

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Embodied Lives: Women in Physical Occupations Talk About Their Bodies

by

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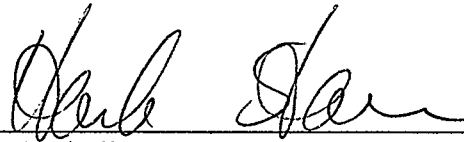
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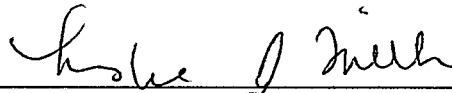
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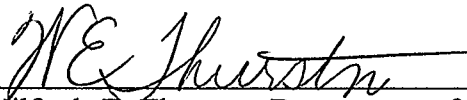
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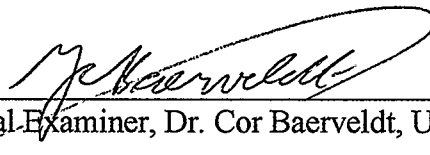
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Abstract

The psychology literature on the female body has largely ignored the embodied aspects of women's lives and tended to focus on the pathological ways in which women understand their bodies. In addition, recent research that considers embodiment is often methodologically impoverished. In order to address these issues, 17 women who work in physical occupations, i.e., those requiring bodily strength and skill, such as construction work or landscaping, were asked to talk about their bodies in individual, semi-structured interviews that were taped, transcribed and analyzed using discourse analysis. Contrary to what might be expected based on the psychology literature, participants drew on four interpretative repertoires in constructing versions of their bodies, i.e., the aesthetic body, the healthy body, the able body, and the natural body. In addition, they positioned themselves as not overly concerned with appearance and generally comfortable with their bodies. In particular, the healthy and able body interpretative repertoires were used by the participants to position themselves as normal, capable and independent. Women working in male-dominated occupations also negotiated the dilemma of doing a man's job with a woman's body. This research challenges assumptions that most women are dissatisfied with their bodies and many engage in pathological practices in order to improve their bodies. It also contributes to our understanding of the ways in which women routinely negotiate the dilemmatic aspects of women's embodiment.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” In her influential work, *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone de Beauvoir challenged the notion of “woman” as a straightforward, biological category, arguing that the role of woman was a socially constructed phenomenon. She argued that, from the moment a woman is born, she is immersed in a complex, cultural environment that shapes her experience of gender, that is, she learns how to be a woman. Nowhere is this more relevant than in the case of women’s bodies.

Feminist researchers have long constructed the “problem” of women’s bodies as being that “the female body” constitutes contested ground. Numerous cultural meanings are associated with the female body and, invariably, these cultural meanings or versions of the body are worked up in a context of controversy (think, for example, of the reproductive body and the anorexic body). These cultural meanings may further be seen as the inspiration for a variety of social practices, from the chastity belt to miracle creams that purportedly prevent wrinkles. At a recent appearance in Calgary, Gloria Steinem claimed that the battle ground for sexism, racism, classism and homophobia was the control of women’s bodies, specifically, women’s reproductive body. Taking this point further, women’s bodies are endemically sexualized, fetishized, infantilized and used to sell everything from computers to clothing. Moreover, women’s bodily experiences (e.g., puberty, pregnancy, and menopause) have their corresponding psychological diagnoses in the DSM-IV (i.e., pre-menstrual syndrome, post-natal depression, and hormonal imbalance). Thus, a feminist perspective leads us to understand the female body as open

to multiple meanings that are socially significant and tied to hierarchies of power and domination.

On the other hand, some feminist theorists have suggested that talking about the embodied lives of women may be problematic, because there is a risk of equating women with their bodies or making problematic bodies a normative aspect of women's psyche. In other words, from a feminist standpoint, women's bodies have been both the site of repression, as well as a way of providing the possibility of resistance. In response to Simone de Beauvoir's provocative question "What is a woman?", Conboy, Medina and Stanbury (1997) write in their introduction to *Writing on the Body*:

At first glance, the answer to Simone de Beauvoir's question... appears simple, for is the female body not the marker of womanhood? The body has, however been at the center of feminist theory precisely because it offers no such "natural" foundation for our pervasive cultural assumptions about femininity. Indeed, there is a tension between women's lived bodily experiences and the cultural meanings inscribed on the female body that always mediate those experiences. Historically, women have been determined by their bodies: their individual awakenings and actions, their pleasure and their pain compete with representations of the female body in larger social frameworks. (p. 1)

Women's bodies, then, have been historically and culturally contested locations, and on a daily basis, women must negotiate a plethora of cultural discourses. Thus, women lead embodied lives. To make this claim is to dissolve the usual dichotomy between the biological and the social-psychological. In other words, women's everyday lives are shaped by, and in turn shape, cultural discourses related to the female body. As we have already noted, there are many such discourses that compete for dominance; think of debates over abortion, birth control, and plastic surgery, to name a few. When and how

women take up these various meanings of the body in making sense of their lives is an appropriate starting point for feminist psychological research.

Additionally, this understanding of embodiment is informed by the ways in which the term has been taken up in feminist discourse, that is, as the experience of living in the world in/with/as a body upon which is inscribed the cultural assumptions and contestations of not only one's own contextualized experience in the world, but also as the shared, disputed, constituted and historicized site of a tradition of bodily experiences and interpretations (Bordo, 1997; Conboy, Medina & Stanbury, 1997; Price & Shildrick, 1999).

The embodied aspects of women's lives, however, have been largely ignored and are currently undeveloped in most psychological literature. In much of the traditional psychological literature on women's bodies, the emphasis is on the problem of women's attitudes about, misconceptions of and overall pathological relationships with their bodies (e.g., Dittmar & Howard, 2004; Russell, 2004; Wagenbach, 2003). Research based on clinical populations, the popularization of psychological terms such as body image, self-esteem, body-dysmorphia, and a general failure of psychological researchers to take into account the situated, embodied nature of women's bodies, has helped to make the idea that women in general and not just women with eating disorders "naturally" have pathological thoughts about their bodies (Blood, 2005).

Currently, then, there is a need to conduct research that deliberately focuses on the ways in which bodies are contested within our culture and everyday life. As Bayer and Malone (1996) put it:

To unsettle these meanings of the body is to take issue with their seemingly fixed effects: that is, to make the ambiguity surrounding constructions of the female body and sexuality matter differently. (p. 669)

From a feminist psychological perspective, our challenge as researchers is to conduct research in such a way as to encompass both the cultural and the particular aspects of women's experiences as embodied individuals; that is, to ground our theories and our research practices in the everyday practices of individuals in their social worlds (Davis, 1997).

Consequently, I have attempted to develop a research project that would take into account the embodied nature of women's lives. Additionally, I wanted to undertake a study that would challenge the notion that women are inevitably in some pathological relation to their bodies. Initially, I questioned whether there might be situations in which women describe their bodies in positive or healthy terms. To address this question, it seemed necessary to explore women's accounts of their bodies in relation to their everyday lives. I focused specifically on women whose paid work requires physical strength and/or bodily expertise. As the work place is a "normal" part of women's everyday lives, I anticipated that their accounts might produce discourses that challenge psychology's dominant view of women's bodies as a problem for all women. Moreover, I adopted discourse analysis as my theoretical and methodological framework.

In this chapter, I outline the broad, feminist theoretical context that informed my project, ending with a brief note about the discursive framework and an outline of the remainder of the thesis.

Theorizing Embodiment

I hope to show that the body, or rather, bodies, cannot be adequately understood as ahistorical, precultural, or natural objects in any simple way; they are not only inscribed, marked, engraved, by social pressures external to them but are the products, the direct effects, of the very social construction of nature itself. It is not simply that the body is represented in a variety of ways according to historical, social, and cultural exigencies while it remains basically the same; these factors actively produce the body as a body of a determinate type. (Grosz, 1994, p. x)

Historically, the body has been, at best, an inconsistent interest in psychology.

