruth is currently employed in a low-level clerical job.
RUTH’S STORY: "Crash and Burn"

RUTH: The first year I was here I was in a--I was going back home after the summer term was, after spring quarter before summer, and I went home, visited my family, ran some errands, and I was coming back HERE, and I was in a huge car accident. And uh. So then it, then it wasn’t just, wasn’t, oh, screwing around, then it was like, "OK!" [LAUGHS], you know [LAUGHTER], "If I’m gonna DO this I’ve gotta buckle down and DO, cause my options have suddenly decreased SIGNIFICANTLY, because the accident that I had made me visually impaired. --It’s real HARD to be a mechanic when you don’t SEE very well. So, anyways, so I figured, "OK, I’ll just go ahead and crank this out." So, I got to it. And I got, I picked up my Master’s, and

S: What in?

RUTH: Phys Ed, in Phys Ed. And--wrote a thesis. And did fine. Went on--[LOUDLY, BRISKLY] right then I knew that I was having trouble with my advisor, that he and I were--we were fine scholastically but, we locked horns personally so much that it got in our way. And um, and it was towards the end of that year that he gave me a "C" in one of my classes, when I DESERVED an "A," like I’d always gotten, and I asked what the deal was. And he said, "Well I’m sick of your attitude, and I thought I’d give you a ‘C’ to, to uh, you know, give you a little HUMILITY." And I said, "Oh--ALL right. [LAUGHTER] As long as that’s all it IS! It’s not my work, it’s just my attitude, FINE!" [LAUGHTER]

So anyways, so that, so that, so that was our life together. At that point, I said, "Well, I should go--LOOKING," you know?

S: You were working on your Ph.D.?

RUTH: Right. I decided, "OK, I’ll switch schools for my Ph.D." So a woman in the same area I was in, in Maryland, she had the same visual impairment I had, and I said, WOW, at least she’ll have some--some SYMPATHY with the extra burden of, that research offers the visually impaired person, and might be more willing to be HELPFUL. So I went and they said, "Well YEAH, you’re welcome to come." And then I get a long distance phone call--my advisor was up for tenure at the time I was doing this, and they said, "GOTTA come
back, if you leave now, he won't get tenure." [BAFFLED AMUSEMENT] For SOME reason, I was overwhelmed with a FIT of compassion. And said, "Well, what the heck, if this will help him out, maybe then he'll help ME out." So I said that he was a good teacher, and--you know--he WASN'T, but you know, I said the right things, and I stayed, and he DID get tenure. And then, he didn’t WASH the other hand, but [LAUGHTER]. It's ok, you put it out there and you take your chance.

So, finished my coursework, took my generals, did fine on the generals, wrote my dissertation, went to, uh, DEFEND it--I had four people on my committee, three of them said, "Fine, it’s good to GO. There’ll be a few revisions, but" you know, "we’re behind you, it’s gonna work." And THEN, somehow [LAUGHS], in the course of two hours, they all changed their minds. And they DIDN’T pass me. And I had taken all my time, because I had, you know, things go slowly when you read slow. I’d used up all my time, and they had failed me, and I said--"FINE. The HECK with it. But if I come back I have to constitute another committee, cause there’s no way I’m gonna trust THESE people who said ‘YES’ and two hours later said ‘NO’!

S: They all said yes except the advisor, you mean.

RUTH: No, the adviser said YES.

S: He said yes too?

RUTH: He said--YEAH, he said--

S: The outside rep and the other three people on the committee all said yes.

RUTH: Uh Huh.

S: And then they did not sign, what? the final oral report form?

RUTH: Right, they changed their mind. They didn’t, they didn’t sign off on anything, they just said, "GO AWAY."

S: This is five years after passing generals?

RUTH: Right. [PAUSE]

S: I--have never heard of that. In my life.
RUTH: Well [SIGHS]. I was--SURPRISED. I was surprised. It was a shock to me. [PAUSE] My perspective NOW; what I've seen is that, the thing that they valued about me, besides my quick wittedness, is that, I'm very CONTENTIOUS with IDEAS. Like, if you put, if a person puts forward an idea, I'll tear it up. Just, I'll just, rip it apart, and--and, FIGHT with it. I'll fight with the idea. I don't particularly get into fighting with people, but I LOVE to fight with ideas. And occasionally I'm not too gentle, and then people think I'm attacking them instead of their idea, but I'm just, I'm just FIGHTIN' with the idea.

So, THAT's what they LIKED about me. They, they found that--INTERESTING. And so that was, that was an asset. Well along about seven-eighths of the way through the project, I realized that that kind of fighting was making me sick. And I got TIRED of fighting. [PAUSE] I, uh, [PAUSE]--you know, in the course of my research, I started getting more into deconstructionist philosophy, and uh, some of that research, er, some of that criticism in that AREA; and it started to DAWN on me that the whole, the whole PICTURE is kind of [PAUSE] TOXIC, in that it, the, the kind of fighting that you do with the ideas-. If you just fight with the idea to PLAY, that's one thing. But if you fight with ideas to make a LIVING, then you have to make a more burdensome COMMITMENT to it. And you have to kinda play it, you have to play a certain kind of GAME.

And I don't know if it's this way in like the social sciences or whatnot, but I know in the, my area is HISTORY [of physical education and sport], and in HISTORY, all there IS is interpretation. And so contrasting interpretations, and belittling other people's to promote your OWN is the name of the game. And, uh, I just got REAL, REAL, REAL overwhelmed with how hateful that is. And I said that, and I--I could consciously, I can remember consciously saying, "I'm done fighting with this. I'm NOT, GOING, to FIGHT, with anybody's ideas anymore. Their ideas are their ideas."

And so, my dissertation took this like radical turn to the left, and it got [PAUSE] TOO far, actually, this is, some friends have told me this: "it got TOO deconstructed." [LAUGHS] And um, [PAUSE] I wouldn't, like I PUT all the literature OUT there, but then I wouldn't [PAUSE], I wouldn't do that next step of saying "this was wrong" and "this was right." I just said, "This is what their literature su--, this is what THEIR perspective is. And their perspective COMES from this, and it causes this consequence." But then I wouldn't say that it was WRONG. Or STUPID. And uh, so, when I got into the oral, that's,
that’s the place they HIT. And they were like [DEEP VOICE] "Well, what, what are you trying to say?" And I said, "I’m not trying to say anything. I’m not putting FORWARD a statement, I’m putting forward a COLLECTION of POSSIBILITIES, and THEN, showing how THESE folks’s perspective made it look this way. Even though it’s not NECESSARILY that way, it LOOKS that way, because of the way they LOOKED at it."

S: Their arguments were constructed in a way to support their own
15 RUTH: RIGHT

S: whatever their own agenda was.
16 RUTH: RIGHT. Yeah, so that’s, that’s what I was saying in the defense, and it definitely was NOT a defense. [LAUGHS] And so, after about four or five questions, they realized that I wasn’t, I wasn’t gonna take the bait, and that just, it turned, it just went "PSSSSFFFFT!," like that. And then it was a crash and burn situation.

And so, fine, that happened. And then, as they debriefed me later on, they, the two people from my department who were on my committee, both said, it was my advisor and this teacher that I was close friends with, both said, "You lost your fire. You have lost your fire." And I thought, "If the piece that I lost is the part that you liked, I’m real glad I lost it. AND, I don’t want to get it back for YOU. And I don’t want to get it back for this profession. Because if THIS, if this is, if THAT FIRE is what it takes to BE one, I don’t want to BE one."

And so--what I did for the first time was think of, "what would I—, IF I had passed my defense, IF I had gotten a job as a sport historian at a, at a university, WOULD I want to DO that? Would I want to BE in that position? Not necessarily, "would I want to do that kinda work?" cause I LOVE that kinda work, but "would I want to have to BE what I had to BE to stay?" --And I could SEE that, even people whooo, don’t want to, and who say, you know, "I’m gonna NOT be one when I grow up!" they GET there and BE one! [LAUGHS] And then I said, well, "That’s not, that’s not an option." Even success in this particular case would be--a failure. I wouldn’t want to be that. And so--that’s what I put OUT there.

And THEN I got in ret--, in return to THAT piece, I got, "Well, you’re so CLOSE. Why don’t you just FINISH? You’ve done
ALL this work, why don’t you just get the degree and then you don’t have to TEACH!" And then I, so, I entertained that notion. And it was [PAUSE] that the Ph.D. is a credential to teach. It’s not a credential to be—especially in history, I mean you don’t do anything else WITH it. So why get it? It would just sit there.

* * *

Both Ruth’s storyworld and narrator personae emerge as tenacious, ethical, insightful, and keenly clever in this story. Of course, her rejection of the power structure’s ideology doomed her despite all her abundant intelligence and perseverance; nevertheless, a focal point of the story, it seems to me, is Ruth’s commanding intelligence. We find out that Ruth is smart by virtue of her narratorial expertise: she consciously displays her rhetorical giftedness, her powers of observation and analysis, the many sharp and shining facets of her liberal education, as proof of her intelligence. We also learn of Ruth’s intelligence in the content of her horror story: Ruth’s story-self moves almost effortlessly through the demands of two graduate programs. With an air of understatement, Ruth lists her accomplishments: she breezily comments that she "picked up" her Master’s, finished her coursework, "did fine" on her generals; the people at Maryland apparently liked her and asked her to join their Ph.D. Program; and, she deserved to get an "A"—"like she had always gotten" (emphasis mine).

It is also clear that Ruth is no shrinking violet, either in the interview situation or with her academic advisor; she bluntly asks, "What's the deal?" when she received the "C." When Ruth says they "locked horns," she implies that true verbal
contests occurred with her advisor, that she did not remain mute in the face of a lopsided display of power. While there is always an asymmetry of power between advisors and their advisees, the former empowered to guide and critique the work of the latter, we intuit that Ruth rebelled at non-productive, non-constructive, and downright unethical powerplays. Thus, the advisor/advisee relationship for Ruth was a place for encounter and confrontation, not passivity. Ruth also depicts herself as compassionate; although she foreshadows the advisor’s unscrupulousness ("he gave me a ‘C’ in one of my classes, when I DESERVED an ‘A’"), Ruth returns to Ohio State and vouches for him so he would receive tenure. Along with being smart, assertive, and compassionate, Ruth is also a survivor: Ruth’s metaphor "crash-and-burn"—contextually apt and esoterically significant given both Ruth’s and my vulnerability as players in the Ph.D. game—implies that Ruth has suffered but has also survived the "sacrificial" torture of her dissertation defense.

The main thrust of her conflict narrative, I think, is that she has come through horrific events with her humor and intellect completely intact. Ruth’s "survivor" persona can be seen in her playfulness in the face of conflict and crisis: her laughter and her verbal sleight-of-hand directly follow commentary about reversals or tragedy. After informing me of her car crash, she portrays herself laughing determinedly with the realizing that she has to "crank this out"; she laughs again and makes delightfully scathing remarks about the "C" grade ("Oh—ALL right, As long as that’s all it IS! It’s not my work, it’s just my attitude, FINE!"); Ruth keeps laughing as she continues to plumb the depths of her advisor’s shallowness ("he didn’t WASH the
other hand"), and she laughs when remarking on her committee members' pre-
dissertation defense assurances, which ("someHOW") sour disastrously during the
defense. But Ruth's frolicsome resilience must be considered alongside the high
seriousness with which she develops herself as morally upstanding: the self-
reflexivity Ruth employs throughout the narrative, and especially in paragraphs eleven
through fourteen, allows her to both correct and create her story-self (Linde
1993:122), imbuing that self with a morality that justifies her rejection of the
academic life and the academics themselves, and that also makes their judgment
against her seem reprehensible.

Ruth's use of intertextuality permits her to recast prior texts for a particular
kind of interpretational agenda: by using "snatches of other texts," Ruth transforms
the past into the present (Fairclough 1992:85). For example, when she comes to the
conclusion that academia is caught up in the "hateful" practice of "belittling other
people's [ideas] to promote your OWN," Ruth exposes a normative practice which, in
its "successful" manifestation, contributes to the reproduction of the dominant culture
within the university. Ruth's conscious rejection of that activity ("I'm done fighting
with this. I'm NOT, GOING, to FIGHT, with anybody's ideas anymore. Their ideas
are their ideas") is a symbolic attack against a mechanism of power. Ruth negates the
criteria that attend group membership in academia by casting doubt upon, and
refusing to identify with, the activities and power relations that occur within it.
Ruth's narrational playfulness, therefore, allows her to comment on her own
resilience, but in the present, from the distance of time and space. By contrast,
Ruth's seriousness is situated in a crucial point in her past; such seriousness shows her staunch commitment to her own value system, allowing her to expose the literal meaning of a dominant social text.8

Ruth structures her narrative to show that her misfortunes have been out of her control—both the car crash and the denial of her committee come out of the blue. But issuing from both of her crises, which are ends in themselves, are new beginnings fashioned by Ruth herself. From the "ashes" of her car wreck and her wrecked Ph.D. Program, Ruth arises like the mythological phoenix. She proves her ability to pick up the pieces after the physical disability of the car accident—being a mechanic is no longer possible, so Ruth embarks on the road to a Ph.D. Program. But although she travels its entire length, Ruth does not quite reach her destination: Ruth’s Ph.D. committee wielded its power and withheld Ruth’s membership in the group that she aspired to join. While she admits that she "didn’t take their bait," alluding to her own role in the committee’s decision, Ruth’s comment shows her stalwart refusal to be objectified by the specious interests of the committee. Ruth registers her "shock," yet she recasts her loss, reshapes her disappointment by fashioning a new persona. It would be difficult to discover whether Ruth’s decision to reject those who rejected her altered the character of her membership in other groups (especially her occupational group). What is clear is that, by setting herself apart from those with power (faculty members and, later, the A & P’s who are her workplace supervisors), she does repudiate both the "toxic" competitiveness demanded by the academy as well as the competitiveness within the workplace hierarchy. Ruth enacts cultural criticism in
everyday life, denouncing hierarchically produced visions of "appropriateness" in her roles as both doctoral student and Civil Service worker. True to her form of resistance against "unworthy" authorities, Ruth symbolically immunizes herself against her A & P supervisors' penchant for governance and reproach with her strong work ethic, her hard-charging productivity, and most especially, her gift for "trickster" behavior, discussed earlier.

Contradictory aspects of Ruth's individual and group identities thus emerge: Ruth doesn't want to be identified with either academics or the A & P's, yet uses rhetorical gifts and intellectual tools that members of both groups might envy. Ruth's highly functional, highly concrete role as Civil Service worker mirrors Ruth's ideology: she no longer "fights with ideas" but rather "sells her labor" (a theme that Ruth develops in later portions of her narrative). Elliott Oring points out that personal identity is derived from group experiences, expressions, and "consciousness of kind" (1994:212); but it stands to reason that personal identity can also come from the rejection of a group's experiences, expressions, and consciousness (Bauman 1971), and Ruth has rejected the "collective consciousness" of the academy. Ruth's problem is not with the purely intellectual aspect of academic work (she says, "I LOVE that kinda work") but with the nature of the academic beast ("would I want to have to BE what I had to BE to stay?"). Ruth implies that, upon hypothetical successful completion of a Ph.D. program, even she might not escape pandemic faculty arrogance: "Even people. . . who say . . . 'I'm gonna NOT be one when I grow up!' they GET there and BE one!" In this rhetorical construction, "one"
becomes a negatively marked term despite its lack of specificity: "one" implies "typical arrogant faculty member," yet it could just as easily stand for "addict," "pervert," "embezzler," or any other undesirable—any other other! Ruth's strategy here allows her to symbolically turn the "sacred" into the "profane." Reflecting on the outcome of her oral defense, Ruth comments, "Even success in this case would--be a failure"; she implies that her divorce from the toxic competitiveness of academia is a prerequisite for getting on with her life. But by picking up the pieces of her Ph.D. Program and using them for new ends, Ruth's "failure" becomes a success of sorts.

This is not to suggest that there is no sense of loss in the story. Does she miss the intellectual engagement and goal-oriented mindset of the academy? I think so. When Ruth says, "So why get it [a Ph.D.]? It would just sit there," the emptiness and feeling of loss are palpable. She does not for one minute cry in her soup, yet Ruth does not display the joviality in this narrative that she displays in others. Looking beyond the immediate context of Ruth's story to larger realities, especially her current low-paying clerical job in the university, Ruth's horror story begs the question, "just where is the displaced intellectual's niche?" She is not the trickster here, just the survivor, and it was clear to me as I listened and watched Ruth that she has suffered great personal reversals.
Emily’s text is perhaps the bleakest of the horror stories in the sense that the "victim" persona of her storyworld self allows her so little latitude for either adjustment or rebellion. It is also arguably the most vividly metaphoric and dramatically performed of all of the stories.

* * *

EMILY’S STORY: "'Like the Cannon on the State House Lawn'"

1 EMILY: The WORST was [QUIETLY] Dean Davis. Um, I knew I had to leave there when, after they put me under Dean Davis, the assistant dean. Yeah. She was real mean. She was real--she spoke to me in a HATEFUL manner. And I KNEW I had to get out of there, after that.

2 Um, so I left. I went to, I saw what I thought was the perfect job in the Green Sheet where I would get to EDIT. It was Secretary 2, two jumps up the ladder. So, I WENT to the Medical College. And I found it was so much WORSE than this department--I wanted to go back immediately. I, I had, never been in anything so HORRIBLE in all my thirty years of working.

3 I had a boss who wouldn't train me and show me my job. The computer was horrible, and there were vibrations in the room that made the screen seem to shake, I was in this ROOM that SHOOK all the time. There were huge, air moving machines in the next room. These machines, HUGE, IMMENSE THINGS, turned and moved the air in the building. They caused vibrations that hurt my ears and made my brain feel like it was being shaken to jelly. After two or three days at this new job, I wanted to go back to the old department. The Dean had told me, "You can always come back." So, uh. [PAUSE] I was ready to call him after two days and say, "Could I please come back?" And I, I knew, because they did ANIMAL research, that I could just say to Human Resources, "I'm an incest survivor, I can't stand to see little animals in cages, waiting to die. And I, I cannot deal with this."

4 And Laura said, "If you go back where you were so miserable, I will change all the locks on the doors and lock you out of the house." And it's MY house. She said, "Make a go of it, it will get better." So I made a go of it. I WAS going to get to edit; I was, making more money. I knew I had been miserable, I knew Dean Davis had been
mean to me. So I stayed. And, I was never, WELL, there was even more of a "WE are the faculty and YOU are nobody"-feeling there than there was before. Um, I was not included, they did not explain what they were doing in the lab. A woman who worked in the lab tried to get the faculty to let me go to a lab meeting so I could understand more what was going on in the lab. But secretaries were not allowed to go to lab meetings.

5 Dr. Torvill treated me, I think he basically distrusted women, and the workload was worse than it had EVER been in [the first department]. I, I did the work of one-and-a-quarter people. I begged Dr. Torvill to get help for me, I had so much work. He wouldn't get any help. [PAUSE] I landed at the place at 7:30 in the morning, TOP speed, and I did it til 4:30 as best I could at TOP speed, every day. There was a problem after lunch that my head hurt so badly from the vibrations that I had to slow down. Because with my head hurting so badly I couldn't really work at top speed for the last maybe three hours of the day.

6 Um, but I struggled to do the best I COULD. And after about a year, I REALLY had headaches, and I had to go to bed about six o'clock at night, with my head and neck muscles ACHING. My head felt like it had been in a vice and had been just shaken to jelly all day. But I knew there was something WEIRD, because, if I put earplugs in my ears, I didn't feel the shaking. So I figured I was CRAZY. So--finally, um--I COMPLAINED. And nobody cared at first when I complained about the vibrations. Dr. Torvill didn't care that I was getting headaches. When I asked him to trade OFFICES with me cause it didn't shake as badly in his office, his direct quote was, "I don't want to get headaches!" And, he was only there two to three hours a day. I was there eight hours a day. So, finally, after a year, I was desperate. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know who to complain to, but--I talked to, I finally complained, I tried the administrator, and she was concerned, but--.

7 When we got action was when I called Labor and Employee Relations and complained. I, I was afraid to go to an ombudsman. Two people at [her former department] had filed grievances and then, I, I don't think people were too nice to them after they filed grievances. So I didn't really want to file a grievance because, Dr. Torvill was so DISLIKED, and I was his secretary. I, I didn't feel, I was like a private secretary to him rather than working in a department office. So, [SIGHS]. Anyway, I called Labor and Employee Relations and I complained about it, and finally they sent the Environmental and
Occupational Health and Safety people out, who found out that the problem was, um, NOISE, from the machines next door, that was low FREQUENCY, where I couldn’t hear it but it bothered my ears, and it made my brain feel like it was being shaken in a vice. So they had me go to a doctor, then I wore these customized earplugs at work. And [she holds them out for me to see] that’s the right one, and that’s the left one.

S: Oh, they’re really big ones

EMILY: I wore ’em

S: they’re definitely, they look like

EMILY: yeah, they go in. Yeah. So when the phone rang or somebody wanted to talk to me, I’d loosen the left one a little. Like—so. I felt gross, dirty, handling them. I cleaned ’em every day, with alcohol, but they’d get sticky. And people would SEE me handle ’em. I wore ’em all day at work, but I still got headaches. Somewhere in here, Dr. Torvill did trade offices with me, but the problem got little better. I still got horrible headaches, still couldn’t do anything in the evenings because I had to be in bed by 6:30.

Then Dr. Torvill said I could do my work at home in the morning and go in and work there in the afternoon. So I did that for eight months. And I STILL was getting headaches, only by THEN, there was a WORSE problem. I was saying the wrong word maybe five times a day. Um, I noticed, when I’d worked there maybe a year, that I’d sometimes say "blue" when I meant "green." The problem increased to where after I’d worked there for two years, I was saying the wrong word maybe five times a day. I’d say, um, "Broad Street" when I meant "Main Street." Or I’d say, "I wonderful how he is?" I was also turning on the wrong burner on the stove, then walking away without noticing. Then I REALLY PANICKED. I called the, the Clinic to make an appointment with a NEUROLOGIST, afraid of permanent brain damage. It was at that point that Dr. Torvill moved me over to his private company. And so I was at this company about the last eight months.

During the three years that I worked in the College of Medicine, wh—when I walked up the hall to go to work every day, I had a ritual thing I said [SLOWLY, DISPASSIONATELY]:

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"I am nobody, I am nothing, my thoughts and my
feelings do not matter. I am going in here just to do my
job."

And that would get me in the mindset to go and work there.

11 And then the horrible comments that I've told you before, when,
when I was—BESIDE myself with frustration. About a quarter of
twelve one day, um, I was VENTING frustration, I, I cried, twice in
front of Abdul I was so miserable at the job. And, I never cried in
front of Dr. Torvill. And the one time I was venting with Abdul, who
I found very difficult, but for some reason I could go ahead, and show
feeling, um, about how, how, MISERABLE I was. How much, I had
WAY too much work, and the vibrations hurt my head, and I didn't
feel appreciated. And just how plain miserable I was, and how I'd like
to have another job, but, I didn’t know another one to go to.

12 And I was just MISERABLE! Dr. Torvill walked up. And I
continued because the flood of emotion was coming out, I just
CONTINUED. And I said to Dr. Torvill how MISERABLE I was and
how the workload was too heavy, and, and just generally how
miserable. And that's when he said [LAUGHS]: [BOOMING,
SARCASTIC], "OHHH! You wanna be like the cannon on the State
House LAWN!" And I said [HESITANTLY], "What’s THAT?" And
he said [DRAMATIC TONE, CADENCE] "IT DOESN'T WORK,
AND IT CAN'T BE FIIRED! HAR-HAR-HAR-HAR-HAR-HAR-
HAR!"

13 He LAUGHED! Abdul laughed! And [SOBERLY] I laughed,
because I didn’t realize I'd been hurt. [PAUSE] So. I didn’t realize,
I don’t realize, sometimes, I’ve been hurt, and then LATER I realize,
in fact I think I came home and Laura said [LOW], "Oh, that’s
terrible." I realized later that I’d been HURT. That instead of hearing
that I was really MISERABLE, and saying [WITH RESIGNATION],
"Well, maybe we CAN lower your workload a little," Instead of
HEARING my pain, he just ridiculed me. So that was what it was like
to work there.

14 When I went to the Medical College, I thought I was going to
get to edit. And I stayed at that God-awful job because I THOUGHT I
would get to edit the articles for the journal. But I learned after several
months that I was not GOING to get to proofread OR edit the articles
for the journal. I was going to send the articles out for peer review.
The only thing I got to edit were the papers written by Abdul, the head
of the lab. And HE resented me for editing him. The job I have now came up, finally, when they abolished my position with Dr. Torvill. So--[SIGH][SIGH] um, when my job was to be abolished, I had to make up a secretarily-oriented, um, packet, a resume--they had me go to Human Resources and talk to Roger Blaine about it. And, I was sort of excited. I was apprehensive but excited because I thought, "At LAST, maybe I'm going to get to edit."

* * *

Framing the beginning and ending of the text is her soft-spoken, heartfelt, "I wanted to edit," a sentiment that colors all of Emily's larger narrative and an aspect of her recurring "victim" theme. Within the narrow bands of her story's fragile, symbolic frame, a maelstrom rages. In this dissonant whirl, Emily is at the mercy of machines and a volatile, totalitarian boss. Now, Emily-as-machine was a trope in her "status" narrative and the same figure resurfaces in this text. But Emily's machine metaphor becomes variegated in her conflict story. She is a machine subsumed by a larger machine, which is explicitly suggested by the unrelenting roar of the air moving equipment and implied by the politics of depersonalization demanded by the Medical College. Jay Mechling has noted that "the twin forces of technology and bureaucracy determine the institutional character of the university" (Oring 1989:341), and in both her contentual information and rhetorical techniques, Emily demonstrates that technology and bureaucracy are horns on the same goat. Technological "gains" in the 1980s and '90s have precipitated a reduction in secretarial staff in many work spheres, creating not only more onerous workloads but an increasingly imposing bureaucracy for the clerical workers who do remain (in his essay "The Productivity Paradox" which appeared in a recent edition of The Chronicle of Higher Education, 292
Paul A. Attewell remarks "Ironically, the one personnel category in which employment has been reduced because of information technology is that of clerical workers, such as secretaries and typists" [March 15, 1996]). I think the technobureaucratic oppressiveness of Emily's office is evoked most especially by the rhetorical devices she uses in her performance: her repetitions mimic the monotony of the workplace; the alterations in register and tone suggest the oppressiveness; the action-suspending evaluations mirror the prolongation of her torment and the static yet frenetic mood of an assembly line, where her chances for encountering human empathy and intellectual expression are nil.

Emily's story exemplifies recurring performance. The text's nearly flawless construction strongly suggests its important position in Emily's story repertoire. We have a logical rationale for her acceptance of the job (paragraphs one, part of two, and part of four), then a lengthy account of Torvill's indifference and the chronicity of the physical and emotional torment she endured. Emily hurls her first salvo in paragraph two, stating that she had "never been in anything so HORRIBLE in all my thirty years of working," a no-holds-barred statement that begs specific corroboration, which Emily abundantly provides as the narrative unfolds. After documenting her misery in the Medical College as it occurred over time (paragraphs three through ten), Emily suspends the linearity of her story to focus on her emotional breakdown (paragraph eleven). This part of her story is not reenacted in dialogic form; we do not learn how, or if, Abdul the lab manager responds. Rather, Emily abstracts and emphasizes only essential information, enhancing the suspense of her narrative with
repetitious and emotionally-charged reminders of her "misery" and "frustration" (the strongly intoned "miserable" appears no less than six times in eleven lines). In paragraphs eleven and twelve, Emily orchestrates her text so that her despair in its fullest emotional expression can be positioned directly against Torvill's callousness.

As do the other women's narratives, Emily's story exhibits an oppositional structure. Here we have an inhuman environment characterized by the sights and sounds of machines, and overseeing this machine-like environment is a sinisterly insensate boss. For contrast, Emily draws a parallel in paragraph three between her own sense of entrapment and that of the lab animals. The lab animals function symbolically in Emily's story, standing for the cooptation of nature and the natural self by the institution. When she says, "I'm an incest survivor, and I can't stand to see little animals in cages, waiting to die," Emily suggests that she and the lab animals are all sentient creatures experiencing the absence of human concern and existing in the shadow of "the machine." Like the animals, Emily becomes a commodity in the College of Medicine, producing at "top speed," her brain "shaken to jelly." Emily's physical and emotional connectedness to the lab animals' exploitation is but one aspect of her vulnerability: another lies in her persona as "machine." As in Chapter 4, we again have Emily's reference to her working at "TOP speed" (paragraph five), which simultaneously emphasizes her productivity and evokes the gruesome pervasiveness of institutional politics. In the College of Medicine, instead of interacting with people, Emily must interact (against her will) with machines. There is no mention of camaraderie or relationship among the other
workers, and Emily certainly does not connect with any of them; in fact, Emily's rendering of her isolation seems the most extreme among all the "horror stories" I collected.

With this resumption of the "self-as-machine" metaphor, Emily casts herself as victim to the demands of the larger machine. She bespeaks her slow suffocation and inescapable pain, depicting herself as stripped of everything that confers humanity. There is no mechanism for promoting "understanding" in this environment. Rather, her intellect is untapped, and her need and capacity for interaction are denied—overtly, by her boss's withholding of information and ignoring her messages (i.e., he refuses to "train me and show me my job," he bars Emily's attendance at lab meetings, and he refuses to get her the help she begs for), and indirectly, when she must resort to earplugs. This curbing of Emily's interactive self by the "machine" results in the deterioration of her communicative coherence and leads to her fear of brain damage. Victimization by "the machine" also extends to Emily's personal life: unable to "work at top speed for the last maybe three hours of the day," Emily becomes a disabled machine; "in bed by 6:30," Emily loses the recreational aspects of her selfhood that might flourish apart from the workplace. In what is perhaps the most malignant manifestation of the "machine," Emily replaces her personal goals with a ritual of negativity in which she reminds herself of her inconsequentiality, her invisibility, in order to persevere and produce: "I am nobody, I am nothing."

Emily almost apologizes for lapsing into humanness, unable to work at top speed for the last few hours of the day and going to bed early; her comment, "after a
year, I was desperate," makes Emily's plight all too clear: stay in the job and lose her mental and physical health or quit and lose her livelihood. But although Emily can survive only if she relinquishes the self, that aim isn't quite realized. Durative-descriptive clauses in paragraphs eleven and twelve show her underlying resistance to the demand for self-abnegation. Emily slows the action of the story and increases the suspense level with her evaluations in paragraphs eleven and twelve. The story's drama builds to a crescendo of intensity when Emily delivers the punch line: Torvill's smoothly delivered folk performance within Emily's larger performance is the "climax" of her horror story. The swiftness of "his" delivery, the precision with which it is levelled in its context, and the stunning force of its rhetoric, also suggest the recurring nature of Torvill's "cannon" analogy; Emily's dramatic rendition of Torvill's performance leads me to believe that he has used the analogy at opportune moments in the workplace with other subordinates.

The pernicious humor of Torvill's analogy obfuscates the political reality of Emily's situation in several ways. First, by linking Emily to "the cannon on the State House lawn," Torvill redirects Emily from her condition of human angst and guides her back again to more "appropriate" machine status. Radner and Lanser have scrutinized the ways men ignore women's messages and the reasons for these acts of denial; they comment: "To pay attention to women's subversive feelings is, in a sense, to validate them--and potentially to lose power or self-esteem; acting as if one is not receiving their messages, on the other hand, is a way of silencing women, of screening out their power to disrupt" (1993:32). Torvill's cannon analogy is clearly
effective in shutting Emily down, in silencing her before she can cause further
damage. Torvill not only parallels Emily with a machine, but it is a dysfunctional
machine. In so doing he implicitly appeals to the "guilt" that Emily must be
experiencing for "not wanting to work." This remark allows Torvill to conveniently
delete both Emily’s selfhood and the contextual conditions that have produced her
misery, and to ignore Emily’s history of productivity.

After vividly characterizing Torvill’s remark (assuming his booming voice
and heartless laughter for dramatic impact), Emily the narrator is silent for a few
seconds, recreating in the interview the shock that must have emerged during the
initial exchange. Torvill’s rejoinder to Emily’s expression of desperation is, in fact, a
non-sequitur, a communicative breakdown with a surrealistic dimension: experiencing
it is like stepping in the dark on a stair that isn’t there. As Richard Harvey Brown
has noted:

Both reification and schizophrenia are semiotic ailments—disorders in
the logic of communication. This, by the way, is why we feel so
estranged when trying to communicate with either schizophrenics or
with bureaucrats; in each case we encounter a world of perfect
rationality which is so abstracted and disconnected from shared
experiences as to be false and unreal. (1987:55)

Dr. Torvill dismisses Emily’s complaint as illogical with his own illogical response.
He not only puts her in her place, he imposes a new brand of reason with his societal
discourse, which is a strictly rhetorical construction ("reason is not something that
belongs only to experts. Instead it exists through public discourse. For Marxists as
well as for ethnomethodologists, reason is a practical human activity, a dialectic of
form and performance" [Brown 1987:77]).

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There are a few ambiguities in Emily’s story. First, her difficulties with the air moving machines are resolved when she and Dr. Torvill finally move to another building, but Emily doesn’t highlight that information. Nor does she emphasize that Dr. Torvill did finally trade offices with her and did allow her to work at home in the mornings. I believe that Emily deemphasizes Torvill’s less malicious overtures in order to underscore her intense and prolonged torment, which is the point of the story. The effects she experienced in the College of Medicine precipitate Emily’s search for causality; as Northrop Frye suggests, "the mental operations preceding the writing out of the causal sequence move backwards. The causal thinker is confronted by a mass of phenomena which he can understand only by thinking of them as effects, after which he searches for their preceding causes" (1980:59). Bauman likewise points out that "events are abstractions from narrative. It is the structures of signification in narrative that give coherence to events in our understanding, that enable us to construct in the interdependent process of narration and interpretation a coherent set of interrelationships that we call an ‘event’" (1986:5). Thus, structures of signification precede any understanding of events, and permit subsequent interpretation of them. Emily’s mode of text production makes use of Dr. Torvill’s previous linguistic texts when such texts support her theme of being victimized. We hear Torvill say "I don’t want to get headaches!" We hear him make the cannon analogy. But Emily quite understandably leaves out less dramatic and less mean-spirited interactions that must have occurred when Torvill agreed to let her work at home and so on. As do all narrators, Emily clearly wants to invoke particular bodies
of knowledge and to deemphasize others. Having earlier admitted to me that she is an "eager to please" individual, Emily hesitates to muddy the water by including information that might compromise the malevolence of Torvill's portrait.

Emily expressed an interest in looking over this interpretation of her horror story. After reviewing it, she was troubled. In her view, my analysis implies that there must have been "positive" aspects about the job which she had ostensibly failed to bring out in her narrative. Emily stressed that there were few positive features of her work in Dr. Torvill's department. She added that Dr. Torvill allowed her to work at home only after she told him that she "was very sorry" but she could endure no more headaches, no more of her brain being shaken to jelly, and because of fear of permanent brain damage, she decided it was necessary to resign her position.

When Emily reclaimed a portion of her power and refused to be a victim any longer, Dr. Torvill agreed to her working at home during the mornings. Emily also told me that there were other incidents, far more hurtful, that she did not divulge in the interviews for fear of subsequently being found out. Emily explained that the incidents she brought to light in her narrative were "safe" incidents in that she has a witness who can back her story.

Emily's feedback shows that discussing the finer points of her performance and metanarrative strategies is less important to her than conveying the depth of her misery in Torvill's domain. Emily's critical comments are appreciated and valuable for this polyvocal study, as are her first-hand, from-the-heart descriptions of the activities in her former workplace. From my position as folklorist and student of
discourse, however, I still maintain that Emily was keenly aware of the dynamics of the interview situation and of my expectations as interviewer when she told me her horror story. I do not imply that there may have been "positive" aspects to her job in the Medical College; my idea is only that Emily chooses to highlight some of the most dramatic aspects of her experience there to support her point. In looking over her text, it is clear that she skillfully selected each point for maximum impact and impression. When Barbara Allen states, "Personal experience narratives are carefully shaped and precisely positioned for rhetorical effect in their conversational settings (Oring 1989:237), she implies that narrators like Emily are careful to give interviewers whatever it is they think the interviewers want and will comprehend. And what critical ethnographer-folklorist would not prize Emily’s story, which so piercingly portrays the production, contestation, and, ultimately, the maintenance of workplace hegemony?
Narratives of Conflict

From the early twentieth century through the 1980s, occupational folklore studies were concerned with "colorful" and "romantic" occupations; cattlemen and smokejumpers were all the rage back then. Pink collar workers and women in general were absent from the scholarship, apparently reflecting the assumption that "dramatic" occupations inspired correspondingly "dramatic" folk texts, and also revealing the bias of male folklorists toward masculine subjects and public performance. Insofar as genres, the focus was on practical jokes, one-upmanship, and trickster behavior in the workplace. Narratives of personal experience were largely unexplored. To the uninitiated, this project's topic of Civil Service staff members, and its genre of personal narratives, might sound unexciting compared to the occupational folklore of the recent past. Yet the "conflict" accounts described here reveal that sparks can fly in any work environment (as Fairclough remarks, "Hegemonic struggle takes place on a broad front, which includes the institutions of civil society (education, trade unions, family)" [1992:92]). And a commensurate level of "one-upwomanship" also seems to occur among female Civil Service staff members and their not-always-male superiors. In the second chapter, I remarked that "sisterhood is a construct." The kinds of conflicts reported here certainly bear out that truism.

Labov (1972) and Polanyi (1989) have noted that one of the functions of stories is to show that something went wrong, that some injustice occurred; Polanyi states, "The speaker demonstrates that this period was a very storyworthy one.
because it differed so widely from the way things ought to be" (1989:99). The horror stories in this chapter also document that displays of power can catch one offguard (Hester’s job is "suddenly" abolished; Jill’s boss loses control in a staff meeting; Ruth fails her dissertation defense). Patrick Mullen, in reviewing the ambiguous life story patterns of one of his informants, suggests that "in American cultural history the dominant values of individualism and achievement orientation are not without conflict. They can lead to stress and suicide; they can be thwarted by misfortunes out of control of the individual" (1992:128). But it is the unexpected and even devastating nature of the situations they recount that has paradoxically offered the women frameworks within which to explore and emphasize aspects of their own worthiness. The women’s story-selves display traits of intelligence, self-reliance, tenacity, wit, and workplace competence; the conflict event sanctions the depiction of these positive character traits, and the positive character traits are intertwined narratively with the negative event that stimulated them. Thus, the women’s stories of "out-of-the-ordinary" events are constructed alongside the creation of strong storyworld and/or narrational identities.