Those associated with the early history of psychology treated the body as a psychological phenomenon in the sense that it was implicated in the factoring of human error and in the threshold measurements of psychophysicists, such as Ernst Weber and Gustav Fechner (c.f. Hergenhahn, 2005). Almost immediately, however, the interest in bodily senses and abilities gave way to questions of perception and interpretation, and by the time Wundt set up his laboratory in 1879, the new psychologists were concerned not with how the body enables us to interact with the world, but in how the mind, or more precisely consciousness, facilitates this interaction (Hergenhahn, 2005). Similarly, behaviourism's focus of psychological study was not so much the body as the behaving organism (Benjamin, 2007; Skinner, 1938). Although the cognitive revolution of the 1950's brought the mind back to psychology, cognitive psychology, and psychology at large, can be criticized for failing to take into account the situatedness of the sensing, perceiving mind. That is, cognition is supposed to take place within human bodies that are in turn situated in particular contexts and environments (Borrett, Kelly, & Kwan, 2000; Cowart, 2001).

Despite this less than promising start, interest in the body has recently made its way into the realm of the social sciences and also into psychological inquiry. This is due in part, as we shall see, to the attention brought to the body by feminist scholars as well as to widespread interest in embodiment within the social sciences. In 1990, Frank observed in a review of academic writings on the body that “Bodies are in... in academia as well as in popular culture,” (p.131). Six years later, he noted that bodies were *everywhere*, and that he could hardly have anticipated “the ubiquity of bodies today” (Frank, 1996, p.734). Indeed, compared to the abstract, mechanized body of the behaviorists or the body as the physical encasement of the cognitivist mind (Stam, 1996), the past two decades have witnessed more specific study of the place of the body in social sciences (e.g., Davis, 1997; Price & Shildrick, 1999; Williams & Bendelow, 1998).

Not everyone is optimistic about the sudden interest in the body. Critics like Elizabeth Grosz maintain that the entire Western philosophical tradition was, and in most cases, continues to be characterized by a deep “somatophobia” (Grosz, 1994, Price & Shildrick, 1999). Berdayes, Esposito and Murphy (2004) argued similarly that “contemporary life” and academic inquiry in particular reveal “a profound alienation from the body” and “a profound distrust of human embodiment.” (p.1). They warned that there is

the tendency of scientific accounts to remove the body from its social context, and furthermore, to reinterpret complex social phenomena by working back from this abstracted biological strata of existence. (p. 3)

They allege that much contemporary research on the body reflects a long historical tradition of either sheer indifference to the body (i.e., the body variably dismissed as

mechanistic, unthinking, worldly, fallible, or mortal) or a failure to consider the body as a sociocultural and historical production. Even when researchers do not adopt biological reductionism, they often treat the body in mechanistic or behaviorist terms, in which human beings are thought to respond to the world in a manner similar to that of Pavlov's dogs. This view negates the possibility of creative human interaction with the world, including embodied or lived experience, human agency, and subjectivity, effectively bringing all of human experience down to the level of stimulus-response:

Thus, whether one turns to the contemporary crop of naturalists, who reduce behavior to the correlates of the gene, or to neobehaviorists who retain only a pale version of human responsiveness toward the world, mainstream ways of thinking about the body essentially distort human existence. (Berdayes et al., 2004, p. 3)

Thus, both Grosz and Berdayes et al. argue that research where the body is treated as just another object of exploration ignores the importance of the body within human understanding. They remind us that all knowledge is situated, embodied knowledge, that is, it "arises from a practical disposition of the body within the world" (Berdayes et al., p. 3).

Many scholars trace the reasons for this treatment of the body as far back as the ancient Greeks. Plato believed that the immaterial spirit or soul of a man was trapped in the corporeal prison of the flesh and that *reason* was the means to escape that prison. In fact, all of matter for Plato was a pale and imperfect version of the real world, the world of ideas (Grosz, 1994; Hergenhahn, 2005). Similarly, in the works of Aristotle, women were closely allied with matter, which was devoid of identity and only given meaning by the generative power of the male (Grosz, 1994). Over 1000 years later, the Scholastic tradition brought the influence of Greek philosophy to bear on the doctrines of the

Christian church, where the soul, but not the body, was held to be immortal and the pursuit of reason was the highest goal (Hergenhahn, 2005, Romans 8:1-18). This in turn contributed to Western views of a split between mind and body and a hierarchy in which body comes in a distant second (Grosz, 1994).

Thus, while many trace the beginning of the mind/body split to Cartesian dualism, it is clear that his philosophy of the separation of mind and body was built on a much older philosophical tradition (Berdayes et al, 2004). That said, Rene Descartes' formulation of mind-body dualism has been so influential that most people are quite unaware that there are other ways to conceive mind and body. Descartes believed that the human being was made up of two distinct, and as we shall see, unequal elements: mind and body. The mind, specifically the human mind was a pure substance, a *res cogitans*, capable of understanding and knowing the world by means of reason, intuition and deduction (Berdayes et al, 2004). The immaterial mind was the seat of rational thought: "I think, therefore I am". The body, on the other hand, was a *res extensa*, part of the physical/material world and therefore, like the sophisticated mechanical statues in St. Germain, subject to the same mechanical principles of movement and physical laws which governed the universe (Berdayes et al, 2004; Hergenhahn, 2005). The Cartesian dualism of mind and body continues to influence the way people think and talk about the body, in particular how people theorize and research the body.

There are at least three important legacies of this influence. First of all, there is a reification of body as an object (similar to biological reductionism), i.e., as a vehicle, a mechanism, or a thing. It is treated as an artifact, subject to study and manipulation like

any other object. Second, as we have already noted, this separation of mind and body is hierarchical, that is, those things associated with mind are elevated, valued more highly than those things associated with body, which ultimately gives rise to the third point below, about the application of dualistic values to 'things' other than mind and body.

Elizabeth Grosz (1994) points out that mind/body dualism leads us to dichotomous thinking, and thus a polarization of terms in which one term is valued and privileged, and the other term becomes its 'polar' opposite, that is, it is devalued, and made subordinate.

Thus, the body becomes what the mind is not:

It [body] is what the mind must expel in order to retain its "integrity". It is implicitly defined as unruly, disruptive, in need of direction and judgment, merely incidental to the defining characteristics of mind, reason, or personal identity through its opposition to consciousness, to the psyche and other privileged terms within philosophical thought. (Grosz, 1994, p. 3)

Finally, the pervasiveness of mind-body dualism has given rise to a host of related hierarchical polarities. Consider such familiar dualisms as reason and passion, self and other, subject and object, and civilization and nature, to name a few. In each case, the first of the pair has priority of importance over the latter. Grosz (1994) draws particular attention to the association of mind/body dualism with the opposition between male and female. In Western tradition, there has been a long historical connection of man with mind, reason, and judgment and woman with passion, emotionality, and nature. As most feminist scholars have argued, for women this has been a less than favorable comparison. The association of woman with her body has been called upon in accounts throughout

history as reason to keep women in the home and out of the educational, political and vocational arenas that might compromise her fair constitution.

This is relevant to psychology in that much of the most recent literature on the body in psychology adopts Cartesian dualism and treats bodies as separate a priori facts of existence, thereby failing to take into consideration the constructed, situated production of bodies. As I shall discuss later, a discursive account treats both mind and body as social constructions, i.e., as social and cultural productions invested with meanings – often, as we shall see, contradictory and contested meanings.

Feminism, Foucault, and Embodiment

Some feminist theorists, including Bordo (1993), Bartky (1998), and McLaren (2002), have turned to the work of Michel Foucault to try to escape the inevitable unfavourable consequences for women of mind-body dualism. Foucault's work is seen as important for feminist theory, because his philosophy is inconsistent with mind-body dualism, he politicizes the body, and he highlights the relationship between power and its enactment on the body (McLaren, 2002).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) demonstrated how the move from traditional to modern societies, as reflected in such institutions as the education system, the military, the asylums, the factories and the prisons was characterized by a new, more robust and insidious discipline of the body. Here, "new" was in comparison to an older, authoritarian organization of power in which the authority of the monarch was inscribed, often through painful and highly graphic ways, on the bodies of those individuals, i.e., the

King's subjects, who dared to rise up against him. Violation of the law was seen as an insult to the monarch (Foucault, 1977; Bartky, 1993). The new discipline was more than mere political allegiance or the appropriation of the products of its [the body's] labor: the new discipline invades the body and seeks to regulate its very forces and operations, the economy and efficiency of its movements. (Foucault, 1977)

Foucault demonstrated how the enactment of power was no longer a straightforward case of one group exercising power over another; in this new transformation of power, the source of power is more difficult to trace. Thus, power is everywhere and nowhere all at once, that is, power is all around us and yet has no easily identifiable source (cf, Bordo, 1997).