It is true that the participants are sometimes reticent. Carrie and Ariel often seem constrained when speaking about their observations and experiences. And Ariel and Emily critique the institution’s power dynamics but from the standpoint of their narrational selves; their storyworld selves do not challenge their prescribed roles (indicating, perhaps, their reinforcement of power relations in situ [Fairclough 1989:41]). Nevertheless, their impassioned narrative styles allow them to roundly
condemn their tenuousness and marginality in the workplace. Emily and Ariel's rather passive storyworld selves and more indignant narrative selves are therefore not out of touch. As much as the other women, these two are keenly aware of their positions in the hierarchy, and their cognition fuels their fire. When I look at the power of Emily and Ariel's narrative styles juxtaposed with their stories of misuse and victimization, Richard Bauman's words hit home: "true anecdotes are told to keep us aware of the vulnerability of life as it really is and the capacity of speech to make this vulnerability apparent and to bring it under control" (1986:77). Their "successful" performances allow several of them to achieve an after-the-fact "control" that was impossible at the time of the conflict, but also to communicate, in some cases, an ongoing lack of control.

As Linde states, "narrative, both in its expressiveness and in its possibility for ambiguity, can function as a major social resource for creating the self, both in its separateness and in its relation to others" (1993:121). Bauman (1971) and Dundes (1989) have also shown that performers may identify themselves in opposition to the powers-that-be. But if the women define themselves apart from the power structure, do they by extension define themselves apart from their occupations, or in Ruth's case, apart from academia? Not exactly. While they implicitly and explicitly stress their state of underemployment, the participants are all proud of their work ethic, their productivity; Meg, Hester, Iz, Ariel, Jill, Ruth, and Emily all refer to their workplace competence, a point of pride for them. They have a measure of control over their productivity and they manage it positively. Ruth's expertise as performer
and her capacity for insightful analysis of complex events demonstrate her intellectual breadth and thus implicitly align her with the academicians. The women gain control over asymmetrical power relations by either reenacting the role-reversing behavior they used during conflict situations or, in the case of Ariel and Emily, by rehearsing their contempt for unjust treatment with vehement narrations: participants remake their experiences by portraying themselves as the "hero" of their stories, but they achieve a similar result with their narratorial expertise.

Robinson and Hawpe have spoken to the didactic force of the story form:

where practical choice and action are concerned, stories are better guides than rules or maxims. Rules and maxims state significant generalizations about experience but stories illustrate and explain what those summaries mean. The oldest form of moral literature is the parable; the most common form of informal instruction is the anecdote. Both forms enable us to understand generalizations about the social order because they exemplify that order in a contextualizing account. (1986:124)

Similarly, Jerome Bruner suggests that narrative is concerned with "human action and intentionality. It mediates between the canonical world of culture and the more idiosyncratic world of beliefs, desires, and hopes. It renders the exceptional comprehensible" (1990:52). The narratives all reveal how storytelling can be a medium through which prevailing norms are either unconsciously sustained or deliberately rejected.

**Border Crossers and Border Patrols**

Margaret Mills has suggested that the postmodern question, "can the subaltern speak?" should be replaced with "How, and under what circumstances, can or does
the hegemonic hear?'" (1993:174). The hierarchy’s demand for docility and silence, and the women’s rejection of those demands, are themes that emerge in the stories via the women’s metanarration as well as in the development of their story-selves. Meg says, "There must be some sort of an image of, of low self-esteem and we’re all supposed to participate in that stereotype. And I didn’t. It was probably pretty obvious that they had not hired another fat cow." Hester doesn’t share the details of her actual testimony for the graduate student, instead concentrating on the faculty’s subversive plot to abolish her job; yet it is her willingness to speak up that is the catalyst for that action. Carrie also rejects silence in the face of a supervisor who wants to curtail her phone conversations: she displays her positionality and subjectivity with her rejoinder: "I perceive myself as a woman, as a mother, and as a worker, and in that order." Ariel’s metanarrative whispers and the lack of assertion of her story-self suggest the oppressiveness of her workplace; Jill’s public graciousness to her co-workers and her request for help is met with her supervisor’s incoherent ravings; Ruth argues "inappropriately" with her advisor and "inappropriately" in her dissertation defense and is punished accordingly; and Emily summarizes the root of her workplace woes: "Instead of HEARING my pain, he just ridiculed me." In remarking on the silencing of excluded and oppressed groups, bell hooks could be specifically commenting about the women’s university experiences: "Silenced. We fear those who speak about us, who do not speak to us and with us. We know that the forces that silence us, because they never want us to speak, differ from the forces that say speak, tell me your story" (1990:152).
The major point of Ariel's conflict story, and a sub-plot in Iz's, has to do with their supervisors' objections to their graduate coursework. In Ariel's case, especially, this objection is call for alarm—she reiterates that she is working at Ohio State only for the tuition waiver available to staff members. What values lead supervisors to express dismay at employees' aim for self-development and self-expression? Bruner states that while broad-mindedness is the cornerstone of democratic culture, "open-mindedness generates its own enemies, for there is surely a biological constraint on appetites for novelty" (1990:30). Ariel and Iz are "novel" in their intellectual ambitions and therefore threaten the sharp delineations between low-ranking staff and their supervisors. Jill is also "novel," portraying a workplace confidence and graciousness that eludes her supervisor; Meg and Carrie buck the system and win; Hester and Ruth buck the system and are dismissed; Emily breaks down, yet her pain is dismissed.

Brook Thomas has written that the official voice of pluralism in Western democracies domesticates subversive voices by appropriating them (1991:60). Similarly, Habermas has stressed that state and economic "systems" are displacing communicative aspects of language which aim to promote understanding with "strategic" uses of language which aim to control people and which are geared toward political and economic "success" (Fairclough 1992:6). I believe the rejection of this "strategic" kind of language is the operating force in the climaxes of all the women's conflict texts: Torvill refuses to accept Emily's anguish, and wants instead her machine-like workplace productivity; Ruth's advisor wants to change her "attitude"
(paradoxically, if she had continued to "fight" with ideas instead of her committee members, she would have been seen as appropriately conforming to the requirements of the academic mindset); Ariel and Iz's supervisors try to dissuade the women's class attendance in favor of greater commitment to and "attendance" within the workplace; and Jill's, Carrie's, and Meg's supervisors, and Hester's chair, all implicitly demand greater levels of docility and selflessness than these women are willing to give. As Donald Brenneis puts it:

> the institutions of the modern world, whether transnational economic systems or national science bureaucracies, do not exist in an abstract, generalized sense. While they may have clearly delineated organizational structures, they also are understood and experienced—and their implications shaped and renegotiated—in quite particular events and interactions . . . the central role of a concern for aesthetic, performative, and emergent dimensions of such events, dimensions for the understanding of which the theoretical and methodological resources of post-New Perspectives folklore are especially valuable. Only through serious engagement with such questions can relationships between the "givens" of social, political, and economic order—the assumed causes—and those events in which they are reflected, redefined, and constituted be understood. (1993:299-300)

The refusal to silently embrace the prescribed mold for Civil Service employees (or doctoral students, in Ruth's case) has resulted in their supervisors' resistance, as Meg's, Carrie's, Iz's, Ariel's, Jill's, and Emily's narratives demonstrate, or their outright repudiation, as Ruth's and Hester's stories show. The desire by higher-ups to impose an "essential" quality on their underlings thus seems to be at work here. By ignoring the women's concerns and advancing agendas that embody particular truth values (largely about "appropriateness," "loyalty," and "productivity"), stereotypical conduct is subtly yet compellingly demanded.
On the other hand, their texts make clear that the women recognize the dominant's group's interest in assimilating them, and that they are cognizant of the means used to persuade them to loyalty. Taken as a whole, these narratives of conflict provide a voice of consensus in opposition to essentializing efforts of the dominant group. In both their histoire and their discours, Meg, Hester, Carrie, Iz, Jill, and Ruth critique the system and construct empowered story-selves. The women's discursive role reversals and the fluidity with which they move across class boundaries in their stories contrast with the immobility of Ariel and Emily's storyworld selves. I think that the gaps between Ariel's and Emily's narrational and story-selves proclaim the "differences" that set them apart from their superiors in the workplace as surely as does the storyworld verbal sparring that Meg, Hester, Carrie, Iz, and Ruth so variously document in their conflict stories. And Jill depicts herself as neither acquiescing nor showing aggression, but she also achieves power in her narrative: her unwillingness to react to her supervisor's rantings allows Jill to disrupt the superior/subordinant dualism that characterizes Civil Service worklife. Despite their different themes, their different self-characterizations, and their different ways of responding to conflict, all the participants' conflict narratives reveal a rejection of arbitrary boundaries, of inequities, of intimidation.

Insofar as they are all "border crossers" (or would-be border crossers), the women demonstrate their unwillingness to be dominated. By contrast, their "superiors" reveal themselves to be jealous border guards. Nancy Hartsock, citing Albert Memmi's The Colonizer and the Colonized, points out that "once the
behavioral feature or historical or geographical factor which characterizes the colonialist and contrasts him with the colonized has been isolated, this gap must be kept from being filled" (1990:161-62). Hartsock further stresses that "radical dichotomy . . . functions to maintain order. The questions posed . . . are: In whose interest is it to preserve dichotomies? Who experiences change as disorder?" (1990:162-63). What happens when border crossings occur, even if such crossings are limited to personal narratives that are recounted to sympathetic ears? I believe such incidents foster alterations in the perceptions of self and of other, by both self and other; when people leap across class boundaries, even symbolically, they abrogate established categories, replacing one role for another, and thus, alter and reconstitute social universals. When individuals refuse to accept the roles that the dominant class has prescribed for them, the status-quo is threatened. As the identities of individual and group selves on both sides of the border thus become more indeterminate, they become all the more jealous of guarding their toe-holds.

Metaphors of Resistance

T. R. Wright claims that "narrative is the way we construct our sense of identity, but metaphor is how we think, especially in areas in which we need to build our knowledge of the unknown by comparison with the known" (1988:11). In a similar vein, Bruner suggests that narrative is plot, drama, historicity, diachronicity, and a way of using language, but once narrative "achieves its particularities, it converts them into tropes: its agents, actions, scenes, goals, and instruments (and its
troubles as well) are converted into emblems" (1990:60). Richard Bauman sees these "emblems" and the dramatic performances that contain them as creating emergent social structures at the macro level and emergent texts at the micro level: "emergent texts" are most frequently manifested as the retooling of old forms in new ways (1977:40). We see such "retooling" in some of the simple figures in the texts: Meg’s supervisor becomes the "Iron Claw in the Velvet Glove"; Hester’s job abolition was accomplished by a collusive "set up"; Carrie’s workplace is a minefield, a site for "holding your ground"; Ruth "crashes and burns," yet ultimately escapes academia’s seductive "toxicity."

But the women’s capacities for story development extend beyond their use of simple specific figuration. All the stories function within complex, overarching metaphoric structures of a dialectic character. Brown suggests that

The relation between the literal and the metaphoric is dialectical. Like essence/appearance or factual/fictional, each term presupposes and implies the other. By not acknowledging this dependency, literalists render themselves incapable of understanding their own creative process, whereas metaphoricists are unable to explain how their tropes relate to experience. Of course, both creativity and experience are linguistically mediated. Hence, we are not speaking of an opposition between language and reality, but of a dialectic within a symbolic reality. (1987:114)

This highly "pragmatic" assessment is reminiscent of the process orientation of performance theory; Brown is suggesting here that reality exists in both physical and mental "facts" and their interrelation. The participants’ narratives function dialectically--their topics of greatest importance (injustices in the workplace) are
rendered more relevant by the inclusion of "point-counterpoint" patterns which run throughout the texts. I think this patterning reveals the dialectical essence of the women's life experiences. For instance, in Meg's story, the "fluff chicks/disco queens" metaphor, suggesting "visibility," is played off the "backroom" metaphor, which simultaneously implies "invisibility," "silence," and brute productivity. Hester and the graduate students in her former department (standing for "honesty," "integrity," and "innocence") are cast against the faculty's scheming subversiveness. Iz's on-the-job experiences match those of her life, a Dickensian spectrum of positive/negative characters and actions. Jill's self-control and ethical standards are contrasted with her supervisor's lack of same. Ruth's series of personal crises is matched if not entirely ameliorated by her intellectual independence, wit, and tenacity. In Emily's story, we have double extended metaphors: the lab animals are linked to Emily's entrapment, and the appropriating oppressiveness of the "machine" controls Emily and the animals alike.

If metaphors functionally link "subjective" and "objective" realms (Frye 1980:68), the mixing of metaphors within narratives can strengthen that link. Citing Lyotard, Jim Thomas remarks that the postmodern mixing and matching of metaphors to obtain contrasting meanings help us to see beyond the social conventions "that anchor our common sense" (1993:24): we see such "mixing and matching" in Emily's text. The lab animals are a metaphor for her vulnerable sentient self; she heightens this metaphor of suffering and entrapment by playing it off her other dominant metaphor, that of the sterile, unfeeling, overpowering machine.
The women have given voice to specific and selected incidents, using narrative and metaphor to make sense of their experiences and positions after the fact. But as interviewer and interpreter of their stories, I am also "making" here, spinning the empirical data from the interviews into a web of polyvocal meanings, using as my loom selected theories from folklore and discourse scholarship. The result is distinctly collaborative: all the women have had a chance to review the transcripts and analyses of their "status" and "horror" stories. Meg, Ariel, and Iz, for lack of time, were unable to do so, yet Carrie responded briefly but positively to my interpretation; Jill seemed pleased with my analysis and offered a few editorial comments which I incorporated; Hester likewise corrected some typographical and contentual errors in her transcript and was enthusiastic about the analysis. Ruth spoke to me on the phone about my treatment of her texts, saying: "I read the Bible, which is a collection of oral stories put into a written tradition. When I read your transcription of my words and the analysis, I said, 'Wow! These are my words, all right, but they seem so official in this format!'

Of all the women, Emily has been the most assiduously involved in reviewing her words and my interpretations. The reciprocal nature of Emily’s and my dealings can perhaps be best seen in the last paragraphs of the interpretation of her horror story. Here, Emily’s objections to my analysis are duly noted, after which I respond to her objections. This in-text negotiative dialogue between Emily and me offers details of our differences about the analysis; taken as a whole, it also shows the
polyvocality I want this project to embody. I hope and think that this project has achieved the polyvocality of which Elaine Lawless speaks in the following quotation:

Feminist ethnography, here designed as reciprocal, multi-layered, and polyvocal, mirrors the text and sub-text of the women's stories, which are equally mutli-layered and polyvocal. The spoken voices of the women interplay with other aspects of their own unspoken or muted sub-voices, with internalized male constructs of text and story, and with the stereotyped and misogynist demands of their cultural context." (1993:80) (emphasis mine)

I also believe that this project's trajectory, buoyed by both fictional and factual elements, in its modest way mirrors Vico's contention that the kernels of "historical truth" reside in myth and legend, that we can only "know" that which we "make."
NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. The validity of "situational," performance-based folklore scholarship in the late 1960's and early 1970's depended on the uprooting of long-held notions such as those about traditionality. For a century or more, scholars had sought to "discover" and impose traditionality on folklore in order to show not only its historical importance but to pinpoint its formal evolution. But in 1971, Dan Ben-Amos discounted the necessity of tradition for folklore creation and dissemination, instead viewing identity construction as the primary catalyst for folklore performances. See Toward New Perspectives in Folklore, 1971, ed. Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman. Austin: University of Texas Press.

2. Bauman describes the anecdote as a special kind of narrative: "The anecdote may be defined as a short, humorous narrative, purporting to recount a true incident involving real people. The characteristic formal features of the genre include a focus on a single episode and a single scene, and a tendency to limit attention to two principal actors. As a corollary, perhaps, of this last feature, anecdotes also tend to be heavily dialogic in construction, often culminating in a kind of punch line, a striking, especially reportable statement rendered in direct discourse." (Story, Performance, and Event, p. 55)


   Zora's friend Calvin says, "... Ah just heard about a toe-party over to Wood Bridge tonight and Ah decided to make it."
   'A toe-party! What on earth is that?"
   The conversation takes a detour, but questions about toe-parties continue.
   "I went on in and was herded behind the curtain. 'Say, what is this toe-party business?' I asked one of the girls. 'Good gracious, Zora! Ain't you never been to a toe-party before?' 'Nope. They don't have 'em up North where Ah been and Ah just got back today.'" (pp. 9-16)

   Hurston's deception was driven by the demands of ethnographic fieldwork. But she was able to excavate folk meanings about folk events for a more comprehensive cultural portrait because she participated in these events herself, demonstrating that she was a member of the community: her own toe was judged and she sampled the "coon-dick," too.
4. Livia Polanyi (1989), Robert Georges (1987), Charlotte Linde (1993), Sandra Stahl (1989), John Robinson (1981), and Amy Shuman (1986), among others, have contributed their ideas to the questions, "what topics are storyable, and under what circumstances?" Shuman reveals that for every story that is told, another narrative, coincidental to the first, is untellable. Robert Georges speaks of cultural "rules" governing tellability, and ponders "appropriateness" in the content and telling of tales.

5. Michael Stubbs (1983), among other sociolinguists, sees "so" and "well" as structural markers that can function either as topic shifters or topic closers.

6. Gregory Bateson talks about "gaps" in message structures: "if the receiver can guess at missing parts of the message, then those parts which are received must, in fact, carry a meaning which refers to the missing parts and is information about those parts . . . . when an observer receives only certain parts of a sequence or configuration of phenomena, he is in many cases able to guess, with better than random success, at the parts which he cannot immediately perceive. It is, indeed, a principal goal of the scientist to elucidate these redundancies or patternings of the phenomenal world" (1972:414). Iz’s "gaps" in this part of her narrative are not redundancies but incongruencies; as with redundancies, however, the meanings of Iz’s discontinuities can be identified by looking at the patterning that characterizes her overall narrative and many of its features.

7. In Livia Polanyi’s view, Iz’s long story sequence embodies a hierarchical embedding of "several major stories which appear independent as they are being told but which link up into one grand unit at the end of the sequence" (1989:86).

8. After Foucault, Fairclough suggests that "Power does not work negatively by forcefully dominating those who are subject to it; it incorporates them, and is ‘productive’ in the sense that it shapes and ‘retools’ them to fit in with its needs. Modern power was not imposed from above by particular collective agents (e.g. classes) upon groups or individuals; it developed ‘from below’ in certain ‘microtechniques’ (such as ‘examination’ in its medical or education senses . . . .), which emerged in institutions such as hospitals, prisons and schools at the beginning of the modern period. Such techniques imply a dual relation between power and knowledge in modern society: on the one hand, the techniques of power are developed on the basis of knowledge which is generated, for example, in the social sciences; on the other hand, the techniques are very much concerned with exercising power in the process of gathering knowledge" (1992:50).

9. In Lake Erie Fishermen (1990), Patrick Mullen and Timothy Lloyd uncovered oppositional narratives that commercial fishermen employed to set themselves apart from other groups. In what are called "in your blood" stories, the fishermen justified their hatred of factory work; such mechanized work is scorned for its removal from outdoor, "natural" work on the lake. Another such oppositional structure was pinpointed in the commercial fishermen’s narratives about sport fishermen, whose
activities have contributed to the erosion of the commercial fishing industry on the Great Lakes.

10. John Lomax's 1910 collection of cowboy ballads in the early twentieth century is a case in point (see *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, New York: Sturgis and Walton Company). Also see Robert H. Byington, *Working Americans: Contemporary Approaches to Occupational Folk Life*. 1978, Special Number of *Western Folklore* 37: 143-245. For instance, Jack Santino's contribution to this collection focused on such traditional genres as practical jokes and trickster behavior in the workplace, and his focus group was traditional and "romantic" (i.e. male railroad workers). Santino's fascinating 1989 work *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: Stories of Black Pullman Porters* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press) in some ways continued to advance the "masculine" model of folklore study with scrutiny of a marginalized male group. However, Santino's analysis of the personal experience narratives of his informants exemplifies the late 1980s impulse for branching out from earlier, more narrow genre studies.

11. I use the word "successful" deliberately. In *Toward New Perspectives*, Roger Abrahams encapsulated the constitutive quality of "successful" folkloric transmissions:

> Expressive folklore . . . creates mechanisms by which the group can psychologically handle the unexpected. . . .by embodying suggestion in an organized manner, thus creating an atmosphere in which pleasure may occur because the feeling of control is transferred magically from the formal expression to the situation itself (that is, when the performance is successful). (1971:18)

12. Do supervisors have the right to object to their employees' taking courses? The Office of Human Resources informed me on Friday, February 16, 1996, that the employee fee authorization program ("EFA") is indeed a legitimate and publicized benefit for Classified Civil Service staff members. Descriptions of eligibility for the benefit, and of the benefit itself, follow:

Eligibility: 75% of greater FTE appointment, completion of probationary period. Description: Instructional and general fees only are conditionally remitted by the University pending successful completion of up to 10 credit hours per quarter of course work taken at Ohio State in pursuit of a degree outside normal working hours. May not receive any other financial aid or scholarship. (Form Number 11174, July 1, 1995)

Civil Service workers observe eight hour working days; they are not paid for their daily lunch hour, which might feasibly occur between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., depending on the "coverage" demands of their department. Lunch hour, therefore,
might appear to be an ideal time to take a course that meets daily for 48 minutes, Monday through Friday.

But there are problems with this assumption. As a student advances as an undergraduate and as one proceeds through graduate school, course possibilities become increasingly limited, constrained by the demands of the academic unit and governing college. Further, graduate programs are heavily dependent on seminar classes that meet twice weekly for two-hour periods. Thus, the needs of advanced undergraduate and graduate students do not seem to have been considered when this university benefit was implemented. When I inquired at Human Resources about such potential problems, I was told that supervisors are authorized to decide who among their workers can take classes, and at what times.

CHAPTER 6
MATERIAL REALITIES

The value of a dollar is social,
as it is created by society.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

In the following pages, the participants talk about their standards of living and related issues. Along with race, gender, ethnicity, occupation, personal history, and geographical position, income helps to define one’s social location within the workplace and outside of it. Income is an unavoidable facet of self perception; Adrienne Rich remarks, "economic and other material realities . . . help to create psychological reality" (1993:228). Part of that "psychological reality" goes beyond bare economics and extends to institutionally-defined worth; our bi-weekly paychecks habitually remind us of the extent to which the university values our labor, our presence, our selves. As is true of the private sector, the university’s pay ranges are bound up with employee classifications, categories, and length of tenure; in any occupational sphere, stratified pay scales are powerful signifying practices which help maintain and reinforce the hierarchy.

Glimpsing the participants’ financial situations adds a valuable facet to this critical ethnography, for their texts make it clear that the size of a paycheck can
further marginalize those who occupy the social periphery of The Ohio State University community. Close readings of the "income" texts also enhance comprehension of the women's other narratives, for while specific information about their salaries and economic difficulties is highlighted here, another important point in all the texts concerns personal worth: the worthy selves that the women have deftly fashioned in their previous narratives reappear in the following pages. In speaking about their marginality, and about status and conflict in the workplace, we have seen that the women often contrast their own competence, dignity, and intelligence alongside the ethical and moral shortcomings of people in positions of power. The income texts again reveal vigorous negotiations between self and institution, contests between positive, self-defined marginality and negative, status-based marginality.

Abundant performance strategies and ideological use of language are part and parcel of many of the texts. Some of the women use exemplum, internal dialogues, and embedded stories to emphasize their points. They all engage in forceful evaluative strategies. But while ideologically-driven discourse and performances help us to adapt to, come to terms with, and compensate for the lack of more tangible compensation, discursive practices are always constrained by a "constituted, material reality, with preconstituted 'objects' and preconstituted social subjects. This constitutive process of discourse ought therefore to be seen in terms of a dialectic, in which the impact of discursive practice depends upon how it interacts with the preconstituted reality" (Fairclough 1992:60). As in the stories of conflict and status, the selves that emerge in the following pages are both vulnerable and vexed: for the
most part, the women bristle at the financial difficulties they face as (mostly single) Civil Service women. And, not surprisingly, all of them reject either implicitly or explicitly the value that the University hierarchy ascribes to them via the contents of their pay envelope. While some of the texts consist of unadorned epigrammatic assessments of financial difficulties, others are embedded with metaphorically vivid personal experience narratives that exhibit the beginning/ending story format.

Meg’s narrative exemplifies this dynamic: she comprehensively documents the ways undervalued Civil Service employees have been handed the financial short end of the stick, but she also argues that Civil Service women have been aware of the university’s machinations all along. Situated within the documentation, Meg offers a story that bolsters her point.

* * *

1 MEG: The problem on one level is a kind of attitude of unappreciation for staff at a basic level, which kind of manifests in an INVISIBILITY of staff to faculty. Unless the faculty are exceptional people, exceptionally sensitive and rare, staff members tend to be relatively invisible, unless they do something wrong or unless they don’t do something that you want them to do. Then they’re HIGHLY visible. But very rarely do, I think, staff members come to the attention to faculty at large, or you know, managers and supervisors, THAT kind of level, in a positive way—looking for good people to give a pat on the back [PAUSE] or some sort of recognition to.

2 Of course, the most meaningful recognition that a person could have probably is MONEY, especially at a time when very LITTLE of our budget has gone to support raises of either faculty or staff for several years. I mean, I think that the problem exists on the faculty level, too. And if we start to lose our good faculty to other institutions, which I think is already happening in some departments, uh, very quickly it becomes a negative snow-balling effect, and demoralization sets in, and all kinds of problems come with it.
And it just means that more people are going to be looking, people who would otherwise be happy here, and feel very satisfied dealing with Ohio students and Ohio politics and environment in general. I think that for the staff, one of the things that, uh, people, like me, who've been here a long time, kind of predicted several years ago when Stuart Madison announced that the University would be splitting off from the State in terms of its Civil Service salaries. We KNEW—I mean, we KNEW what that meant. That meant that our salaries would go down. That meant that we would lose ground. We KNEW that. What we were being told was that [MOCK REPROACHFUL], "Oh, NO! [SWEETLY CONDESCENDING] This was so we could give you RAISES when the state doesn’t LEGISLATE a raise, and we can give you extra merit pay."

Now that was, my GOD, that was maybe TEN YEARS AGO? And since that time we are now, for a comparable title, we're [TERSE] now seventeen percent behind the state. Now quickly do a figuring of what 17% more income would mean to you. It might help you make ends meet. It might mean the difference between havin' to make do with a coat that's fallin' apart another year, or goin' out and buying a new one. It might mean the difference between being able to afford daycare. I mean, and it's the 17% calculated over the ten years!

Oh yeah! It's an incredible LOSS to people here. And I think that staff members at the university, especially those that interact with academic departments, I think that we have to be [PAUSE] in some respects BRIGHTER, more on top of things, and more WITH it, more in-sync with our departments, than, you know, if you're just doin' a little business job and all you have to do is answer the phone and do a spreadsheet. We have to [COMMANDING and TERSE] answer the phone, do a spread sheet, and talk intelligently about, you know, the role of East Asian languages and quantum physics in the world today! [BRIEF LAUGH] You know, I mean, it's like, there are all these things that we, we have to do in terms of serving the public, and serving the students, and our faculty, and the fact that we're getting paid a helluva lot less for it means maybe that all of us who stay here are STUPID [LAUGHTER] in some fundamental capacity.

S: I've wondered about that--do you think it's the retirement benefits people build up here that keep them here?

MEG: No, I think that people would leave if they felt that they had a place to go to. And people ARE leaving. I think that the people
who don’t leave, some of them are STUCK because they COULDN’T get a job elsewhere. But of course that’s one of the weird things that’s always said.

This, this is a funny story, I’ll have to tell you this story. The year that I got an award for the best staff member, which was a relatively new thing that Jim Rather, bless his heart, had started, to recognize staff—I think this is a WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL program. I went down to lunch with two of my colleagues and a person from the College office. And all three of us staff members had been here for many years. I don’t know how long exactly I had been here at that time [PAUSE]—at least 10 years I guess. And the other two people had been here, one of them had been here seven or eight years longer than me, at that time, but you know, we’re lookin’ between 10 and 20 years.

And we were talking about another department, and some of the problems they were having in staffing. And we were trying to figure out WHAT might be going on there, and see if we could provide any insight to help the situation. And, the person from the College, who we all like and respect a great deal, out of her mouth came the statement: “You KNOW if SO-AND-SO were any good, SHE’D have left here a long time ago.”

And the three of us looked at one another, and of course I’m usually the one that gets into trouble, so I said, “EXCUUUUSE me? Did I just hear you say that?” I said, “Do you know who you’re talking to right now at this table, and how many years we have, individually and collectively, put INTO this university? Does this mean that we’re no good? Is this the perception?” And the person was absolutely horrified that she had said that—I don’t know if she was horrified that she said that or horrified that she had said that to US [LAUGHTER]. It’s indicative of a deeply entrenched attitude that "if they’re good, they’re gonna be GONE." And so, you have this image of the upwardly mobile—person who comes in with their five-year plan, you know, works a little bit here, then gets another job here, then goes off. [PAUSE]

And I think that right now we have to focus on everything that we can get out of this university, since they’re definitely getting everything out of us. In terms of incentive for classes, and you know, the kinds of things that we’re able to DO here, like I’m able, HOPEFULLY, KNOCK ON WOOD [SHE KNOCKS ON THE DESK], to complete my Ph.D. while working here—probably the
LONGEST TRACK of putting yourself through school on RECORD! I keep joking that I'll be 87 by the time I get this damn degree! But--maybe I'll only FEEL like I'm 87 years old! This quarter, that will do it! Um, I think that, I think that's actually one of the things that keep people here, is the fact that they can take classes. Another thing is that people, some people PREFER an academic environment in which to work, because you have intelligent people to talk to. However, I think that you're going to find, over the years, demoralized groups of people, and also people who just simply can't afford to stay here. And, who aren't getting what they need to get back in return for their work.

I mean [SIGH], every once in a while you look back and you wonder if I should have done something differently, and I try NOT to do that very often--it's not, it doesn't serve any practical purpose. But, if I COULD have done things differently, what would I have liked to have done? Well, I would have liked to have NOT had to work my way through school, especially doing things that are FAIRLY demeaning at times, and stressful and problematic, and not very well paid, in comparison to what they're worth. And, I would have liked to have been a T.A. and just, you know, have [PERKY] Mom and Dad support me and GOLLY GEE, if wishes were horses we'd ALL have a [LAUGHS] forty mule team! You know. So that's the way it goes!

* * *

More than a simple assessment of her standard of living, the overarching point of Meg's income text concerns the underappreciation and undercompensation of Civil Service staff. But once again, Meg skillfully, subtly emphasizes her own workplace worthiness and linguistic competence in the telling. As a member of a traditionally silent, "invisible" group, Meg tells the story not only to expose policies that have negatively affected Civil Service workers but also to show how she made herself visible and acutely audible in a situation of domination. In structure, theme, and performance, Meg's story highlights her strength of character and intelligence.
In the last chapter, another participant, Hester, also spoke about her workplace invisibility, and here Meg attests to the reality of Hester's experience: Hester's opinion that she was invisible to the faculty unless she acted "inappropriately" is echoed in Meg's words in the first paragraph, above. In her own conflict story entitled "Working in the Back Room," Meg revealed the expectation for Civil Service workers' quiet compliance, but her co-workers soon learned that "she was not just another passive and docile employee." The self-portrait Meg created in her conflict story is matched in this narrative. Civil Service workers might be "invisible," but from the moment she speaks in the interview situation, Meg-the-performer and storyworld Meg are lofty creations, steadily growing to genie-like proportions as the narrative unfolds.

Some of the women use the interview as a forum for showcasing their analytical abilities and teaching talents as well as their performing skills. Meg, for instance, peppers her abstractions and analyses with dialogue and colloquialisms, a tried-and-true teaching method that jolts the "student" into cognition (of course, I am Meg's student in the interview context). In the third paragraph, Meg stresses that ten years ago she and other staff members knew that their salaries would go down: "We KNEW, I mean/we KNEW what that meant." She goes on, again in parallel form: "That meant that our salaries would go down," "That meant that we would lose ground." When she emphasizes that this ploy occurred "TEN YEARS AGO" and depicts herself as cognizant of the consequences of the policy back then, Meg portrays a self that is not only prescient but unwavering over time. But Meg's keen
comprehension is temporarily undercut by the intrusive, avuncular voice of authority at the end of paragraph three, at which point the university steps in to placate staff about the pay policy. Here, Meg launches into performance with her dramatization of dialogue, one of her most reliable keys to performance. Her repetitious use of the plural "you" ("This was so we could give you RAISES . . . and we can give you extra merit pay") shows the administration's powerful role as teacher of minions, but Meg dramatizes the university's "lines" in such a way as to show its underhanded placation of staff members' misgivings.

Meg then constructs a symbolic exchange with the university in paragraph four, the soothing, false voice of authority conspicuously contrasting with her own sternly honest voice. This dramatization, fictive though it is, reflects the tenets of Interactional Sociolinguistics, in that "each utterance in an interaction receives part of its meaning from what another person offered before, and gives part of its meaning back to that other person to use in what comes next; it is in this chain of self/other reciprocity that the structure of interaction emerges" (Schiffrin 1994:352) (emphasis in original). The word "reciprocity" is key: "reciprocity" was absent when the university made the pay separation decision--the voice of authority told the little people how it was going to be, and the little people had no voice with which to respond. So directly following the university's "monologue," Meg constructs her own series of rhetorical statements in paragraph four, which are directed at me ("we're now seventeen percent behind the state. Now quickly do a figuring of what 17% more income would mean to you" and so forth). This monologue, adjacent to
the university's monologue and patterned after it (the repetitious use of the word "you" is an especially important feature of both texts), can be viewed as Meg's figurative rejoinder to the University's duplicitous, sugar-coated party line. She analyzes how the "seventeen percent" decrease has affected not only herself but all staff members through the years. Demanding my computation of a loss of 17% over ten years to force my understanding of how such a loss might have adversely affected me, personally, Meg draws me into her realm of power; her rhetoric simultaneously commands my attention but exacts only my speechless acknowledgement of her propositions.

Meg discards politeness conventions with her demands of me, enacting a powerful self that corresponds with the controlling power of the university, portrayed at the end of the preceding paragraph. She again uses repetition, forcefully reiterating "seventeen percent," showing how the decision to separate the pay ranges has been an "incredible LOSS to people here." Meg has a gift for expanding the focus of the conversation from her own problems to the larger scheme of things; by underscoring the wide-reaching nature of the problem, Meg lends both validity and pathos to her individual circumstances. In this text, Meg talks very briefly about her own financial woes, and when she does, it is implicitly: "It might mean the difference between havin' to make do with a coat that's fallin' apart another year, or goin' out and buying a new one." Yet Meg does not have children, so her subsequent comment, "It might mean the difference between being able to afford daycare" shows her understanding of the issues of the wider community of Civil Service workers. The
"coat that's fallin' apart" might be something to which Meg can relate, but the comment about daycare is distinctly generic. By the same token, Meg's remark in paragraph two about the paucity of faculty raises, and the ramifications of an inevitable exodus of "good faculty" from Ohio State, highlights her analytical strength as well as her fair-mindedness; not narrowly constrained by her own problems, Meg's text shows her vision and broad comprehension of the overall picture.

Meg's powers of analysis continue when she goes on to explain that this seventeen percent loss is more dramatic given that university staff members do more than answer phones and prepare spreadsheets. Civil Service workers are not really expected to exhibit scholarly expertise about "the role of East Asian languages and quantum physics in the world today," but the disparate disciplines in Meg's text are emblematic of the breadth and depth of her own liberal education and scholarship, which she brings to the workplace and uses there in various ways. The comic observation about the scope of a Civil Service worker's duties functions as does an overruled question in the courtroom: Meg's laughter and the exaggerated quality of the statement indicate that it is not supposed to be taken at face value, but the impression of Civil Service workers as intellectually facile, and underpaid, remains.

In paragraphs five and six, Meg introduces an implicit question that she goes about answering in each of the subsequent paragraphs: "are (longtime) Civil Service staff members 'intelligent' or 'stupid'?" By way of example, she offers the embedded story in paragraphs seven through nine in which she describes an interaction with a College Office employee. It is clear that the story is an important one: I interrupt
Meg's train of thought at the end of paragraph five with a question, to which she responds thoughtfully and astutely, but she then returns the conversation to the embedded story. Meg says that some staff do leave, and then throws out the possibility that some of them stay in university jobs because they can't get jobs elsewhere. But Meg doesn't really believe the truth of this generalization, for the theme of her embedded story is ultimately a rejoinder to the sarcastic, ironic comment at the end of paragraph five: "the fact that we're getting paid a helluva lot less for it means maybe that all of us who stay here are STUPID." In a roundabout way, the remark suggests that Civil Service staff are loyal, but Meg is also asking, are Civil Service staff members stupid? She answers her own question in the embedded story.

Meg begins her story with the information that she was named "best staff member." This casual comment is in fact a strategic preface to the story which allows Meg to stress that she has been deemed "worthy" by those in charge, and it renders the College staffer's coming gaffe immeasurably more offensive. When Meg related this story to me, she knew that I knew the importance of winning the "best staff award," and also that I knew the identity of the College Office staffer. The transcription above does not indicate my reaction to Meg's sentence, "I went down to lunch with two of my colleagues and a person from the College office," but when she said this, my eyebrows shot up, and I whispered the woman's name in question form. (My whisper tacitly indicated that I would keep the woman's identity confidential.) Meg nodded her affirmation of my hunch about the College staffer's identity. Thus, because I know the woman who plays the key role in Meg's story, Meg did not need
to provide any elaboration about her. Deborah Schiffrin's acknowledgement that self is constructed through anticipated reaction of others is helpful here: "speaking a language is itself a process that requires symbolically putting oneself in the other's place in order to know how to tailor one's information (syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically) so that it will be comprehensible to that other" (1994:131).

Schiffrin also points out that "what is communicated is inherently situated, and often situated (in an interpretive sense) in different ways for different people" (1994:402); my own insiderness as a Civil Service employee, and especially my knowledge of the unnamed College staffer's identity and personality, were certainly important considerations for Meg as she embarked on this story. Such shared "insider" information added much resonance to Meg's story.