Foucault (1977) further illustrated how discipline was used to control bodies, most famously, those of prisoners. He provided Bentham's Panopticon as an example of how precise control could be maintained over many prisoners at once without the need to exert constant surveillance. In order to accomplish this, the prison was constructed in a circular fashion. In the center of the circle was the guards' tower, positioned to provide potential visual access to any and all of the cells that were built along the outer perimeter of the circle.

All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible. The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately...Visibility is a trap. (Foucault, 1977, p. 200)

While it is not possible for the guard to watch every single prisoner, the prisoner's reality is that at any given moment, he/she may be under surveillance. It is under the possibility of this critical gaze that discipline is maintained:

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of constant and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary... in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation in which they are themselves the bearers. (Foucault, 1977, p. 201)

Thus, under the constant possibility of surveillance, the inmates begin to *police* themselves. Foucault extended the lesson of the Panopticon to the rest of modern society: "in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy". He asks, "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?" (1977, p. 228).

In Foucault's description of modern society, then, power and its effects begin to operate in increasingly tighter modes of control at the level of individuals, including the discipline of bodies, gestures and daily actions. Additionally, power is not just something exercised from above; individuals become complicit to the extent that they exercise power over themselves individually as well as over one another. The result is the creation of what Foucault describes as "docile bodies":

What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, *a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior*. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down, and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy', which was also a 'mechanics of power', was being born... Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies. (Foucault, 1977, p. 138, emphasis mine)

The workings of power were now directed at the specific processes of activity: students are instructed on how to pray at the beginning of class, soldiers are trained in how to march; prisoners are conditioned to police themselves. As Bartky (1998) describes it, “power now seeks to transform the minds of those individuals who might be tempted to resist it, not merely to punish or imprison their bodies” (p. 79).

Although Foucault never extended his analysis to include gender, many feminist theorists have applied his ideas of docile bodies and power that is exercised from everywhere and nowhere to women’s bodies. Bartky (1998) claims that Foucault’s body is genderless, and therefore male:

... but Foucault treats the body throughout as if it were one, as if the bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life. Where is the account of the disciplinary practices that engender the ‘docile bodies’ of women...? (pp. 63-64)

Bartky argues that the correction, production and commodification of women’s bodies is similar in many ways to the course of discipline as described by Foucault. The struggle over women’s bodies is not so much around maternity and ‘woman’s place’ any more; these days,

normative femininity is coming more and more to be centered on woman’s body – not its duties and obligations, or even its capacity to bear children, but its sexuality, more precisely, its presumed heterosexuality and its appearance. (Bartky, 1998, p. 81).

Bartky points out that the vast range of cultural practices which teach women to be women, e.g., media, peers, parents, schools, sports clubs, and gyms, lead women to an awareness that they are under constant surveillance. Under this surveillance in turn,

individual women begin policing each other and themselves. She describes in detail the kinds of disciplinary techniques through which the bodies of women are regulated and produced, dividing them into three groups: those that aim to produce a body of a certain size and shape; those that require of women's bodies particular movements, postures and gestures; and those that regulate bodily display and adornment.

Embodiment as Resistance - the Performative Body

While Bartky and others see Foucault's notion of docile bodies as a way to theorize the systematic oppression of women, some feminist authors, like McLaren (2003), see the promise of the potential for docile bodies to defy disciplinary oppressive cultural constraints, i.e., in order for there to be power, there must also be resistance. Thus, a theory of the body that can account for normalizing gender practices opens up the possibility to undermine and destabilize gender norms.

Many feminist authors, including, for example, Butler (1993), Irigaray (1977) and Wittig (1973), have focused on empowering aspects of embodiment, such as considering lived bodies to be the site for resisting meanings drawn from powerful hegemonic discourses. Owing much to Butler's (1990) destabilization of the largely unchallenged relationship between anatomy and gender identity, considerable attention in recent years has been given to the notion of *gender as performance*, and the body as dramatic/artistic medium (e.g., Arthurs & Grimshaw, 1999). The breadth of this literature is as rich and diverse as imagination will allow. Take, for example, the provocatively sexual images produced by artist-theorists like *Kiss & Tell*, who use their pictures and performances to initiate equally provocative discussions about women's bodies, sexuality, pornography,

and censorship (e.g., Blackbridge, Jones & Stewart, 1994). Specifically, they see their art/theory as a way to challenge hegemonic positionings of the body, in particular of women's bodies in popular culture:

Art-making in its myriad forms is also a place where we can push the possibilities of media and sometimes break through our everyday vision... It is this revolutionary potential that keeps us motivated. Why all the sex? Simply because we are queer and to be queer means to be defined by sexual difference. Since this *difference* is the *raison d'être* of the social discrimination and invisibility we endure in this culture, it should come as no surprise that some of us choose to deal with sexuality in our work. The act of representing something that is given zero value (lesbianism) and representing it in such a way that it has unmistakable meaning as *difference* throws into question the omnipotence of a system that denies the very possibility of that difference. (Susan Stewart of *Kiss & Tell*, Blackbridge et al., 1994, pp. 111-112, *italics* the author's)

Within gender studies, scholars have also given attention to the performance politics represented by people who, in their life styles and through their bodies, subvert gender boundaries, e.g., drag kings and queens, transgendered individuals, or butch and femme lesbians, although not all transgendered individuals or 'butch' lesbians would necessarily describe themselves as either political or performing (e.g., Arthurs & Grimshaw, 1999). Mandy Kidd (1999) in her essay, *The Bearded Lesbian*, describes the range of social and sexual identities "made possible by queer theory and advocated by the practitioners of queer" (p. 199), which intentionally assume "contradictory subject positions" (p.199) in order to destabilize culturally reified notions of what it means to be gendered or to inhabit gendered bodies. However, others like Kate Bornstein (1994) argue that the performance of gender is not limited to those individuals who challenge or otherwise destabilize gender norms and boundaries, but involves a complex set of disciplinary norms and

cultural practices that starts even before we are born. This brings us full circle, back to Simone de Beauvoir's statement that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."

Discourse Analysis

In using an accepted analytic framework, i.e., discourse analysis, to study embodiment, I am attempting to correct a shortcoming in the small but growing research literature on embodiment within psychology. Although I review this literature in Chapter 2, here I would like to note that existing research consists primarily of ethnographic and interview studies that lack a systematic method of analysis and fail to even describe how the data were analyzed. Discourse analysis provided me with a means of conceptualizing and systematically analyzing my participants' accounts.

The discourse analytic approach used in this research takes language as its focus, specifically, the ways in which people talk about topics like, for instance, memories, feelings, or in this case, their bodies. The version of discourse analysis I used is based on the developments that have come to be known as discursive (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987, 1995; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). In addition, I draw my theoretical framework from two more sources. My analysis was informed by Edwards' (1997) critique of cognitivism in which he challenges psychology's popular view of language as a code or system of representations and instead takes up a discourse analytic perspective, in which language is understood as social action in which claims are made and defended. Additionally I draw from Potter's (1996) elaboration of the constructive function of discourse. In particular, I orient to the "more synthetic and global form of analysis" associated with critical discourse analysis (Edley & Wetherell, 2001, p.441;

Wetherell, 1998). This approach combines a conversational analytic concern with the occasioned situated nature of talk as it is constructed in the immediate conversational context with a post structuralist concern with how ways of making meaning are drawn from a broader social and historical context. Thus, it is assumed that people construct versions of themselves in their talk, and that by studying the way these accounts are produced within specific contexts, i.e., conversations and interviews, we can see how people take up or resist culturally available ways of talking about themselves. In considering both the immediate nature of talk within the local conversation as well as the broader culturally available discourses that inform people's talk, I use the kind of synthesis that Margaret Wetherell suggested in her 1997-1998 debate with conversation analyst Emmanuel Schlegoff (e.g., Schlegoff, 1997, Wetherell, 1998) in which she argues for an approach which draws upon both approaches:

I suggest that although the terms of engagement between post-structuralism and ethnomethodology/conversation analysis need revisiting, a stance which reads one in terms of the other continues to provide the most productive basis for discourse work in social psychology. (Wetherell, 1998, p. 388).

Two concepts are important here. First, with discourse analysis notions like *attitudes* and *identity* as fixed individual characteristics are replaced with the notion of *subject positions*, which are discursively available ways of talking about ourselves (Davies & Harré, 1990). At any given point in time, multiple, contradictory subject positions are available to participants. Thus, "who we are" is a product of our social interactions with others. Furthermore, subject positions are taken up in the context of

interpretative repertoires, that is, shared cultural understandings identified by patterns in the language used, including figures of speech and metaphors. In my analysis, I examined the cultural discourses that the participants drew on to talk about bodies, i.e., the way they drew upon culturally available *interpretative repertoires*, how they positioned themselves in relation to these repertoires, and how they negotiated the often dilemmatic aspects of taking up these discourses (Edley, 2001).

Additionally, by investigating talk in action, and noting the situated nature of the social constructions of selves, discourse analysis allowed me to identify the discursive resources that the participants drew upon and resisted in their talk. I also focussed on the processes by which hegemonic forms of discourse were normalized within the research conversations and those producing *alternative discourses* that challenge psychology's preoccupation with body dissatisfaction.

Chapter Outline

The remainder of the thesis is laid out in four chapters. In Chapter 2, I consider how embodiment has been taken up within psychology, occasionally including literature from sociology, and then I narrow the discussion more specifically to the embodied lives of women. This was a daunting task given the scope and diversity of scholarship in this area. Necessarily, some theoretical frameworks, including the body as active subjectivity, phenomenological intersubjectivity and situated knowledges (c.f. Bordo, 1993; Price & Shildrick, 1999) have been omitted. As shall be seen in my examination of how the topics of embodiment and bodies have been taken up within psychology, most of this research has been concerned with the pathological, specifically eating disorders and body image

disturbance. Researchers like Sylvia Blood (2005) have clearly implicated the social sciences and psychology in particular in producing and reproducing pathological concerns as normative for women. At the end of Chapter 2, I describe the present study and how it meets the need for an approach to understanding women's embodiment that is grounded in the normative experiences of women in an everyday social context. In Chapter 3, I present my methodology and in Chapter 4, the analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the results, i.e., their implications for women and for theories of the body within psychology.

women take up these various meanings of the body in making sense of their lives is an appropriate starting point for feminist psychological research.

Additionally, this understanding of embodiment is informed by the ways in which the term has been taken up in feminist discourse, that is, as the experience of living in the world in/with/as a body upon which is inscribed the cultural assumptions and contestations of not only one's own contextualized experience in the world, but also as the shared, disputed, constituted and historicized site of a tradition of bodily experiences and interpretations (Bordo, 1997; Conboy, Medina & Stanbury, 1997; Price & Shildrick, 1999).

The embodied aspects of women's lives, however, have been largely ignored and are currently undeveloped in most psychological literature. In much of the traditional psychological literature on women's bodies, the emphasis is on the problem of women's attitudes about, misconceptions of and overall pathological relationships with their bodies (e.g., Dittmar & Howard, 2004; Russell, 2004; Wagenbach, 2003). Research based on clinical populations, the popularization of psychological terms such as body image, self-esteem, body-dysmorphia, and a general failure of psychological researchers to take into account the situated, embodied nature of women's bodies, has helped to make the idea that women in general and not just women with eating disorders "naturally" have pathological thoughts about their bodies (Blood, 2005).

Currently, then, there is a need to conduct research that deliberately focuses on the ways in which bodies are contested within our culture and everyday life. As Bayer and Malone (1996) put it:

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I begin with a consideration of the difference between psychological research on the body and research on embodiment. After considering the respective literatures, I review some of the wide-ranging ways that the notion of embodiment has been studied and interpreted in psychology. Finally, I focus my concern specifically on women's embodiment and research that considers the experiences of women in sports and physical occupations with a view to providing a rationale for my emphasis on women working in physical occupations. Finally, I conclude with the rationale for my study as well as what I hoped to accomplish with this research.

Researching the Body and Embodiment

As I noted in Chapter 1, research on the body, especially embodiment, has blossomed in the last two decades. Within the discipline of psychology, this has been taken up in two ways. First, there is research focused on the body, or more precisely, body issues such as body image and body image distortions, eating disorders, self-esteem and interpersonal attraction (e.g., Bailey, 2001). This treatment of the body is consistent with a traditional, positivist approach to psychology (Blood, 2005). The second area of research is the situated, lived or inhabited body, described loosely by many as embodiment. In research of this type, sometimes "embodiment" is understood according to the most common, feminist definition, i.e., as the experience of living in a gendered, racial, (un)healthy or (dis)abled body. Others distinguish between 'body' as 'the body we have' and can thus alter through diet, surgery and cosmetic means and 'embodiment' as 'the body we are', i.e., the socially produced and constructed body (Hall, Hockey, &

Robinson, 2007). This distinction however is neither consistent nor rigorous. For my purposes, I use the term *embodiment*, mindful of feminist perspectives and my discourse analytic perspective, in the following sense: women's everyday lives are shaped by, and in turn shape, cultural discourses related to the female body.

Body and Body Image

I begin first with the traditional, positivist psychological research focused on the body (e.g., Bailey, 2001; DiGioacchino, Sargent & Topping, 2001; Jehkonen, Ahonen, Dastidar, Laippala & Vilkki, 2000). The common ground among these areas of inquiry is a focus upon people's (mostly *women's*) self-perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes in relation to their bodies, i.e., on "fastening women's bodies to women's psyches" (Bayer & Malone, 1996, p. 667). In other words, what is of interest are presumed internal, cognitive processes. Although clearly of, and about, the body, the relationship between such cognitive processes and the body typically remains untheorized. Equally troubling, this approach focuses attention on processes inside the woman's body as responsible for any problems associated with the body.

Studies of self-image, particularly body image, figure prominently. Interestingly, the majority of these studies are concerned with how body awareness negatively affects women's self-esteem, especially with regard to weight and social expectations. Bayer and Malone (1996) point to assessment techniques like the Figure Rating Scale (Stunkard, Sorenson & Schulsinger, 1983), arguing that the tools and assumptions that inform psychology's approaches to body issues often characterize women's dissatisfaction and preoccupation with their bodies as being normative. The Figure Rating Scale presents

nine drawn figures of a woman in a body suit, ranging progressively from very thin to very fat, with the norm or healthy body types, as determined by researchers, placed *in cognito* in the center of the range of options. Participants are asked to pick both the figure that represents their ideal body weight and the figure that best represents their actual body weight; the discrepancy between the two choices is taken to be an indication of women's psychological dissatisfaction. Beyond the fact that all the drawings are not particularly aesthetically appealing, Bayer and Malone (1996) point out that the very design of the questionnaire presupposes that this bodily dissatisfaction is a natural and perpetual aspect of women's psyches:

Such body-image questionnaires not only regulate and constrain the body through classifying, sorting and ordering it, but they also effect a field of differentiations that invest and specify the meanings of the body. The historical traces of the use of body types to classify and categorize persons carry within them a repressed set of codes of social orderings around gender, race and class. (pp. 677-678)

By reifying dominant cultural discourses like the ideal body image and women's dissatisfaction with their bodies, such a psychological perspective narrows the range of interest to body-related pathologies, such as eating disorders and low self-esteem. Sylvia Blood (2005) makes a further, very persuasive argument that the popularization of psychological theories "documenting" women's dysfunctional relationship with their bodies, as manifested in such psychometric criteria as 'distorted body image' have not only pathologized women's relationship with their bodies, but have normalized the idea within popular culture.

One of the key criticisms of this literature, then, is that it treats bodies and psychological concepts related to bodies, e.g., body image, as stable, real entities that are measurable, acultural and natural. The role of cultural expectations, the implications of having a gendered body, and the political nature of talk and claims around bodies remain virtually ignored. The embodiment literature that I turn to next addresses many (but not all) of these concerns.

Embodiment

First, I start with a general sampling of the many and sometimes surprising ways that embodiment has been taken up in psychology, with occasional reference to sociological perspectives – especially in the discussion of embodiment and illness. Then, I focus specifically on studies of women’s embodiment and physical activities, with an aim to providing a rationale for my own work on women in physical occupations talking about their bodies.