For greater comprehension of the meaning(s) of Meg's embedded story, I will briefly describe the College staffer and her position in the university. She is a long-time Administrative and Professional employee whose salary is comparable to those of some of the university's full professors. She serves as a liaison for both faculty and staff in her College, and as Meg says, is generally well liked. She works closely with the Dean, formulating budget and personnel policies; and she has "connections" all over the university. And, using as our yardstick dominant Western cultural mores, I could argue that the woman is poised, socially skilled, and an elegant and expensive dresser. Now Meg has already planted an image in the mind's eye of underpaid Civil Service staff members in threadbare winter coats. As I listened to the story, I pictured this immaculately turned-out, silky-voiced College staffer magnanimously
hosting the three Civil Service women, and the underlying disparity in rank between
the Civil Service women and the A & P woman was enhanced by my visualized
disparity between their modes of dress.

These disparities in turn heighten the story's ironic thrust. Meg might be
powerless to remedy the "17% pay loss over ten years' time," but she instantly seizes
totality of the College staffer misspeaks, succinctly translating the comment as, "if
they're good, they're gonna be GONE." Meg's understated, ironic, "... and of
course I'm usually the one that gets into trouble," is in fact a performance key,
creating anticipation for the cunningly staged reenactment that follows (Meg does not
"get into trouble" but rather comes out quite the victor; that she "usually gets into
trouble" also suggests her consistent bravery in difficult situations). Meg projects two
personae and two sets of dialogues in the story: she communicates one-on-one with
the College staffer at the lunch table. But she also champions all Civil Service
women, demanding an immediate apology as well as a recalibration of false
stereotypes with her machine-gun questions that simultaneously disarm and attack:
"Did I just hear you say that?" "Do you know who you're talking to . . . ?"

Citing Labov, Schiffrin comments that speakers who are highly committed to
their propositions often perform in "soapbox style": "the speaker uses increased
volume, maintains the floor for an extended period, and seems to be addressing an
audience larger than those in his immediate co-presence" (1987:18); Meg's
performance of her embedded story perfectly demonstrates this "soapbox technique."
The modality of her verbal aggression, especially her textural devices such as vowel-
elongation and the angry forcefulness with which she delivers her storyworld retorts, reinforce her propositional meaning. This particular brand of modality also breaks down existing barriers and creates a scenario for a new kind of regard between participants, Meg becoming the volatile, chastising parent, and the College staffer, the cowed child. Her repetitious use of the deictic "you" in this rhetorical construction ("you" seeming to implicate both the College staffer and the University itself) shows Meg's lack of deference and creates a mood of penetrating directness, of asymmetrical familiarity between the women (a similar dynamic occurred when Meg commanded me to figure how a 17% loss of pay has affected me through the years). The series of questions are, in fact, imperatives: they force recognition of the slight by explicating the underlying meanings of the College staffer's verbal blunder. When Meg mercilessly demands, "EXCUUUUSE me?" "Did I . . . ?", "Do you . . .?", "Does this . . .?", she not only repudiates unfavorable generalizations about Civil Service workers but temporally freezes the College staffer's comment so that all of the women at the table are forced to consider its ramifications. The questions are not designed to elicit information and in fact their rhetorical nature and rapid-fire pace stifle further interaction. The College staffer is rendered dumbstruck, and Meg has the last word, and the last laugh.

The metanarrative comment in the middle of paragraph nine suggests the devastating impact of Meg's rejoinders to the College staffer: "And the person was absolutely horrified that she had said that--I don't know if she was horrified that she said that or horrified that she had said that to US." Of course, it was the
inappropriateness of the staffer's remark in its context that rendered it unforgivable, as the women at the table were certainly aware. Words become significant only within a specific social context, and there is no ambiguity in the College staffer's words, or in Meg's rejoinders. In semiotic terms, we have a remarkably "stable signified-signifier" dialectic here, and that is what caused all the women's horror. As Fairclough suggests, irony comes from "a blatant mismatch between apparent meaning and situational context" (1992:123)—likely they were enjoying a pleasant lunch, the talk flowed smoothly, the College's staffer's guard was down, she momentarily forgot the class membership of her luncheon partners. Then, out of the polished mouth of authority came an "unspeakable" insult. Meg acknowledges that the College staffer was well-liked and respected, conditions which must have made her slur that much more surprising. It is also probable that she had worked to develop her reputation as respected emissary of the College, and that she guards her reputation. Thus, the gaffe must have been even more horrifying to the staffer than it was to the Civil Service women, but Meg's stage directions ("the three of us looked at one another") demonstrates the shock that registered among her peers.

It is not clear whether the College staffer replied to Meg's rhetorical questions, but the story implies that a "horrified," apologetic silence of sorts resulted; Meg's lack of specificity here suggests that the interpersonal relations at the lunch table took a turn for the worse (or, as Tannen puts it, the women experienced "conversational trouble" [1994:69]). But had Meg been silent as the other women apparently were, she would have been contributing to a replication of the prevailing power structure.
With her rhetorical strategies, however, Meg symbolically brings the other woman to her knees, verbally de-thrones her, and reverses their power relationship. Meg’s laughter in analyzing the comment shows her exhilaration at remembering how she adjusted a power imbalance to her own ends; she also laughs because she is "successful" in her rendition of the story event. Meg accomplishes all this with a high degree of self-reflexivity—she is deliberately shaping the heroic, larger-than-life actions and identity of her story self as she narrates. While the issue of pay equity remains unresolved, I suspect that the residual effects of Meg’s words have reverberated through time, still subtly informing the College staffer that she should use care when simultaneously talking to and about Civil Service employees.

In paragraph ten, Meg widens the theme of her discussion to include recognition, satisfaction, and a worker’s "connectedness" to her "products," reward issues that affect all employees. She includes her logical assessment that staff members need to take advantage of every opportunity the university offers, as the university is "definitely getting everything out of us." Meg becomes more vulnerable then, explaining that she is painfully aware of the tediousness of her own progress in graduate school, and invoking fate with her action of knocking on wood. In her final paragraph, Meg indulges in a little wistful reconsideration of her life. While she wants to make me aware of the hardships and self-denial she has shouldered, she also feels her own frustrations and vulnerability too sharply with such divulgences. So she regains her equilibrium, summarizing her good-natured acceptance and neatly ending her narrative with a folk saying ("if wishes were horses . . .").
Unlike Meg, Hester steers clear of sweeping analyses and concentrates on herself, and in particular on one aspect of her life affected by her longstanding Civil Service employment and the pay she receives. But as does Meg, Hester shows her acceptance, and her humor, while explaining that her credit rating is beyond repair.

* * *

HESTER: I have just—yeah, it used to really, really stress me out, I'd get physically ill. It's like NOW, I couldn't care less what my credit rating is. I have totally given up the option of buying a house, because I'll never get it with my credit rating. I just have resigned myself to renting for the rest of my life. And now with my daughter ill, it's like, gotten WORSE. So I've just learned which bills you can juggle and be a month behind on, and which you can't. And you just do what you can do.

S: I like the fact that you're smiling while you're saying this--

HESTER: Well, it's like, what can you DO, right?

S: --most people would be sweating bricks thinking about something like that.

HESTER: Well, to me, being able to get to sleep at night and ENJOYING at least part of my day, is much more important than worrying about a credit rating for a house I may never own. It's CRAZY, absolutely crazy. I intend to pay all my bills, that's never been an issue, I don't intend to--run OUT on anything, but you can only do so much with what you have. And, in the way the world is TODAY, you can't REALLY assume that because you're in financial trouble it's because you're fiscally irresponsible. That's just not the equation anymore. Especially for single parents. It's like, I ca-I can't, I can't, make myself take RESPONSIBILITY for all this, because I CAN'T. It's NOT all my fault, you know.

You have to do certain things. I mean, society expects you to do certain things when you're a parent. When you're a single parent, it's that much harder. When you HAVE to make decisions that keep you in a lower--pay range, what are you gonna do, be charged with NEGLECT or whatever because you can't do what you're supposed to
do for your kid, or have a bad credit rating? So, it's like, the credit rating is [LAUGHS] DOWN THE TUBES! [LAUGHTER]

S: A non-entity here!

5 HESTER: YEAH! [LAUGHS]

* * *

The forcefully evaluated, idiomatic list of Hester's psychic and economic realities in the first paragraph emphasizes her desperation, and her lexical usage is especially indicative of her sense of powerlessness. The thrice repeated "just" shows Hester's resignation, detachment, and refusal to accept culpability for her predicament. As used here, "just" in no way indicates half-heartedness (or "hedging" as that term is widely understood); rather, the word is a synonym for "simply," an unqualified sign of Hester's impotence and surrender, emphatically denoting her commitment to her viewpoint. The repetitious "really, really" functions along with "just" to show her inability to extricate herself from the situation. The series of absolutes ("NOW, I couldn't care less," "I have totally given up," and "I'll never get it") projects variations on the same theme, the clauses equally intense in their semantic import. In strict semantic terms, Hester's first cliché, "And you just do what you can do" is negated by "what can you DO, right?" Yet both phrases reveal resignation, hopeless acceptance. The repetition and strongly expressed absolutes serve as an "enhancement," not of an event or a discrete experience (Bauman 1978:138, 144), but of a negative life pattern, protracted and seemingly inescapable.
Thus, Hester's text is not marked by "key events" but rather by a series of durative-descriptive realities which highlight the chronicity of her predicament (Polanyi 1989).

In the same vein, I think that the "fixity" of Hester's forms, to quote Bauman again, indicates that she perceives her fundamental lack of agency; the only kind of agency left to her is that of resolution and refusal to internalize the anxiety and shame that might logically follow a spoiled credit rating. A sense of resignation marks all of Hester's text, and my comments to her seem to reinforce this acquiescence.

Schiffrin, noting language's potential for fostering reciprocity, says that "because of its contextualizing, indexical functions, language stands in a mutually constitutive relationship with the self, the other, the self-other relationship, and the contextualized meanings that are continually negotiated during the interaction" (1994:352). I mention the smile on Hester's face as she comments about her broken credit because the semantic and paralinguistic aspects of the interaction do not match. Hester returns with the "fixed" cliché, "Well, it's like, what can you DO, right?" I continue to press Hester for a fitting paralinguistic acknowledgement of the severity of her plight; however, my remark, "most people would be sweating bricks thinking about something like that," has a dual function in that it also comments on Hester's bravery in not sweating bricks, thus complimenting her--and encouraging more input. It's more important to sleep at night and enjoy her day than to worry about her credit and a house she may never own, a paraphrase that suggests Hester's "either-or" existence: forced to make a choice, she has decided to focus on her own mental health and her daughter's well-being at the expense of more "abstract" concerns.
Dissection of Hester’s text reveals conventions of both social and linguistic discourse which emerge as she and I talk. In pointing to her lack of agency (social discourse) while in fact maintaining agency in her control of the interaction, Hester’s text offers a variety of points, a variety of meanings. We learn about her financial straits, but also find out that Hester is assertive and committed to her ideas and an appropriate interactant, offering as she does sequentially relevant responses to my own comments. ("Whenever a speaker in interaction uses a device that the interlocutor understands he intended, a situation of pragmatic identity exists. This is the ideal, the goal, of communication" [Tannen 1984:20].) Hester also conforms to the conventions of the interview situation and the larger context (i.e., our shared experiences as Civil Service workers, women, mothers, graduate students) (Schiffrin 1994:407).

In the second paragraph, Hester presents her key to psychological survival: she must live in the present because her past difficulties have made financial planning impossible. But then Hester becomes ambiguous, defensive, when she stresses that she is not to blame for her unfortunate credit history ("You can’t REALLY assume/I ca--I can’t, I can’t . . . take responsibility," and so on). The point of these nonspecific remarks, I think, is to comment on monolithic, faceless institutions such as "society" (and by extension, "the university") which she perceives as failing her. The ambiguous language that Hester uses to invoke her own ambiguous and tentative position and lack of agency is, I believe, an example of what Interactional Sociolinguistics terms "contextualization cues," language that evokes both local
(interdiscursive) and global (contextual) frameworks within which messages are to be understood. "Discourse can thus be seen as a contextualized and contextualizing vehicle for the construction of different levels of meaning" (Schiffrin 1994:407).

The explicit self-vindication in this text goes hand-in-hand with Hester's criticism of both the university (for its devaluation of clerical employees) and of society at large (for her general economic predicament). Hester takes on the voice of authority for all single parents in paragraph three, but she again alludes to an amorphous reality that governs her life choices and monitors her actions: when she says, "society expects you to do certain things," Hester is pointing to the ubiquity of "official," discipline-specific, institutionalized norms that guide our every move. Others have noted that "society" demands, and is largely successful in receiving, the public's compliance; for example, Brown, citing Habermas, opines that "institutional compulsion . . . brings about a relatively rigid reproduction of uniform behavior that is removed from criticism" (1987:55). Most would agree that Hester's decision to prioritize her finances so that she can fulfill her familial obligations is highly moral, but morality is not my focus; rather, her words, "society expects you to do certain things when you're a parent," imply the rote conformity with which she responds to a naturalized social discourse. A few pages back, Meg symbolically wrestles with the abstraction known as "the university" when she veers from convention with her indignant demands of the College Office staffer. But Hester seems more passive, more resigned to the idea that both the university hierarchy and society at large can manipulate her at will. Clearly, bureaucracies can cause diffusion and downright loss
of identity, of personal agency. Hester's text shows that the social and university hierarchy are insidious and imperfectly comprehended, yet the wide-reaching power of "total institutions" is manifest by her remarks. "They," and "society," have led us all to "the way the world is TODAY."

When Hester expresses discouragement over "the way the world is TODAY," she hints that there used to be another kind of world, a "golden age" of humanity and opportunity that is now lost. Hester can't reminisce about this golden age because she has not experienced it first hand. But she is clearly lamenting something familiar, a set of American "promises" about stability and progress, promises that have perhaps suggested themselves to her in books, movies, the spoken memories of elders. In Hester's view, life in the 1990's contrasts unfavorably with this hypothetical golden age, especially for underemployed single mothers. Given the decidedly cynical viewpoint of Hester's narrative, can it be called an "American" text, or does it veer from the "shared American values" that Livia Polanyi suggests consist of choice, control, and individual responsibility in decision making (1989:199)? Granted, this is clearly not a typical American "success story" featuring career development, raises, achievement, the flowering of relationships; indeed, none of the "material realities" texts are "American success stories" in the usual sense, which Patrick Mullen sees as depicting how high-achievement pays off, either in promotions, more money, the respect or envy of others (1992:151). It is true that the "success story" has traditionally been the archetypal American story; but it stands to reason that the success theme must have a negative counterpart. Just like the American "character,"
the American "story" is, in fact, an amalgamation: there are countless stories and themes based upon, intersecting with, or even undercutting "American" ideologies that are perhaps no longer serviceable. American stories, furthermore, are not static but are subject to constant metamorphosis, just as are the "traditional" expressions and stories within folk groups.

I think that Hester's narrative can be called an "American" text because she so strongly emphasizes her angst over her relative lack of control; she spends a good deal of time rationalizing her inability to assume total responsibility for her financial predicament. If Hester isn't able to celebrate "choice" and "responsibility," she meets these issues head on. She stresses that she "intends to pay all her bills" and will not "run out on anything," and admits that some of her life choices have negatively affected her finances. For example, she has chosen to stay in an Ohio State Civil Service job for many years in order to complete her doctorate, but she has also made the decision to prioritize her finances for her daughter's well-being at the expense of a healthy credit rating. (Hester explains in a later narrative that she chooses Civil Service worklife now because she needs a "low intensity" job while completing her dissertation.) Thus, Hester clearly believes that individuals should exercise choices and should assume responsibility ("American" traits, in Polanyi's view). What gives Hester cause for concern is her own inability to manage choice and responsibility according to the well-worn American script.

Hester revamps the presupposition of the "golden age" with the last line of her third paragraph ("It's NOT all my fault, you know") and the first lines of the fourth
"You have to do certain things. I mean, society expects you to do certain things when you're a parent"). The discourse marker "I mean" simultaneously directs me backwards to Hester's prior words, and then forward, when I hear how she modifies or reinforces those words (Schiffrin 1987:309). Such vehement rationalizations would likely not come from individuals who do not believe in the importance of assuming responsibility for their decisions:

You can't REALLY assume that because you're in financial trouble it's because you're fiscally irresponsible. That's just not the equation anymore. Especially for single parents. It's like, I can't, I can't, make myself take RESPONSIBILITY for all this, because I CAN'T.

In this series of unspecific but heavily evaluated statements, Hester shows her disappointment with alterations in socio-demographics and social mores, economic inflation, downsizing: the ideology behind her comments is at once generational, gendered, and class-based.

In addition to themes stressing responsibility and individuality, Polanyi insists that Americans "can be moved by arguments that something is not fair" (1989:199) (emphasis in original). In a similar vein, Schiffrin stresses that bifurcated positionalities can emerge in discourse: "Although positions are often personally held beliefs about the way the world is, they may also be beliefs about the way the world should be" (1987:18). I think dual messages, "here's how things are, but it shouldn't be this way," permeate Hester's text. That she stresses the unfairness of her situation is, I believe, another aspect of the American quality of this text. The toilet metaphor that summarizes the unfairness is especially poignant given Hester's life goals and the deprivation she has shouldered to reach them. Her later narratives--which focus on
the completion of the dissertation and plans for a job as a clinical counselor—are more hopeful, but Hester’s "DOWN THE TUBES" remark in this text suggests that, like her credit rating, the "American Dream" is also prone to vanish these days. Thus, American values survive in Hester’s income text, but in altered form. Such recast American values are a sober reflection of current economic and social realities as experienced by a "marginal" woman, single mother, and Civil Service worker.

As does Hester, Carrie projects an image of a self that is in the grip of a power so big and complex as to be indefinable.

* * *

1 CARRIE: Poverty is basically becoming a, more of an issue, when you look at weighing why you’re working at the university versus being in a private sector job. But I am reluctant to give up the security I DO have here because it’s obvious that being a beginning person out there in the PRIVATE sector, I’d be extremely vulnerable too. It would be FOOLHARDY to take a job at my age in the private sector! I mean, you read they’re laying off 200 at AT & T this week --. So, if I were gonna go be a guidance counselor at a school--as soon as the school budget, you know, gets TIGHT, they’re gonna, I’m an EXTRA PERSON. It’s not like I’m—THAT critical to the operation.

2 So, I just feel like I don’t have the choice. I’m TRAPPED, and I’m also, I also feel like, because the university KNOWS we’re trapped, they don’t really care to do anything about it. They’re not taking very seriously the fact that it’s almost IMMORAL to keep our raises so low, and not provide us with more mobility. And I do without many things.

S: Like what?

3 CARRIE: Well, I have an office next to my living room that has no rug, and I don’t have the $200 to buy an area rug. I need an occasional chair in my living room that I can’t afford to buy. I have a car that is OLD, OLD, OLD, and that hopefully will keep on running for another two years [KNOCKS SHARPLY ON THE WOOD DESK].
S: How many miles?

CARRIE: A hundred and twenty-five thousand. AND no house. AND no savings. AND no credit cards. I can't afford a credit card. I, I have ok credit, but it's SLOW credit. And this is what you face when you've been a single parent with one income for years. I mean, I USED to be a homeowner, but I had to sell it to FLOAT, to allow, to provide my children with what they needed. So, it's just been a matter of really bad timing for me, all the way around. When the interest rates were high, I owned a house and had to sell. When they were lower, I couldn’t buy. It’s just been a matter of bad timing. [DRY CHUCKLE] You know, Life is Tough! I mean, it could be a lot tougher, but it’s not always, you know, I live paycheck to paycheck. [PAUSE] So--it’s very, very frustrating.

S: Any hope in the future of having a house?

CARRIE: [PAUSE] [HOPEFULLY] Maybe a condo.

* * *

Without prodding, Carrie speaks of "poverty" here, the first of the women to do so. Carrie explains her reasons for staying, yet the main points of the narrative seem to be the university’s culpability and Carrie’s own hardships, both psychological (fear of entrapment in terms of both pay scale and career) and material (she cites her lacks). Like Hester, Carrie is single and so does not have a spouse or partner as a financial "back-up." Seeming to echo Hester’s remark that "society expects you to do certain things when you’re a parent," Carrie testifies to the financial burden of single parenthood, having to sell her house so that she could bring up her children "with what they needed."

As does Meg, Carrie critiques Ohio State's compensation policies, expanding her issues from the confines of her own life to the larger body of Civil Service
employees. However, all of Carrie's critiques directly relate to her own life position. In Carrie's view, the university is "immoral" in its policies to keep pay low and to fail to help long-term (and highly educated) employees in finding jobs in the system for which they have been groomed by their educations and work histories. In untaped conversations with Carrie, she has pointed out that, while the advanced degrees and a plethora of "career" workshops offered by the university provide employees with training and development, the university does not take an active role in helping its motivated and accomplished "human resources" find better employment within the system. Carrie thinks such issues need to be considered, and new policies formulated, to address these concerns. Complicating Carrie's situation is the fact that she is ten years older than either Meg or Hester; thus, in her mind, an upwardly-spiralling career seems an unlikely prospect for the future.

When speaking about the university or private sector, both of which are institutionalized power structures, Carrie uses the indistinct pronoun "they." Again, such generic usage bespeaks the amorphousness and complexity of the institution (Hester uses the broadly anonymous term "society" in a similar way). In paragraph one, Carrie says "they're laying off 200 at AT&T this week," and then subjunctively opines that, were she to get a job in the private sector, "they" would lay her off before they would terminate employees with longer tenure. In her second paragraph, Carrie uses "they" when describing the university's administration, again revealing the inability to pinpoint precise identity. The unidentifiable members of this blurry group "KNOW we're trapped," but "don't really care to do anything about it."
using unspecific, indirect appellations such as "they" and "society," Carrie and Hester tacitly comment upon the complexity of the institutions that control them, and also show their own perceived lack of agency within such a system. Carrie's text also echoes Hester's notion that in the past, things were easier, more predictable. For Carrie, economic life has been characterized by "really bad timing," "all the way around." Now, living "paycheck to paycheck," she is unable to save for the future.

In performance terms, Carrie uses tonal variations, parallelism, and repetition to emphasize her strong feelings. "I have a car that is OLD, OLD, OLD," she says as she knocks on wood. Meg also knocks on wood when she suggests her hope of completing her Ph.D., and the knocking on wood in Carrie's text functions in a similar way, revealing her vulnerability and desperation: she needs the car to "keep on running for another two years." Carrie also uses a parallel form, and forceful intonation, to impress on me that she has "NO house/NO savings/NO credit cards."

When they talk about money—or lack of it, the women frequently use gnomic expressions and/or clichés.

Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett remarks on the nature of the "gnomic expression" which seems loosely commensurate with the function of the cliche:

Semantically, gnomic expressions deal with basic aspects of life: love, health, age, poverty, riches, work, etc. . . . gnomic expressions state a general truth, often by metaphorically referring to a range of experiences broader than their immediate context of use. Verb tense in gnomic expressions is almost always the present, an atemporal present, since it applies to any time. (1976:163)

The term "gnomic expression" suggests newly minted aesthetic forms, while clichés are expressions that are seen or heard so often as to be irritating, even meaningless.
But in the texts in this study, clichés are used to define situations of entrapment, situations that, if not "meaningless," certainly engender the women's frustration and discouragement. Like gnomic expressions, the clichés seem to state general truths and seem to be situated in the atemporal present. Although their texts differ, Meg, Hester, and Carrie all spout clichés of resignation; when people lack solutions, they say things like "If wishes were horses we'd all have a forty-mule team" (Meg); "It's like, what can you DO, right?" (Hester); and "Life is Tough!" (Carrie). Deborah Tannen suggests that Americans "are inclined to regard relatively fixed expressions with suspicion and are likely to speak with scorn of clichés, assuming that sincerity is associated with novelty of expression and fixity with insincerity" (1989:40). But I do not believe that the women are showing insincerity when they use clichés to summarize their fiscal concerns. Rather, it seems to me that such formulaic phrases clearly express perceived powerlessness over some of life's prevailing conditions. Perhaps the women use forms they "scorn" to show their scorn for their plights.

Iz speaks only in an off-handed way about her lack of money.

*I * *

IZ: I got into trouble because I don't dress professionally enough. You know, they're paying us, what, fifteen-five a year? And they're telling me to dress professionally? I'm sorry! And they're also telling me I've got to do more with less. Yeah! I've BEEN doing more with less.

*I * *

While Hester and Carrie reveal their sense of entrapment and resignation, Iz's text is reminiscent of Meg's: Iz's angry dialogue with the university brings to mind
Meg’s more explicit diatribe against the College staffer. Both Iz and Meg show their strength by constructing symbolic dialogues with the institution, and in so doing, reject the university’s value system. This is a bold departure from discursive convention which underscores not only these performers’ marginality but their sense of personal empowerment. The similarity between Meg and Iz doesn’t end there: for both women, the remark, "I get into trouble," shows their independence, their willingness to assert themselves. Both preface their expressions of indignation with this ironic phrase, and in so doing they single themselves out as risk-takers, implying that they are more courageous and insightful than their co-workers. The phrase functions as a justification for the acts or behaviors that follow in the text; and, because presumably Iz and Meg will continue to "get into trouble," the phrase is also prophetic. This device functions to project images of strong selves that are unchanging through time, selves that do not get into trouble but instead get the best of their adversaries. Verbally challenging the university hierarchy is one way Iz "gets the best" of Ohio State. When "they" tell her to dress professionally, she responds as if to a manageable, single, addressable person: "I’m sorry!" she says angrily, she will NOT dress professionally. And to the propaganda that "she should do more with less," she retorts, "Yeah! I’ve BEEN doing more with less."

Granted, the combativeness that I have observed in Meg and Iz emerges in their representations of storyworld events or their assessments of some inequity. I do not know whether Meg really was as forceful with the College staffer as she portrayed herself to be, or under what conditions Iz becomes angry or recalcitrant in
the workplace. Nevertheless, their forceful discourse in the interviews shows not only their umbrage at the lifeworld events they are reconstructing but also their disregard for the politeness conventions that people usually adopt when being interviewed. (As we have already seen, Ruth also discards politeness rules, during the interview and in the job sphere itself—see Chapter 3.) Fairclough argues that politeness conventions provide a key to the way social and power relations work (1992:163), and I think that refusal to embrace politeness conventions during the interview suggests the women's own authority as well as their familiarity with me; the interviews also "sanction" their critiques of behaviors, policies, and/or cultural frameworks in the workplace that have diminished them in some symbolic or real way.

Ariel and I were waiting for slices of vegetarian pizza at a restaurant near her office. As we stood in line, she commented, "this better last me a while, because I'm only eating one meal a day nowadays." I didn't immediately respond to Ariel's remark. But a few minutes later, as we ate lunch and I began the interview session, I asked her:

* * *

S: And so why are you eating one meal a day?

ARIEL: Well, part of it is, I don't have the money. I can't afford--I mean, I just don't make enough money. I mean, I barely make enough money to pay my house, my mortgage payment just went up $70 a month. And I take home approximately $640 every two weeks; my mortgage payment is $470.00. So that takes almost one paycheck. And then I have to pay UTILITIES. I just can't make it.
2 And I was really thinking about getting a second job, and I hate to do that, I'd never finish my dissertation if I had to do that. But now I've got this job thing going with my Russian colleague. And nothing's really happening financially with that yet, but I'm, I'm DOING things. You know. And that's, I HOPE that's my way out of this.

S: $470 is still fairly reasonable for a mortgage payment.

3 ARIEL: Yeah, see I put down $30,000 on my house. I—I had money at one time. I inherited quite a bit. But most of that's in an annuity, and I've taken out as much out of the annuity as I can. YEAH, because they sock you with this—PENALTY for taking it out early. And I've had to go into the annuity because I couldn't--live. I was told I was living a $60,000 lifestyle on $20,000 a year [LAUGHS]! But, that was when I bought my house, and I was doing a lot of things with it, you know. It's really calmed down now. [PAUSE] So I did have a low house payment to start with, but just having this increase all of a sudden by $70 a month when I'm not used to that—.

I think that's another, you know, "single people gripe"! You know [LAUGHS], I mean, I can't say that you, your house should cost cheaper because you're single! That doesn't sound right! But—I had to take a loan out to pay my property tax because when I refinanced my house there was no longer an escrow. And they didn't tell me that till I went to sign the papers. And I got hit with it—I think it was twelve hundred dollars, it may have been fourteen hundred dollars, property tax.

5 And, so, I just can't make it on what they pay here. [PAUSE] And downtown, you get so much more money for the same job classification.

[PAUSE] I had a friend, uh, a friend of a friend, a secretary, she had to sell her body to science. She had terminal cancer, and a little boy—she was divorced, --but my friend Elizabeth told me that Sandy, I don't know what type of cancer it was, sold her body to the OSU hospital—whatever—or MEDICAL SCHOOL, because she had to have money to pay her bills.

S: She was an employee here?
ARIEL: [NODS] She worked at Health Sciences. And they would dock her pay for her chemotherapy. And she didn't know what was going to happen to her little boy. Her mother was going to take him, but she didn't know if her mother could really take care of this kid.

S: You think YOU have problems, you know? [PAUSE] This was last year?

ARIEL: Oh no, this was—maybe seven or eight years ago. And I thought—I mean, I just couldn't believe the fact that she worked in HEALTH SCIENCES. They, of all people, should be AWARE of these things. [BREEZY] But she was just taking off too much time at work, so she had to take chemotherapy on her lunch hour. And she had a degree from here.

* * *

Framing the discussion of her financial problems in paragraphs one through five are Ariel's oft-repeated thematic propositions, "I just don't make enough money," and "I just can't make it on what they pay here." This hyperbole (and it is hyperbole, for Ariel has been "making it" for fourteen years, albeit in unsatisfactory fashion) is meant to show the continuous difficulties she faces, her unhappiness and anxiety over her material straits. Ariel's tonal emphases stress her commitment to her ideas, as do her word choices. The contractions show the precariousness of the situation ("don't have the money"; "don't make enough money"; "can't afford"; "can't make it"); and qualifiers further stress the point ("barely make enough money"; "never finish my dissertation"); Ariel also uses the word "just" in the way Hester uses it, to imply "simply," "really," "totally." All in all, paragraph one is not a narrative per se. Rather, it is a series of items, a list, but a heavily evaluated one. Ariel's major theme, "I don't make enough money," and the supporting
documentation for it, are cast in the present tense. But Ariel also offers two ancillary texts, one fashioned from her future hopes and another set in the past. And the final three paragraphs comprise a short story that takes us out of Ariel’s realm of experience altogether. Spliced alongside her commentary about her present day financial straits, these sub-texts extend the temporal scope, enhance the dramatic impact, and powerfully corroborate Ariel’s viewpoint in her larger narrative.

The ideational coherence of Ariel’s text is partly derived from the placement of, and switches among, the discourse markers "and," "but," "I mean," and "you know." The series of "ands" in the first paragraph supports Ariel’s claim about her financial problems: she specifies the amounts of both her paycheck and her mortgage payment and mentions her utility payments. Schiffrin points out that "whenever we find and, we know we have a unit that is connected to a structurally equivalent unit somewhere in the discourse" (1987:141); in paragraph one, the guiding structure is the series of sentences which in essence says, "I don’t make enough money"; the "and" phrases and sentences that follow are clearly linked to that structure. All of the "and" phrases in the first paragraph, in fact, can be seen as sub-categories of this broader theme of not having enough money. Moreover, the markers "you know" and "I mean" in the first paragraph, as in the final one, provide complementary support for Ariel’s propositions: "whereas I mean focuses on the speaker’s own adjustments in the production of his/her own talk, y’know proposes that a hearer adjust his/her orientation (specifically knowledge and attention) towards the reception of another’s talk" (Schiffrin 1987:309).
The seriousness and the ramifications of the specific problems in the first paragraph are summarized by the first sentence of the second paragraph, in which Ariel explains she has thought of looking for a second job. Yet when Ariel proposes her plan for a job with her Russian colleague, she shows herself as hopeful and motivated. These two concepts—an enumeration of financial problems and the need for a second job—are also linked with the conjunction "and." The "ands" support the overarching claim of Ariel's income text ("I just can't make it") unless they are found under the rubric of a "but," which implies the introduction of a new idea (and in which case all new cases of "and" support this new idea). See, for instance, the last four sentences of the second paragraph. We have a "but/and/but/and" structure, the first "but" clause consisting of one of Ariel's sub-texts (she hopes to mitigate her financial problems when the job with her Russian colleague becomes viable). This sub-text represents a detour from the main idea of her overall text (i.e., that she "just can't make it"). The first "and" situated underneath this sub-text introduces Ariel's admission, "nothing's really happening financially with that yet"; this admission somewhat neutralizes the hope that Ariel and her Russian friend can get their business off the ground. Nevertheless, Ariel immediately puts the topic back on the track of hopefulness with a second "but" sentence: "But I'm, I'm DOING things." The final "and" prefaces a sentence that supports this idea: "And I HOPE that's my way out of this."

Paragraphs three, four, and five are set in the past, and provide specific background information about the metamorphosis of Ariel's spending habits over
time, which she summarizes with the intertextual remark: "I was told I was living a $60,000 lifestyle on $20,000 a year!" Ariel’s spending tendencies and the size of her annual pay are revealed in this comment; but the highly self-reflexive, even self-denigrating tenor of the remark is, I think, more important, demonstrating Ariel’s desire to show her human tendencies as well as her ability to poke fun at herself. At the beginning of paragraph five, Ariel temporarily leaves the main theme ("not having enough money") with her related diatribe about "single people’s woes." Then she reverts to the past, focusing on the loss she incurred as a result of the escrow situation. But she returns to the original theme, presenting the coda for her own narrative: "So, I just can’t make it." Schiffrin points out: "When and is the textual norm, so becomes sequential, contrasting to and" (1987:133); in Ariel’s text, the series of "ands" precedes claims that support her text’s major proposition, and the final "so" instructs me that the summarizing and supporting activities are at an end. And yet she supplies what amounts to a postscript with the comment about the pay gap between university and "downtown" workers. This important afterthought indicates that Ariel shares Meg’s view that "state employees make 17% more than Ohio State staff." Ariel’s interview thus exposes another aspect of the social discourse that circulates among Ohio State Civil Service employees.

Ariel’s tangential subplot about the friend’s friend who sells her body is meant to corroborate Ariel’s own story of financial difficulties (the story is ironic in more than one way: the commodification of the female body seems to be a familiar trope for Ariel, whose thesis and dissertation topics concern prostitution in Akron,
Ohio during the Progressive Era). As Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett points out, the significance of the "parable" is in the specific meaning that it derives from the specific context and interchange within which it takes place (1975:130). Ariel tells me this story to show that another has fared even worse than she, and in the telling, she is also fulfilling the goals of the interview. Both Ariel and the woman in the story are clerical workers who either resort to desperate measures or contemplate the same to make ends meet. Ariel might be forced to look for a second job, and the woman was forced to sell her body, a rather desperate kind of "second job," to be sure. The generic "they" again arises, this time in Ariel's metacommentary in paragraph eight. "They, of all people, should be AWARE of these things" implies the systemic absence of sympathy and humanity manifest within bureaucracies. Ariel's closing sentence, "and she had a degree from here," is meant to show the constellation of ties the woman had to the university, another similarity that Ariel shares with her.

Jill's income text is abbreviated; it doesn't tell "what happened," but instead describes "items" or "entities." It is a list rather than a narrative. According to Deborah Schiffrin, a list provides "pieces of a conceptual world"; it is "a closed discourse unit in which a group of conceptually related entities is brought into focus for a hearer" (1993:316). I have arranged the text to show its list attributes.
1 (BACKGROUND INFORMATION)
JILL: For the most part, I’ve adjusted to working here at Ohio State, given that I am underemployed and over-educated, and paid very little for either. The salary’s not good.

2 (MAJOR PROPOSITION)
But I’ve, I HAVE had some career counseling here at Ohio State,

3 (ITEMS IN JILL’S LIST THAT SUPPORT MAJOR PROPOSITION)
(a) and also, I AM going to prepare to take the one academic class that I’m still needing to prepare myself for the professional position I want,

(b) and I will take that spring quarter.

(c) And sometime SOON, and within the next few weeks, I need to correspond with the Personnel Director of that position, and let that individual know where I am academically, because I have not tracked that for them since last year when I met with them. [LOW] (He does not have an awareness that I have been taking courses, and so on.) So, I need to do that, touch base again,

(d) and get my foot in the door. * * *

In this series of strong declaratives, Jill does not engage in dialogue with me or ask questions or tell stories or make global statements about the university or other workers. Not a story like Meg’s, which tells "what happened" via main event clauses and evaluation, nor yet a text whose main aim is to describe a continuing state, like Hester’s, Carrie’s, or Ariel’s, the purpose of this text is to list future potentialities. Jill talks about her material concerns in only the most generalized way, instead concentrating on her plan to recoup the career and financial status she enjoyed in the recent past. I think she chooses to avoid the specifics of her financial life in part
because she has had a relatively short tenure in the university. And the professional jobs that Jill held before coming to the university are still fresh in her memory.

Jill sets the tone for her text with the simple, undramatic, but strongly stated opinion that she is underemployed and underpaid. She goes on to illustrate a plan of action for the future (although she has "adjusted," she will "prepare" herself for a professional job). In the first paragraph, Jill provides background material: the stative verbs "I’ve adjusted" and "I am" show the continuity of Jill’s position; the conditions of her current job are negatively evaluated. The "but" in the second segment shows Jill’s refusal to accept her current state, for despite having "adjusted," Jill indicates that she neither desires nor anticipates staying in a Civil Service position. The "but" is also a cue that Jill wants to change the topic. The remark, "I’ve had some career counseling at Ohio State," functions as a preface to Jill’s list, establishing the environment for enumerating the procedures she must take to get a new job. These steps for a career change are linked by the conjunction "and"; the conjunctions "and," "but," and "so" not only establish connections among the entities in Jill’s list but also reveal the ideational structure of her text.