Living with illness. An important area of research on embodiment has been within the context of the complex relationship between bodies and illness. From this perspective, most people take their bodies for granted; embodiment is not an issue until something disrupts the normal workings of the body. In the case of illness or physical disability, one is forced to negotiate the bodily limitations of living with/in a sick or disabled body and therefore the embodied quality of everyday life becomes a concern. Sociologist Art Frank, in a 1996 review of recent embodiment scholarship, particularly within the social sciences, draws on Drew Leder’s notion of the ‘lived body’ (Leder, 1992), that is, the body as a contextualized, dynamic subject -- that which Frank calls “a

story-telling body” (p.735). Within the context of illness, most of the works reviewed concentrate on what Leder calls the *dysappearance* of the lived body, that is, the “inescapable embodiment” (Toombs, 1995, as cited in Frank, 1996) of learning to live with, and to compensate for, the limitations of a disabled body. ‘Dysappearing’ refers to “the body’s loss of taken-for-grantedness during illness” (Frank, 1996, p.338). In other words, dysappearing occurs as an unsolicited awareness, i.e., a dysfunctional appearance of the body, or rather of the new limitations of bodily function. However, dysfunction operates not only in terms of the negotiated immediacy of disability or illness, but also in the homonymic sense of ‘disappearance’, in terms of having lost the sense of self, as well as familiarity with, and the taken-for-grantedness of, one’s own body.

Frank’s treatment of “embodiment” draws attention to the challenges of living in our bodies in the world: “Many people exist in body/world relations of ambiguous transcendence, inhibited intentionality and discontinuity,” (p. 741). Since Frank’s review, researchers have continued to investigate illness and the resulting forced immanence of the ill person’s lived bodily experiences. Some, such as Alan Radley (2000), have critiqued the commonly held biomedical view of the body as being unable to meet the individual needs of patients, calling for health psychologists to (re)theorize what it means to be embodied within the health care system by closely examining the practical, physical relationships between patients and staff. Others, in a manner clearly reminiscent of the notion of ‘inescapable embodiment’ mentioned above, have examined the utter, abject embodiment of cancer patients (Waskul & van der Riet, 2002). In a twist on the usual take of the misery of body awareness during illness, Pia Kontos (2003) makes a

persuasive argument for the ability of the body to retain abilities, like artistic talents, and therefore, retain some semblance of self and individual agency in the face of the memory deterioration caused by Alzheimer's disease. In their research on hypoglycemia, Mol and Law (2004) discuss how people with diabetes experience hypoglycemia as embodied occurrences, that is, unlike the medical discourses of facts and measurements, people who experience hypoglycemia do so through bodily knowledge, through listening to what their bodies tell them. They build a theory of how we do bodies: "We all *have* and *are* a body. But there is a way out of this dichotomous twosome. As part of our daily practices, *we also do (our) bodies*" (p. 45, italics theirs).

As a final example, Willis, Miller, and Wyn (2001) coined the term "gendered embodiment" to describe the social construction of femininity and masculinity, which they used to explain the differential in life expectancy between young women and young men with cystic fibrosis. They tied gender differences in attitudes towards the meanings of body image, career and life-and-death to young men's greater likelihood of adhering to the medical regimen compared to young women. Importantly and consistent with the other research described above, they concluded that the medical and psychological health communities need to rethink illness in terms of individual embodied experience.

Embodied cognition. In the last 30 years, there has been a movement towards theorizing an embodied cognition, that is, an approach to cognition arising from within cognitive science that aims to understand the relationship between organisms and their environment or, more specifically, between an embodied organism and the way that organism's sensorimotor capabilities enable communication with the outside world

(Borrett, Kelly, & Kwan, 2000; Cowart, 2001). This movement comes from the growing concern that the traditional view of cognition as computation is incomplete in that it fails to incorporate the situated embodiment (e.g., the role of the physical setting) of the individual (Ziemke, 2002). The remedy is to study the role that embodiment plays in various aspects of cognition. Such research has included the study of semiotic resources employed in the production of human language, as well as action and cognition while talking and simultaneously performing a shared activity with multiple participants (in this case, young girls playing hopscotch and archaeologists classifying color; Goodwin, 2000). Similarly, the role of embodied perception and action has been implicated in the study of linguistics and linguistic meaning (Gibbs, 2003).

This use of the term “embodied” here seems rather far removed from the connotations of “lived experience” or cultural constructions mentioned earlier. Here, we have a return to the problems of mind-body dualism: how does the, for these purposes, internal mind communicate or receive information from the external world? Whatever one decides the precise problem of embodied cognition to be, it is most certainly apolitical and impersonal. Rather than seriously considering the role of context, culture, situational specificities and demands, cognitivists are more concerned with how to quantify the environment as simply another factor in the empirical equation.

Other takes on embodiment. The past decade has witnessed a burgeoning array of embodiment related topics in the research literature. One recent example is sexual embodiment, which broadly defined, focuses on the physical aspects or bodily experiences of intercourse and, presumably, other sexual activities. In some cases, the

exploration of sexual embodiment is seen as a less abstract, i.e., ‘more embodied’ application of social constructionism, in which researchers can examine the interaction of sexual, gendered, heterosexual bodies in the interest of understanding pleasure and desire as embodied, social formulations (Jackson & Scott, 2001). The study of sexual embodiment has also been viewed as a way to bring critical thinking into the context of lived experiences and racialized aspects of transsexual bodies and transsexual people (Roen, 2001). Researchers have also studied the sexual embodiment of orgasm (Jackson & Scott, 2001; Potts, 2000).

In addition, embodiment has been a focal point for investigating such issues as first-time mothers’ experiences of pregnancy (Bailey, 2001; Bartlett, 2000; Johnson, 2000), the course of recovery from schizophrenia after medication change (Rudge & Morse, 2001), and the discursive value of “gustatory mmms” during meal times as an expression of the embodiment of pleasure (Wiggins, 2002). There is also a strand of research which is exploring the kinds of cyber-bodies that are experienced by people online, and hence the connections between embodiment and identity in cyberspace (Chatterjee, 2002; Hardey, 2002). Thus, there is at least a small, established research interest in embodiment within psychology. Because my interest is in talking to women in physical occupations who call on their bodily skills on a regular basis, I will now focus on embodiment as it is taken up in sports and physical occupations.

Women’s Embodiment - Sports and Physical Occupations

Relevant to my project are studies on embodiment in occupations and pastimes that require women to routinely engage in physically challenging activity. Many of these

involve spaces or situations in which people use their bodies in physically demanding ways, such as contact sports and physical occupations. For example, Theberge (2003) interviewed adolescent women hockey players in order to offer “an examination of the *embodied practices* of girls who compete in ice hockey” (p. 500, emphasis mine). She reported that the young girls showed tremendous pride in their physical competency and actively expressed their enjoyment of the game’s aggressive physicality.

Similarly, George (2005) conducted informal ethnographic observations and conversations with her teammates on a competitive collegiate soccer team. The team required considerable personal commitment, including a physical routine that involved strenuous weight lifting and cardio training. She noted that while most athletes felt personally empowered by their physical strength and ability on the field, off the field, many expressed the need to find a balance between the demands of maintaining a competitive athletic body and the desire to appear feminine and attractive.

The idea of balancing stereotypic masculine and feminine qualities formed part of the results of two other embodiment studies. In a “life-history case study” of high school girls on an Australian-rules football (a highly physical, full-contact form of rugby) team, the issue of balance came up again (Wedgwood, 2004). In this case, however, it was part of the coach’s heterosexual standard evident in this quote: “you can see by the makeup of our team, the girls are feminine at the same time as they are competitive, and I think we need to strike that common balance” (p. 144). In another study, balance was used in an account of cheerleading as being both a liberating “discursive practice” and one that reifies gendered stereotypes (Adams & Bettis, 2003). Specifically, contemporary

cheerleading was described as both masculine and traditionally feminine. Cheerleading was described as masculine because the girls develop and show off their muscular bodies, use bold and aggressive (deep-voiced) cheers, and, in general, take risks and find power in the physicality of their bodies. It was simultaneously described as traditionally feminine, because the girls derive pleasure from the attention, popularity and sex appeal associated with cheerleading. Being constructed as a sex object was a disadvantage of the feminine side of cheerleading, but there were benefits as well:

Cheerleading was appealing to these girls because it offered them a space to revel in what they called being a girlie girl. Unlike other athletes, these girls are participating in an activity that remains firmly entrenched within a feminine discourse; thus, they do not have to veil their masculinity nor worry, like other athletes, about being stigmatized as too masculine or as lesbians. (p. 84)

Balance, as introduced in these articles, was described as a way of mediating bodily strength, performance and satisfaction, for example, balancing the ‘masculine’ cheerleader qualities with being attractive, sexual, and heterosexual – the “feminine” cheerleader qualities.

A study that blurred the distinction between sport and work explored volunteer firefighting as a type of serious leisure (Yarnal, Hutchinson, & Chow, 2006). Yarnal et al. conducted an ethnographic study of teenage women’s (aged 16-19 years) experiences while enrolled in Camp Blaze, a week-long residential adventure camp designed to train young women in firefighting skills. Initially interested in how the young women developed leadership and teamwork skills, the researchers found that “processes of embodiment emerged as the most salient and visible aspect of camp experience” (p. 140).

From the strict disciplinary practices imposed on the campers to the myriad ways that campers learned to use, trust, and push their bodies, participation in the camp was an 'embodied' experience:

So there she is, resting with her back against the fire blackened building, hair matted against her head, face drenched in sweat and streaked with soot, armpits soaked, legs akimbo, arms resting comfortably at her sides. And, she's smiling. As an observer, you could just tell she knows she "done good." Her body says she's proud of it. (p.133)

Yarnal et al. concluded that embodied learning gives young women greater confidence in themselves, in their bodies and in their ability to use their bodies to go beyond previously imagined boundaries.

Interestingly, studies examining embodiment in the workplace have tended to focus on men and the development of masculinities. Notably, the challenge or dilemma for these men is not so much about balance between masculinities and femininities, as it is about the ability to achieve and maintain masculinity. Hall, Hockey and Robinson (2007) interviewed men in what they described as three occupational cultures, each with its accompanying embodiment of masculinity: firefighters, real estate agents, and hairdressers. They argued that in all three occupations men's experiences of their bodies in the workplace contributed to their embodied notions of self. Furthermore, in each occupation, men performed what the authors refer to as "contradictory masculinities": "the home-handyman hairdresser; the older, yet clear-thinking firefighter and... estate agents... claiming a professional identity" (pp. 549-550). Thus, the men's gendered subjectivities were worked out through engagement with, and sometimes resistance to,

prevailing body-based stereotypes of men and masculinity. Other researchers have investigated school as a place in which young men are disciplined in the normative ways of masculinity (Kehily, 2001), as well as the embodiment of competence and heterosexual masculinity among bouncers in British night clubs (Monaghan, 2002).

While these studies are interesting, thought provoking and otherwise insightful, their methodology is sometimes difficult to pinpoint. For instance, in the article on adolescent girls and ice hockey mentioned earlier, Theberge (2003) failed to explain the theoretical framework that informed her analysis, the process whereby she selected particular excerpts as worthy of note, and how the excerpts were then analyzed. Similarly, in her life-history case study, Wedgwood (2004) provided no account of how she analyzed the information gathered or what theory informed her analysis. Yarnal et al. (2006) were an exception in using grounded theory. Thus, most of the embodiment research published to date has provided little in the way of methodological depth or integrity. In particular, although collecting substantive amounts of data, e.g., observing interactions within the field of study, making picture documentaries, and interviewing coaches, players, and campers, researchers appear to have used no systematic analysis beyond a general appeal to themes and interpretations based on categories generated by the researchers.

Analytical improvements. Some researchers have turned to post-modernism as a means of theorizing their research. Post-modernism in research on bodies and embodiment is hailed as a means of going beyond biological reductionism and, in highlighting the importance of individual differences over the search for the normative, it

provides an inclusive space for alternative and marginalized perspectives (Adams & Bettis, 2003; Blood, 2005; Miller, 2000). For example, in their poststructuralist reading of cheerleading, Adams and Bettis (2003) referred to the use of dominant or prevalent cultural discourses to inform their analysis of cheerleading as a discursive practice. The participants' talk was treated as reflecting ways of making sense or meaning that are located externally in the culture; that is, as reflecting cultural reality. While this move to locate cheerleading within bigger, macro-level cultural practice is clearly an improvement over more methodologically impoverished studies, it still does not go far enough. I argue that their analysis would have been much more persuasive if they had started at the level of the interviews; that is, if they had attended to the discourses the cheerleaders produced within the local context of their talk, including a consideration of what the cheerleaders were trying to accomplish in making their claims and in choosing one argument over other compelling arguments.

Discourse analysis. Miller (2000) has argued that it is precisely this tendency to overlook the situated, political accomplishments of talk in everyday settings that renders many post-modern studies ineffective in terms of providing a feminist critical perspective. She argued further that all talk is political, that is, speakers are always doing something in their talk – such as making claims, presenting versions of themselves, talking in ways that make sense in the particular context of conversation (see also Edley, 2001; Potter, & Wetherell, 1987, 1995; Wood & Kroger, 2000). In the discourse analysis that Miller and others advocate, politics is treated as an ongoing discursive accomplishment, but also culture, identity, bodies, and embodiment are viewed as

accomplished in talk. Moreover, not just certain kinds of talk, but all talk, e.g., about shaving your legs, missing the bus, philosophy, political promises and scientific discussions entail making claims of some kind. Discourse analysis retains post modernism's respect for individual differences and multiple positions and also serves a feminist's critical perspective by locating analysis and research in the routine talk of individuals (Miller, 2000).

To date, there is little discursive research on women and the body, although some (e.g., Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005) have argued for the usefulness of examining talk in everyday situations to study how bodies and body size are constructed and constituted through talk: "body size is hereby not a perceptual topic, but a conversational resource that may be drawn upon to achieve interactional business" (p. 627). Similarly, Gill, Henwood and McLean (2005) used discourse analysis to investigate the ways in which men talk about their bodies and bodily practices. Thus, there is a need for discursive studies to explore women's embodiment.

My Research

In my project, I adopted discourse analysis as my theoretical and methodological framework, because it provides a systematic analytic approach based on the understanding that all talk is action, and that cultural constructs like body and embodiment are best understood by examining the ways in which they are produced in everyday talk. In this regard, I agree with those who argue that the problematic assumption made in much research is that talk can accurately represent something real or out there, such as bodies or women's embodied experiences (e.g., Miller, 2000). The

discursive perspective is that talk produces accounts. Accordingly, my interest is in women's bodies as a discursive site for the production of political realities and assumptions about women and women's lives. In other words, my concern is with how talk about bodies is produced, how claims are made, and the interpretative repertoires or cultural resources that women draw on or resist in their accounts.

The present study explored the experience of women in physically demanding occupations by using critical discourse analysis to investigate the interpretive repertoires the women drew upon and the subject positions they took up in talking about themselves and their bodies (Edley, 2001; Potter and Wetherell, 1995; Wood & Kroger, 2000). The discursive approach used takes language as its focus, specifically, the ways in which people talk about themselves and events in their lives, and in this case, their bodies. Central to this approach is the idea that people construct versions of themselves in their talk, and that by studying the way these accounts are produced within specific contexts, i.e., conversations or interviews, we can explore how people take up or resist culturally available ways of talking about themselves, i.e., the way they take up culturally available subject positions. In my analysis, I examined the cultural discourses that women drew on in talking about their bodies in the context of everyday life, i.e., the way they drew upon culturally available interpretive repertoires, and how they negotiated the dilemmatic aspects of taking up these discourses (Billig, et al., 1988; Edley, 2001).

There is a paucity of research in psychology that actively engages the notion that women lead embodied lives. Additionally, there is a tendency within psychology and within popular culture to pathologize the relationship between women and their bodies.

Thus, my purpose in this research was to study women's embodiment by investigating how ordinary women, that is, women drawn from a non-clinical population, talk about their bodies. The work place is a relatively "normal" part of women's everyday lives; thus, in talking with women recruited to talk about their everyday lives, my intention was to move away from the kinds of pathologizing tendencies that characterize psychology's treatment of women's bodies. I hoped to expand and augment what has hitherto been a rather narrow understanding of the body and embodiment within psychology.