Jill systematically lists the entities that fit under the larger conceptual idea, "career counseling." The repetition and parallelism of the first-person pronoun and either "need" or future tense verbs are also iconic of the list items’ situatedness within the larger category: "I AM going," "I’m still needing," "I will take," "I need," "So, I need to do," ("I need to) touch base again," and ("I need to) get my foot in the door." With these predicate constructions, Jill stresses information about the list
entity rather than her predicate. Nevertheless, the deixis in the parallelism should not
be overlooked: the speaker’s agency is an important dimension of the text, which
focuses on Jill’s hopes for the future and her role in achieving those hopes. Jill
emphasizes her agency ("I am going to prepare." "I will take that (class) spring
quarter") and her understanding of what "needs" to be done ("I’m still needing," "I
need," "I need") and the order in which she must accomplish these needs. Jill
reiterates her unfulfilled desires and points to the gaps in her life that require
attention; she likewise stresses gaps in her professional preparation that, left
unbridged, might prevent her from escaping her current situation. Hence, very
"SOON," she will attend to her career plans.

Therefore, Jill’s brief list embodies an evaluative dimension as it shows her
hope for the future and her role in effecting career changes; this positive evaluation
within the list is Jill’s response to the negative evaluation in the opening paragraph.
But the temporal arrangement of the list has no evaluative dimension; while
"meanings" within narratives and stories depend on comprehension of what happened
when, Jill’s list is a sequential confirmation of the appropriate steps for career
planning, the temporal structure indicating the necessary succession of the list items;
but no item is more or less important than any of the others. As Schiffrin points out,
"rather than becoming agents involved in the actions of a reported experience (as in a
narrative), it is the entities themselves that are the focus of talk" (1993:316).

Jill’s tone is more formal, less dramatic, more matter-of-fact and therefore less
revealing of emotions, than the other women’s. There are no "you knows" or "I
means" in her text; she has neither to convince herself nor does she set out to convince me of the wisdom of her plan. In fact, Jill seemed to rehearse this plan for her own benefit more than for my sake or for the sake of the interview. Even her gaze implied her intense preoccupation with the future and her role in it. Jill’s eyes met mine when she stressed a particular word or wanted to clarify something (her parenthetical "He does not have an awareness that I have been taking courses, and so on" is one example). For the most part, though, Jill seemed to contemplate the wall above my head as she calmly and systematically listed the steps for career advancement. Jill’s text, and the way she delivered it, echoes her strong beliefs in planning, in personal control, in the importance of dignity. In this itemization, she is candid but only insofar as her immediate plans for the future are concerned: the "who, what, when, and where" all support the "why"—that she is, very simply, underpaid and underemployed, and that she is eager to remake her life.

Jill’s text lacks the irony and cynicism that color the other women’s narratives, and her lexical usage is polite, even hypercorrect, and therefore perhaps conforms to women’s "typical" mode of talk. True, Jill doesn’t use tag questions, qualifiers, or hedging in this text, discourse devices which some scholars view as "feminine." Nevertheless, Jill’s grammatical constructions are conspicuously precise, supporting the notion that "women as a rule follow the main road of language, where man is often inclined to turn aside into a narrow footpath or even to strike out a new path for himself" (Jespersen 1990:212); along the same lines, Brown and Levinson, after Labov, note that "women typically use more prestigious dialect variables (more
'standard' phonological forms) than men do in comparable situations" (1987:31). Jill tends to enunciate standard usage instead of the vernacular: she will tell, not a "guy" or a "person," but an "individual," about her academic progress; she is not looking for a "job" but for a "professional position"; and the Personnel man "does not have an awareness" (rather than "doesn't know") that Jill has been preparing for a professional job. Other incidences of hypercorrect speech occur with Jill's avoidance of contractions: "I'm" appears once in her text; "I've" appears twice, but one "I've" is corrected to a firmly stressed "I HAVE." Other non-contracted forms in Jill's text are: "I am," "I AM," "I will," "I have not," "He does not," "I have." Jill uses jargon, but only when it is polite to do so. When she euphemistically says, "I am underemployed and over-educated," depicting in spatial terms her poor fit with her job, Jill is conforming to politeness conventions, but I know she means she is, perhaps, "too smart" for it, and that the work is correspondingly "beneath" her. Additionally, Jill will "touch base" before she attempts the more aggressive act of getting her "foot in the door."

Jill's politeness is probably rooted in her upbringing, but it also might be partly traceable to her view that she should belong, and indeed soon plans to belong, to the Administrative and Professional group of university employees, for whom precise usage is presumably a desirable standard. For Jill, precise diction—and perfect grooming—seem to be a matter of impression management, to use Goffman's apt phrase, a reenactment of things past and a rehearsal for things to come, a way for
Jill to remember and maintain her identity as a professional woman. An old maxim has it that, those who wish to climb the corporate ladder should dress in their current jobs as they would dress in the job to which they aspire. Diction and demeanor are siblings to dress.

As are her other texts, Ruth’s income text is complex, and artfully constructed.

* * *

1 RUTH: The work—is—it’s like, it does not PAY quite enough to be comfortable. — Fifteen thousand dollars is more than, is slightly more than I got when I--I was making ten [thousand] as a T.A. To live successfully in the WORLD at fifteen thousand—if you want to, you know, have a HOUSE, and the accoutrements of a middle class LIFE [BLACK ENGLISH], it ain’t gon’ CUT it.

2 Um, I’m clear that I’m, I’m clear that I sell my labor for seven dollars an hour. And I don’t mind making that contract with the university. You can buy my WORK for seven dollars an hour. The thing that I resent is that they want my creativity and my good ATTITUDE, PLUS my labor [LAUGHS] for seven dollars an hour. And you have to pay me a little more to get those other two. You know, to get my creative input, you have to give me a little more—you have to give me a little more than seven dollars an hour. Cause [PAUSE], when a GROUNDSkeeper makes more than I do, then I shouldn’t have to SUPPLY any more creative input than a groundskeeper. OR, a vehicle operator, makes more than I do. So then I shouldn’t have to, I shouldn’t have to GIVE any more than a vehicle operator has to give, for that seven dollars, which is the cost of the LABOR.

3 So I have to be obliged to--to--PROMOTE the University as if it were heaven on earth, twenty-four hours a day, for seven dollars an hour. No, you’re not gonna get it. I--you are NOT gonna get that bright, chippy little attitude that, I would say is the primary thing that separates the Classified Civil Service and the A & P’s.
One of the pieces that I did in my dissertation is that we look at, the concept of EMPLOYMENT is a twentieth century CONCEPT. Uh, the way we operate in employment right now is like, we have a certain set of qualifications, and certain kinds of training, and certain aptitudes, and certain interests that make us AMENABLE to a certain career. And that it's our job in life to find that out about ourselves and to prepare ourselves for a certain POSITION in the world where we're maximizing our TALENTS and so forth.

THAT whole construct started around the 1880s, 1890, with the beginning of social work, and that, that whole, when philanthropy went from being a private to a public, semi-public institution, and the, and the emergence of those new social professions: that CONSTRUCT started right THEN, to explain those people's work life. And plus the, the middle management people were, were slidin' in ALONG with those folks to filter in between the boss and the worker. So, there, in industry and in um, semi-PUBLIC, uh, institutions, we, they were, this MIDDLE-ground was filling up with these kind of people that saw work THAT WAY. And, it's, now it's a--an ideological hegemony on how EVERYBODY looks at work. But it's not necessarily SO, it's just this kind of a short-term construct that we made for ourselves, you know, in the industrialized world.

And I don't particularly CARE for it! And so I don't really buy into it. And I'm kinda, I'm more along the lines of the old mercantile presentation of work which is, you know, the iron law of wages that's a, it's a curve that comes back on itself: if you pay too little, a worker won't work because they could do something else to get more wages; if you pay the, just the right amount, they work a lot and they're happy, and then if you pay too much, they'll take the money they earn and stop working because they would rather rest and have a good TIME. And, I tend to work in that model, really, a lot better. I sell my labor. And that's, that's ALL I sell. Everything else is mine, and I'll either give it to you or I'll keep it, but I won't sell it. [LAUGHS] I sell my labor. You know, and it's, so if you want me to make this great creative idea of how we should do things BETTER, I'll give it to you if I feel like being generous, or I'll keep it to myself. But, you can't BUY that for seven dollars an hour. You know, it's not, it's not within my unwritten contract with you, when I'm providing for that amount of money. I'll be happy to give it to you if I'm in a good mood.

And when I give it to you, I don't care if you steal it, cause every time I've contributed something to this university, it HAS BEEN,
my name has DISAPPEARED and somebody, some SUPERIOR's name has appeared where my name SHOULD've. And after about the third or fourth TIME you go: "OK. GOT it!" [LAUGHTER] "I see what's happenin' here! OK." SO, when I GIVE it, I KNOW I'm givin' it. And I, I know that as soon as I go, "Here's my idea," it's not [Ruth's idea], it's YOURS. You know, you're gonna run with it or throw it away, and it's, I don't have ACCESS to it anymore, it's up in the air. And so, I'll either keep it to myself or I'll give it, but you can't pay me for it, because A), you can't pay be ENOUGH for it, and B), you WON'T pay me enough for it. [LAUGHS] So. It's like that. So.

* * *

Unlike Jill's future-oriented income text, there is no suggestion of either past or future in Ruth's narrative: she lives in the present, possibly a symptom of her physical disabilities that may restrict her job mobility in the future. In this rhetorically complex, masterfully didactic text, the overarching propositions are that Ruth 'sells her labor' and that for "seven dollars an hour" the university will receive her labor and nothing more. To support these points, Ruth takes us into the realms of history, ethics, and economic feminism; she indicts twentieth century management along with the university hierarchy for its inequitable pay policies and cooptation of employees' creativity and ideas. And, in setting herself apart from the more highly paid Administrative and Professional workers, whose "bright, chippy little attitude" she intensely disdains, Ruth solidifies her membership in the Civil Service group, whose low pay she believes should entitle the university only to the work specified in job descriptions, and not extend to either "attitude" or "creativity."
When Ruth says in paragraph three that she refuses to "promote the university as if it were heaven on earth" and to sport that "bright chippy little attitude" which she thinks distinguishes Civil Service employees from Administrative and Professional workers, she may have a point in noting stratification in politeness conventions and behavior styles among the two groups. Ruth has not only astutely identified euphemistic tendencies among workers at Ohio State, but clearly refuses to participate in such behavior. Indeed, while the "labor/pay" tradeoff is a major proposition in her narrative, the ultimate concerns of this blunt, uncompromising text are artifice and dishonesty, in ideology as well as in the workplace. Brown points out that institutions are "ways of doing things; they are also grammars that account for these ways of acting. . . . social institutions, like paradigms in science, are expressive vehicles for exemplary definitions of normalcy and deviance, recipes of duties and obligations, and syntaxes of self and other" (Brown 1987:122). Adrienne Rich, among others, has argued that regardless of their station, women often exhibit overly-pleasant demeanors: "economically disadvantaged, women—whether waitresses or professors—. . . learn to behave in a complaisantly and ingratiatingly heterosexual manner because they discover this is the true qualification for employment, whatever the job description" [1993:235]. But might not the expectation for employees’ ingratiating demeanor accompany many low-level positions, office and factory, bank and restaurant, store and hospital alike? While women might be expected to project more pronounced deference, men aren’t exempt from this requirement, which may be manifest in body language as well as spoken and written discourse. The "he" in this
excerpt may be a case of male-as-generic gender, but then again, maybe it isn’t. At any rate, I can attest to the class-based bias that is the foundation for this somewhat exaggerated depiction of workplace demeanor:

No sooner has the average office worker hung up his coat and popped his sandwiches into the top drawer of his desk . . . than he assumes a slightly—sometimes radically—different personality from that worn over the breakfast table or in the street outside. He learns to feign enthusiasm, excitement, rage and indignation, to wrinkle his brow in simulated deep concern and to clip to his face a fixed grin of eager anticipation; he uses euphemisms and hyperbole to offset the tedium of office life, to persuade himself that filing or writing memos are matters of all-consuming interest, and that he is having the time of his life preparing the annual budget. (Lewis 1985:98)

Ruth begins her narrative broadly, with a firm yet unspecific assessment of her material wants and only a brief mention of her annual salary. The first paragraph casts a slender beam of light on Ruth’s standard of living; I think she chooses to limit this topic to a few choice sentences because to dwell on it would be to expose an area of vulnerability (Meg’s text is similar in this respect). Still, paragraph one is densely evaluated, especially in the implications of its tonal and lexical devices. It is no surprise that Ruth’s yearly salary of $15,000 denies her "the accoutrements of a middle class life"; what is interesting is the effects that are achieved in the juxtaposition of the word "accoutrements" (itself highly suggestive of "middle class life") with the Black English to which Ruth immediately switches, with "it ain’t gon’ CUT it." Unlike euphemisms, linguistic placebos that soften unpleasant realities, Black English casts a floodlight on them. When a white person uses Black English, a variety of realities come to the surface. When she says, "it ain’t gon’ CUT it," Ruth is not only pointing to her material wants, but is again busily comparing her own
status in the work hierarchy with the social status occupied by African Americans. (Compare Ruth’s use of Black English, and her general irreverence, to the hyper-genteel speech in Jill’s income text! Usage mirrors ideology: Ruth’s text is pejorative; Jill’s strives for amelioration.) It will be remembered that when I conducted field research in her office, Ruth adopted Black English on the telephone when faced with some work-related conundrum; and as we will see in the next chapter, she uses the same strategy when talking about coming to terms with her Civil Service positionality. Black English also crops up here. Gumperz says

where a code or speech style is regularly associated with a certain class of activities, it comes to signify or connote them, so that its very use can signal the enactment of these activities even in the absence of other clear contextual cues. Component messages are then interpreted in terms of the norms and symbolic associations that apply to the signaled activity. (1982:98)

Ruth’s use of Black English occurs in interviews when she talks about incidents that expose some dimension of her vulnerability, but I think the code-switching does not indicate acquiescence. True, if we look to the story context, the Black English becomes iconic of a low-status worker responding to the manifestations of a low-status job. But the situational context of the interview is a forum for empowerment: Ruth sees me as sympathetic and in-tune with her views, and the interview invites her to comment about her self-respect and independence. Thus, the Black English does point to Ruth’s awareness that the vulnerability she experiences as a result of her Civil Service job are class-based, but it also shows that she embraces nonconformity and is unwilling to behave as a docile, polite employee, especially in situations that promote vulnerability.
As Ruth progresses, she narrows and sharpens her focus. In paragraph two, she divulges information about her salary again, but not annual or even weekly pay. Rather, she reiterates again and again that she makes "seven dollars an hour." The single-digit meagerness lends logical support for Ruth's adamant refusal to part with anything more than her strictly circumscribed labor (and, in paragraph three, she achieves comic incongruity when she contrasts having to "PROMOTE the university as if it were heaven on earth" for "seven dollars an hour"). The emphasis on the hourly rate of pay suggests the job's low status (it is usually only low-level employees who are paid hourly); the hourly wage also implies the job's fluctuating, unstable nature. In addition, the paltry "seven dollars" an hour contrasts with Ruth's startling ability to shed light on the complex topic of labor history and capitalist ideology. Like Meg, Ruth projects the persona of teacher; leading me by the hand, Ruth takes me through an obstacle course of abstractions and exempla.

In paragraph two, by way of first-hand example, Ruth contrasts differences in pay and work expectations among gender-dichotomized jobs in the university. In four, five, and six, Ruth shines as she presents an outline of "twentieth century employment," which can be taken as a metaphor for the artifice and conformity demanded by university administration. Showing her understanding of the machinations that govern employment, a system in which the "we's" are bracketed according to "a certain set of qualifications, and certain kinds of training, and certain aptitudes, and certain interests that make us amendable to a certain career," Ruth caustically denigrates over-simplified and artificial social science models that force
square individuals into round holes. Ruth’s reaction to the falseness or uselessness of unquestioned, commonplace ideology is a fundamentally 1990s theme, perhaps as "American" a theme as the "success story" may have been in other times or for other groups. As Denzin observes, "Capitalism and its cultural logics have had their way with us. We have been living someone else’s version of our own history. We linger under old myths and political ideologies: Oedipus, democracy, freedom, the cult of Eros, family, love, intimacy, radical political change" (1995:54). And Robert Bellah et al. note that, in late twentieth century America, "there is a powerful rejection of the managerial-therapeutic ethos, in which we can see not only the discontents of the present economic and social order, but also reminders of the continuing importance of the biblical and republican cultural traditions in American politics" (1985:50). A self-defining, self-determining individual, it is clear that Ruth views culturally determined management and segmentation of workers with a jaundiced eye; her narrative, in fact, could be called radically postmodern, building on and then deconstructing the dominant ideologies of the dominant culture.

In paragraph four, the indexical meaning of Ruth’s rather dispassionately delivered sentiments about career planning become clear when contrasted to paragraphs five and six, in which she sketches out the rudiments of twentieth-century labor history and calls attention to the built-in weaknesses of the capitalist model. Here, Ruth evinces her keen understanding that specialization has elevated a technomanagerial elite whose function it is to guide the productive process; on the other hand, it has so reduced each role within this process that the role becomes meaningless to its incumbent. For most people the work site is not the place to try to
become a master of what one does; instead, the goal of excellence is relegate to the private worlds of hobbies, sports, and purchasing, as opposed to the more public worlds of work, political participation, and formal organization. Labor thus loses its value as a source of positive identity for an agent, because the organization of work reduces most workers to factors of production. (Brown 1987:45)

When examined alongside the whole narrative and its broad implications, the jargon and abstractions in paragraphs four and five are treated sarcastically. Ruth imparts a pseudo-loftiness to her tone when she explicates "the concept of employment," the rest of her text exposing all its pitfalls. When she stresses that "certain interests make us AMENABLE to a certain career," Ruth uses the word "certain" exactly as Hester used it in her income text, to indicate the restrictive pigeonholing of twentieth century management, which has sharpened the boundaries between public and private spheres. As Bellah et al. point out, "Particularly powerful in molding our contemporary sense of things has been the division between the various 'tracks' to achievement laid out in schools, corporations, government, and the professions, on the one hand, and the balancing life-sectors of home, personalities, and 'leisure,' on the other" (1985:43). When she talks about filling a job that allows for "maximizing" our talents, Ruth further highlights how workers are categorized, organized, and manipulated by the guiding forces of society. The high-toned jargon contrasts to Ruth's own spare, lean model of labor efficiency in paragraph six: "I sell my labor," she says.

Perhaps Ruth is recycling one of the lectures she used when she was a teaching associate in the university; but given her personal history (including her botched dissertation defense and physical disability, among other things), the middle paragraphs of this text seem to me to be a rationale that Ruth calls upon whenever she
needs to justify her current low paying, low status occupation. But it should also be remembered that Ruth has lost her classroom--she is no longer either a public school teacher or a graduate teaching associate. As does Meg, she shows off her teaching expertise in the interview setting, teaching me about labor history and wrong-headed ideologies. Patrick Mullen suggests that "the process of fieldworker becoming learner seems to be cross-cultural" (1992:41); clearly, whether the interviewer is a cultural insider or outsider, the interviewee's impulse to teach is often a strong one. In Ruth's case, such a skilled presentation smacks of repeat performance; the precision of the historical chronology, the recollection of the details of this historical "construct" and how we "operate" within it, the smooth juxtaposition of the broad historical model with Ruth's own assessment (paragraph six) of how she does not fit into it, all point to a traditional text.

As it has turned out, this text is not traditional. After reading "Material Realities," Ruth left a voice-mail message on my telephone. I transcribed the message and include it here:

* * *

Sharyn? This is "Ruth." And this is not about work. This is about your chapter you sent over. I am--SO--flippin' impressed with your work. There are so few people on the planet that can figure out where I'm goin' or what I'm tryin' to say. And you CAUGHT it!

The only error was that you said, my, uh, my little thing on labor history, was a past performance. No! [LAUGHS] It wasn't! It might have sounded that way, but, but, it was cute to see that!

You got, you hit every nail on the head! I am so impressed. Talk to you later. Bye. (May 20, 1996)

* * *
The advantages of a reciprocal study are tangible and numerous. Ruth's correction increases the validity of the study, and her praise has bolstered the ego of the researcher. Furthermore, the interactions that will inevitably spring from Ruth's phone message will help to cement our friendship. Although, as Ruth says, her elucidation of twentieth century labor history is a non-traditional text, I still maintain that she includes it to highlight her teaching and performing talents and broad knowledge base. And, as stated before, I think Ruth uses this information to subsequently discredit dominant economic and management theories and in doing so, to justify her own workplace ideology and behavior.

Let us return to Ruth's text. Having established her broad point about the university's expectation for compliance and artifice in paragraphs three, four, and five, Ruth takes the next step in paragraphs six and seven, revealing its penchant for usurping workers' ideas. In impugning the university, Ruth must depict herself as temporarily vulnerable, victimized. But she regains her equilibrium: as she shares with me her understanding of how labor manages employees, and in setting out the terms of her individual "contract" with the university in paragraphs six and seven, Ruth again stresses her agency and individuality. The structure of Ruth's narrative also reinforces her personal power. She parallels a series of "they/we" and "I/you" models throughout this text; the "they/we" dichotomy in paragraphs two and four stands for subordination—"they" are the university power hierarchy whose voice guides the "we's" ("they want my creativity and my good ATTITUDE, PLUS my labor" [paragraph two]). But it should be noted that Ruth situates herself above all
the rest of the "we's" with her first sentence in paragraph four ("One of the, one of the pieces that I did in my dissertation is that we look at, th-, the concept of EMPLOYMENT is a twentieth century CONCEPT"): Ruth is reminding me, and herself, of her academic training and accomplishments with this remark, a condition that qualifies Ruth for a continuation of her analysis.

Use of the generic, third person pronoun "they" implies a speaker's sense of the university hierarchy as anonymous and untouchable. The system both leads and misleads workers, and Ruth is clear that workers must be vigilant in guarding against the takeover of our behavior, work, ideas. As it occurs in everyday speech, the use of an abstract "we" often suggests the presence of a less democratic milieu (not to mention the dilution of the speaker's guilt). For example, when a boss says, "Sorry, but we are going to have to let you go" or "We feel your experience would be wasted here," an unmistakable tinge of autocracy hangs in the air. Conversely, when a worker self-reflexively adopts this "we/they" model, it indicates her alignment with the underlings as well as her clear apprehension of the model of passivity versus domination that operates within the institution. But Ruth prefers to concentrate on her agency and control, so she also parallels a more assertive "I/You" personal pronoun model throughout the text (paragraphs two, three, six, and seven), allowing her individual voice to emerge as she dramatizes a conversation with the university. "We" and "they" are objectified abstractions, and the use of this model removes potential interlocutors from the dialogic spotlight. Conversely, "I" and "you" are subjective constructs, implying face-to-face communication; use of "I/you" decreases
the distance and neutralizes the power dynamic that marks a "we/they" model. In
directly addressing the university as "you," Ruth symbolically demands
acknowledgement and response. Like Iz and Meg, Ruth sets up a dialogue between
herself and the university, directly addressing it with a plural "you" (compare Carrie’s
and Ariel’s more passive, indirect "they"). The imperatives in Ruth’s last paragraph,
and throughout her text (i.e., "you can’t buy that for seven dollars an hour," "you
have to pay me a little more to get those other two," and "you are NOT gonna get
that bright, chippy little attitude"), function in much the same way as Meg’s bald
commands to the College staffer and Iz’s implicitly direct remark, "Yeah! I’ve
BEEN doin’ more with less!" The frequency of "I/you" usage in Ruth’s text shows
her lion-like persona, as does her comment that she can be generous when she is in a
good mood (end of paragraph six). Ruth’s use of "I" in this text shows her
individuality, her marginality, for she has consciously decided not to affiliate with the
"we’s" who are led to and through their "careers." And she obviously does not
desire to connect with the higher-ups.

Rejecting the artifice of career planning and also the built-in competition of the
workplace, Ruth goes on to dismiss the possibility of true "collective decision
making" in paragraph seven. Not getting credit for her creativity, she summarizes the
unfair treatment she has experienced with professorial aplomb: "A), you can’t pay me
enough for it and B) you WON’T pay me enough for it," a dichotomy that
simultaneously shows the value of her ideas and the inequity of the institution.

Sharon R. Kaufman says that "successful adaptation takes place when individuals
symbolically connect meaningful past experiences with current circumstances" (1986:162); in this final complex statement of her narrative, Ruth refashions a negative situation, in which her ideas are stolen, into a positive one, stressing her own talent while leveling the last of a series of indictments against university administrators. Thus, in the interview, Ruth once again creates a positive identity, an identity that is "oppositional" to the university power hierarchy.

Emily also talks about money in the following paragraphs, but as do the other women, she broaches larger issues, such as her longing for the appropriate use of her talents and her desire for acceptance and camaraderie in the workplace.

* * *

1 EMILY: When I worked at [her first job in the university], I couldn't believe how HARD I worked for such little money. Here was my letter giving me $16,000 a year, and I couldn't BELIEVE [LAUGHS]--. When I came back in '90, I was making fourteen, but we got our six percent raise that summer, and so I was making sixteen, or fifteen-nine or something. Raises were about six percent a year, in those days. So they gave Ann Marie more: they gave me 6% and Ann Marie 6.2 or something, because she'd been there the year and worked so hard and was so beloved. So she got MORE of a raise. But it was fine, I was HAPPY to get six percent raise; so I thought that was pretty neat. But I still couldn't believe how hard we had to work for the amount of money, that we were getting. And then Dr. Torvill got me a ten percent raise, and then that was the year we only got like a one percent raise. So he got me more money, I have to say that for him.

2 I think it's terrible how hard many Civil Service people work for so little. I think it was TERRIBLE that the raises were so small, 1.5 or whatever percent that we got. Um, I think it's terrible that President GEE gets all this HUGE raise and we get, very little.
Now, the money, for me, I can live off what I make, I'm making nineteen thousand now. It's the most I've EVER made. And I'm, I'm, I'm pretty happy, to have it. I don't think my current supervisor LIKES me very well, and I consider that a big problem. I don't feel SECURE in my job now. But I'm happy to have my salary. I think for what I'm DOING there, I'm paid very WELL. They're not really using my editing skills. Last summer when the pressure was off they could have given me faculty manuscripts to edit. They could be letting me proofread department publications now, they're not USING my skills. But if they START using my skills, Ann Marie is going to hate it. I had a paper from Roger Hunter and I took it home to do it. I knew I couldn't sit there and edit it two or three hours at work. So I brought it home, I edited it in three hours at night, I took it back the next day and I typed it. Uh, she will resent it if I'm editing. They could be using me a lot differently.

So, I can LIVE on the money I am paid. I air condition my house in the summertime instead of taking a trip, because there's not enough money to do both. One of the professors once asked me at the end of summer, "Did you take a nice trip?" And I, I was too humiliated to say, "No, I air conditioned my house." I just said, "No, I didn't take a trip, did you!!"

* * *

Emily's narrative contains two interconnected themes, one having to do with pay, and the other, with her sense of negative marginality. Emily's first "money" theme comes to light in paragraph one when she talks about her pay history at Ohio State; she offers both general information about Civil Service raises over the past few years and her own perceptions about raises. Emily stresses that Civil Service staff work very hard for little money. Her comment, "I couldn't believe how hard I/we worked for so little money," reveals Emily's view that both she and other Civil Service employees are devalued by the university. It is interesting that Emily implies membership with other Civil Service workers with this "we" construction, but the
solidarity seems to come only from a shared negative state. In fact, Emily rarely depicts herself as part of a larger "we," and instead tends to emphasize her detachment and isolation.

Emily’s sense of otherness emerges in the first paragraph with the distinction she draws between herself and Ann Marie, her co-worker; this sense of otherness is repeated in paragraph three, when Emily again brings up the fact that she wants to use her editing skills in the workplace. We learn in paragraph one that Ann Marie got a raise of 6.2% and that Emily received 6.0%. Ann Marie and Emily both worked very hard, and Emily suggests the slightly larger raise for her co-worker was partly a result of Ann Marie’s longer tenure on the job. But Ann Marie’s higher raise also came about because she "was so beloved." Although not the slightest hint of envy or sarcasm crept into Emily’s voice at this point of the narrative, her conspicuously matter-of-fact tone belies the semantic import of her comment. While she stresses that she thought it was "fine" and "pretty neat" to get the raise and was "HAPPY" to have it, it is clear that Ann Marie is "beloved" and Emily is a newcomer, an "other," certainly less beloved than Ann Marie, and perhaps not beloved. Emily has wanted the acceptance and approval of others all her life; I am convinced that her choice to depict Ann Marie as "so beloved" is a mark of her perception of her own otherness. The remark about Ann Marie in paragraph one is paralleled with the comment about Emily’s aborted editing career in paragraph three. Here, she suggests that even "if they START using my editing skills, Ann Marie is going to hate it." Thus, Emily suggests that Ann Marie, "so beloved," has the
capacity to "hate" another's workplace activities (and by extension, perhaps "hate" that other, too). That Emily subsequently admits taking home her editing assignment, completing the task without compensation, shows her tendency to avoid potential conflict, and ultimately, her acquiescence to Ann Marie, top dog in the secretarial pool.

In the second paragraph, we have a brief, generalized analysis of the university's pay policies. The specific details in the first paragraph lend credibility and validity to the text and justify Emily's inclusion of broader, less specific, highly subjective ideas in the second. Here, Emily leaves her own immediate experiences behind. She speaks to larger issues but she does so in a highly personalized way with the right branching predicate construction "I think":

\[
\text{it's terrible how hard many Civil Service people work for so little} \ldots \\
/ \\
\text{I THINK} \quad \text{it was TERRIBLE that the raises were so small} \ldots \\
\backslash \\
\text{it's terrible that President GEE gets all this huge raise} \ldots \\
\]

Scholars of discourse frequently note that a speaker's affinity for propositions can be pinpointed in particular features of speech; low affinity is often linked with subjective uses ("I think"), hedging ("a little bit"), and tag questions ("isn't it?," "don't they?"); high commitment for an assertion is achieved with imperatives, forceful intonation, and so on. However, recent scholarship suggests that a speaker's apparent commitment to a claim is easily confused with her wish to assert solidarity with the
interactant (Fairclough 1991:163; Tannen 1994).9 I believe that Emily is strongly committed to her views in paragraph two. Her three "I think" constructions are used to show that it is only her own opinion that she is advancing; Emily, an admittedly tender-hearted individual, lessens her culpability by prefacing a strongly stated opinion with "I think." The "I think" constructions also reveal Emily's desire to be correct and fair-minded, to eschew reckless condemnation of university pay scales, to accept accountability for her comments (and thus, perhaps, to gain my appreciation during the interview).

But I am also convinced that paragraph two shows Emily's intense commitment to the idea that pay scales at the university are unfair. Along with the "I think" and the strongly evaluated "it is/was terrible" at the beginning of all three sentences, Emily ends each sentence or major clause with a highly evaluative, highly repetitive series of lexical measurements, all of which are premodified by intensifying adverbs: Civil Service workers get "so little," raises were "so small," the President gets "all this HUGE raise," "we get, very little." Emily contrasts the sizes of the raises, strategically embedding the President's large raise within repeated mentions of the small raises of the Civil Service workers. Thus, Emily's "I think" predicate construction seems to have a dual purpose in her text: it allows her to assume the mantle of accountability and to stress her point. "Hedging" is not part of the plan.

Emily returns to her own issues in the third paragraph, but this time takes us to the present, suggested by the temporal marker "now" at the end of the first
sentence (the first "now" is a discourse marker pointing to a shift in theme, a coordinate conjunction which functions to link the second and third paragraphs, and to imply that a comparison is going to be made about them [Schiffrin 1987:235]). In the remainder of her narrative, Emily shifts between themes of "I can live off what I make" and her marginality. In paragraph four, Emily offers an exemplum to show that, by prioritizing, she can live on the money she is paid. After reviewing this text, Emily confided to me that she would be living "month-to-month in a rented apartment" had she not inherited money from her parents’ estate. The inheritance permitted Emily to buy her own home; unlike Hester and some of the other women, Emily does not have to make choices among life’s necessities. Rather, she chooses between two luxuries, and air conditioning wins out over a yearly vacation.

When supporting the theme that she can live on the money she makes, Emily provides a series of concrete statements (she is making $19,000, the "most she has ever made"). She may very well be "happy to have it," but she equivocates with her "I’m, I’m, I’m pretty happy to have it" construction. The repeated "I’m" suggests Emily’s hesitation, and "pretty" shows more qualification. Here, Emily seems to make a cognitive leap from the size of her paycheck to anxiety-producing work conditions. The markedly tentative structure of her sentence shows her discomfort over her next string of ideas: she believes her supervisor dislikes her, she doesn’t feel secure in her job, and she is chronically sorrowful that "They’re not really using my editing skills."
So we see that Emily's "big" problems are not related to pay (Emily bought her house from the proceeds of her parents' estate, and has told me that, were it not for the inheritance, she would be living from paycheck to paycheck in a rented apartment, with little hope of future financial security). Rather, in all of her narratives in this study, Emily shows that her primary concerns are that she does not belong and that some people might disapprove of her. These needs to avoid conflict and ostracism, to save face, are also apparent throughout Emily's income text. Emily's discussion of finances is constructed alongside talk about broader personal issues: not only does she choose to edit a faculty member's paper at home, gratis, to circumvent Ann Marie's workplace objections, but she is reluctant to tell a faculty member that she can't afford a vacation; Emily seems to withhold that information in order to foil the faculty member's potential criticism or disdain. Emily also focuses on her intellectual and career needs again and again. Thus, for Emily, positively connecting with others in the workplace and finding fulfillment and challenge on the job are of paramount concern. Money is of secondary importance.
Compensation Issues and Identity Building

The work of Civil Service employees is essential to the functioning of the university, but the participants' opinion is that the university does not appropriately recognize the value of their work. Acknowledgement of an employee's worth, as Meg points out, can come with verbal appreciation, but it is especially tangible in a paycheck, and all the women bring up negative aspects of the university's compensation policies. They cite, among other issues, low pay (Meg, Hester, Carrie, Iz, Jill, Ariel, Ruth, and Emily); poor raises (Meg, Carrie, Emily); ill-considered use of Civil Service employees' time, education, and talents (Jill and Emily); the higher pay of State of Ohio Civil Service workers in comparison to Ohio State University's Civil Service employees (Meg and Ariel). Iz has "been doing more with less." Hester has "TOTALLY given up the option of buying a house." Ariel "Just can't make it." Carrie has "No house, No savings, No credit cards." Meg says the seventeen percent pay loss "has been an incredible loss to people here." Ruth points out that her Ohio State paycheck "ain't gon' cut it." Jill simply states that "the salary's not good," but we shouldn't forget that, when describing her decision to come to Ohio State, she remarked that the $15,000 starting salary was "dirt" (see Chapter 3).

Nevertheless, Jill doesn't want to talk about "poverty" and certainly doesn't see it as a way of life. Having worked in a low-paying secretarial position for only a few years, she hopes for a better-paying professional position in the near future. But coping with financial strain is all too familiar for Meg (as is the balancing act between
full-time employment and graduate school). She accepts the hardship because it is a condition of her quest for a doctorate. Hester also indicates that insolvency is a way of life, yet she shows herself as changing over time, adapting to "society's" demands for appropriate parenting and the conditions associated with a too-small paycheck. She used to get "physically ill" when considering her debt, but has since decided that she will do whatever it takes to raise her daughter properly: the corresponding reality of this decision, however, is that she will never own a home. Like Hester, Carrie stresses the chronicity of her financial predicament. She believes that her timing has been unfortunate, and single parenthood has not helped. But she also argues that the university has exploited her and other Civil Service women.

Iz's "income" text is very small but she too indicates that some degree of financial deprivation is a way of life for her. Ariel says she has altered her standard of living to cope with inadequate finances. Ruth likewise admits that her salary won't support a middle-class lifestyle (but the larger point of her story is that she will give the university her labor and nothing more for seven dollars an hour). Emily seems to accept the modest life she leads and the ways she must cut back and prioritize to compensate; she believes she is well paid for what she does, but she also opines that Civil Service employees receive very little pay considering how hard they work; and although Emily says she can live on the money she receives, she stresses that "it's TERRIBLE how hard many Civil Service people work for so little."

All of the women except Emily stated that their pay is not adequate for their needs. But they all explain that they are also losing out in other important ways.
Meg, Carrie, Ruth, and Jill bring up the issue of poor allocation of resources, and Emily implicitly disparages her past and present supervisors for failing to put her talents to good use. Several of the women, in fact, leave their "poverty" issues behind in order to critique the university and its larger policies. This "us against the institution" theme is clear in Meg's, Carrie's, Iz's, Ariel's, Ruth's, and Emily's texts. (Jill remains hopeful and avoids criticism, and Hester's critique of the university is an implied critique: her text deals instead with her own acceptance of a disastrous credit rating.) More indirectly related to pay—and workplace "appreciation" in general—were such concerns as negative treatment or negative impressions of Civil Service workers by supervisors or faculty (Meg, Ariel, Ruth, Emily) and the paucity of advancement opportunities in the university (Carrie). Emily also explicitly impugns the hierarchy for exorbitantly rewarding the President while neglecting the low-level staff whose daily efforts are critical to the goals and operations of the institution.10

Scholars argue that some of these issues have affected large numbers of working women in the United States through the 1980s and 1990s (see, among others, Blau and Ferber 1992; Davis 1991; Hewlett 1986; Lefkowitz and Withorn 1986; Schwartz and Volgy 1992). And, citing widespread acceptance of such fallacies as fading discriminatory hiring practices and improvements in on-the-job treatment, Susan Faludi (1992) documents rising inequities and intimidation through the 1980s; she also discredits the notion that women have been making great strides, infiltrating what has been the ranks of "male" careers (Faludi suggests a more à propos headline might be "More and More Women Stuck in Secretarial Pool").
Discursive forcefulness and innovation attest to the ideological importance of a speaker's subject, and as stated, the theme of the "income" texts is not only money. Rather, identity and positionality within the occupational setting share top billing with economics. The participants say, "Yes, I'm having financial difficulties, but you need to know other things about me." The narratives embody a good deal of poetic language, a few flamboyant performances, and strong evaluative strategies, for good reason. Abundant scholarship focuses on the variety of interactional functions that are accomplished by such surface linguistic features as rhythm, rhyme, assonance, alliteration, parallelism, and repetition. While these tactics accomplish multiple ends, perhaps their most important function is to involve, and ultimately persuade, the listener. Deborah Tannen and a number of others affirm that such devices "sweep the audience along toward subjective knowing," both convincing and moving them in their understanding (1984:155). And the income texts are convincing. They speak to the specificities and duration of the participants' material difficulties, and also reinforce the individual identities the women have constructed throughout the project.