My particular interest was in talking to women who work, or had recently worked in employment areas that require a certain level of bodily skill and/or physical activity, that is, in occupations in which their bodies are integrally involved in what they do, both in terms of the tasks they perform and the level of skill required. This included traditionally female occupations with bodily requirements, e.g., cleaning or janitorial staff who are on their feet all day engaged in physically demanding tasks, as well as non-traditional occupations, e.g., weight trainers, firefighters, and military personnel. In including physical-but-traditional work as a qualifying factor in selecting my participants, my study took up an aspect of physical work which is often unrepresented in the literature.

Research on women facing the challenges of non-traditional work is well-documented in the literature. While still typically the exception, women are increasingly represented in occupations that have historically been exclusively male domains: as members of the military, paramedics, firefighters, policewomen, wrestlers, fishers, construction workers, tradeswomen, boxers, and so on. Women in these occupations

often find themselves in the position of challenging well-entrenched stereotypical gender constraints, as can be seen in the higher incidence of sexual harassment among women in non-traditional versus traditional occupations (e.g., Ragins & Scandura, 1995). Much of the research on this topic has investigated women's attitudes, personality traits, and feelings of self efficacy (e.g., Greene & Gohdes, 1997; Mathur, 1996; Whiston, 1993); as well as sex role attitudes (e.g., propensity for androgyny), role conflicts, and sex role orientation (e.g., Chatterjee & McCarrey, 1991; Lawson, 1989; Long 1989; Teibel, 1990); in addition to the stresses, harassment, and other barriers faced on the job (e.g., Jaqua, 1988; Monroe, Blalock & Vlosky, 1999; Ragins & Scandura, 1995).

My research questions were as follows: How do women in physically demanding occupations, i.e., those in which regular demands are made on their bodies (e.g., landscapers, construction workers and cleaners) draw on available discourses when they talk about themselves and their bodies? Do they produce alternative discourses to those most familiar within western culture? What is accomplished in constructing their bodies in particular ways? My intention was to analyze the process by which hegemonic forms of discourse were normalized and to critically consider "whose interests are best served by different discursive formulations" (Edley, 2001, p.190). Additionally, mindful of the paradox of discourse that we as users of discourse are also constituted in discourse (Potter & Wetherell, 1995), how do women position themselves in relation to the interpretative repertoires they take up? What subject positions do they take and what do they gain by taking up certain positions and rejecting others. Finally, what are the controversial or

dilemmatic aspects of talk about the body for my participants? How do they negotiate these dilemmas?

My hope was that this research would open up an analysis of women and their bodies beyond the narrow constraints of the research literature in psychology and provide a discursive space in which we can begin to re-theorize psychology's view of the body.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Participants

Fifteen women attending the University of Calgary and two women working full-time from the community volunteered to be interviewed to talk about their bodies, especially in the context of doing physical work. Participants ranged in age from 18 years to 51 years. Most were Caucasian, and identified as lower to middle class (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Religious Affiliation	SES
Ann	21	Polish	Roman Catholic	middle class
Chris	22	Caucasian	None	working class
Hannah	34		non-religious	
Janice	19	Caucasian	Catholic	
Jenica	24	Caucasian	none	poor student
Jenny	21	Caucasian		
Juliana	20	Caucasian	Religious science	upper middle class
Katie	22	Caucasian		
Krista	23	Caucasian	Christian - nondenominational	working class
Lana	45	Canadian	Lutheran	low
Marie	51	Caucasian	Catholic	lower-middle
Nancy	27	Croatian	none	middle class
Rian	19	Caucasian	Christian	lower-middle
Rochelle	18	white Canadian	none	
Sidonie	22	Arab	Islam	below poverty line
Taylor	18	white Canadian	Roman Catholic	middle class
Terri	32	Caucasian	Mormon upbringing	middle class

Note that in Table 1 participants were not given pre-existing categories to choose from; thus terms like “Caucasian” and “white Canadian” reflect the participants’ own

descriptions. Additionally, empty spaces indicate that participants opted not to provide information in the relevant category.

All participants were students at the time of the interview, with the exception of Marie and Terri. Recruitment was through word of mouth and through Experimentrix, a Department of Psychology recruiting tool, which encourages students to sign up for experiments in order to earn bonus marks in designated psychology classes. To qualify for the study, participants must have worked, or been working, in an occupation that required some degree of physical fitness or exertion as either a requirement of the job, e.g., as a construction worker, or a requirement to qualify for the position, e.g., military personnel. In fact, all participants recruited were working, or had worked, at their jobs, full-time or part-time, in the last two years.

As part of the recruitment process, the exact definition of “working in a physical occupation or one in which participants used their bodies” was kept intentionally vague in order to encourage women from occupations that perhaps were not covered in the list below. Prospective participants were informed that possible occupations included the following, which was not intended to be an exclusive list: construction workers, firefighters, military personnel, paramedics, cleaning women, janitorial staff, health workers, care givers, policewomen, postal delivery workers, tradeswomen, dancers and gymnasts. Women who routinely participated in physically demanding sports, e.g., hockey, soccer, football, and basketball were also considered. The participants came from a variety of occupations, which ranged from building and maintaining neon signs to privately contracting to clean houses. For a list of the particular physical occupations

each of the participants worked in (some participants worked in more than one occupation), please see Table 2.

Table 2

Participants Age and Physical Occupations Worked

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation
Ann	21	skiing instructor
Chris	22	coaching gymnastics (over 6 yrs)
Hannah	34	cleaning houses; laborer in a factory
Janice	19	swim instructor/lifeguard (3 yrs)
Jenica	24	landscape (2 yrs); seasonal laborer at zoo (3yrs); ski instructor; house painter
Jenny	21	personal trainer (6 mos); muscle & fitness training on personal level (5 yrs)
Juliana	20	dance instructor (4 yrs); jazz, modern & hip hop to girls ages 6-17
Katie	22	landscape assistant 4 mos/yr (4 yrs)
Krista	23	climbing wall instructor (3 yrs); field hockey coach & teacher (6 yrs)
Lana	45	tradesperson -- industrial spray painter & journeyman (12 yrs)
Marie	51	animal health technician (lifting animals, cleaning cages); residential cleaning
Nancy	27	lab technician requiring heavy lifting, minor construction work
Rian	19	general construction -- framing roofing, renovations, etc. (3 yrs)
Rochelle	18	landscaping (3yrs)
Sidonie	22	cleaning (6 years); stock type work, Zellers (8 years) concurrently
Taylor	18	skilled laborer in construction industry
Terri	32	personal trainer, fitness competitor (8 yrs)

Note that descriptions used under “vocation” reflect participants’ own descriptions.

Procedure

This research was approved by the Conjoint Faculties Ethics Review Board. Participants were interviewed in the discourse lab at the University of Calgary (see Appendix A for a copy of the Board's approval notice). Once seated, I chatted briefly with them about the purpose of the study and what would happen next if they agreed to participate. I talked about the tendency within the psychological literature to pathologize women's relationship with their bodies, explained my rationale in talking to women in physical occupations about their everyday experience, and explained what would be expected of them in the interview should they give their consent to participate. The written description of the preliminary talk I gave to the participants is provided in Appendix B and was presented to the participants in paper form as part of debriefing after the interview had ended.

Next, participants were given the consent form (Appendix C) and the list of suggested topics (Appendix D) and left alone in the room to read these documents. Participants were asked to notify me in the adjoining room once they had a chance to go through the documents. At this point, I asked if the participant would still like to participate. All participants agreed to participate in the study after this part of the procedure. Participants were again informed, having already read this as part of the consent form, that they were free to end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time. Once participants agreed to this and signed the consent form, I turned on the tape recorder. The cassette tapes used were 60 minutes to a side. Many participants talked

longer than the 60 minutes, but only the tape recorded portion of the interviews was used for analysis.

Participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format in which they were encouraged to ‘take the lead’ in terms of choosing what conversational topics were most important to them. In order to ‘break the ice’, I began each interview by asking participants to explain what kind of work they did. Participants were encouraged to use the suggested topic guide as a source of possible topics. While some participants referred to the guide throughout the interview, the majority referred to it infrequently or not at all. After the interview ended, participants were given the debriefing handout (Appendix E), thanked for their time and encouraged to contact the researcher at any time with further questions.