The themes here, and indeed, in the study as a whole, seem to revolve around issues of individuality, self-esteem, and survival rather than community cohesion, cooperation, and sharing. These are fairly isolated selves. The women depict their individuality in silhouette, setting the self against the complex, techno-bureaucratic structure of power that is the university. Alongside their criticisms of the university, the women show themselves as hard working, tenacious, and ethical; they take extra pains to fashion worthy personae in response to their elaborate discussions about how
the institution has devalued them. Yet in the final analysis, the texts reveal
differences in the participants’ responses to their university positionality. Meg, Iz,
and Ruth, although clearly admitting to their own economic frustrations, portray
themselves as confronting or challenging some aspect of the hierarchy and
consequently achieving a measure of victory over it; they symbolically chastise the
university, demanding its accountability. Conversely, while Hester, Carrie, Ariel,
and Emily also critique the university, and although they lament their plights and
those of other Civil Service women, they show little agency.

Some situations, especially those governed by bureaucracies, seem so
overwhelmingly complex and impersonal that they inhibit individuals’ agency. Brown
opines: "machines and bureaucracies are seen as having a life of their own. The
human purposes they were designed to serve are forgotten, and the mechanistic
organizations come to generate ends and purposes of their own. The institutionalized
space in which we could act as moral agents is thereby diminished" (1987:55). Thus,
Hester portrays herself as stalwart and resolute, coming to terms with problems she
cannot surmount. Carrie is also a survivor, but an angrier one. In a previous
chapter, Carrie said she could either "put up or shut up," and that trope resurfaces in
her income text, in which Carrie shows the ways she’s "trapped" and calls up an
image of an immoral university administration. Ariel is also discouraged but shows
her pluck by trying to achieve success and financial equilibrium in spheres other than
her Ohio State clerical job. Atypical of the narratives, Jill’s is energetic and
optimistic. Her list-like text seems almost a pep talk, an outline of her game plan,
expressed as much for her own satisfaction and reassurance as for the demands of the interview. Emily's need for approval and acceptance accompanies her assessment of how the university has failed Civil Service workers, in both its salary and raise policies through the years.

But speakers can refashion themselves, and correct inequities or misconceptions, even rewrite the past, by using "old texts" for new purposes. Deborah Tannen, after Becker, posits that "semantics is a matter of prior text" (1987:43); and Richard Harvey Brown (1987) and Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992) argue that society itself is "intertextual," and that existing social texts can be reconstituted for new ideological purposes. Indeed, the intertextuality within Meg's and Ruth's narratives (and implied in Iz's) demonstrates such a dynamic. For instance, Meg-the-narrator commands of me: "Now quickly do a figuring of what 17% more income would mean to you," and in so doing repudiates the university's policy of separating its Civil Service workers' pay from State of Ohio pay ranges. Meg also overturns an apparently widespread university fallacy—which she summarizes as, "If they're good they're gonna be GONE"—when she emphasizes her own worth and the collective worth of Civil Service workers. In much the same way, Ruth exposes and summarily rejects the processes and policies that manipulate workers within the bureaucracy. As is Meg, Ruth is the consummate teacher-performer; the intellectual dimension of her discussion allows Ruth to symbolically position herself above the work hierarchy. Furthermore, the sophistication of her teaching shows how strongly she identifies with the intellectual goals of the university
(of course, this identification is highly ironic given her decision to abandon her goal of a Ph.D. and a subsequent teaching career at the university level).

As in the narratives of "status" and the "horror stories," we return to the overarching theme of unfairness in our look at "material realities." Most of the participants believe that conditions and circumstances beyond their control have stymied them in achieving their goals. Carrie and Hester, for example, insist that their financial predicaments are not their fault but rather the result of unfortunate financial and personal turns. When Carrie says "bad timing," she could be saying "bad luck," an idea borne out by her action of knocking on wood when talking about her car. Life for Hester and Carrie, and, to some extent, for all the women in this study, seems to have emerged as a result of both choices and chances which have led to current circumstances: individual free will influences life but life is also determined by conditions beyond one's choices, such as the country's economic climate and the inevitability of aging. Nina Gregg says of her own pink collar informants at Yale, "The women's stories illustrate how the possibility of resistance and the forms resistance takes in the workplace are products of subjective and material positions, discursive and socioeconomic realities" (1993:172-173); the texts in this chapter mirror Gregg's findings.

Deviations from "ideal" life themes create "gaps," but storytelling can integrate the "ideal" with the "actual," symbolically bridging the gaps, repairing injustices, and turning the tables (Kaufman 1986:185). However, some of the stories and exempla we have looked at in this chapter seem to enlarge the gulf between
"real" and "ideal": Ariel's parable about the woman who sold her body to science, for instance, is meant to show the desperation of some Civil Service workers; it is a warning about falling prey to a compassion-less institution and it suggests the scope and depth of financial difficulties that low-paid (and especially single) women may be forced to face. Ariel's point, of course, is that life is far from ideal, but her story is no less moving than the empowering ones, and the specificity within her parable lends it a ring of truth, making it strongly convincing as well.

Yet Meg's embedded story about the College staffer demonstrates how a story can overturn a negative life situation. And storytelling per se is not the only way one can symbolically right a wrong: narrative and metacommentary can also accomplish that end. For instance, after she delivers her story about the College staffer, Meg says: "We gotta get everything we can out of the university because they're certainly getting everything out of us." Similarly, Ruth tries to at least counter the toll the university exacts from its workers: she reveals that, given the opportunity, the institution will use low-paid workers' ideas and creativity without rewarding those workers, and Ruth symbolically corrects this moral deficiency with her assertiveness, her strongly portrayed self. Although Ruth, Meg, and Iz want to equalize some of the hierarchy's negative effects, they do not portray themselves as "working the system" in that phrase's traditional sense (i.e., by duplicitousness or slacking off). Rather, they "work the system" by standing their ground and speaking their minds. Thus, in portraying "self," Meg, Iz, and Ruth are careful to retain the ethical dimension of their personae while promoting their personal strength and resilience.
A persistent critique of ethnography has it that we ethnographers inscribe social reality and construct truth(s) from the raw materials of our own limited textual and social practices. Are the stories in this study biased? Are the tellers prejudiced? Are my presentations and interpretations similarly flawed? Of course. Let us instead ask, Whose reality is this study reflecting? Whose visibility? Whose power? Whose definitions? In defining their material difficulties, the women are defining themselves. And they need to define themselves lest they be subject to others’ definitions.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. Meg's repudiation of the College staffer's sentiment mirrors the words of Suzanne Gordon's informant, clerical worker Kristine Rondeau, who was chief organizer for Harvard's Union of Clerical and Technical Workers. "Secretaries and their employers are both taught that if they do clerical work for very long, like more than a couple of years, they are somehow defective. There's something wrong with you!" (1991:174). Meg's translation of the College staffer's notion that "If you're good, you're GONE" is similar to Carrie's remarks in Chapter 4 about long-time secretaries' and other clerical workers' inability to progress through the system. Such workers, especially those who have earned advanced degrees, often aspire to professional careers, but frequently experience difficulties in climbing the ladder.

2. Most scholars view the "hedge" as a device that shows half-hearted commitment to a proposition (see Fairclough 1992; Tannen 1984). However, Brown and Levinson state that "a 'hedge' is a particle, word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is partial, or true only in certain respects, or that it is more true and complete than perhaps might be expected" (1987:145) (emphasis mine). Hester's use of "just" corresponds with this last sense of the meaning of "hedge."

3. Deborah Tannen explains that "For English speakers, at least, it is common to use fixed expressions with some items in their canonical form altered, with no apparent loss of communicative effectiveness. This in itself is evidence that meaning is not being derived from the expressions directly, by a process of deconstruction according to definitions and rules, but rather is being arrived at in a leap of association" (1989:40). Such a leap in cognition is achieved in Hester's paralleling of the antithetical "you just do what you can do" and "what can you DO, right?," the former semantically implying agency, the latter, the lack of it. But in their situational use, both imply Hester's lack of agency.

4. Invoking a past "golden age" during storytelling seems to have different functions for different age groups. Patrick B. Mullen notes that elderly people sometimes align themselves with an idealized "golden age," and in so doing, they continue to identify with an occupation or a community that may no longer exist in its previous form. The women in this study, by contrast, seem to refer to an ostensible "golden age" that they cannot personally recollect in order to justify their own discontent, sense of entrapment, and powerlessness. (See Patrick B. Mullen, 1992, Listening to Old Voices: Folklore, Life Stories, and the Elderly.)

5. Marjorie Bard's (1992) term "idionarration" might be usefully applied here. Bard suggests that people frequently narrate to themselves, for themselves.

7. Brown and Levinson also note, however, that such politeness conventions are manifest in different ways and to different degrees, depending on any number of social variables.

8. Margaret Mills reminds us: "Just as the concept of the decentered self had an early articulation in women's studies, but cannot be considered unique to women, the study of relative empowerment and disempowerment in language, undertaken from the feminist viewpoint, went on to illuminate processes of disempowerment and marginalization not limited to gender forces." (1993:178)

9. In *Gender and Discourse*, Tannen also argues that linguistic conventions such as interruptions, silences, and topic changing are polysemous. Such devices can imply solidarity, domination, or both; Tannen stresses that one must look to the context and to the interactants when trying to decide how such conventions function.

10. As Brenner (1990:501) points out, maybe we should consider as criteria for higher compensation the lack of opportunity for advancement, questionable job security, and the degree to which a job is boring.

11. For instance, repetition functions to tie new utterances to prior utterances, to offer the hearer less semantically dense information which facilitates a greater absorption of the message, and to afford the speaker greater ease in conducting the interaction. Repetition also allows the speaker to satisfy the requirements of the interaction—such requirements include holding the floor and persuading. "Repetition not only ties parts of discourse to other parts, but it bonds participants to the discourse and to each other" (Tannen 1987:52).
CHAPTER 7
RESOLUTION AND THE FUTURE

*I have discovered that we may be
in some degree whatever character we choose.*
James Boswell

Along with abundant criticism of the institution and its policies, the participants shared with me some positive aspects of their university employment. They revealed how they cope with their jobs and why they have chosen to remain in them. With twenty-three years in the system, Hester has the longest work history at Ohio State; Meg, Carrie, and Ariel have each worked in Civil Service jobs for about fifteen years; Iz, for eleven; Emily, for six; Ruth, for five; and Jill, for three. Have fringe benefits and perks offset the women’s financial difficulties and their sense of underemployment? Have such benefits likewise affected their decisions to remain in their university jobs? Has long-term work in the Civil Service category motivated them toward academic achievements? The women address these and other issues in the following narratives.

The participants also shared with me their hopes for the future; I have found that the process of coming to terms with their university employment is often directly linked to expectations for the future. In some cases, hopes are positive and plans for the future are well-defined; a number of the women believe that their affiliation with
the university will help them to accomplish their goals. Meg's texts are good examples of such hopefulness. First of all, when I asked her why she has decided to live what I call an "intense reality"--that is, combining fulltime employment, graduate school, and the responsibilities that accompany personal life--, she responded:

* * *

1 MEG: Well, I don't think I have a choice, exactly. I mean, I have a choice not to work fulltime, I suppose I could always go on welfare. [LAUGHS LOUDLY] I have to work fulltime. I mean, there's no way around there, I have to work fulltime to support myself. And unless I want to be brain dead, I HAVE to do something intellectually challenging for me. So, in a way--looking at it that way, I have no choice. I simply have to do what I, what I do. And that's who I am and that's what I am.

2 Fortunately, my husband is extremely good around the house, and I'm not one of the women that, that they say does 70%, or whatever ungodly percent of work around the house. In fact, my husband does a lot of that, and I think we split, we split it pretty evenly. And we've been pretty lucky to be able to do that so far. But, I know that that kind of situation has to be flexible because people's situations could change. You know, if I were to win the lottery, I don't even play it! But if I were somehow to win the lottery, and be able to just go "Oh!,"--I would DO more stuff at home, because I like doing stuff at home. I like being domestic, I like cooking, I like to sew, I like to make jewelry, I like to do all kinds of things I don't get a lot of time to do. So.

3 It's really funny though, when you talk to people that, that say, "Well gee, I don't know what I'd do if I'd retire," and all this other stuff, it's like, "Well HELL, there's this whole world out there, DO it, you know, just do ANYTHING!" [PAUSE] In a way, getting back into school and doing all this stuff is a way of coping with being underemployed, because you keep your mind alive, your mind active. And that helps you to--adjust to the fact that you're working way beneath what it is your training, your talents--the whole thing.
Plus, you know, I started making jewelry in order not to commit
homicide against my one boss. He's responsible single-handedly for
several of my bracelets. It was either kill him or make jewelry. So I
decided to make jewelry.

S: So you vent your spleen on the jewelry?

MEG: Oh yeah, pounding on metal is just wonderful. That's a
new one [MEG EXTENDS HER ARM AND POINTS TO ONE OF
SEVERAL SILVER BRACELETS; I ADMIRE IT]. But it's doing all
this other stuff that helps you with being underemployed. And having
a sense of humor. There are a lot of people that are worse off. Just
having a sense of humor and being able to laugh at it, and not take
yourself so seriously.

S: Have the faculty objected to your taking courses during
work hours?

MEG: If I'm personally mindful of what I need to do, the
department gives me all the latitude it can. "Hey guys, I'm going to
the library." It's a mutually beneficial thing. But this wouldn't be
possible in Personnel Services. People here know that if a special
project needs to get done, I'll do it, you know--I will get it done. I am
treated and perform like, FUNCTION like, a faculty member who
doesn't teach and do research. This is the wonderfulness of this job.
Number one, I know this job inside and out, to a large extent. I am
giving a paper at the end of October, and the department is paying my
airfare--that's real support--really supportive of staff.

* * *

Meg again calls upon her performance strengths in this text; chief among
these are her richly ironic, understated sense of humor, repetition, and internal
dialogue. She continues to display her ability to assess the larger perspective ("There
are a lot of people that are worse off"). And identity formation is always an
important function of Meg's narratives: once again, she emphasizes her personal
competencies and demonstrates her penchant for teaching.
When Meg repeats in the first paragraph that she doesn’t have a choice about fulltime employment, she is actually emphasizing her choices all along. The rhetorical device, "I have no choice," simply functions to convey the idea that she needs to work for a livelihood, and that she also needs intellectual challenge. Her choice to stay at Ohio State is directly related to her choice to continue working toward a doctorate. So Meg is underemployed, but she works at Ohio State because the milieu allows her to satisfy her need for intellectual development. In paragraph two, Meg shows the scope of her accomplishments apart from the workplace, all of which represent specific choices: she enjoys "doing stuff at home" and "being domestic," but she also likes "cooking," and "to sew," and "to make jewelry," and "to do all kinds of things." Meg doesn’t say she excels at these endeavors, but the assumption is that people are competent at activities they enjoy.

In paragraph two, Meg offers information about the equal partnership she experiences in her marriage and the techniques that she uses to successfully cope in the workplace, and in paragraph three, she expands her discussion to include the wider community. Displaying her scorn of unengaged people, Meg teaches me her philosophy of productivity and purpose in a mock dialogue with a witless retiree, "Well, DO it, just do ANYTHING!" Clearly, "boredom" is not part of Meg’s lexicon. In paragraph four, Meg seems to use the plural "you" and plural possessive pronoun "your" to recommend to all Civil Service workers her own successful techniques for surviving underemployment: "you keep your mind alive, your mind active. And that helps you to--adjust to the fact that you’re working way beneath
what it is your training, your talents—the whole thing." But coping with
underemployment is only part of it. One must also cope with irritating personalities
and situations at work. Meg constructs her text in a way that allows her to smoothly
weave a personal incident into the larger "embedding" narrative. The narrative
progresses from an account about herself that is general (paragraph one), to an
account about herself that is specific (paragraph two), to the universal applications in
paragraph three. Then, in paragraphs four and five, Meg returns to self-focusing,
with her story about jewelry making. The preceding paragraphs, with their
alternatively specific and universal thrusts, form a logical chain of ideas which
sanctions Meg’s inclusion of a highly specific, subjective account at this point in the
text.

Meg never applies a negative epithet to the boss, and the tone of her delivery
is markedly understated. But her lexical choice, "kill," couldn’t be more blunt. Dell
Hymes sees power and creativity emerging in incongruity: "creative language use is
often not a matter of a novel sentence, or a novel context either, but of a novel
relation" between sentences and contexts (1975:156); when Meg stated she had to
learn to make jewelry so she wouldn’t kill her boss, I was shocked because neither
her tone of voice nor the content of her previous utterances prepared me for such a
dramatic remark. Further, the semantic connection between jewelry making and
murder is also incongruous: an intuitive leap is required to grasp Meg’s meaning.
It’s clear that Meg’s remark cannot be taken only at its referential, face value.
Richard Bauman sees the dynamics between texts, events, and social structures
governing emergent performances: Meg's subtle but powerful murder metaphor can be explained by his suggestion that "in artistic performances of this kind, there is something going on in the communicative interchange which says to the auditor, 'interpret what I say in some special sense; do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken literally, would convey'" (1977:9). Along similar lines, Deborah Tannen says that "By doing some of the work of making meaning, hearers or readers become participants in the discourse. In other words, they become meaningfully, mythically involved" (1989:17). Indeed, the very indirectness of Meg's "homicide" metaphor renders it an involving, affecting, and comic way to show that the boss's behavior was a significant problem (notice how lackluster a straightforward statement, such as "My boss was a jerk," seems by comparison.) Furthermore, Meg and I gain rapport by sharing a comprehension of the boss's unacceptable behavior and by delighting in Meg's rhetorical ploy.

With her "kill the boss" segment, Meg shows her agency by deciding to channel negative energy into positive, concrete creations: she replaces killing the boss with making jewelry, and continues to remind herself of the effects of that positive energy every time she revisits this folk text: Meg made the bracelet some time ago and thus diverted a potentially explosive situation. As she re-performs her scenario for me, she continues to derive similar power with a new audience. The anecdote is the antidote. But in telling me this story, Meg is not only showing that she successfully overcomes workplace stress; she is also conveying the idea that she is adept at making jewelry. Because she has made several bracelets, and because the
bracelets are beautiful and intricate, it is clear that she is dedicated to her craft and a talented artisan. Meg combines artistic vision and physical strength to transform workplace difficulties into tangible forms that she proudly displays on her person. Bauman (1977) has pointed out that part of a performer’s power lies in her ability to move her audience with her performance’s formal qualities, and Meg was displaying two kinds of artistic "forms" for me during the interview, and both her verbal art and her jewelry were fashioned with expert precision. When she held out her arm for me, the bracelets seemed symbolic badges of her endurance, courage, and victory over adversity.

The conspicuously understated tone throughout Meg’s "kill the boss" exemplum in paragraph four seemed designed to elicit a response, and my question "So you vent your spleen on the jewelry?" was the invitation that Meg needed to talk at greater length about herself. In paragraph five, Meg summarizes the ways she copes: she is busy with "other stuff," and says humor helps (a gratuitous remark given the semantic and performance thrusts of her preceding text). Then, in paragraph six, Meg portrays a symbiotic relationship between the requirements of her job and her own talents and motivations. Demonstrating the familiarity, flexibility, and freedom she enjoys, Meg quips: "Hey guys, I’m going to the library." The breezy yet imperative construction suggests that Meg can guiltlessly sandwich her own interests with the demands of the job, attending to each sphere as dictated by necessity and possibility. Meg "functions like" and is "treated like" a faculty member because, as does a faculty member, she will get the work done. She can pursue her
extra-occupational interests because "I know this job inside and out"—she is
irreplaceable in her position given her longevity and continuity in her department.
Thus, her superiors support her conference attendance with airfare and good wishes.
At the end of paragraph six, Meg again portrays herself as teacher, but implicitly, by
referring to her upcoming paper presentation. For Meg, the "wonderfulness" of the
job is rooted in the facilitation of her academic goals.

Some would argue that Civil Service employees have little freedom of
movement and experience little equitable treatment, but Meg's job has offered her
such privileges for some time. Presumably, the boss she wanted to "kill" has been
replaced long ago, and there is no hint of workplace friction in the remainder of the
text. Nevertheless, Meg perceives her Civil Service job as a mere stepping stone to
bigger and better things.

*  *  *

S: What about when you get the degree? I mean, is this your career?

MEG: Oh HELL no. Oh GOD no. I mean, I was talking to
someone the other day and she's like, you know, her mentality, it was
like so clear that we have different, a totally different mentality about
this stuff. Her mentality was that, you know, since I've worked here
for 14, 15 years, whatever it is, there's no way, in HER opinion, that I
should want to [BREATHY, WONDERMENT] "Give UP what I've
GOT here!" And it's like [TERSE], well what IS that exactly? I
mean, I've got a retirement fund and I can let it stay there if I want to,
or I can quit Ohio and get the hell out of the state and take it out and
start somewhere else. I mean, there are all KINDS of different choices
that you can HAVE, even with limited funds or limited--horizons, or
what have you. But, her idea is that, once you've put a certain number
of years in, you're basically here for life. You know the difference
between a "career person" and a "lifer"?
S: Tell me the difference.

MEG: In the military? A "career person" makes a conscious choice to work somewhere. A career person thinks of it as a professional JOB, and a LIFER is basically somebody who is a draftee, somebody who just winds up staying in for the rest of their life--

S: So that would be the Civil Service people maybe?

MEG: Maybe, maybe NOT. Because there are some Civil Service--quote unquote--type of people who are definitely career people [LAUGHTER]! And there are probably some upper level types that are more LIFERS in their mentality.

S: Oh, you're right. Absolutely. I see

MEG: It's an attitude!

S: I'm commenting on YOU, but you're commenting on the WHOLE.

MEG: On the whole, yeah. The whole thing. Anyway, the FUTURE, I hope, will be--even before I get the degree I would like to move from this department to a department in which I could teach as well as do administrative stuff. In other words, I would LIKE to be an A & P in a department and have part of my duties be outreach, or administration, or coordination of programs; and the other part of my duties be teaching classes. And I don't know if this will happen or if it CAN happen, but that is something I would LIKE to see happen.

And then I'd like to get the degree and focus on TEACHING, and I'm HOPING, get published enough so that I have a chance at the job market, and can compete alongside anyone else. I figure that [PAUSE] I'm not gonna wait until I graduate to start publishing things. A good piece of advice was given to me by, a, someone whose wife is also kind of getting her Ph.D. "LATE," or "LATER" in life than the normal trajectory. What she was doing is trying to make enough of a name for herself that when people have a job opening they think, "Well, we have a job opening, we need to get somebody like HER!" And they THINK of her by name, and want to hire HER!

And I'm interested in such strange stuff that I might as well try to tailor myself as well. Because it will be, I think, to my advantage to
there is no question about her life, that her goals have long been in place, and that they have nothing to do with Civil Service work. In support of this opener, the anecdote in paragraph one presents Meg's opinion about Civil Service work and her own career visions; her views are strongly stated, in content, vocabulary, and force of expression. The use of intertextuality allows Meg to discredit the co-worker's views of Civil Service work. Meg points up the difference between her own views about her job (long-term but temporary, it's just a stepping stone to bigger and better things), and the glorification of Civil Service work by an upper level Civil Service staffer. We will recall themes of optimism and the belief in a variety of options in Meg's "resolution" text a few pages back--she points out that life situations are prone to change, and she angrily chastises the fictitious would-be retiree who imagines boredom after worklife: "well HELL . . . just do ANYTHING!" Meg's optimism, coupled with intolerance for limited vision, resurfaces in her views about the future. (In Chapter 3, I mentioned Carol Warren's findings that many women drift into their jobs, their occupational position ultimately a result of chance rather than focused planning. This notion is apt when considering Meg's views about "lifers" and "career people.")
How does Meg's military metaphor work? We associate an ideology of prescription, of regimentation, of subordination of self to a "greater glory" when we think of the military. Embracing the ideology of military doctrine is critical for the university's so-called career people, especially. But Meg doesn't want to be a lifer or a career person. Her distinction between lifer and career person is a bit misleading—both kinds of employees might stay in the system for life, Meg is saying. Yet while the lifers don't initially plan to do it and never like it, the career people plunge themselves into the institution, body and soul. The contrast between the lifer and the career person underscores the major tenet of Meg's text: this dichotomy is not all there is; rather, one can invent one's own future.

There is power in naming and dissecting the two Civil Service mentalities, which, in their different ways, promote the ideological goals of the hierarchy. And it is in the space between the contrasting voices of the lifer and the career person that Meg dramatizes her own viewpoint. She equally rejects the careerist's naive, quixotic attitude and the lifer's lack of grit and imagination; rather, Meg is a risk-taker, realistic yet self-determined. She resents being tethered to a job by prevailing social discourses, by the power of suggestion, and she emphasizes the dogmatic narrowness of the careerist via her own in-text performance. The career person's comment is rendered invalid by the awed tone in which Meg portrays it ("there is no way, in HER opinion, that I should want to [BREATHY, WONDERMENT] "Give UP what I've GOT here"); that comment is subsequently overturned by Meg's cut-and-dried rejoinder that she does indeed have a retirement fund, and that she can either leave it
alone or "get the hell out of the state" and "start somewhere else." Meg's military metaphor also suggests that, for hapless "lifers," a Civil Service job is like a prison sentence: once you're in it, it's hard to break out. Meg parallels her own view of Civil Service work with the "lifer" mentality, and depicts the grin-and-bear-it, pay-your-dues experiences that she has had at the university. Meg constructs her identity by showing who she isn't: she is neither a lifer nor a career person.

In the third major paragraph, Meg talks about the future, and the academic goals she spoke of in her resolution text are figuratively realized here. Meg's engagement with her Ph.D. program has served as one avenue for "tailoring" herself, for "establishing a certain kind of profile," and the Administrative and Professional job she envisions in the near future would bridge the gulf between her current position and the faculty post she ultimately hopes for. The position may not materialize, but Meg is highly specific about the activities she would like to assume even before she completes her doctorate--she wants to teach and to continue her program planning and administrative duties. The process of self-tailoring is an intellectual process: Meg gradually, self-consciously, and strategically integrates herself into the professoriate, first, by gaining levity, familiarity, and respect in her Civil Service job; next, with an envisioned Administrative and Professional "bridge" job; and finally, with a longed-for faculty job. Meg moves with calculation. But the more fanciful act of imagining herself in her future faculty position also seems a useful, if not downright necessary, step toward realizing her goals.
While Meg shows the ability to overcome her sense of underemployment, maintaining a positive identity and a sense of control in the workplace can be challenging. Here, Hester speaks of an initial sense of disappointment and resentment in her latest Civil Service job. But those negative feelings have largely been replaced by the comprehension that some unexpected advantages go along with it.

* * *

1  HESTER: Now, I can see a reason for having to go through this, at least from my spiritual perspective, and right now I think it's basically a hibernation period until I get the doctoral work done. I really like the position I'm in now, even though technically, it's got less responsibility than the position I just left. It's very different, very different. It's not academically oriented, it's more business oriented. And it's like I'm the newest one in the office, I came from a place where I was there the longest and knew everything, to where I'm newest in the office and don't know much, and that was sort of like an ego-bruising experience in some ways.

2  But at the same time, the reduction of pressure is good for me at this point in time, because it lets me focus the majority of my energy on my dissertation and the clinical work I'm going to have to be doing on the evenings and the weekends, so it's like I'm not going to be coming from a day job that's totally drained me so I won't be able to cope with this other stuff. And it's like I'm going to be able to maintain my energy and still do well on the job.

3  So at this point in time, I see it almost as some sort of UNIVERSAL COSMIC GIFT that was given to me, saying, "Here," you know, "this is what you really need to focus on, but will still have the opportunity to support yourself," and stuff like that. So, that's how I resign myself to it now. Now, when I graduate, with the stuff I've seen, particularly at this university, I don't want to be an academic. Uh, I don't want to work in a world that has people doing these kinds of things to each other and other people. They glorify the mind of man so much that they lose their perspectives. I'm going to be primarily a clinician.
And--[SIGHS], I think that keeping a Civil Service job since I'm so close to full retirement benefits anyway (it's only eight years away)--that it would be okay to go ahead and keep a job like this, that allows me to maintain my energy to do part time what I REALLY want, so I get that back, and be able to channel my energy. And then when I retire, I can pull retirement benefits, um, almost to what I'm making now, so that I can--I'm not going to be in a position where I'm going to have to have a fulltime client load right away when I'm trying to set up a private practice. I'll have an income coming in. So I'm not going to be like at the "survival stage." It's almost going to work out perfectly for what I want, and I didn't really plan it that way, it just sort of fell in place.

* * *

Hester's narrative of resolution is about conserving energy now in order to shore up for the future. As are Meg and Ariel, Hester is counting on finishing her Ph.D. program at Ohio State, and has opted for a relatively low-pressure job so that she can put her energy into a goal to which she is strongly committed. The chance to earn a Ph.D. has been one benefit, and her relatively low pressure job will allow Hester to cope with the stresses that will attend completion of the dissertation. Thus, although only a by-product of the job, Hester views being able to manage extra-occupational tasks as a benefit of sorts. A more significant benefit is her retirement fund: after thirty years in the system, Hester will be able to retire from the university at about age fifty with health and dental insurance and eighty percent of her salary for the rest of her life. With the solid footing of her retirement package, Hester will be in a position to try her hand at a new professional career, the earnings from which could prove to be sporadic, at least initially.

Spiritual concerns are implicit but seem to be paramount in the narrative.

With the constructions, "Now, I can see a reason for having to go through this, at
least from my spiritual perspective," "I see it almost as some sort of UNIVERSAL COSMIC GIFT," and "I didn’t really plan it that way, it just sort of fell in place," Hester suggests the existence of a larger power that has guided her to this better-than-she-could-have-hoped-for point in her life. In paragraph three, she portrays a voice that doesn’t quite seem to be her own: "‘Here,’ you know, ‘this is what you need to focus on, but will still have the opportunity to support yourself.’" I think the voice is an omniscient one, belonging to the bestower of that "UNIVERSAL COSMIC GIFT." It is only "now," in retrospect, that Hester, in her human frailty, sees the underlying advantages of the intersection of her job and academic paths, one endeavor supporting the other in unexpectedly fortuitous ways.

Hester evokes this sense of indebtedness to a higher power by the semantics and narrative coherence of her text: in the first paragraph, the confession that she had an "ego-bruising" experience when she changed jobs in the university system imparts a sense of her vulnerability, but the narrative’s tone quickly becomes positive, as Hester shows how she has adjusted to the unplanned but distinctly positive benefits of working at her new job. And all the rest of Hester’s narrative is upbeat. Rebirth, for Hester, will come with graduation from her Ph.D. program and, subsequently, her retirement from the university. Of course, the tenets of many religions have it that life itself is a hibernation period, true birth coming with death. But in Hester’s text, the attainment of a Ph.D. is also a sort of rebirth, from a prolonged, limbo-like period to an ultimate blossoming where respectability and fulfillment coincide.
We saw that Meg depicted a self whose career was evolving before her eyes, and Hester likewise shows that she is nearing the end of a goal-driven trajectory. The modality in paragraphs two, three, and four implies that Hester is operating from a position of "insider knowledge," that she knows how the future will unfold. Sentences modalized with "I'm," "I can," and "I will" lend a sense of "categorical prediction--'this is what will happen'" (Fairclough 1992:174). But while Meg aspires to the ranks of the professoriate, Hester wants to maintain an identity that is distinct from faculty members. Hester comments that, in academia, one finds "people doing these kinds of things to each other and other people." This unspecific remark seems to hark back to the sentiments in Hester's "horror story" (Chapter 5) in which she recounts the steps to the eventual abolishment of her job. Some faculty, in Hester's experience, are less than moral in their treatment of students and staff. By suggesting that "they glorify the mind of man so much that they lose their perspectives," Hester is not only making a distinction between faculty members' moral shortcomings with her own presumably equitable, ethical, and moral treatment of others. She is also implicitly invoking the contrast between mortals (including faculty members who spend their time glorifying "the mind of man") and the higher power in which she seems to place her faith.

As did Meg and Hester, Carrie also has positive things to say about employment at The Ohio State University.
CARRIE: I think I'm UNDEREMPLOYED here, but I also have to weigh the advantages of having—absolutely fantastic, perfect health care at very minimal cost, I mean, I'm over 50—, and so with 16, 17, or 18 years in state service, I have the potential of in ten—years being eligible for retirement. And, P.E.R.S. retirement is an entirely different story than Social Security. So, YOU know--

S: After twenty years on the job, you'll retire?

CARRIE: Well, depending on what other things are going on in my life. I may NOT be able to retire as soon as I want if I'm still single—. Who knows if there'd ever be a buyout again, that staff could participate in. I mean, I could always hope. It's probably unlikely that it would happen, but then, I just feel like, BECAUSE of being single, I can't NOT consider that. I mean, there's just no way to do it. And, you know, I could walk away from this job, pull $20,000 out of my retirement fund, and in ten years, have absolutely nothing! So, that's why—. I mean, it's not an OBNOXIOUS job.

S: So you sort of talk yourself into being happy with this sense of underemployment since you have these other benefits?

CARRIE: Right, and try to maximize other areas, I guess. You know, if there's some sense of dissatisfaction—.

S: Do you think the faculty accept you?

CARRIE: I think they give us freedom to be individuals, and that's not true with very many offices. I find faculty try to make staff conform, to their idea of what a staff person is. And this department is unusual in its—ability to—accept US as individuals, the same way they want to be accepted as individuals, themselves. And they're a pretty strong group, too. And maybe because they expect that themselves, for some reason or other, they're open enough to also extend that to us, which I don't see that in other departments, some other departments.

And, we haven't had any opposition in terms of using our lunch hour for class. With me, I really think the fact that basically if you do your job, and you really try not to let anything fall through the cracks, uh, they consider your schedule just the way they do theirs. They allow us our, you know, idiosyncracies.
As did Meg and Hester, Carrie opines that she is underemployed, but she, too, alludes to the advantages of developing interests apart from the workplace. And Carrie’s sense of coming to terms with her employment at Ohio State is also connected to her expectations of what will happen in the future. To Carrie, the most significant of the university’s employee benefits are its retirement plan and medical insurance. She waxes almost poetic in her first paragraph when she speaks of "absolutely fantastic, perfect health care." And, as does Hester, Carrie can look forward to a future that is relatively secure financially, a crucial concern for a single woman. Carrie mentioned to me that she would like to retire in 2000 after twenty years in the system, but she is not sure she will be able to afford to do that. Still, her tenure at Ohio State will allow her to accrue a retirement fund above and beyond Social Security.

The absence of a controlling work environment is also important to Carrie. Seeming to echo Meg’s words, Carrie suggests that other departments deprive Civil Service workers of autonomy, but in her own department she experiences faculty-staff equity that is similar to the workplace equity that Meg describes. When describing job performance standards within their departments, Carrie and Meg say that if they anticipate what must be accomplished and attend to necessary details, they are afforded flexibility, respect, and acceptance. Carrie will "really try not to let anything fall through the cracks" and Meg is "personally mindful of what needs to be done." Meg says that the freedom her current job offers "wouldn’t be possible in Personnel Services," and the environment in Carrie’s department allows staff to
express their individuality, "not true with very many offices." Thus, Carrie and Meg give evidence of a social discourse that exists among Civil Service workers, that is, most university units are restrictive of staff members and force their conformity.

Iz spoke of the compassion of some of her supervisors at the university. In the following narrative, which takes several detours, Iz implies that her self-image improved as a result of supportive and nurturing attitudes at work, and that her academic potential flourished in the university's intellectual environment. Iz and many others have taken advantage of the university's fee waiver for staff members and have experienced the boon of physical accessibility to both the classroom and to the academic mindset, as well as the fee waiver offered by university employment.

For Iz, another advantage was Ohio State's Childcare Center:

* * *

1  IZ: I get married, I have my son, and I go back to school, and uh, I couldn't have gotten my undergraduate degree without the help of the OSU Daycare Center. And you know what? I wasn't a student for a while and they kept him anyway. I was talking to the director, and she said, "You know, 'Iz,' why don't you let childcare be the least of your problems now?" [LAUGHS] My husband worked in a mediocre job, and I got fired from this place [the restaurant where Iz and I spoke] for drinking, and um, so I was working at Long's, and we got good money from the government, because we both made diddly. But I got to meet some really great teachers, and take neat courses and read great books.

2  I finally graduated in the Spring of 1985. And then I decided to take a couple of classes as grad non-degree. And I took a social studies class I liked a lot, and a poli sci class was real good. And, I thought I could do this. I got to know the professors in the department, and thought about what I wanted to do with my life, you know. I was rather sure that secretarial work was probably not what I
wanted to do all my life, and I was feeling bored and antsy, so I thought, you know--. I started to meet some of the professors and read the master's exams, and I said, "This stuff is simplistic BULLSHIT, I can do this!"

And, it made me think a lot about--how lucky I was, you know, because most people from my neighborhood don't, didn't, end up the way I did--. I'm real lucky, I feel like I am real lucky, and the reason why I'm lucky is because of school, because of reading, because of books, because of teachers. You know, cause I didn't have much self-esteem. I didn't believe that I could do anything, but I got through school, and I can see how a lot of teachers changed my life--.

I had to take the GRE because my undergrad GPA was 2.1. And I took it and I did really well, I mean, amazingly well. I got, I did, like, crappy in math, which I wasn't surprised! I hadn't taken math in 17 years! But I got, it was like, in the 98th percentile in the communications skills, and my analytical skills were pretty good, too, my logic was pretty good. And they let me, I'm sure they let me in because of the GRE, and I knew, I knew a couple of the professors. And I thought, "Well, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to get my Master's." That was for the ego. Because I wanted to prove that I was smart enough to do it. Anyways, I got the job in the Department, and I was very happy about it.

S: That was an upgrade?

IZ: From Clerk-Typist to Clerical Specialist to Secretary 1. And, it was great. I worked with a wonderful woman--

S: Your supervisor?

IZ: Right. THEY wanted me, SHE wanted to make me comfortable with my job. And I had finally made it into the degree program. And I told them on the interview, I said--: "I am looking forward to doing this." And they let me take classes. I have taken two-hour classes and not taken lunch hours. I had to take a math class, algebra, for my certification. I don't like math, I'm scared of it. And, uh, I took it on my lunch hour one summer, and one of my co-workers would let me just work on my algebra for the rest of the day. It was the summer, granted--but I would sit there for three hours, and I never got any shit from him. YOU know, I've written papers, stuff you get fired for [LAUGHS LOUDLY].

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S: Yeah, but did you always get the work done?

IZ: Oh, the work was done. I have no problem. You see, we'll never get overtime here. I have no problem coming in for these people on weekends, staying late, 'cause they appreciate me, they give me days off. And they let me do a lot of things, but they expect me to take responsibility for things they would not ask a secretary to do.

* * *

Iz speaks of a variety of perks that have helped her to persevere in Civil Service jobs. The opportunities of a graduate education, the benefits of working in a flexible office environment, and many kindnesses shown to her by people in positions of relative power are all evaluated in highly positive terms. That the director of the daycare center let her child stay while Iz was not officially affiliated with the university seems to have profoundly affected her during a period of low wages, alcoholism, and a troubled marriage. Iz hints that professors in her department vouched for her admission to graduate school. In a later job, her supervisor was a "wonderful" woman who was concerned about Iz's comfort and happiness. While employed at this job, Iz could take two-hour classes, study her math, and write papers during the workday. Further, her co-worker was consistently tolerant and supportive of Iz's quest for a Master's degree--"I never got any shit from him," Iz says.

Meg and Hester have actively remade themselves throughout their tenure at The Ohio State University, succeeding in doctoral programs and grooming themselves for professional careers. In a similar way, Iz has consciously set about to improve herself, to symbolically depart from her working class roots. And her university training has been the ticket to that departure. The opportunity was there and Iz
appreciates it: her abundant superlatives and repetition impressed upon me that teachers, books, and learning all helped to "open doors" and "change her life." But
the opportunities of a graduate education are useless if a student lacks motivation and
ability; ultimately, we teach ourselves. This dialectic between opportunity and
natural talent is a major point of Iz’s narrative. She reflexively depicts her goal
orientation and self-encouragement: "I thought I could do this," she ventures. Then,
more boldly, "I can do this!" And again she urges herself on: "I thought, ‘Well, you
know what I’m going to do? I’m going to get my Master’s.’ That was for the ego.
Because I wanted to prove that I was smart enough to do it."

In this last series of sentences, Iz dramatizes the epiphany she experienced
while simultaneously beholding her own abilities and recognizing the chance for their
fruition. This comprehension has been crucial to her life’s progress and her self
identity. Iz’s innate intelligence is a trope that she returns to time and again, but
simply telling me that she is smart is not enough. So she concretely explains how her
capacity for learning has fostered her academic success: she seems to have genuinely
enjoyed a variety of courses, she continues to love to read "great books," and she
emphasizes her nearly perfect verbal and analytical Graduate Record Examination
("GRE") scores. Thus, she has been "lucky" (repeated four times in paragraph four),
but she’s also smart. We have seen the relationship between fate and personal power
in many of the narratives in this project, and it has arisen again here.

The content within Iz’s last few paragraphs mirrors Meg’s and Carrie’s
comments about the mutually beneficial arrangements that exist in their offices.
Granted, my interjection, "Yeah, but did you always get the work done?" is leading. Yet Iz answers promptly and convincingly, explaining that even though she has taken time to pursue her own interests during the workday, her supervisors expect her to undertake a role that surpasses her written job description: sometimes she comes in on the weekends and stays late, and she is responsible "for things they would not ask a secretary to do."

I also asked Iz about the future. As her text indicates, Iz will "stay here til she gets a teaching job" for two rather obvious reasons: first, she has been trained to teach secondary school. (Lacking a Ph.D., Iz would not be competitive for a faculty position; and even if she were to go on to earn a Ph.D. at Ohio State, it is a commonplace that universities seldom hire their "own"). Second, Iz dislikes the university's administration.

* * *

S: Do you envision yourself as staying at OSU permanently, because you've already been here so long?

IZ: I'll stay here til I get a teaching job. Uh, it'll be hard as a teacher, but as a teacher, I'll have a little power, you know, I'll be a "professional." They can't pay me enough at OSU--. And it's just real ugly now, I don't have a positive image of the administration.

* * *

For upward mobility in the system, Iz would likely be forced to seek a job in administration, and she recoils from the ugly political contests that seem part and parcel of it. She cannot ideologically align herself with the administrators, whose
goals she sees as at odds with the academic "mission" of the university. The power she will assume as a teacher will be a logical extension of her university training: she will devote herself to intellectual exchanges, to influencing young minds and lives.

Ariel speaks of her long-term but ultimately fulfilling academic accomplishments. Her path toward advanced degrees has been fraught with bureaucratic holdups, but she has nevertheless persevered and has accomplished academic distinction in her graduate program in the Department of History.

* * *

1 ARIEL: It took me seven years to get my master's degree. Because—a LOT of it was, I could only take one class at a time, and at that time they didn't have tuition waivers, they had tuition reimbursement. You had to shell out the money yourself and then wait seven weeks to get your reimbursement. Yeah, and then your supervisor had to sign your grade. You got a grade, so you made a Xerox copy of your, your grade sheet. Our former chair just thought that was so demeaning and insulting, but he had to do it.

And so then you'd have to sign that and send it over to Archer House, and whenever they felt like it they'd send you your money back. And so a couple of times I couldn't go, the next quarter, because I didn't have the money. But mainly it was because, it took so long, was, my research—should I say what my research was?

S: Oh please do.

ARIEL: Oh, okay. I was reconstructing the red light district in Canton, Ohio in the Progressive Era. So I—Canton had two dailies at the time. I read every new—, BOTH newspapers published in Canton between 1905 and 1913. And so, because I worked full time, the only days my—my research was only available to me on Saturdays at the Historical Society between the hours of nine and five, so that's why it took so long for me to get my Master's. I wrote 334 pages.

S: I'm, I'm floored. That's, that shows total dedication.
ARIEL: [LAUGHS] Really! Yeah. I LOVED it. Dr. Burns said, [LOFTILY] "Now what could you POSSIBLY do for a dissertation, Ms. ___?" [LAUGHS] You know, to top the thesis. And, and so then I took a little bit of time off between my Master's--just a, I don't remember what I took off--two quarters or something, before I signed up for any classes. And, I've been struggling away ever since, to do that!

I'm in the Ph.D. program now, and my dissertation topic is going to be, I know what it is but I might change the focus just a little bit: it will be "The Roots of Organized Crime in Stark County, 1890-1924."

S: It's going to be Burns again--

ARIEL: Yeah. Burns has been wonderful, I mean he's a real mentor, I think. He's been so good to me. And, I mean, I used to be afraid of him. He wrote me a wonderful letter. I got a grant from Women's Studies and he wrote me this great letter. It was the first time he'd ever, I'd gotten anything good from him--he never said anything one way or the other. I mean, he keeps telling me this is one of the most important studies on prostitution. And, I think it might be 'cause I'm older that he treats me a little different.

And the former chair here was very good, he used to say "If any of those people ever talk down to you, you come to me." Now, he wasn't particularly that way with the other person in the office who was Civil Service. Anyway, I DID want to say that the former chair did give me a research day, for a while, while I was working on my thesis. Every Friday, I worked 40 hours a week--I came in

S: you just worked ten hours a day for four days?

ARIEL: Yeah, uh huh. And then I had every Friday off to do research. So anyway, that's the reason I'm still here. I'm trying to get my Ph.D., but it's just getting farther and farther away, it seems.

* * *

If the satisfaction Ariel finds in her commitment to her program of study does not overshadow the conflicts and difficulties she has experienced in her dual role as
employee and student, it at least minimizes those conflicts and difficulties.

Nevertheless, the frustrations that bureaucracies inspire is clear in this text: Ariel hints that the people at Human Resources deliberately delayed the reimbursement process, and the plural "you" in the first paragraph shows that Civil Service workers have had to resign themselves to bureaucratic red tape in order to persevere as a student ("you got a grade, you made a Xerox copy of your grade sheet, . . . you’d have to sign that and send it over to Archer House, and whenever they felt like it they’d send your money back"). But Ariel is clearly engaged with her intellectual topics; her metacommunicative, "Should I say what my research was?" is a bid to expand upon a subject that interests her. She offers abundant information about the processes she has experienced and the topics she has undertaken (the Ph.D. topic is an offshoot and expansion of her M.A. thesis).

Ariel thus sees her connection with the university in a dual light. Unlike Meg, who envisions bridging the gap between Civil Service and a faculty position with a joint administrative-teaching position, Ariel’s current situation at the university is unique, and truly dichotomous. As a long-time Typist 2 with a master’s degree and a clearly defined dissertation topic, she seems to be one of the most conspicuously underemployed women in this study. Ariel emphatically "hates" Civil Service work, yet she is absorbed in the intellectual process and especially in her dissertation research. She is also pleased with her advisor, whom she describes in superlatives ("wonderful," "real mentor," "so good to me"). Her advisor is an important figure, someone who boosts her self-esteem by valuing her research and treating her
"different," better, because she's "older." The former chairperson of the department was likewise supportive, championing Ariel against the overtures of less supportive members of the department. During this former chairperson's tenure, Ariel enjoyed measurable job flexibility, making use of four-day work weeks for a time.2

Ariel almost seems to look at her Ph.D. program not as a means to an end, but as a process that is its own product. Unlike Meg, Carrie, and Iz, Ariel is unspecific about the kind of job she hopes to secure. In sharp contrast to the hopefulness and energy she projected in her "resolution" text above is the dubiousness of her "future" text, which follows.

* * *

1 ARIEL: What with a full-time job and personal issues, I can't even seem to find the time to read for general exams. I just don't have the time. I've only had time to read two books this quarter, and I have a hundred and twenty of 'em on my major field list alone. Maybe I'm reading these things TOO carefully, I don't know. A friend of mine who recently finished his dissertation told me, "You should be reading four books a day." [LAUGHS] I'm trying to read Thorstein Veblen now. I'm getting too old for this! I don't care about this stuff anymore. I just want to write my dissertation.

S: And what do you hope for the future when you're finished?

2 ARIEL: Well, I don't foresee a positive future. As far as a professional job goes, uh, --I just don't really foresee much happening. I went to some Graduate School thing years ago about job hunting. Except it had a fancier title than that. For graduate students who were getting ready to graduate. And I said, "Well, my problem was, you know, I hadn't been networking. I had no assistantship. I was working." And they said, "Oh, well, they'll be very impressed with that!" And I said, "NO THEY WON'T!" Oh yeah, I was a "Typist 2" all those years, you know, while other people were out being T.A.'s and delivering papers, and doing all this stuff, I had to work all the time. And it's a real disadvantage, and I know an employer--I mean, I don't blame them, they don't want somebody like that around.

* * *
Although Ariel is excited about her topic and wants to write her dissertation, she is distinctly pessimistic about concluding her program and landing a professional position. Unlike Meg, she doesn't seem to have the energy for simultaneously juggling fulltime employment, publishing and presenting papers, and forging onward toward her Candidacy Examination. In paragraph one, Ariel refers to the remark of her friend, the new Ph.D. recipient, and in so doing provides a concrete dichotomy between the ideal (completing her Ph.D. program) and the real (the time constraints that stymie her productivity): from the vantage point of his own completed program, the friend admonishes Ariel to read four books a day, a ludicrous suggestion given her emphasis on "time" in this text (paragraph one holds four variations of the idea, "I just don't have the time"). Indeed, from Ariel's pre-candidacy, Typist 2 perspective, the competing demands of her life's roles have led to her exhaustion (it is possible, too, that her 49 years have exacerbated the fatigue). The often conflicting demands of her roles have also given Ariel reason to doubt her chances for closure, for completion, for success.

(The action-oriented researcher likes to provide support when it is needed. So, despite Ariel's misgivings about her ability to complete her doctorate, I will use the future tense rather than the subjunctive in the following sentence.) When Ariel completes her degree, she will not seek a faculty position, yet she does hope for a better job. But Ariel brings up the problem of an incongruent curriculum vitae: advanced degree(s) aside, how does one explain away a decade or more of low-level clerical work when seeking a professional situation? In her opinion, few employers
will be interested in someone whose résumé indicates she has been a "Typist 2" for "all those years." Ariel portrays the bluntness with which her friend, the recent Ph.D. recipient, tells her that she should be reading four books per day, yet however unrealistic and unsympathetic this recommendation may be, Ariel seems to tolerate it better than the false sympathy of the "job hunting" people. Her disgust with indirection and hackneyed phrases is, in fact, clear in her description of the function at the Graduate School (paragraph two): it was a "job hunting thing," yet it had a "fancier title than that." The implication is that the name of the function, which Ariel has forgotten, was suggestive of the artifice that she detected in the event.

The people at the job hunting "thing," when faced with Ariel’s concerns over how to explain or de-emphasize her longtime Typist 2 position when she enters the professional job market, spouted a canned platitude, which Ariel deflates with her sarcastic: "‘Oh, well, they’ll be very IMPRESSED with that!’" Her bald-faced, metanarrative aside ("NO THEY WON’T!") and her subsequent denigration of her "Typist 2" job title create a rupture in interdiscursivity, to use Fairclough’s term, correcting the falsely positive discourse of the university’s career placement specialists. They don’t understand Ariel’s worries about getting a job and instead hand her a line. Those in power to hire her won’t be impressed, Ariel says, and they won’t understand, either.

As were the job hunting counselors, prospective employers will be similarly unable to understand Ariel’s position, and after scrutinizing her texts, I am not sure that Ariel wholly understands it, either. Meg, Hester, and Iz’s narratives are not only
hopeful, embodying traces of spirituality and humor which help them to persevere and maintain their hopefulness; they also offer specific information about specific plans.

Not so Ariel's text. Despite her intense engagement with and talent for academics, she is unclear and downcast about the future. Even Carrie, who focuses not on a new career but a financially viable retirement, seems more hopeful than Ariel.

Still, time brings change. As stated earlier, Ariel has experienced angst over her chairperson's objections about pursuing her Ph.D. program. But in June, 1996, the news broke that this administrator had decided to accept a deanship at another university. In the local newspaper, she was praised as a staunch advocate "for faculty and students." There was no mention of her commitment to staff members. Now, to what extent the university should be committed to the upward mobility of its non-faculty employees is an issue whose scope exceeds this study; and it is expected, of course, that administrators should look after the welfare and interests of students and other faculty. But it is interesting that some faculty administrators exceed expectations by supporting staff members' academic and career development. The former chairperson of Ariel's department was such an individual. Administrators who encourage the upward mobility of Civil Service staff members create gaps, subtle contradictions and discontinuities in a hierarchical framework. (Admittedly, I myself have been keenly looking for just such "gaps" throughout my tenure as an Ohio State staff member.) How the new chairperson of Ariel's department, whose identity is not yet known, reacts to her plans to complete her Ph.D. program remains to be seen, but I am sure Ariel will be happy to tell this story when the opportunity presents itself.
The following texts were recorded during a "hot chocolate break" in Jill's office. Jill opened a paper napkin and arranged it on her desk before placing her mug of cocoa on it; she stirred her drink carefully, took a sip, dabbed at her lips with her napkin, and then began to speak. The first narrative is upbeat, but then Jill has proven to be a rather consistently upbeat interviewee.

* * *

1 JILL: There are approximately 45 full-time faculty in this department. We also have about 115 graduate students, so it's a very large department. We have a staff of maybe eight or nine. I've certainly worked in business and in academia, and THIS is what I consider the most positive work experience that I've EVER had. I've heard a little bit of politics, and I've even begun to see some of it. But, by and large, I have had no sexist interaction with any of the male faculty; I've had nothing but positive, warm, almost ENDEARING interactions with some of the female faculty; and so it's been a very positive experience.

And I VALUE that. BELIEVE me. And I THINK of that when I hear other horror stories about other departments. I've already experienced MY worst nightmare, more than once, and that is NOT at Ohio State but at another academic setting. Just some very bad personal interactions [PACE PICKS UP, RAPID AND TERSE] which happened to be with a--female SUPERVISOR.

3 So anyway, at Ohio State, in this department, I have had very positive interactions AND I KNOW that I'm thought of with very high regard by many of the faculty. Many of them say things to me that are very praiseworthy, and a few of them have even gone to the chairman and said positive things, or perhaps even written a letter. Um, I think that is because I'm an intelligent human being; I'm a respectful person; I'm MORE than consistent; my behavior here--by that I mean when certain workers show up, you know, LATE every day, and [CLIPPED, TERSE] there's no consistency. And I'm given very high regard in, actually my last--what's it called?--evaluation, yeah--

S: Performance review.

4 JILL: Performance review. So, at any rate, just for consistency in arriving at work, and the fact that my absenteeism is
EXTREMELY low, probably the lowest of anybody in the department, um, for ANY reason, planned or unplanned. And let me say, too, that I believe I came to Ohio State with an attitude that was forthright yet very--very CONFIDENT about my abilities? I know I'm a good worker, and I'm generally a person who chooses to please people. I prefer to interact, or I just DO--I interact with people in a cordial, polite, respectful manner, until I--you know, if there are some barriers that come down and I'm able to interact on more of a personal level, if I CHOOSE to, then that's one thing.

So, two years and a few months after coming here at a VERY low salary--um, I have a split job function, and that is that four hours a day I perform one job task, and THAT is that I am the receptionist and the greeter at the front desk in the department. And I don't supervise anybody, in either one of these positions. But I have a little bit of pull in that position. I'm able to--WHEN the work study students are AROUND, and when they're IDLE, believe me, I get them hopping, and because there are so many things that I need to have done, just to make order out of chaos if it wasn't done. The fact that my arm is injured and I can't lift cartons and crates that weigh, you know, WHATEVER, 50-60 pounds, I don't KNOW what a crate of paper weighs, but I can't lift it, and I just don't choose to do that.

Probably my salvation is the fact that I have another position in the afternoon. Every day that I'm at work, in the afternoon I come to this location, where I'm sitting with you now, and it is, in essence, my own OFFICE. I work with one of the faculty here who is of an international reputation, this person is a university Eminent Scholar, and I think that has something to do with the funding and all of that. There are of course some hidden perks associated with having my own office, and not being visually or physically monitored by my supervisor or other co-workers. Many of my co-workers don't know how to find their way over here, so they have RARELY ever been here.

The last time my supervisor was here was actually to deliver yet another critical comment to me about [PAUSE], a REPRIMAND--. The Department Chairman wanted me to create, or print a letter, a FORM letter, that he had given to me, and it was on disk. And he came looking for me, I think ten minutes before my lunch hour. And I was not here. And then he went to my supervisor and complained that I was not at my desk, at that time, and where was I? And SHE, in fact--the attitude that seems to be very prevalent, is the "kick the dog attitude," if someone yells at HER, she then yells at her subordinate.
So, it’s quite pleasant, not having to be in that atmosphere, and to—I WORK very well by myself. That’s a capacity that I value. And so I HAVE the autonomy—that’s a good word for you to pick up, that describes me. Autonomy is a REAL good word. And I have that in this position. I also have this gentleman’s respect and his regard, and a level of caring, and it’s all completely professional. [PAUSE]

S: So all of that makes it possible and palatable for you?

JILL: It DOES.

* * *

In her first paragraph, Jill reveals that respectful interaction and personal connections are important workplace issues. Some would argue that non-sexist treatment is the right of all workers, and as such, should be merely expected, not celebrated. Jill would most likely agree; still, she emphasizes here that the male faculty’s non-sexist behavior is a positive facet of her work environment. Jill also says that she enjoys warm relations with female faculty. Thus, paragraph one’s theme is "Jill likes her co-workers." Paragraph two is a rejoinder to paragraph one: she likes her co-workers, but they have good reason to like her, too. Jill is specific about how she knows the faculty in her office like her and why, and in providing a list of reasons, Jill engages in the same sort of identity creation she has undertaken throughout this project in all of her narratives. She stresses that she is intelligent, she is respectful, she is consistent. Then she moralizes about her co-workers’ lapses, and in so doing, emphasizes that she does not have such character flaws. Paragraph three continues to build identity: Jill arrived on campus with a clear idea of her value as an employee ("I came to Ohio State . . . very CONFIDENT about my abilities").
In paragraph five, Jill begins with the hypercorrect "I prefer to interact," but repairs her sentence in order to show more definitively her method of interaction: "cordial, polite, and respectful." She then insists that she can become more personal, more familiar, but only if she "chooses" to do so. However, she seems to suggest that it is the faculty who "like to joke and tease," who set the stage for more personal interactions, and that Jill just follows their cues to accommodate them. Jill avoids presenting a self with a playful streak; or, if it can be inferred that she does behave playfully from time to time, it does not appear to happen in the workplace in the absence of faculty members' impulses for playful behavior.

What helps Jill to cope with her Civil Service job? As always, a degree of autonomy, choice, and the personal agency that follow. In conformity to a pattern in her discourse, Jill talks about "choice" a number of times again in this text ("I'm generally a person who chooses to please people" and "I just don't choose" to lift heavy cartons [paragraphs four and five]). Thus, despite her low-level clerical job, Jill constructs her work life to encompass choices. They aren't earthshaking choices, but in stressing choices—even choices concerning interaction style and small aspects of her job—, Jill reminds herself of her personal power.

To Jill, privacy and the private space that her afternoon office provides are distinct benefits: it is unusual for her supervisor or any of her co-workers to visit her there ("many of my co-workers don't know how to find their way over here, so they have RARELY ever been here"). But it is interesting that Jill describes the advantages of her afternoon office by elaborating on an unpleasant incident that
occurred there. In commenting that her supervisor visited her to "reprimand" her, Jill again depicts her supervisor's irascibility and again shows that she is subject to it ("the last time my supervisor was here was actually to deliver yet another critical comment . . . a REPRIMAND--. . . . And SHE, in fact--the attitude that seems to be very prevalent, is, you know, the 'kick the dog attitude,' if someone yells at HER, she then yells at her subordinate"). That such incidents have occurred and might occur again negates the idea that the office is truly a "private" inner sanctum. Yet Jill's likes to emphasize the positive: in this account, she detaches herself and depersonalizes the supervisor's verbal reprimand by linking her "yelling at her subordinate" with the universal human tendency for "kicking the dog." The boss's insecurity and misdirected wrath are thus emphasized and Jill effectively dismisses any aspect of her own guilt. She then connects the series of negatives in paragraph seven to the major idea in paragraph eight, a return to the positive theme which characterizes the text as a whole: "So anyway, it's quite pleasant, not having to be in that atmosphere," she states. The "so" functions as a coda and marks Jill's return to the main theme, which concerns "benefits of working at Ohio State."

Turning negatives into positives is a tactic of which Jill often makes use. We see this tendency vis à vis her comments in paragraph one, when she says her work environment is "most positive," and then backs up that statement with the report that male faculty members have not exhibited sexist tendencies. We also can see this tendency of making positives from negatives in all of Jill's narratives, and in her fundamental outlook about her position in a Civil Service job. Here is a woman with
a master's degree who has worked for years in a professional capacity but who is now occupying a low-level clerical job. Yet rather than bitterly complain, Jill's impulse is to speak positively—we will recall that in the last chapter, for instance, Jill spoke optimistically about her chances for a new position at the university.

However, in the following text, recorded some months later, Jill seems far less hopeful. Ironically, part of her cynicism comes from having read several of my dissertation chapters. But other developments have also given Jill cause for concern—she has recently applied for a number of positions at the university, and has not been invited to interview for them.

* * *

JILL: My goal in coming here was, I was hoping for a quick turnaround into a position that would be more to my liking. And of course I acquired my master's degree here, and I had some interactions with certain offices and I'm pretty much a well-read Columbus citizen so I know of certain things that are done here at this university FOR the community, so to speak. So I knew of positions that would be of interest to me.

I've applied for them and have not even been interviewed. And in one case I even had an inside networking connection. And I called that individual when he vacated his position, and said "Jim, I want to APPLY for your old job!" And he said, "Well great! Go AHEAD," he said. "But do you want an off-the-record--answer as to what I think your chances might be?" And I said, "Sure do!" And he said, "Jill, they're looking for a minority. They're looking for a racial, male, minority." And I saw him, probably four to five months later, and I said, "Hey, whatever happened?" And he said, "Was I right or was I right? Racial, Male, Minority." Because the staff in that department at that LEVEL were predominantly female, in fact, he was the only male. And then he left that position.

So the staff then was totally, 100% female, within that category. And so they needed some balance. And he said to me, "Jill, even in
the FUTURE, I can tell you they're gonna try and balance that scale, and they're NOT going to be looking at Caucasian females. They are NOT."

I wanted to say to you that, from having read all of your paper, which is marvelously done, I find it to be [MOCK PATHOS] VERY DEPRESSING, from this standpoint: my cohort you've interviewed have had horrendous experiences here at Ohio State. And I, of course, the only reason I'm here is that I was hoping to move into other positions that would be more fulfilling, where I can make a contribution more along the lines of my talents, my interests, my gifts, my intellect, and all of THAT. So. [SHORT LAUGH] I just, you know, I DON'T see that happening. And the more I read, the more down I became.

So, NOW, and having experienced the realities my friend talked about, and after having read your paper, and experienced in words what women such as myself have gone through here at Ohio State, I'm feeling RESTLESS. I certainly thought that I'd be out of here in a year or less, I mean, I was overly confident of that, and THAT HAS NOT HAPPENED. At the moment I'm kind of in limbo. Because [PAUSE], none of the positions, the A & P positions that I've applied for here at Ohio State, have panned out. There are not any networking opportunities, or what there HAVE been have not panned out. I don't see another option, I really DO NOT. I'm feeling pretty pessimistic about it.

Anyway. So, you know. And then here we are, as the New Year approaches, and many of us are, I for one in changing the calendar--that I carry with me every day, and I glance over activities and certain things, and we REFLECT. I'M reflecting, at least, upon accomplishments, and things I've learned, and things that happened to me personally--I'm speaking in a personal sense now--. I'm reflecting upon that, and I'm REFLECTING on yet another YEAR of being here in THIS job at Ohio State.

S: [RHETORICALLY] And do you want to be doing this again at the end of next year?

JILL: Right. I COULD very well be doing it. NOW. The position that I MAY pursue is also a State of Ohio position, an extension position. The big coin flip is, would I want to move? given that I am single and I have no dependents, people can certainly come to visit, and I can certainly go to visit and so on. So it's not like--and I'm
certainly not going to put myself in the outback Ohio, not that there really is an outback Ohio! But maybe I could go someplace with some culture, and--and a college at least, or a university or something. You know, there's also a part of me that's actually looking forward to a fresh start.

* * *

Jill speaks with almost profound appreciation for the warm yet professional working relations in her office in her "resolution" narrative. Yet in her "future" text, taped some weeks later, she is uncharacteristically somber and pessimistic as she assesses her position at the university and the realization that the possibility for growth is not a sure thing. Jill has portrayed herself in previous texts as counting on practical self-help methods for career advancement. But having experienced the absence of networking and few invitations for job interviews, she is reflecting in this narrative, trying to resign herself either to her Civil Service job or a move out of Columbus.

The chronology of the text conveys how the spectre of job stagnation slowly reveals itself. The first paragraph is set in the longest-ago past. Jill expected to network and, armed with her master's degree and her insider's savvy about Ohio State jobs, to quickly climb the ladder. But the story about her job search shows Jill's dawning comprehension of university racial and gender "quota" politics. Despite being a "well-read Columbus citizen," despite hoping for and expecting a "quick turnaround into a position that would be more to my liking," one's personal preparation, attitude, and goals do not always offset social realities.
In accordance with her disappointments and setbacks, Jill must readjust her sights. She does so in paragraphs four and five, in which she acknowledges that she was overly confident and unrealistic. But she still hasn't decided what her next step should be: Jill is now "restless," "pretty pessimistic," and "in limbo." Paragraph five, set in the present, shows that Jill is now seriously "reflecting" (repeated four times) on her past and future. But reflection is a symptom of personal evolution, and it seems that Jill is reflexively watching herself become marginal. As her tenure lengthens, the sense of her otherness grows, and in reflecting, she is effectively inventing an identity that stands apart from the hierarchy, which grows increasingly alien. In paragraph five, Jill has adjusted her objectives in accordance with new truths. And in paragraph six, she expresses hope again, as is her wont. Forced to veer from the pragmatic kinds of solutions in which she usually places her faith, Jill comes to grips with the possibility of a new career direction, perhaps not within the university system.

That Jill's discouragement partly stemmed from having read my work caused my own discouragement. I had been sure that my research would offer empowerment and that it would yield only "positive" results. But Jill's comment has led to a greater understanding of how researcher and participants work together to construct coherence, together selecting and shaping our meanings from texts and analyses. Jill's interactive position altered in the reading of the chapters: she had previously been the expert witness, and I, her audience. But in the act of digesting the other women's stories, Jill became a recipient of their points of view and of my analysis of
them, which led to an alteration in her perceptions about her own positionality in the university. The reciprocity that has taken place is clearly chain-reactive and circular: the constellation of "meanings" and joint interpretive constructions have resulted in shared information and shared realities that are not always freeing or exhilarating, at least not instantly. But shared realities, rooted locally in individuals' discursive detours from existing social "texts," radiate outward and ultimately make themselves known, in some dimension, to larger structures and larger groups.

Ruth often uses non-linear, non-story frameworks; her narratives are heavily evaluated and energetically performed. The text that follows is no exception.

* * *

1  RUTH: When you get to the level of education that WE have, your ability to criticize is HONED to a sharp edge. And if you're THAT CRITICAL, and I AM very critical, you have to, you have to do somethin', you have to construct it another way or else you'll take that criticism, which is such a fine TOOL that you have, and you'll use it. Cause you, a, a clerical person, as a Civil Service person, you do NOT have ANY permission to criticize ANYTHING. YOU know [LAUGHS], if you go, "this process does NOT work right," "this process is a waste of paper and energy and funds and try it this other way," they—somebody comes along with a hammer and smacks you in the back of the head! [SHORT LAUGH] You know, [ASSUMES BLACK ENGLISH DIALECT] "It's not your BIDness! We've ALWAYS done it this way!" [SOFTLY, MEEKLY] "OK. [LAUGHS] Just lettin' you know what I thought!" [LAUGHS LOUDLY]

2  So ANYWAY, so all that's happening over here while this WORK life of mine is supporting my daily habits like eating and sleeping and having a place to live and that sort of thing. And uh, it's --[SLOWLY] DIFFERENT. That world and THIS world are entirely

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different. And I PREFER, I prefer the clerical world in terms of people's TEMPERAMENT toward each other. Cause the academics can be CUT-throat, stab-you-in-the-back, lie-to-your-face, but in the sweetest possible demeanor. Then there's THIS place: if people don't like you, they make it real clear that they don't like you, and if they DO like you, they treat you right. But nobody--nobody goes out of their way for anybody. It's a, it's a nice [PAUSE] homeostasis in the, in the WORK culture. And as long as you stay within your PERSONA, just kind of, day-after-day, it's FINE.

3 You know, if you come in and you're different than you were the day before, then [TERSE] all hell breaks loose! [LAUGHTER] As long as you are where you were YESTERDAY, you're all right. [LAUGHS] And THAT's, it's not hard to do that. I LIKE it!

* * *

In the last chapter, Ruth pointed out that her creativity is apt to be stolen in the workplace. In the text above, Ruth says that if she volunteers a suggestion, she may be hit on the back of her head. The first comment points to the value of her ideas, and the latter, either to the uselessness of her ideas or, more likely, to the threat that a bright underling poses to a supervisor who is constructed to be narrow and unimaginative. Does the fact that Ruth divulges two such different reactions to her ideas negate the "truth," the validity, of her texts? It seems possible that cooptation of ideas and castigation for ideas could both occur in the workplace, but independently, depending on circumstances. I have no reason to doubt that Ruth has experienced, in some form, what she describes. But at the same time, her representations of reality are just that: representations. She is not a "neutral conduit of objectively real information" (Tannen 1989:108); rather, her narratives concomitantly demonstrate her worthiness and expose inequities in the system. Quoting Tannen once more,
much of what appears in discourse as dialogue, or "reported speech," was never uttered by anyone else in any form . . . the words have ceased to be those of the speaker to whom they are attributed, having been appropriated by the speaker who is repeating them . . . uttering dialogue in conversation is as much a creative act as is the creation of dialogue in fiction and drama. (1989:101)

Thus, I believe that Ruth’s report that "somebody comes along with a hammer and smacks you in the back of the head!" is an amalgamation of more than one negative workplace interaction, condensed and quite obviously exaggerated for effect.

Back in her "material realities" text, to prevent her ideas and creativity from being burglarized, Ruth evolves a new consciousness: she vigilantly protects her creativity and personality, and gives the university only her work for seven dollars an hour; in this chapter, Ruth projects a less forceful self, yet the depiction of her supervisor hitting her on the back of the head for volunteering a suggestion likewise results in self-regulation, and ultimately self-protection. Ruth has learned that invisibility and silence can protect her, at least in the short run. Hence, Ruth’s complex narrative is ultimately about concealing one’s true identity in order to persevere in the workplace. When she indicates in her first paragraph that "you have to do somethin’, you have to construct [your critical viewpoint] another way," Ruth implies that, while working at her Civil Service job, she consciously and consistently masks her true identity of scholar and critic. Her impulse is to point out how processes are not working or how they might work better, but she has found that Civil Service workers are not rewarded for volunteering such insights.
Ruth uses standard English when she depicts her own words, showing that she is both respectful and intelligent when she suggests changes in the workplace. But her cerebral self is repudiated (presumably by a supervisor): "It's not your BIDness!" Ruth then projects her own persona as meek and apologetic. In analyzing her previous texts, I have argued that when she uses a white representation of Black English to portray her own voice, Ruth does so to amplify her vulnerability in irritating or threatening situations. But here, the Black English characterization seems to have a very different function: it shows that the supervisor lacks intelligence, insight, and empathy, and it underscores her brutal tendencies. But the text also seems to depict the proximity in status between Ruth and her supervisor: both are essentially low-level employees, and the supervisor, who ranks only one level above Ruth, is threatened by the cleverness of a subordinate. The ironic, Black English representation of authority corrodes it and exposes its underlying weakness just as Ruth exposes her own assailability when she uses this technique to represent her own voice.

Ruth establishes her positionality with the codeswitching that occurs in her dramatization, and her evaluation, of course, is internal to the dialogue: she does not have to step outside her little tableau to convey her assessment of the interaction. The intertext is clearly manifest, the voice and persona Ruth assumes when she introduces this dialogue altering the "original speaker’s" "meaning." So while Ruth, as the recipient of her superior’s dialogue in the workplace, is complicit in maintaining her identity as subordinate, she emphatically resists interpellation with her oppositional
discourse in the interview with me. Ruth may have been literally silenced when the interaction(s) occurred, but she regains her voice in the interview and projects a highly self-reflexive assessment of class-based inequity with her performance of the fictive workplace altercation.

Ariel complained about hypocritical relations in the job-hunting workshop, and Ruth seems to call up memories of her failed dissertation defense when she talks about "cut-throat academics." But unlike faculty who deceive "in the sweetest possible demeanor," Ruth insists that Civil Service workers will let you know if they don't like you, and they'll treat you right if they do. Ruth affirms that there are no unpleasant surprises, that a functional attitude among staff members prevails as long as they consistently present their carefully circumscribed, personal "contracts" with each other. (When, in paragraph two, Ruth informs me that she trades her labor for food and shelter--"daily habits," she calls them--it occurs that another of Ruth's "habits" is her need for a predictable environment, the rules of which are within her power to keep. It would not be a surprise if Ruth's need for stability stems from unpredictable, angst-producing events that have occurred in her past.)

We see that for Ruth, as for Jill, coming to accept a particular work environment has to do with a particular quality of interaction there. Yet in direct contrast to Jill, Ruth does not experience—and in fact depicts herself eschewing—personal interactions and "endearing" relationships with faculty members. When Ruth says they "treat you right" when you consistently "stay within your PERSONA," she suggests restriction and isolation, but Ruth glibly turns this negative state into a
positive one by stressing that it is the lack of "hypocrisy" in the Civil Service culture that she appreciates. Yet the absence of "hypocrisy" results in the absence of altruism ("nobody goes out of their way for anybody"). In highlighting the "positive" aspects of a negative situation, Ruth impresses on me just how negative that negative state is.

Ruth's comment about "staying in your persona" is similarly negative, implying that she must project a particular face for a particular situation. When she says near the end of the text that "it's not hard" to stay in her work persona, Ruth could mean that she has no choice but to stay in the only persona available to her, but I would be surprised if this were the case. In fact, Ruth is a complex and subversive individual, and I think her comment is meant to show that the interactional and behavioral details of "appropriate" work demeanor are easily mastered. Ruth implies that she is successful at role-playing, but it is only one role of many.

If, as Ruth says, Civil Service workers must project a particular self, she is also implying that the "ideal" Civil Service self is unwavering, static through time. If Civil Service workers develop their intellect, they might be apt to criticize. And if they criticize, they might receive a smack. Thus, Ruth closely monitors her workplace persona. But in disguising her true temperament, her true motivations, isn't Ruth herself guilty of hypocrisy? Richard Harvey Brown states: "A work must embody multiple masks as it seeks to unmask regimes of signification that structure experience" (1995:155); it can be argued that human beings are "works," artfully crafting the self as they might craft any other cultural production.³ Ruth's narrative reveals that, in consciously fashioning herself to conform to workplace expectations,
she is herself a social and cultural construct. It is necessary for Ruth to camouflage her identity in order to fit in with the idea of Civil Service workers as faceless, voiceless, and opinionless. When she says, at the end of the text, that she "likes it," we realize that this is also an ironic comment. Who likes getting smacked in the back of the head? Who likes suppressing their talents and impulses? Ruth is highly ironic here. Yet, in simply acknowledging the existence of her own critical opinion in this narrative, she reminds me and herself of her own personal power, and once again claims for herself an oppositional identity: she is not one of the Civil Service employees, nor is she part of the academic cohort. Rather, there seem to be two distinct characters in Ruth’s narratives, "Ruth-the-worker" and "Ruth-the-self-author."

It might be useful to compare Ruth’s bifurcation of personality to a work of literature--Frederick Douglass’s autobiography is the example that comes to mind--to see how such a strategy might work in her narrative. In his Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Douglass creates himself as separate from the other slaves with his literacy, and his morality sets him apart from the slave masters. Likewise, Ruth defines herself in opposition to the "cutthroat academics" with her own morality, and she distinguishes herself from Civil Service staff with her critical intellect. Just as Frederick Douglass is two distinct personae, Douglass-the-slave and Douglass-the-writer, the latter gaining credibility from his ever-increasing articulateness, Ruth’s credibility is gained by her insightful analyses of her dichotomous position. Douglass’ exposé of the slave system is made more horrific when he shows that such a system defiles not only the slaves but concomitantly leads
to the coarsening and degradation of the masters. In a similar light, Ruth
metaphorically portrays the coarseness of the baseball bat-wielding superior, whose
supervisory role has presumably fostered her devolution. As Douglass' increasing
literacy juxtaposed with his continued enslavement makes that enslavement
unspeakable, Ruth's critical acumen renders her low-level Civil Service job
ludicrously beneath her. As Douglass-the-author places his pen, an icon of his
intellect, in the frost-bitten gashes of Douglass-the-slave's foot, creating a literary
symbol of pathos that cannot be forgotten, Ruth talks about her potential for critical
analysis as a "fine tool," emphasizing that she has something sharp and rare and
valuable. But it is risky for Ruth to use her "fine tool" which can dissect the
institution's shortcomings, just as it was dangerous for Douglass to reveal his literacy.

In drawing an analogy between Ruth and Frederick Douglass, I do not imply
that a Civil Service job and human bondage are equivalent. I only mean to show that
contestation of ideologies emerges in the deliberate and conscious use of words and
the relational thrust that is gained with metaphor and bifurcated characterizations,
among other involvement strategies. Such devices are universal, occurring in all
literary genres, in personal experience narratives, and in everyday speech (Deborah
Tannen, among other scholars, points out that conversation is studded with "features
that have been identified as quintessentially literary" [1984:154]). The force of
Ruth's utterances, her lexical choices, and the strong evaluation show the tension
between "Ruth-the-employee" and "Ruth-the-self-author." Despite her rather subdued
demeanor, Ruth is still fighting for her rights, but under the guise of indirection.
When I asked Ruth about her visions for the future, she was similarly ambivalent, unable or unwilling to comment on a specific plan of action for herself.

* * *

RUTH: It's interesting, because my family all assumed that as soon as I was done with schooling, I'd come home. Well, I'm done with schooling, why aren't I home? [SHORT LAUGH] What's goin' on here? So--I never--I never really thought of consequences, you know, like, OK, here I am, doin' this, what do I do next? Well, I don't know! I don't, I don't have, I never have been much for career planning. So, I guess there's some UP parts to that and some DOWN parts to that [LAUGHS]. I could stay.

* * *

Her family's assumptions aside, Ruth doesn't know what she'll do, or when she might do it. But when she says she's "never" been much for career planning, it is important to remember that Ruth has in fact completed all requirements for a Ph.D. except for an approved dissertation, a path that requires tenacity and goal-orientation. Ruth's admitted aim had been to teach at the university level, but since failing her dissertation defense, it seems she has abandoned the idea that she is the architect of her own future. Ruth is still recuperating, and I believe her Civil Service job is a self-imposed exile (and a highly ironic one, because she is now in occupational service to the institution in which her academic plans went awry). Unlike Jill, who has taken the prescribed, systematic approach to job mobility only to be thwarted by circumstances beyond her control, Ruth's unwillingness to commit to any future plan comes from her inability to envision herself moving through the university's hierarchy, the machinations and signifying processes of which are repulsive to her.
Ruth could stay and then again she could leave, but fifty-three year old Emily seems resolved to working in a Civil Service position until her retirement. Unlike Ruth's ironic perseverance in her job, Emily seems earnestly to enjoy, or at least appreciate, some aspects of university work life and the university community.

* * *

1 EMILY: I really like, I LOVE Ohio State. Um, I loved it when I went there. I love learning things. And I love to be part of something that is, helping people to blossom? Well, I've been downwardly mobile, but it's helping them to be upwardly mobile. I really like the work I do, I absolutely love, when I DO get to edit and type a paper, so. I love the work in [her current department], it's very interesting and it's very meaningful because of my incest background. Um, I can't imagine anywhere else that I'd want to work but Ohio State.

2 You can be fat and still work there. There are a lot of heavy-set women in the Civil Service who, I THINK are in the Civil Service because you can BE FAT and keep your job. Many jobs out in the private sector require you to have what they call a [DISDAINFULLY] Professional Appearance. And this is size sixteen or DOWN. You can be heavy and work at Ohio State. So, I feel there is more job security there for me.

3 The benefits are good although they're killing it slowly, they've taken some chiropractic, you know, the medical doctor has to send you to the chiropractor now, and they don't DO that, so they've killed chiropractic. But the benefits are still pretty good.

4 Um, I LOVE being part of research. My father was a design engineer, he designed refrigeration controls, and I love to be part of the research of BURGEONING THOUGHT! New ideas are exciting to me, and so I like to be a part of that. I like to be with the students, it, it makes me feel YOUNG to be with the students. I don't want to work anywhere else. I get so frustrated I want to leave. I think, "Winifred doesn't like me and I oughtta be lookin' at the paper on Sunday, try to find something," but then I don't.

* * *

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Emily "loves" working at the university--softly and fervently, she repeated the words "love" and "like" twelve times in this text. Yet each of her positive reasons for working at Ohio State is accompanied by a corresponding negative, and in every case, the negative point is an aspect of Emily's victim persona that emerges again and again. Some benefits that go with her job are environmental by-products of the university's "business." For instance, the research intensiveness of the institution and helping people to "blossom" are positive intangibles associated with her work. But Emily has been "downwardly" mobile, and her own career has withered on the vine. Likewise, Emily explains in paragraph one that she likes the work in her department, she is interested in the faculty's research (some of which seems relevant to her incest history), and she loves to get an occasional editing assignment. At the end of the text, Emily is adamant: "I don't want to work anywhere else." Yet this sentence is also followed by another distinctly negative remark, Emily sharing her perception that her supervisor dislikes her and that she should consequently be looking for a new job.

Another benefit, which Emily depicts as specific to the university environment and absent outside of it, is a laissez-faire attitude about weight. Emily sees herself as safely cloistered in her Civil Service position, where she believes heavy women experience a degree of job security and can expect less severe ostracism than they might find in the private sector. The flip-side of this "benefit" is obvious: even if expectations about conformity to a prescribed appearance are more strenuously imposed outside the university, Emily still perceives herself as a victim of "packaging" mores. She identifies the arbitrariness of what is an acceptable
appearance and what is not: if you are size sixteen or less, you pass the test, but above a size sixteen, you’re either downright unemployable or you risk losing the job you have, at least in the competitive private sector.

To establish a connection between herself and the university’s emphasis on research, Emily symbolically aligns herself with her father, whose sexual abuse has drastically marked her life: Emily proudly refers to his line of work and implies that, as did her father, she also loves to be a part of the research endeavor. The poignant and ironic parallel with her father shows that Emily can demarcate various aspects of his character—his abusive tendencies have apparently not diminished his intelligence nor tarnished his talent for engineering design in Emily’s mind. I wondered about Emily’s motivation for her positive words about her father, and she explained:

You know what kids in abusive families do: they say the family’s just fine, they pretend the family’s just fine. That is their strategy for getting through school and through life. I did it too. We pretended to be the perfect Arlington family. We went to church every Sunday. And I said we were just fine. We grasp at straws. My respect for my father’s design ability was, and still is, how I made dad just fine. He also took my splinters out very gently. Um, I suppose I’m also aligning myself with my stronger parent out of fear of weakness and vulnerability. When a helpless person is being abused with no hope for escape, she can align herself either with the abuser or victim position—there is no middle ground. And the victim often aligns herself with the abuser to be "on the winning team."

Emily shows the universal impulse to take pride in one’s family, to pull from the memory any positive trait, any tender moment, in an effort to neutralize other, less tender, realities. Having faced difficulties beyond her control, Emily has few stories to tell about her own workplace successes, yet in emphasizing her father’s talent, Emily reminds me and herself that she is heir to his strong cerebral self.
Nevertheless, we see that Emily's intellect and her emotions continue to do battle in this text; her inner saboteur and the dominant hierarchy collude against her, deflecting her hopes for human compassion and a university editing job. When Emily spoke about her views about the future, an even more pronounced negativity and sense of hopelessness emerged:

* * *

1 EMILY: [QUIETLY] Most of the wind has been taken out of my sails during the past five years, at Ohio State. I no longer really think I will find a job where I can do fifty percent editing, and where people will respect me and treat me like a human being, treat me like I matter, like I have a right to have feelings and thoughts, and that I'm a PERSON. So what I'm gonna try to do is stay where I am and CLING to my Secretary 1 job. Um, I have nine years until I'm sixty-two and can retire, I think, although I may financially need to work PAST sixty-two. I'm going to try to be quiet, I'm going to try not to make waves. Uh, I'm gonna, gonna try to SOMEHOW get a little bit of editing to come my way, but I'm not gonna be pushy, I-I'm just gonna try to cling to my little job until I retire. Because I've really given up hope for finding something better.

2 When my medical job was being abolished, I thought, "Maybe now I will get my editing job." I had to go and talk to a man at Human Resources. I thought, "HE will know where the departments are, all over the university, where they need editors."

3 Well, NO. HE wanted to get me into a SECRETARIAL job. HIS obligation was to place me as a Secretary 2. And then I said, "Well MAYBE they might have editing in a Secretary 1 job." So he was like [GREEDILY], "OH, she's willing for a Secretary 1, FINE." So he had me prepare a résumé that emphasized my SECRETARIAL work for the past six or seven years.

4 So, BEGRUDGINGLY, with heavy HEART, I revised the résumé that emphasized editorial work and prepared this [SARCASTIC, DRAMATIC] "SPECIAL SECRETARIAL résumé," and BY GOD it said how I did MAIL MERGE, how I scheduled meetings, how I kept calendars. And I went around the university. And um, it just broke my HEART. It's very hard, you know.
Now I WAS going around singing the marching song from *Les Miz* this morning, so I suppose there IS a flame burning in me a little bit that DOES hope for something better. I would LIKE it to come along in my department, but, there’s also, a lot of my spirit has been killed, and I am just sort of trying to hang on where I am.

* * *

In her first paragraph, Emily evokes the sense that she is unknown, unacknowledged, and invisible: she is not treated "like a human being," "like I matter, like I have a right to have feelings and thoughts, and that I’m a PERSON." This generalized but strongly intoned anonymity becomes disconcertingly palpable with the specific information in the middle paragraphs of the text. Here, Emily concretely shows how the institution can erase identity. Facing job abolishment, she logically prevails upon a Human Resources staff member to help her secure the editing job that has long eluded her. But despite her plans and requests, this representative of the university blithely yet commandingly guides Emily back into the secretarial niche she had previously occupied. Emily is a *summa cum laude* graduate of The Ohio State University and she has held an Editorial Assistant position at Ohio State and two editing positions in California. Yet the Human Resources man ignored her training, experience, and aspirations, and the university did not reward its own stellar "product" with a job that matched Emily’s inclinations and abilities.

Emily exposes the Human Resources employee’s refusal to look beyond her secretarial experience to help her to find the editing job she wants: she does not use so-called "reported" dialogue here, but rather supplies a paraphrase of the man’s adamant, definitive discourse, stressing the pronoun "he" and the possessive "his" to
show that the needs and expectations of the institution came first: "Well, NO. HE wanted to get me into a SECRETARIAL job. HIS obligation was to place me as a Secretary 2." By contrast, Emily portrays herself as silent and malleable: "So he had me prepare a résumé that emphasized my SECRETARIAL work for the past six or seven years." Emily goes on to relive the effects of her blunder of innocently suggesting that she might consider a Secretary 1 job if it included editing: her willingness to accept a "downgrade" as well as a "lateral" position would make it easier for the Human Resources man to place Emily, and her openness to a Secretary 1 job dashes all hope for an editing position. So Emily must discard her "editing" résumé for a "SPECIAL SECRETARIAL résumé" which emphasizes the tasks she dislikes the most: "and BY GOD it said how I did MAIL MERGE, how I scheduled meetings, how I kept calendars."

Emily’s voice was thick with sarcasm as she summarized the effects of being simultaneously brushed off and recycled to suit the purposes of the system; this narrative affirms that personal assumptions and values do not necessarily coincide with the "values" of the institution (Jay Mechling remarks: "The university has a ‘shared’ public culture. What is ‘shared’ is a public set of symbols, procedures, and meanings: there need be no assumption of shared values" [1993:341]). Emily’s narrative also explicitly defines how the class-based hierarchy not only reveals but actively reinforces itself. As Suzanne Gordon notes:

The executive in an auto plant does not, typically, reach down into the ranks of factory workers for managerial candidates. Physicians in hospitals do not often "mentor" lab techs. And, in spite of some secretarial workers’ advanced educational qualifications and "close"
working relationships with their bosses, they are no nearer the latter in status than the factory worker is to the factory owner. It is this difference in class rather than in gender that most frequently determines conduct. (1995:180-81) (emphasis mine)

Emily is highly audible and self-directed with her story-line clause: "I WAS going around singing the marching song from Les Miz this morning . . . ." For once, she is unfettered, expressing hope and spirited joy. The university may not recognize her, but Emily piquantly gives voice to her "feelings and thoughts"--the marching song and the "flame burning in me" are emblems of her sensory self, her desires and hopes. But then we return to the blank anonymity by which she characterizes her university worklife: "a lot of my spirit has been killed, and I am just sort of trying to hang on where I am." Emily seems to be acting out a tragic, deterministic role, and the autonomy and hope that crystallize in the "Les Miz" reference paradoxically heighten the thrust of the negative evaluations that surround it. The recurring boat metaphor lends additional aesthetic and semantic coherence to the text. Emily defines her desolation in physical terms: like a survivor of a shipwreck, she will "try to cling" to her "little job," and will attempt "to hang on." The passive clauses, "most of the wind has been taken out of my sails during the past five years" and "a lot of my spirit has been killed," show that a powerful force has acted on Emily, the depleted "wind" and "spirit" synonymous for her waning hopefulness. The metaphor of a self adrift is an apt one: Emily's hope is not for upward mobility but for nine more years of the status-quo. Yet in order to "hang on," Emily must deaden herself to all remnants of her identity: she must "be quiet," "try not to be pushy" and "try not to make waves," or else face the consequences.
Coping with Underemployment.

All regular Civil Service employees receive fringe benefits such as health and dental insurance, enrollment in the Public Employee Retirement System, paid holidays, and the accrual of paid vacation leave and sick leave. The participants describe several university benefits that seem to offset their sense of underemployment; in addition, some of the women’s decisions to stay in the university system can be partly attributed to their employee benefits. Hester and Carrie are counting on the university’s retirement plan and will continue in their university jobs until they can afford to retire. But although she has worked at Ohio State for a number of years, Meg does not feel compelled to stay indefinitely. Emily says she would like to retire at age sixty-two, and hopes she can "hang on" until then.

Carrie affirms that the university’s provision of health care is "perfect"; Emily deems this benefit "pretty good." Iz stresses that, without the University’s Child Care Program, she could not have completed her bachelor’s degree. And a benefit that has been of enormous value to many of the women in this study is the tuition waiver: as has been clear in their previous texts, Meg, Hester, Carrie, Iz, and Ariel have all taken advantage of the university’s employee fee waiver program to advance through graduate school.

Some of the women see great value in less tangible benefits that accompany their jobs. They point out that other Civil Service workers may not experience the workplace respect, attendance flexibility, and opportunities for self-development that they receive; these intangible benefits are often the result of long tenure in a
department, but they can also spring from the empathy and kindness of supervisors and co-workers. The participants who receive them do not take such perks for granted, and indeed, seem to appreciate them more than the publicized benefits. Meg says she's treated, performs, and functions like a faculty member (a statement that is both wishful and prophetic as she grooms herself for a specific faculty job). Carrie’s department’s faculty "give us the freedom to be individuals" and "allow us our idiosyncrasies." Similarly, Iz has studied algebra, typed papers, and taken classes during the workday ("things you get fired for" in other departments). Although Ariel has experienced difficulties with her current department chairperson, she does not forget the support of the former chairperson. And Jill appreciates warm relations with female faculty and lack of sexist treatment by the male faculty members.

Ruth and Emily report less satisfactory working environments; the sense of stricture and censure is clear in both, as is suggested by Ruth’s ambiguous comment, "they treat you right if you stay within your persona." The participants’ assessments of their positions in their respective departments vary widely; while the university’s complex structure of differentiation and hierarchy continues to affect all of its players, it appears that some low-level employees experience more autonomy, more tolerance for their individuality, and a more measurable spirit of communitas, than others.

The women also cope with underemployment by involving themselves in activities outside the workplace. Meg cooks, sews, makes jewelry, and most important, is involved with her academic goals. Carrie implies that she also has areas of interest apart from her university job, but she is unspecific. "When there’s some
sense of dissatisfaction," she begins, and then drifts off. But her earlier remark, "you have to try to maximize other areas," seems to be the rejoinder to what follows.

Hester, Iz, and Ariel are academically driven, their engagement in academia permitting them to build identities apart from their Civil Service work lives. While Jill appreciates the respectful and professional relations in her office, her own academic training and her goal for a professional job at the university are never far from the surface.

Creating Identities and Creating the Future.

A catalyst for social change and the leitmotif of this study is the evolution of social identities. Identities are constantly in flux: Alan Dundes talks about the wrongheadedness of previous scholarship in which identity is seen as "static and absolute instead of . . . flexible and relative" (1989:12). Identities are maintained and reinforced when speakers align themselves with existing ideologies, but can be revamped with creative language use and the adoption of alternative discourses, actions which in turn modify dominant social discourses and the ideologies that belong to them (Brown 1987; Fairclough 1989, 1992).

Transcending dominant ideologies is an important means of altering identity, and in this study the women separate themselves from Civil Service and/or institutional ideologies with their narrative actions. Brown stresses that social and economic forces may impinge on aesthetic production (1987:145), but the texts here show that such conditions can also engender it. The participants’ aesthetic
productions have been politically motivated, and their political stances, in turn, are aesthetically defined. Meg’s "military" metaphor allows her to dismiss the "lifer vs. career person" dichotomy that her co-worker espouses; Emily’s "boat" metaphor and Ruth’s "tool" metaphor are likewise figurative relationships of difference that suggest factual relations of difference. Hester deliberately sets herself apart from the academics, "who glorify the mind of man so much that they lose their perspectives." In almost all of these texts, we see a rejection of paradigms, cultural norms, and vocabularies that serve the ontological and ideological interests of elites.

But the women frequently indicate their need to share their sense of vulnerability, their rhetorical strategies highlighting negative and powerless subjectivities. In such cases, the speaker is preoccupied with exposing systems of control that govern her rather than the development of a particularly positive story self. In this chapter, Emily, Ruth, and Ariel’s storyworld personae seem particularly submissive to the institution—a hostile and unwilling submission, but submission, nevertheless. Now, such has not been the case in most of Ruth’s other texts, in which she has been a forceful agent, a genial trickster, an often self-aggrandizing overturner of the dominant ideology. Thus, in their complexities and fluctuations, individuals and groups alike defy the neat categorization that we academics would impose upon them.

Emily, Ruth, and Ariel need to portray their somewhat passive positions to convey their vulnerability and anguish. But even if they don’t want to "make waves" or abandon their "expected" workplace personae, they still take the first step to
resistance by identifying the particulars of their perceived oppression and by offering subversive critiques of the various social discourses that operate within the hierarchy. Ariel is enervated, but she is likewise subversive in her critique of the system. These women are highly visible as narrators even though they are inhibited by the social discourses of the institution. As Fairclough (1992) insists, discourse is constitutive of and yet constrained by society.

As they actively separate themselves from some of the overarching ideologies of the institution, the women are simultaneously creating a bond with me, the interviewer. The construction of dialogue within narratives (an example of intertextuality) is only one rhetorical device of many that fosters the emergence of the "self." Livia Polanyi (1989) argues that the evaluative segments of a narrative allow speakers to adequately paraphrase their points, and that the use of dialogue is highly evaluative. I would go further and suggest that created dialogues within narratives are often the most densely evaluated portions of a text. Deborah Tannen stresses that the use of dialogue within narrative is "an active, creative, transforming move which expresses the relationship not between the quoted party and the topic of talk but rather the quoting party and the audience to whom the quotation is delivered" (1989:109), and we see the women actively developing rapport with me during the interview session, conveying highly aesthetic and personal information.

For instance, the change of code in Ruth's "It's not your BIDness!" reveals for me the extent of her workplace subordination; Meg denigrates her co-worker whose opinion is that Meg shouldn't "Give UP what I've GOT here!"; Iz says to herself:
"This is simplistic BULLSHIT, I can do this!" and thereby informs me about her academic ability and drive. As a way to demonstrate her intrinsic value as a scholar and human being, Ariel portrays her former chairperson aligning himself with her, championing her: "If any of those people ever talk down to you, you come to me." And, to show the institution's bias (and to explain why she hasn't yet secured a professional job), Jill projects the voice of a co-worker who has inside information about hiring: "They're NOT going to be looking at Caucasian females. They are NOT." The variety of rhetorical devices marking these few instances of intra-narrative dialogue include code switching and exaggeration; further, the speakers omit information about immediate context within which the dialogue has supposedly occurred. These are clearly not verbatim truths but dramatic paraphrases which, as Tannen has noted, reveal and reinforce the speakers' positionalities and underscore their larger points. And the women do all of this for my comprehension.

Discussion about identity formation leads us to a discussion about the future, for in their texts the women talk about the present in ways that permit them to logically link it to the future. Jay Mechling remarks: "The raw material of folkloristic analysis, while drawing upon the past in complex and at times problematic ways, is found in those ephemeral moments of its enactment and performance, moments in which participants have as much of an eye to the future as to the past" (1993:296). The sort of "ephemeral moment" Mechling describes, moments that bridge past, present, and future, is apparent in many of the texts in this chapter. Hester shows herself at the moment of epiphany, a newfound realization that a low-
pressure job would allow her to complete her Ph.D. program: "I see it almost as some sort of UNIVERSAL COSMIC GIFT." Iz also performs an epiphany-like state of realization: "And I thought, ‘Well, you know what I’m going to do? I’m going to get my master’s.’ That was for the ego." Through time, Meg has systematically tailored herself for a particular faculty job, but in the interview situation she performs her ideal future scenario in the deep voice of one empowered to hire her: "‘Well, we have a job opening, we need to get somebody like HER!’"

Clearly, in order to understand the women’s future goals or expectations, an understanding of their past and present, and their positions within those temporal spheres, is necessary. As Northrop Frye suggests:

We do not know the future at all except by analogy with the past, and the future that will happen will not be much like anyone’s vision of it. This gives our social ideals the intensity and purity of something that does not yet exist, yet they are born out of analogy with what has come to us through tradition. So all visions of a social future must be rooted in the past, socially conditioned and historically placed. (1980:15)

The identities created through narrative (and educational attainments, among other things) are very often connected to the roles the women have staked out for themselves in the future. This is not always the case: Emily and Ruth do not discuss positive plans or hopes for the future. Yet we still have an emphasis on personal worth, which is often defined vis à vis intellectual ability.

Bellah et al. are interested in the value systems embraced by American workers, and have demonstrated that work and identity are intimately connected. The difference between a "job" and a "career" is an ideological one, rooted in personal
achievement: "in the sense of a 'job,' work is a way of making money and making a living . . . . In the sense of a 'career,' work traces one's progress through life by achievement and advancement in an occupation" (1985:66). Charlotte Linde speaks about the symbolic import of one's job: "a person's occupation is a piece of information that is expected to be publicly available and that serves as a basis from which many inferences may be drawn about social class, position in the world, education, and so on" (1993:53). In the absence of a "career," however, ambitious people emphasize other ways they have progressed. Now, as stated, it is atypical for individuals who have earned master's degrees— or who are working on Ph.D.'s— to hold Civil Service jobs, but in completing graduate programs, the women's academic pedigrees have set them apart from co-workers (and, sometimes, supervisors) who may not have attained their level of education. Nevertheless, given its task-oriented and hierarchical environment, the workplace is an unlikely forum for low-level workers to discuss their academic motivations or achievements, even when that workplace is a university. This is particularly true when one's co-workers are not similarly motivated by or connected to the life of the mind. Talking about one's personal achievements is possible only in prescribed circumstances (you can tell your mother about your successes any time, but in the absence of a highly specific reason for doing so, it's not wise to blow your own horn in less familiar situations).

Thus, when they refer to their intellectual acumen in these texts, as they often do, the women show their eagerness to talk about their accomplishments. They have not only earned advanced degrees but they have all done so later in life than is the
norm, and almost all have earned their degrees while holding fulltime jobs. When they talk about their academic accomplishments, they are showing their tenacity, justifying their decision to occupy Civil Service jobs, and overturning commonplace misconceptions about the holders of such jobs. And, in many cases, they are portraying their own agency in effecting future roles that have a distinct connection to their intellectual development. If there is truth in the remark, "however we define work, it is very close to our sense of self. What we ‘do’ often translates to what we ‘are’" (Bellah et al. 1985:66), it is easy to understand why the participants choose to focus, not on their "non-career" jobs, but rather on their oppositional identities within those jobs, and their academic goals and other personal commitments that stand apart from Civil Service work life.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. Deborah Tannen (1989) argues at length for the seductive force of two conversational strategies, which she labels "sound patterns" and "sense patterns." The former rely on the musical and rhythmic power of lexical and tonal strategies which, in combination, affect and involve the listener. By contrast, "sense patterns" are rooted in the joint sense-making that speaker and listener construct during interactions. Tannen focuses on linguistic discourse, but both "sound patterns" and "sense patterns" mark all conversational and literary genres.

2. Ariel’s testimony about the former chairperson shows that workers’ positionalities and opportunities can change with changes in departmental administration. For while she does not forget the support of the previous chairperson, Ariel is now coping with the evident disapproval of the current chairperson. I have had similar experiences, as the first chapter of this study indicates.

3. In pondering the human capacity for adjustment to social and cultural mechanisms of power, Clifford Geertz (The Interpretation of Cultures [1973]) sees people as "cultural artifacts."


5. When considering Ruth’s ambiguity alongside her inclinations for tricksterism, it should be remembered that the trickster is himself the archetypal embodiment of contradiction and ambiguity. "The malicious practical joker is deceived by just about anybody; the inventor of ingenious strategems is presented as an idiot; the master of magical power is sometimes powerless to extricate himself from quandaries. It is as though each virtue or defect attributed to him automatically calls into being its opposite." (Makarius 1993:67-68)
CHAPTER 8

CODA

We must be the change we want to see in the world.
Gandhi

In theory, one person can change a lightbulb;
in practice, it may take more than one to carry out the task.
Alan Dundes

Some Implications

The late twentieth century impulse toward self-interested research makes itself clear in this work, frankly narcissistic as it is in theme, scope, and approaches. Back in Chapter 2, I suggested that I would be learning about myself as I studied the participants, and observing, collecting, sharing, and comparing viewpoints about Civil Service working life have been resonant exercises for this "insider-researcher." My own perceptions often seemed to ring out in the women's words, but with new freshness and immediacy. Exploring realities that are different yet the same, incommensurate yet comparable, has validated my views about the university hierarchy. The meanings and possibilities that have emerged from this joint sense-making endeavor have given me new ways to see and understand, new ways to cope (at least for the time being), and new intellectual connections from which to draw. Thus, the processes and final product have satisfied several of my personal requirements. But the study has broader implications.
First, it confirms the validity of some recent theoretical trends in folklore scholarship, including the need to expand the definition of "folk group." So-called "marginal" groups have traditionally been central to folkloristics; as stated earlier, pre-1970s folklore in this country was largely devoted to the collection, categorization, and analysis of the texts of marginal populations such as Native Americans, African Americans, and male members of occupations that embodied the "American spirit" of individuality and adventure in natural settings (cowboys, lumberjacks, and fishermen are representative). Anxiety that the expressive forms belonging to these groups were in danger of dying out was a rationale for such a narrow delineation of "the folk." But "marginality" and "the folk" were convenient theoretical constructs applied by (elite) others. Although most of the women in this project see themselves as marginal in certain ways, and while all of them describe many incidences of negative marginalization that occur in the workplace, I hope this study has shown that Civil Service workers no more make up an essential, homogenous culture than do faculty members or any other group. As Amy Shuman (1993a) argues, traditions aren't "authentic," cultures aren't homogenous, "local" cannot be equated with functional systems, and cultural boundaries are never discernible. All cultural groups are marked by identification processes and prone to cultural restraints that are specifically imposed on them, but as Margaret Mills (1993) suggests, we must recognize the reality of multiple and simultaneous memberships. So while "marginality" and "folk group" are legitimate when emically defined (as in this study), they are bogus categories when applied by outsiders.
Despite women's marginal status in American culture, folklore has until recently largely passed over the vernacular creativity of women, and in particular, women in business settings. Hence, in collecting and interpreting personal experience narratives, this study also takes a detour from earlier folklore scholarship which explored neater and ostensibly more "stable" and "traditional" forms such as tales, ballads, riddles, and folk beliefs. The elitist privileging of the Western literary canon has fostered an unjust trivialization of all folk forms (and by extension, trivialization of the discipline of folklore itself), and has promoted a biased opinion of "oral literature as simple, formless, lacking in artistic quality and complexity" (Bauman 1986:7); but personal experience narratives, like riddles, jokes, and legends, artfully convey cultural meanings that relate to occupation, gender, and class. In its small way, then, this work stands to remedy folklorists' chronic neglect of a gender and occupational group whose words do speak poetry, poetry that emphasizes political, cultural, and material realities.

The participants' use of metaphor, repetition, dramatization of dialogue, metanarration, and other strategies functions within their personal experience narratives to fine-tune meanings; the act of describing memorable events or situations allows a teller to impose order on and make sense of experiences that often resist comprehension. For all the women, "storytelling is a ritual process—healing, correcting, connecting, resolving" (Mullen 1992:271). When we interpret the past, we selectively and imaginatively recount it from the vantage point of the present; "self-understanding is accordingly a matter of the emplotment of one's experiences"
Organizing experience in narrative form may also be a survival technique: as Roger Abrahams has noted, expressive folklore offers reassurance and group stability "by giving a 'name' to the threatening forces both within and without the group, and by presenting these names in a contrived, artificial form and context, giving the impression that the forces are being controlled" (1971:18). Paradoxically, identification and description of strife sometimes offers protection from that strife; trauma and chaos are encapsulated in a narrative's content, but the narrator can deflect chaos by her discursive and performative manipulations of it and by self-reflexively appropriating the past, placing herself as a character within it to serve a particular point or points.

Discovering how subjectivities are negotiated and altered with dramatic, aesthetic discourse is another relatively new thrust within folklore studies. A thumbnail sketch of the evolution of twentieth century folklore scholarship would certainly emphasize a growing comprehension of the importance, indeed, the inseparability, of context upon folk forms. And a significant part of the institutional context, the situational context, and the contexts of meaning within discourse is the perception of self as separate from others. William Hugh Jansen (1959) did not explicitly consider the fundamentally ideological basis that motivates insider/outsider "lore," nor its capacity to inspire social change, and Richard Bauman left out class, gender, and sexual orientation (along with other social issues) in his 1971 article "Differential Identity and the Social Base of Folklore," yet the exoteric/esoteric dichotomy that Jansen documented and upon which Bauman expanded is lavishly clear.
in all of the women's narratives in this project. We have seen from the standpoint of performance and discursive involvement strategies that identity is often achieved by projecting personal worth alongside critiques of the moral defects of the institution and the "others" who govern it. "It is this oppositional principle which constitutes one of the common threads in both personal and group identity. As there can be no self or concept of self without other, there can be no sense of group without some other group" (Dundes 1989:7). By identifying and creating themselves as subjects in their discourse, the women are both setting themselves apart from dominant groups within the university hierarchy and negotiating their very membership in the Civil Service group, as well.

The women often patterned their narratives after standard literary conventions, a condition that fostered my recognition and approval during the interviews. As Kenneth Burke blithely remarks: "form is the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite" (1931:31); similarly, Abrahams points out: "The intent of aesthetic organization is to produce pleasure through recognition of form and focused vitality" (1971:19). The texts have frequently exhibited such structural features as a preface or introduction, a sequence of events, a cast of characters, a plot, a point, and a coming to terms (Kaufman 1986:196). Furthermore, although I have rearranged some of the narratives as they appeared in the typed transcriptions to fit the study's chapter layout, the narratives in their uncorrupted entirety also generally exhibit a thematic sequencing that shows the participants' strong impulses for a beginning, middle, and ending trajectory.
Regardless of whether I prompted them with core questions or presided over open-ended interviews for sharing perceptions of Civil Service work life, the women all offered "introductions" by stating their reasons for accepting Civil Service jobs (the "entry tales") and talking about their marginality; complicating actions came along in their "status," "horror," and "material realities" stories; and a reckoning, a coming to terms, is clear in the "resolution" and "future" narratives.

Hence, the texts and their arrangement have together formed a linear study (a result of the formal requirements of the project and a reflection of the literary conventions of the individual texts). But in topic, method, and scope, this work is squarely situated in the cultural-political folklore paradigm and the process-oriented discourse analysis framework that emerged in the 1990s. The insider-researcher's commitment to advocacy and the dialogic, polyvocal, multi-authoritied dimension of the work are hallmarks of a postmodern production, as is its multidisciplinarity. Folklore has undoubtedly been "chronically insecure about its academic identity, habitually borrowing pieces of theory from other disciplines in the absence of its own unified body of theory" (Baron 1993:227), but folklore's compatibility with other disciplines has been of great value in my attempt to uncover "not only the different experiences of . . . women, but the processes creating these differences" (Gorelick 1991:473).

At the outset, the topic seemed to cry out for the research and interpretational methods I employed; the value of theoretical collaboration has struck me again and again as I proceeded through the fieldwork and writing. The conceptual framework
of critical, reciprocal ethnography has allowed me to present and interpret the
women's texts while pinpointing some of the "social practices" that both generate and
embed their linguistic discourse. The theoretical overlap between folklore and
discourse analysis has also proven to be fruitful for my research focus. Folkloristics
and discourse analysis both emphasize the importance of scrutinizing context; both
are concerned with identity construction through interactive language; and both are
currently focusing on the ideological dimensions of discourse and its culturally
constitutive power. Both are concerned with intertextuality, both see the
interrelatedness of form to function and function to form. Thus, in using discourse
analysis and folklore theories, especially those which emphasize how the political is
often framed within personal, highly aesthetic forms, I have attempted to define the
dynamics of text production and consumption, both in the interview setting and back
in the storyworld. In observing and interpreting, I have found that meanings are both
context-dependent and interactionally achieved. I have also discovered that artful,
complex narratives become larger and more complex when considered alongside the
speakers' cultural situations and my own experience as a member of the culture.

Finally, the combined theoretical approach has resulted in a mixed-genre
work, each genre validating the others. I have juxtaposed academic prose with the
participants' texts and have included an occasional revelation of my own experience at
the university. I have also combined the traditional ethnographic concern for in-
depth, "realistic" cultural observation and description with an "impressionistic" thrust
(Van Maanen 1989), bringing to light my experiences and perceptions as an
ethnographer. Hence, the multiple levels of meaning and representation in this study have blurred the boundaries between "oral and written texts, rhetorical moves, ethical dilemmas, and authority/authorship. It doesn’t just 'talk about' these issues, it is these issues" (Richardson 1994:522).6

Identity Creation and Language

Concerned with the effects of context on expressive forms for several decades, scholars have more recently begun to ask how cultural expressions might not, in turn, affect and change culture itself. As already mentioned, folklorist Richard Bauman indirectly suggested some years ago that language creates culture with his observation that performers' power resides in the "potential they represent for subverting and transforming the status quo" (1977:45). In this work I have aimed to show in empirical terms how discourse is both a product of context and a force upon context; I have explored processes of marginalization and how the constructs of "Civil Service employee" and "faculty" and "supervisor" are either overturned or maintained through narrating. The eight women who participated in this study create (and/or maintain) their identities with discourse, distinguishing themselves as separate from some, and aligning themselves with other, "specific domains and institutions" (Fairclough 1992:137). For instance, the abundant metaphors ("Fluff Chicks and Disco-Queens," "Mr. Leather Elbows," "Queen-Bee," etc.) are obviously not part of the institutional discourse but rather "belong to a lifeworld (conversational) discourse" (Fairclough 1992:192). When the women refashion their university experiences in

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creative ways for my understanding, we see their ideological alignment with social practices that are different from those espoused by the university. The same is true of the women’s laughter, profanity, and dramatic performances: these generally function to demonstrate shared beliefs and perceptions of personal status and value apart from the "status" and "value" the university confers.

Identity creation comprises a fundamental kind of social change, spurring subsequent reactions and adjustments. An important means for establishing identity is through intertextuality. Babcock stresses that "quotation from and allusion to other writers constitutes a dialogue with other literary texts and creates within the narrative an intertextual space which comments both backward to the original text and forward to the present narrative scene" (1977:98). Intertextuality has a similar function in conversation and especially narration—by simultaneously pointing backward to an earlier text and forward to the current one, we receive the speaker’s views about the scenario described in the narrative as well as information about the speaker. In attempting to pinpoint the foundations of discursive creativity in this project, I have found that even presumably "new" discursive forms in novel contexts make use of existing texts.

Fairclough remarks that "intertextuality, and constantly changing intertextual relations in discourse, are central to an understanding of processes of subject constitution. This is so on a biographical time-scale, during the life of an individual, and for the constitution and reconstitution of social groups and communities" (1992:133). Throughout this study, intertextuality is often used to emphasize the
speaker's worth. There are many examples. For instance, Ariel portrays her advisor's complimenting her on her thesis to show his belief that Ariel is capable of pursuing a Ph.D. ("Now what could you POSSIBLY do for a dissertation, Ms. __ ?"). Ariel is simultaneously promoting her competence and demonstrating her alignment with her advisor in this intertext. But when she portrays the false optimism of the job hunting experts, who insist that future employers would "be very impressed" with her stint in the Civil Service, Ariel overturns this idea with her resounding "NO THEY WON'T!" With this tactic, Ariel is both exposing and rejecting a social discourse meant to manipulate and channel and placate people. In so doing, Ariel is creating herself in opposition to the dominant hierarchy. I suspect that Ariel did not share her irritation with the job hunting people, but in the interview with me she rejects workplace jargon as definitively as does the female character in the comic strip below:

![Comic strip](image)

*Figure 10: Exposure of the Ideological Basis for Workplace Jargon* (*Dilbert* by Scott Adams, *The Columbus Dispatch*, March 3, 1996)
Dilbert, the carefully indoctrinated company toadie, obediently maintains the system. Jennifer, an outsider, disrupts it. Jennifer's keen awareness jolts Dilbert into similarly keen, if painful, comprehension. That we "get" the joke shows that we all have experienced the controlling power of "strategic" language (to use Habermas' term). Institutionalized jargon clearly pigeonholes and manipulates us. But our comprehension of this dynamic is merely inchoate. Like Dilbert, we don't listen to the words. We all sing the institution's song but we don't often think about what it means or how it influences us. So when we laugh at the comic strip, we're laughing at ourselves. We also laugh because an individual's exposé of workplace propaganda is depicted as both simple and possible, and the results of that exposé are empowering, indeed. Mark Poster sees an undeniable interrelationship between discourse and action:

Language and action are interrelated aspects of experience. In fact, language may be considered a form of action and action is accomplished by linguistic expressions . . . . social experience is concurrently and inextricably linguistic and behavioral. (1989:127)

The comic strip (and I hope this study in its entirety) exposes and clarifies the symbiosis between words and actions: the chain-reactive, spiralling nature of social change begins with discourse. Jennifer's counter-hegemonic vocabulary demythologizes the "sacred" ideals of the institution and, in so doing, changes Dilbert's consciousness. Other altered consciousnesses and behaviors will follow.
Identity can be created in discourse, and it is also intertwined with career and influenced by hopes and possibilities for the future. As I have pointed out, the participants' advanced degrees are crucial aspects of their identity, and the women's intellectual selves are foundational parts of their identities. Several of the participants have chosen to remain at the university for the fee waiver and other benefits, but although some of them discuss in great detail their apparent inability to progress through the Civil Service ranks or to leave those ranks, others have not specifically addressed this issue. The fact that all of the women have experienced economic insecurity which their advanced degrees have evidently not ameliorated makes this dilemma even more striking. What, then, are some underlying reasons for remaining in jobs they dislike and for which, I strongly believe, they are overqualified?

One reason could be the nature of their academic preparation: advanced degrees in humanities and social sciences usually neither inspire nor prepare people for administrative positions which revolve around finances. And to progress to the top of the Civil Service category and beyond, one must assume growing responsibility in accounting and budget work, tasks that are often anathema to literary scholars and historians. In addition, earning advanced degrees later in life than is "usual" and while undertaking full-time employment can take its toll: even Meg and Hester, who are upbeat about their prospects for future professional jobs, speak to the stress and exhaustion of combining full-time employment with graduate programs. The lack of hope for professional jobs might also be partly rooted in Emily's and Carrie's explicit
views that older and/or overweight women have little opportunity for career advancement. Furthermore, although Meg is the only participant who hopes to eventually land a faculty job (in fact, she seems confident about the possibility), the sobering reality that new Ph.D.s are facing difficulties on the job market may add to the general sense of inertia and anxiety about future careers that I detected in the interviews.7

But perhaps the most significant factor leading to cynicism about upward mobility is the fear of being typecast as Civil Service employees and perpetually overlooked for professional positions. Carrie, Emily, and Ariel (and, in this chapter, Hester) speak about the stigma attached to Civil Service work and Civil Service workers, a stigma which has manifested itself in career development workshops, interactions with Human Resources employees, and unsuccessful job hunts. Experience has convinced them that "Civil Service Employee" on a résumé foils their chances for professional careers inside the university and outside it. DeVos and Suarez-Orozco suggest that "In a class society shifts in economic distribution or an increase in the power of a particular previously submerged group result with time in a social readjustment making for greater consistency in the economic, social, and political aspects of ascribed social position. In a caste society, however, such readjustment does not occur" (1990:157); whether and to what extent The Ohio State University and the private sector surrounding it embody features of "caste" or "class" structures are vastly complicated questions that must remain unanswered here: nevertheless, several of the women's narratives suggest that the university
incorporates and promotes both kinds of ideologies—"class" implying the existence of
group delineation but the possibility for members to move between and among
groups, and "caste" implying unchangeable, deterministic positionality.

While it may be true that "no amount of wealth or occupational or professional
prestige removes the outcaste stigma" (DeVos and Suarez-Orozco 1990:158), I also
think that strongly projected selves can undermine the stigma that certainly exists.
Meg's, Iz's, and Ruth's narratives show their expertise as boundary breachers—they
seem able to integrate work and playfulness, and often cultivate performance
behaviors that promote selves in control of the environment. As Michael Owen Jones
stresses, "circumstances can be altered through one's behavior, attitude, and influence
on others" (1988:242), and Iz, Meg, and Ruth are especially adept at such personal
transcendence. In order to establish the moral--and intellectual--value of the self
when that self is positioned within a material and symbolic cultural system that works
to constrain it, one needs to "construct things a new way," as Ruth would say. Social
change begins slowly, with a reconfigured imagination. From new ways of
envisioning come new hopes and changes.

Critical Ethnography and Advocacy

1. Speaking Theory.

I have come to realize the theoretical (and economic) advantages of
autochthonous research: one does not have to go to Finland, Montana, or the inner
city to collect rich data; my astute primary sources were right outside my office
door, sharing their abundant perceptions about the institution’s policies and practices, and their own positionality and problems within it, actively creating and reinforcing personal identities as they narrated, and consequently offering new ways of viewing social order. Margaret Mills’ (1993) argument that "low culture speaks theory" is applicable to the women’s narratives, whose voices have projected theories that are at once epistemological (inseparable from their criticism and rejection of the institution’s naturalized, objectively "true," unmarked power dynamics and standards of control) and practical (they are trying out their new roles as they speak their new theories).

This project has the potential to influence a variety of people, including other Civil Service workers as well as administrators. My purpose has been not only to describe and analyze a culture but to bring the participants’ meanings into the public sphere, inviting others into the debate. While the participants were ready and willing to share their beliefs and experiences with me, they withhold them from their supervisors, instead sometimes engaging in subtly subversive activities such as dress styles that go against the grain or ambiguous "trickster" behavior on the job. They may tell their workplace stories to partners or roommates or friends, but the supervisor or faculty administrator, while often tangentially aware of the subordinate’s subversiveness, is rarely if ever privy to the vivid metaphors, the dramatic performances, and the colors and music of dialogic reenactments that emerged during the interviews.

One important result of this indirect mode of operation is that members of the dominant group are denied an essential part of life—the opportunity to acquire self-understanding through knowing their impact.
By extension, it stands to reason that "a wise leader would be both interested in and responsive to the feelings expressed in stories, figurative language and other folklore, and the attempts to deal with problems through these expressive forms and communicative processes" (Christensen 1988:61). So making public the findings of this study may aid faculty, administrators, and supervisors by offering suggestions for changes in their management techniques and food for thought about policy issues. Bruner also attests to the importance of publicizing shared cultural meanings for the very culture represented in an ethnography: "Interpretation, however 'thick' it may become, must be publicly accessible or the culture falls into disarray and its members with it" (1990:13). Civil Service workers survive in the university only if they can demonstrate their knowledge of the protocols and behavior codes of the dominant culture, but understanding Civil Service workers' viewpoints is not necessary for the survival of supervisors or faculty members. Nevertheless, mutual understanding is to be encouraged. Unshared thoughts and ideas are like secret codes, like private conceits. The more freely and universally we communicate, the more dynamic culture will be.

2. Cohort Creation.

In years past, folk groups were considered to be static entities, but recent theorizing focuses on the emergent nature of the group, "in part defined by the artistic
performances through which its participants come to define themselves." (Brenneis 1993:297). An interviewer's interest and empathy can foster the creation of narratives and narrative heroes as well as folk groups, and "cohort creation" has been a by-product of this study. Bruner says that recalling the past helps us in memory reconstructions and also sets up a dialogic function between narrator and interlocutor, the latter exerting a "subtle but steady pressure" on the former (1990:59); I think relationships grew as a result of the effort, and sometimes discomfort, that accompanied the framing and performing of the narratives. When I speak of "cohort creation," I am in one sense alluding to very small cohorts—just me and the individual women (for, committed to preserving their anonymity, I have not divulged their names or brought the group together), yet our individual relationships have seemed to blossom via the dynamics of the interviews. However, insofar as all the women have read this project and have been witness to the other women's testimony, they have seen that their solitary voices are not so solitary, that they are part of a social body whose boundaries transcend their own uniqueness. The women who have actively reviewed the texts and interpretations have reported a feeling of kinship with the unknown women whose words appear in these pages. Thus, beginning with the introspection and intimacy of the interviews and continuing throughout the reviewing and critiquing process, cohort creation has created a widened consciousness, and has been an empowering forum for expressing what may previously have been inexpressible.
In expressing the inexpressible, we have found some small degree of communion and stability amid anonymity and flux. Marginal people "lack key supports for their goals and for their personal and group ways of reaching them" (Stebbins 1979:271); this project has engendered mutual support, and has convinced us that we share perceptions of workplace status and inequity as well as intellectual and emotional ties to the university. "When we construct texts collaboratively, self-consciously examining our relations with/for/ despite those who have been contained as Others, we move against, we enable resistance to, Othering" (Fine 1994:74). In setting out the women's words as they were spoken during the interviews, and in requesting and receiving some of their assessments about the cogency of my transcriptions and interpretations, the project's processes have been as democratic, and its meanings as multi-vocal, as I could have wished at the outset. I also hope the cohort creation dimension of this project announces itself in the finished document; I have been cognizant throughout this study that my explanations and interpretations often directly relate to my own life interests and experiences. I have tried to neither pathologize nor romanticize the texts, yet my own intranarrative responses occasionally intrude, and I have deliberately allowed my judgments and emotions to creep in at certain points in the analyses (indeed, I suspect I have shouted my findings from the rafters from time to time, marks of the dialogism and openness I hope this work embodies).
3. Transformations.

I have hoped that the participants will benefit from this work, and as mentioned, their fervent engagement in the interview situations suggests the value of the interviews. Reciprocity has been another empowering dimension of the project: some of the participants have taken my invitation for feedback quite seriously, enabling them to assert their own authority in helping to achieve meanings. But more tangible changes have occurred. As was clear in Chapter 7, the project seems to have rather negatively affected Jill's views of her future in the university; she is now less optimistic about finding appropriate professional employment in the system. But perhaps a cognitive adjustment was necessary, as Jill is now preparing herself for an alternative kind of job. (She also began a personal relationship with a man she met not long after I began to talk to her in the Autumn of 1994, and is focusing on life goals other than those a career might offer.)

Emily has also been affected by reading this work. She told me on the telephone, "You gave me the incentive and self-confidence to get started on my own writings in the evenings and on weekends. When I saw Emily’s words in your dissertation, I knew I mattered."

In May of 1996, I handed Ruth two of my chapters for her review. As she took them, she said: "Since reading your work, I've been questioning my reasons for being at this university. I HAVE a professional degree! What am I doing here? So, a couple of weeks ago I decided to go back into teaching, and your project is no small part of that decision." I almost floated back to my own office that day.

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Finally, Meg has found the "bridge" job she was so hoping for. In July of 1996, she left behind her Civil Service position to work as an Administrative and Professional staff member at the university. Her role will be to set up an institute for collaborative research in a multidisciplinary department; the job will enable her to teach and to put to use her program planning and coordination experience. I cannot say that this study has had a direct impact on Meg’s career success, but I do think it has documented her personality traits, especially her wit, assertiveness, and her impulse to teach. These traits have evidently been clear to those with the power to recommend Meg, and to hire her. Meg is thrilled with this career opportunity; she says she is "very lucky."

Patti Lather sees the empowerment of research subjects to be gained in reciprocity, dialectical theory-building versus theoretical imposition, and new views of validity in praxis-oriented research (1991:56). In this project, I strove for reciprocity and dialectical, dialogic, grass-roots theory building in the methods I used for observing, interviewing, transcribing, and analyzing the data I collected. As far as validity is concerned, I have argued all along that we are not talking about Truth, but about perceptions of truth, representations of truth. Truth claims become entangled with the ego, a paramount concern in the construction of narratives; the women’s rhetorical strategies bear out John N. Kotre’s view about the self and/in storytelling:

Does the totalitarian ego put the self at the center of things? That’s what storytellers do with their main characters. Does it put premonitions and prophecies where there were none? That’s how storytellers get listeners to stick around for the ending. Such alterations are not the edicts of a dictator, but the signs of a myth-maker. They tell us who it is that’s doing the remembering. (1995:117)
We have also seen that narrator selves and story selves do not always dovetail:
Patrick Mullen points out: "How each individual views herself and how she wants
others to view her determines what themes occur in the stories, how the story is
structured, and the way it is performed" (1992:277), but the way an individual views
herself is sometimes at odds with how she wants others to view her. Narrators are
constrained by any number of realities, affecting their themes, story structures, and
performances. The women in this study are interesting biographical subjects partly
because their narratives are so complex, often ambiguous, and even contradictory. So
one of the most salient gauges of the project’s validity lies not in the truth quotient of
the narratives but in the decisions and changes that some of the participants have
made in response to the project itself. Validity here has not depended on the
comparison and verification of existing truth claims but rather on the promotion,
explication, and reciprocal sharing of new knowledge, and the actions that will
follow.

4. "We Recommend."

Another way the "action" research dimension of this project may make itself
felt in the wider community is in the women’s recommendations for change. While
the participants have been implicitly suggesting the need for change in all their texts
throughout this project, their explicit, specific recommendations and critiques of the
university’s policies and practices are included in the following pages. Some of the
women offer a personal experience to illustrate a problem or problems, others suggest
changes that are more generalized. Some of them provide specific plans for change; others merely identify a problem or problems but do not suggest how they might be remedied.

Only seven of the original eight voices are included in the following section. Iz’s voice is absent. When I visited her office to set up another interview, I learned that she had found a teaching job and moved away from Columbus in the early fall of 1995. I had mixed emotions about Iz’s departure. For whatever reason, the staff in her department were reluctant to give me her new address and phone number, and I realized there would be no real closure with her. During our interviews, Iz had stated that she would remain at Ohio State until she was offered a teaching job, but I was selfishly sorry not to be able to find out whether my study had in some way spurred her on. I also regretted not being able to thank her again and to wish her well. But the news of her teaching job was pure delight.

The participants’ recommendations follow. I include their words without embellishment or analysis, and have abandoned the transcription conventions used in the other narratives because I will not explicate the texts for linguistic coherence, aesthetic properties, or identity formation. Rather, I want to set out as simply as possible the women’s ideas for changes in the system.
Meg thinks more flexible working hours for Civil Service staff would promote staff loyalty.

* * *

Flexible Workdays.

MEG: What would make, I think, things a little bit easier for people in my position would be an explicitly stated flexible time. The kind of thing that works the best with me is the sort of thing that’s expected from what is called the A & P person. A salaried person works to get jobs done. If there is a project that needs to get done, they do it, they work their lunch, they may work overtime, they may come in early, but they do it when it has to be done.

And this allows a person like me who’s trying to go through graduate school, et cetera, who may need to come in a half an hour late because they’re finishing a paper until three in the morning. Or writing an exam, or they may need to take off fifteen minutes early to get to a class that they have to go to. Now, if a project has to be done, I do it. And I work late. And I don’t get overtime. Very rarely would I get overtime. I normally don’t even take comp time; and people don’t realize that legally, comp time is supposed to be time-and-a-half. It’s not one-for-one. Around here, I notice that when people talk about comp time, they’re talking about one-for-one, and that’s not the true definition of comp time. I don’t insist on that either. But flexibility is what meets my needs. It makes me happy to know that someone is understanding about my schedule and my needs, and I in turn am understanding about what this department needs.

* * *

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Hester considers the ways the university may be thwarting Civil Service employees who are interested in career mobility. She also sees built-in biases toward Civil Service staff members in both the employee evaluation process and in the university’s grievance procedures.

* * *

Changes in Evaluation Process.

HESTERT: I guess from my personal experience I would say that the evaluation procedure needs to be a collaborative effort. I think you should be able to respond to supervisors’ evaluations of your work, and that you should be able to reach a compromise of what that evaluation will be. My supervisor right now doesn’t even know half of what I do. There are several of my peers who do, and they understand what I’ve done.

S: Do you think you should be able to evaluate her, also?

HESTERT: Oh, I think so. I’ve had to revamp the entire filing system here, go back and redo what they didn’t do for twenty years. I’ve restructured the whole thing, I’ve restructured what kind of workflow goes to the students and what I do simply because it was done in such a haphazard fashion that nobody knew all the steps of the process, so there were a lot of mistakes being made—people were complaining right and left. We get one complaint now every six months, and we used to get maybe three or four a day. And she was the one who was in charge of all that. And this is supposed to be her job, to do the workflow. So, for me to be able to evaluate her, yeah, I would like to.

Promotion Opportunities.

HESTERT: I also have concerns about moving up in the university. I want to stay in Columbus, and I have a few more years before I can retire with full benefits, so I’m applying for university jobs that require the kinds of skills I have and the education. But I’m not even getting interviews. And I was told, actually by a Personnel A & P person, that when people on campus get an application and it’s got any kind of Civil Service designation as the current job, they don’t even look at it. So I’ve been making extra efforts, you know, writing letters before they get the applications, and then I always get the line, "Oh, we’re gonna do a nationwide search." Why do you have to do a nationwide search and spend all that money when someone is already
here who's perfectly capable of doing it? Should I be overlooked, simply because I put myself through school as a Civil Service person, and purposely kept my responsibilities to a minimum because I needed to focus them elsewhere? There's got to be something done here, because it's really discriminatory.

Changes in Grievance Procedures.

HESTER: The person in Human Resources who handled my grievance case was very poorly trained. He did not clearly explain to me the consequences of a recommendation he made, which was that the chair of the department where my job had been abolished should give me letters of recommendation so I could get another job in the university. This personnel guy thought I would be satisfied if I received excellent letters of recommendation, but at no time did I understand that that was to be the entire solution of the proceeding.

Also, the grievance hearing should have been taped so that I could prove my former chair was guilty of discrimination and harassment. Things need to be handled in a manner where there's a permanent record, like in a court, so that there's a permanent record if these things are going to be considered legal and binding at the university. The way it is, these things are oriented in such a way that staff are going to get shafted. I had a clearcut case.

So, I'm very concerned with the quality of the people they've got over in the grievance department right now. This guy was obviously just blowing me off because I was, you know, Civil Service, and they're gonna protect faculty at all costs. Second of all, this man has such poor communication skills that I didn't even realize that he supposedly thought we had come to an agreed-upon solution to the entire thing. I was astounded when I got the letter from him. So not only is their focus unfair, but their basic skills for the job suck.

* * *
In Carrie’s experience, the university often values the opinions and suggestions of its employees according to the rank of those employees. And as does Meg, Carrie thinks the university should take an active role to help long-time, highly educated Civil Service staff members to secure suitable employment.

* * *

Parity.

CARRIE: I’m sitting on a committee right now that is looking at compensation for chairs. And I’m as much a member of that committee as the Chair of Philosophy or the Chair of History. Staff have equal input and, that’s something that I don’t experience in my own department council meetings. But I experience it on this level.

It would be really amazing if I could also function that way in my department. I wouldn’t feel quite so schizophrenic about what is appropriate in which setting. I mean, I mulled over in my mind on Friday whether I should do an e-mail response to somebody’s position on this chair’s compensation committee. And I thought, "the Dean has put me on this committee. I’m as much a committee member as anybody else." So I made my recommendations, and it felt good.

Upward Mobility.

CARRIE: I think there’s a critical glass ceiling that has clunked down into place over the last five years. There used to be mobility. And there isn’t anymore. I have the qualifications, I mean, I have a master’s degree, I’ve been here for fifteen years, I know the university. It’s really appalling to me that people are not really looking at promoting from within. There’s a definite mindset that, when you have Civil Service people, you think of ‘em as secretaries. And "how could this person have an administrative position?" -- even though my particular Civil Service position is administrative.

* * *
Ariel questions her supervisor's right to object to her pursuit of a doctoral degree. She also points to the inefficiency of unilateral decision-making that ultimately affects everyone in the department.

* * *

**Decision-Making Issues.**

**ARIEL:** Okay, there are a couple issues that are bothering me at the moment, and one is the practice of not consulting anyone about what's being done in the office. We just remodeled, we weren't asked for any input, and we've had a mess. The furniture they bought didn't fit. They bought a new module system for the new secretary, it didn't have any desk drawers. It never occurred to them that she would need desk drawers.

**Withholding Information.**

There's also a problem with secrecy in the office. We don't know when the chair is around, where she is. It's none of our business! And it makes us look really stupid when people come in looking for the chair.

**Problems with Managerial Style.**

I also think we need changes in the management's perception of the appropriate way to treat callers and visitors to the office. They want you to be "professional," but the way they define "professionalism" is distance, coldness. If you stop to be pleasant to someone, we're seen as wasting our time. "You're disrupting the work flow." That's the big word now, "disrupting the work flow."

I'm also just generally dismayed by the new generation of management. I find it so distressing that this is my generation of people who fought for changes, and just turned it around. They're careerists, they're very territorial and turf-oriented, promotion oriented. "I want prestige, I want my money, and screw anybody else. I've got mine, now you get yours." I'm getting grief now over my Ph.D. Program. Which I never had before. [The Former Chair] always encouraged that. He thought education was the most important thing. Now it's about inconveniencing her.

* * *
When I arrived at her office in October 1995 to record her suggestions, Ariel surprised me by handing me this list, which she entitled "Recommendations for Changes in the University Administration and Management." Ariel prepared the list on her own initiative.

1. Phony Liberalism. Touchy-feely while they twist the knife. I hear constant complaints from students and faculty about the "coldness" or "distance" in the office. People are met with phony smiles and are blown off. There was a distinct feeling among our latest retirees that the chair could not wait to get them out the door. Had a twenty-minute retirement reception for them from Big Bear.

2. Lack of understanding of other people's jobs. Just do it is the order of the day. If you complain about a real problem that is keeping you from doing the job, all you get is, "that's your problem. We all have these problems." Yes—but we are not all at the top and instead are answerable to everybody.

3. Mandatory quarterly lunch with the chair so we can all know what the chair and others are doing and she can tell us whatever she wants. I am paid by the hour. I am not paid for eating lunch with people I otherwise avoid and have absolutely nothing to do with. My lunch hour is my own time—to get away from these people, not to make nice with them. Lunch with the chair is not on the payroll.

4. Lack of support for my doctoral work. I have been in grad school since 1980, and have only taken one class during work hours (it met once a week for two hours, so I came in early and left late on one day). When I had to go to a two-hour orientation on a work day concerning a seminar I was NOT taking on work time, I was told, "I don't think I'll let you take this class. I've never had a secretary who was also a graduate student and I can't deal with it." I don't have any problems with the faculty on this, only the chair who apparently thinks my Ph.D. is "frivolous." On the other hand, her assistant takes lots of time off for her children's activities and extra-curricular interests, which seems to be OK.

5. There seems to be a Mom Agreement around here, that it is OK to push your work responsibilities off on people who don't have kids. After all, you have nothing better to do.

6. Forced to do trivial activities while real work gets undone, i.e. putting water in flower vases and prettilying up notebook labels in the middle of the office remodeling. Remarks such as, "You may as well do something useful around here." (Real remark from chair to her Administrative Assistant.)

7. Insistence that there is no money to pay for your promotion—and the insistence that the Dean's Office sets job classification standards—not Civil Service and the Office of Human Resources.

8. Inability of chair to realize that one is not born with computer knowledge. We are not permitted to take university sponsored computer classes because it will "take you away from your desk and disrupt the workflow." Yet we are expected to know how to use them.

9. Criticism of me doing "my own work" on company time when I am not. Because I am on the phone with another department for more than two minutes does not mean that I'm not doing what I'm supposed to be doing. The chair simply does not understand my job, though she thinks she does.

10. Hostility and resentment towards vacation and sick time. Seen as a "disruption." The chair is gone from mid-May to mid-July on her second job. She does not take a vacation. She prefers to work.
Jill voices her concerns about information sharing practices in the department.

* * *

Wider Dissemination of Work-Related Information.

JILL: Some specific changes would be: there's a disparity between the individuals who have been here for a number of years and those of us who have been affiliated for less time. There doesn't seem to be a fairness to many of the decisions, and there are some bipartisan things that happen that we only find out about if we overhear something. Sharing of information is the essence of what I wish the supervisory people in this department would do; I am constantly amazed. For instance, we had a new phone answering system (what's it called, the "Unitrek" or something?) put in. And a couple of faculty said to me, after long periods of time with the old recording, "How the heck do I get straight to you? How do I get straight to the receptionist?" And so, nobody even told them.

The Need for Discretion.

And then, this is interesting: when it came time for the supervisory staff to meet with the phone system people to implement the new recorded message, somebody said, "Well, why isn't Jill going to be asked to join the meeting?" And the comment was made, "Well, she just may not be here that long," with reference to the fact that I had two job interviews last summer outside the university, and that I was attempting to leave. And it's inappropriate. Very definitely. Because it was said openly and loudly and in a central location. There was also a physical gesture, like "she's not even going to be here." She dismissed me with her arm, and with her arm movement --.

* * *
Ruth questions the excesses and inefficiencies of the university's management, and challenges what she perceives to be misuse of a land-grant university.

**Too Many Managers.**

RUTH: The greatest suggestion is probably the one that's the least likely to occur, because it's the hardest, and that is, that people deal honorably with each other. Now the work is simple. The work is—peaceful. Can be peaceful. But, to have these weights put over you, weights and goads—they're, useless.

The longer I work in a bureaucracy, the more beautiful anarchy looks to me. I'm quite content to do my work. But then you get these nig nogs on top of nig nogs! on top of nig nogs! who are making these grand pronouncements. And it filters down to you and it's such a hodge podge mess that it takes all the pleasure out of the work. So. I would like to see more honor among the thieves.

Civil Service people work out of honor. Civil Service people work out of honor. You know the joke about Civil Service people, there's three guys leanin' on a shovel, one guy's workin', and the guy that's workin' is the supervisor? You know? That's a construction Civil Service kind of picture. And, it's true! There is no mandate. And so the work we do, we do out of our desire to work. Because they can't fire us. They can fire us, but it's very, very, very, very difficult. So, we work out of honor. And we do the work that we see to do. If we would recognize that the honor inherent in the system liberates people to do the work they do best, and that the manager should oversee, just oversee that, and not get in there and tinker with people, but see that all the work gets done. That's what ought to be done.

So, not counting the President and the Provost, I have Vinnie, and Lorna, and Marty, and Jeb. And, in one office in our department, there's four workers and three managers! You don't need three managers for four employees! Even if it's the group home, you don't need it! But I have four layers of supervision. Now, ideally, I would have Lorna and Jeb. All the other people are superfluous. Especially the Mad Hatter! [RUTH'S NICKNAME FOR THE PROVOST]
Questionable Profit Motives.

RUTH: Seriously, most of the Vice Presidents in the university are unnecessary, and he moreso than the others. Between his restructuring, it's not public knowledge yet! No, but "Enrollment Enhancement" is the euphemism for--falsely marketing the university. And, the piece of that that I think is interesting is that if you look at the Mission Statement? of the university right now? The word "Land Grant Institution" does not appear in the Mission Statement.

S: What does that mean?

RUTH: What does that mean?!! Abraham Lincoln and Mr. Morrill, who was in the Senate, designed the idea of land grant institutions. The reason why they were given land to start was to provide higher education for the citizens of the state in which they were built. So, Ohio State is for Ohioans. Michigan State is for Michigan students. Rutgers is for people in New Jersey. It's designed to give higher education to whoever in Ohio wants it. That was why we were founded and how we buffalored the government into giving us money and land.

And we're the only university in Ohio that has that fundamental reason for being. And so, by taking the land grant aspect out of the mission statement, we are stepping away from that obligation. You first started to see it when they started to limit admissions of freshmen. Well then no money was coming in, because we'd reduced the size of our freshman class. We panicked over that and we let everybody back IN again, and now our figures in Peterson's Guide to Higher Education are startin' to go down, and so, we want to beef up the appearance of the freshman class 'cause that's what they measure. And so we call that "Enrollment Enhancement." And it's a way to buffalo people into thinking that we welcome everyone when in fact we are consciously creating a profile that a prospective student has to fit into. People who are sensitive to language can see that, but who's sensitive to language? Very few. You know, the dullness to the hyperbole in our world, we, we're deadened to the power of that.

So. That's the problem with the mission statement losing the land grant institution part. It's that we aren't aiming to serve the people of Ohio. We're aiming to create a profile. We're aiming to be a big business. Well, if we're a big business, we have no business taking money from the State of Ohio to educate their young. So that's what burns me, and that's one of the Mad Hatter's inventions, and he's fond of that.

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Discrimination Based on Attitude and Appearance.

RUTH: It's the unwritten contract that matters the most to me to change. And what they don't realize is that people reject management's recommendations because--the university is constantly stealing things from us. They're stealing our health, 'cause in that building [RUTH NODS IN THE DIRECTION OF HER OWN WORKPLACE], they found Legionnaire's up in the air conditioning system. They got rid of it but they hush-hushed it in a big way. They steal our creativity. They steal our authority. They steal our personality, in the sense that, "if you look like this and act like this, you get promoted; if you look like that and act like that, you don't."

Even if your skills, your attributes, make you more ideal for the position, you don't look right, act right, smell right, talk right. In fact, I was jazzin' with my boss cause I love to jazz with her, and I was sayin', "You can tell an A-P woman from a Civil Service woman because they're twenty to forty pounds lighter." What I'd love to do is to take all the Civil Service employees, and get a mean weight. And then take a mean weight of the A-P women. And I guarantee! I have another theory about bathrooms, too. It's a theory-- I find that the A-P women like to use the center stall and the Civil Service employees like to use the end stalls. It's just a trend I've noted. I'd like to study it!

S: What, symbolizing their center-stage position in life and

RUTH: Yeah, right! I mean, there's somethin' in there!

Everything harmonizes at some level!

The Need for Unionization.

RUTH: I would like to see a union here. When you get a big enough number of employees, like here, and in the kind of labor-heavy jobs that we have in my department! If those people ever got looked at seriously, demographically, and people realized that there are innumerable single mothers, there are innumerable single people whose sole sustenance comes from this university, and who are willing to fight--. When they begin to see that they'll start to pay attention. I'm talking about management recognizing how high the stakes are. And, as long as they keep the wages low, the stakes are gonna get higher, and higher. A union is a good thing, because we have an unrelenting and insensitive employer who is too far above the workers to be conscious of their needs, wants, desires, ambitions, what not. But the efforts being made to keep the union out are interesting.

* * *
Emily recommends a computer network that would be accessible to all Civil Service employees. The network would provide detailed, personal, anonymous information about the management styles and policies of each of the university’s employment units. Emily believes that such a network would help people to make informed decisions about transferring to new departments within the university.

* * *

Computerized Job Information Network.

EMILY: I think it would be a good idea to have Human Resources have a department where people leaving Ohio State or changing jobs within the university could fill out an exit form, anonymously or signed, regarding the position they are vacating. These forms would have a space to grade the position as to working conditions, workload, amount of overtime, treatment of the individual, and so on. It would also have a place for comments.

This information would be entered into a computer program accessible to OSU staff. The grades would be averaged, either giving each department a general grade or an average grade in each category, or both. I think the various departments would treat staff better if they knew their behavior would affect future recruitment. Their "A" ratings could also be a source of pride. I see the exit forms as either being filled out at Human Resources or returned through campus mail.

* * *
In Sum

Donald Brenneis' remark, cited earlier, bears repeating: "what we analysts take as the institutions of the modern world . . . do not exist in an abstract, generalized sense. While they may have clearly delineated organization structures, they also are understood and experienced--and their implications shaped and renegotiated--in quite particular events and interactions" (1993:301). Failure to question the events and interactions that occur under the governance of existing institutional, class, and gender relations implies and encourages the inevitability and the continuation of those relations. Throughout this project, the women and I have been questioning the institution and our places in it. We have together revealed that the domains of power within Ohio State's hierarchy are places for "holding your ground" and negotiating your positionality, places where both winning and losing are possible. The participants have made some pithy observations about the universality of human needs and desires: for instance, everyone wants "freedom of movement" invisibility but recoils from the kind of invisibility that makes us feel snubbed and excluded. Everyone wants fair consideration for job mobility. Everyone wants to be valued for herself and her talents, not for her job title or appearance or the capacity to pay lip service.

In these pages, the participants have attempted to re-categorize and re-identify themselves in order to modify the power relations of their society. Yet many of the texts evoke a distinct sense of distrust and cynicism, of failed dreams, of repeated patterns of immobility and frustration, even the relinquishment of desire.
Nevertheless, their words are so alive, bringing a fuller dimension to what is familiar and mundane. The most obvious things can be hidden from view by unchallenged assumptions, by looking but not really seeing (one of the dangers faced by the insider-researcher). But creative expression frees us from restrictive patterns of behavior, and collective vision can thus become collective action. Identifying what already exists is an act of the imagination just as is envisioning new worlds, and the acts of identifying and envisioning can change society. The human imagination remains victorious: in defining and critiquing their circumstances and in reinforcing their own worthiness, the participants have fashioned a new, if temporary, world of possibility.

The participants are all still "becoming," still striving toward their ideals. To some extent, they are all actively trying to separate themselves from the values imposed by their past or by their society. Their models for future success are the models they themselves enact; their expressive forms are the tools for their self-transcendence. The poetry in the women's words is the sound of their exclusion and exclusivity, their humor and intellect, their satisfaction, tenacity, and hostility, their hopes and their fears. And it is at the junction of cultural constraint and the imagination that these "voices in the margin" have become audible.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1. Patrick B. Mullen has noted this trend, and in working closely with graduate students for eleven years, I have also observed that theses and dissertations are more and more frequently framing students' own agendas and interests: African American students often write about African-American concerns; lesbians and gays treat lesbian and gay issues in their research; women write about women's problems, and so on. Such a trend might reflect the necessity for increasingly narrow and specialized research topics, but it could also have to do with the loosening grip of objective, positivist paradigms in academia. Michelle Fine points out "at some point, people decide, I'm tired of hearing you speak for me. Only I can speak for myself. I'll speak for my people, and these issues." But she goes on to stress that "it is surely essentialist to presume that only women can/should 'do' gender; only people of color can/should do race work; only lesbians and gays can/should 'do' sexuality; only women in violence can tell the stories of violence" (1994:80). I agree with Fine; while I have come to see the many advantages of being an "insider-researcher," I readily admit that my findings are "my" findings.

2. The notion that particular folk texts embody unique worldviews is derived from the romantic concept of cultural difference that Johann Gottfried von Herder promoted in the 18th century. This view was translated into immutable (and ultimately sinister) racial "differences" that did not begin and end with physical appearance but which extended to intellectual and moral capacities. William Wilson comments on Herder's ideas about romantic nationalism, encapsulating the scope of his influence: "Herder taught that each nation is by nature and by history a distinct organic unit with its own unique culture; that a nation, to survive as a nation, as well as to contribute to the development of humanity as a whole, must cultivate lines laid down by past experience; that the total cultural and historical pattern of a people--the national soul--is expressed best in folk poetry; and that should the continuity of a nation's development be interrupted the only road to salvation lies in collecting the folk poetry surviving from the time of the break, using it to restore the nation its national soul, and thus making possible its future development on its own foundation" (1973:832).

3. Folklorists Amy Shuman and Charles Briggs argue that "championing the folk is built into the discipline, and it may not even be possible to avoid advocacy" (1993:130).

4. See Rosemary Levy Zumwalt, American Folklore Scholarship: A Dialogue of Dissent (1988), for an incisive look at the anthropological and literary roots of folklore scholarship in the last century and the ensuing decades of struggle for positioning folklore within one camp or the other.

5. To pinpoint occurrences of social change in discursive forms, Norman Fairclough recommends interpreting the process of text consumption and production (he calls this "discourse practice"); describing texts; and interpreting texts and the processes that go into their production and consumption "in light of the social practice in which the discourse is
embedded" (1992:231). I believe that the three-pronged theoretical framework within which this project is situated facilitates Fairclough's recommendations.

6. I hope the profitable interdisciplinary collaboration of this work helps to erode the theoretical boundaries that separate the social sciences and the humanities. The value of such theoretical partnership has been understood for some years: for instance, in 1959, folklorist Melville Jacobs asserted that scientific and literary methods should be combined in folklore studies. In so doing, he "was proposing a blending of humanities and science, a combined approach suggested by Ruth Benedict a decade earlier. He was also anticipating the development of performance theory in folklore. The text could be combined with the context, and both could add meaning to the other. His query and response provided a tantalizing suggestion of what is to be gained through a combination of the literary and the anthropological approach to the study of folklore" (Zumwalt 1988:123). More recently, Bellah et al. stress that "the most important boundary that must be transcended is the recent and quite arbitrary boundary between the social sciences and the humanities. The humanities, we are told, have to do with the transmission and interpretation of cultural traditions in the realms of philosophy, religion, literature, language, and the arts, whereas the social sciences involve the scientific study of human action. The assumption is that the social sciences are not cultural traditions but rather occupy a privileged position of pure observation. The assumption is also that discussions of human action in the humanities are 'impressionistic' and 'anecdotal' and do not really become knowledge until 'tested' by the methods of science, from which alone comes valid knowledge." (1985:301)

7. The trends that Figueira-McDonough and Sarri documented in the late 1980s have become more pronounced through the 1990s: "women are increasing their proportion of doctoral degrees at a time when the market is already 'glutted' with Ph.D.s. Furthermore, the areas in which women represent the largest proportion of new doctorates (English, foreign languages, social sciences) are those fields with the greatest surplus of candidates and most limited job opportunities. Women are entering academia when the chances for secure, well-paid, prestigious positions are probably more dismal than they have been at any time in American Academic history (Carter and Carter 1981). And when women do obtain jobs, they are in the lowest and most marginal ranks" (1987:203).

8. Alan Dundes posits: "Folklore data, which exists before the investigator arrives on the scene, avoids the difficulties of administering a 'who am I' questionnaire, which is an a priori document made up by the investigator, not the people being studied. Folklore thus offers social scientists an unobtrusive technique for the gathering of information about identity. Folklore gives a view of a people from the inside-out rather than from the outside-in" (1989:35). Now, although I think Dundes is to some extent guilty of perpetuating the idea that folk forms are "traditional," underemphasizing as he does folklore's immanent character in his first sentence, he is correct in stressing that self-definition can be achieved in open-ended, participant-driven interviews.
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