Interviews were transcribed using a modified version of the transcription notation developed by Gail Jefferson (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984) and used by Edley and Wetherell (2001). See Table 3 for an overview of the transcription notations used in this thesis. Excerpts are numbered by order of their appearance within the text. For example, an excerpt with line numbers 20-27 began on line 20 of the transcript. Citations from excerpts are indicated by line numbers included in parentheses after the citation and the participant’s name if it is not clearly indicated in the text already. The transcribed research conversations were analyzed using critical discourse analysis (Edley, 2001; Potter & Wetherell, 1995; Wood & Kroger, 2000). The analysis process required extensive reading and rereading of the transcripts in order to familiarize myself

Table 3

Transcription Notation

Notation	Explanation
(.)	Speech unclear and therefore omitted from transcript
[...]	Material deliberately omitted
[text]	Clarificatory information; also used to indicate overlapping comments
Text	Word(s) spoken louder (elevated volume)
<i>text</i>	Used to indicate words that were stressed or emphasized
text= =text	Used between turns to indicate an interruption
text?	Voice raised at the end as one would in a question

with the data. The goals of this analysis were three-fold: to discover the interpretative repertoires that participants drew upon and which informed their talk; to examine how participants oriented to these interpretative repertoires and thus the subject positions they took up; and to critically consider what participants were accomplishing in working up these versions. Additionally, I was concerned with how participants' talk contributed to a psychological understanding of embodiment.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

My goal in this analysis was to look at how the participants constructed versions of their bodies across conversations. Even before the interviews were transcribed, it was clear that they had multiple ways of talking about bodies and constructed competing versions while taking up various subject positions according to what they were trying to accomplish in the conversation. As I shall demonstrate, the participants not only oriented to multiple bodies, that is, different interpretative repertoires, but they also took up different subject positions, i.e., positioned themselves and others in relation to available ways of making sense about the body. Keeping in mind that all talk is political, a further goal of the analysis was to investigate what the participants accomplished within the local context of the conversations. Contrary to what much of the literature in psychology might suggest, the participants' talk about their bodies may be seen as the means for managing their identities as normal, healthy, independent women.

Overall, participants oriented to four different interpretative repertoires. The aesthetic body interpretative repertoire involved meeting, or striving for, certain standards of appearance. The participants oriented to the able body interpretative repertoire primarily in talking about work or specific accomplishments which require strength, skill and stamina. The healthy body interpretative repertoire entailed meeting a certain standard of health and frequently focussed on being physically fit or in shape. Finally, some participants took up the natural body interpretative repertoire, which involved talk about characteristics or behaviours taken to be the natural, i.e., biological, properties of

the body. In the following section, I analyse a number of excerpts to establish the construction of the various interpretative repertoires across interviews. Next, I examine how participants drew upon these interpretative repertoire's in order to construct versions of themselves and make, or refute, claims within their talk.

Four Interpretative Repertoires

The Aesthetic Body

Almost all of the participants oriented at one point or another to the aesthetic body, that is, their talk drew upon a common understanding that women should be or are expected to be concerned with the appearance of their bodies – both how they appear to themselves and how they appear to others. This way of talking included notions of attractiveness, diet, weight, and an excessive concern with meeting standards of beauty. The following example is from the interview with Jenny, age 21, a student who worked as a fitness trainer (including muscle and fitness training) in a women's gym:

Excerpt 1

- 154 Interviewer: So how do you think being, working there and-and, you know, sort
 155 of being there with these rules and stuff affects how *you* think about your
 156 body?
 157 Jenny: I know I was hired because, you know, I am the ideal and I know that
 158 sounds awful and I don't think of myself as perfect or anything like that but I
 159 think, if you can train someone and they look at you and they're motivated
 160 by that, that's *such* a reinforcer for how hard you worked to look the way you
 161 do, you know what I mean? (Interviewer: Hm). Like I didn't start out
 162 working out to look like Brittany Spears. I mean, now I want to look-you
 163 know, now I want the six pack and now I want stuff like that but, that's-I
 164 think that's just pushing myself farther than (Interviewer: Mhmm) you know
 165 I would normally? But, I mean, I don't-I don't have-Like everyone has days
 166 where they're like, 'Oh I look so fat' or whatever but I know that if I feel like
 167 that I'll just go to the gym and I'll feel a thousand times better.

Jenny positioned herself as meeting the “ideal” standards of physical appearance expected by her clients (“if you can train someone and they look at you and they’re motivated by that”, 159-160). She described the ideal as something achieved through hard work (“that’s *such* a reinforcer for how hard you worked to look the way you do”, 160-161) and requiring continual effort: “I don’t think of myself as perfect or anything” (158); “now I want the six pack” (163). She positioned herself as not explicitly seeking that standard: “Like I didn’t start out working out to look like Brittany Spears” (161-162). Additionally, she constructed feelings of failing to meet that standard as being normative: “Like everyone has days where they’re like, ‘Oh I look so fat’” (166). Thus, the aesthetic body is thin, or at least not fat, and associated with pop icons like Britney Spears. Additionally, feelings of failure to achieve the aesthetic body ideal are characterized as normative.

The next excerpt is from the interview with Sidonie, aged 22 years and a student, who, amongst other things, worked nights cleaning a business building downtown, and also emphasized thinness as one characteristic of the aesthetic body. One of her nightly duties involved cleaning the stairs between floors. Just prior to this excerpt, Sidonie had complained about the mirrors that lined both walls of the stairway because “you can see like your whole behind going up the stairs...and since I started working there, ohmigod I am so self-conscious to go up that stair” (108-110). This is the stairway she referred to in line 118.

Excerpt 2

113 Sidonie: And like before I worked, I never used to have a problem with my
 114 body weight because I've always been this size [Interviewer: Mhmm] for,
 115 since (.) like the end of junior high like I've always, I got skinny a bit like
 116 when I was in high school but when I got into university I was (.) this size
 117 but since I started work with the building and actually go up the stairs I've
 118 noticed, I'm that, I noticed that's made me more self-conscious like I used to
 119 never look in a mirror to look at, like, like maybe I'll look at (.) you know
 120 like when I'm trying on skirts or anything but now I make sure I check my
 121 behind and see (.) how far out is it and [Interviewer: Mhmm] so I've noticed
 122 that just by working there and just by, like, when it (.) when I get sore?
 123 [Interviewer: Mhmm] I notice that, um, because it hurts here [Interviewer:
 124 Mhmm] and so I touch here just to, like, rub it just to (.) um rub it to make it
 125 feel better? [Interviewer: Mhmm] and I notice that I can feel, like, self-
 126 pockets and it just makes me really self-conscious so.

Sidonie positioned herself as someone who, until recently, had “never” had a problem with her body weight, neither during her “skinny” days in high school nor even when she started university at “this size” (113-115). She identified ‘going up the stairs’ as making her “more” self conscious, implying that she had been self-conscious before she started work. In either case, this self-consciousness was about appearance, whether it be looking at herself while trying on skirts or checking her “behind and see (.) how far out is it” (120-121) or finding “self-pockets” (125-126). Other participants made similar references such as “twin-turbo” legs (Krista 357) and “my carbohydrate pouch” (Janice 478). In addition, critically checking one’s body for less-than-ideal parts was mentioned frequently when participants took up the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire.

Sometimes, participants oriented to the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire as the concern of other people. Consider the following example in which Janice, a 19 year old swim instructor and lifeguard as well a student, described the kind of girls with whom she attended school:

Excerpt 3

706 Janice: I went to school with a lot of girls who were like very, you know, it was
 707 kind of like going to a club when you went to my school every day, my high
 708 school, it was **very** like, ooh, you know there was a lot of girls who would
 709 wake up two hours before to do themselves up [Interviewer: Wow] I know it
 710 was **crazy** at my school so there was like, you know, you'd see the girls who
 711 looked like **perfection** you know with the long hair and the perfect face and,
 712 you know, the tiny little bodies.

Janice positioned the girls in her high school as being extreme (e.g., waking two hours early “to do themselves up” to look “like perfection”, 709, 711), and described the “everyday” scene at her high school as “crazy” (709) and like “going to a club” (707). Thus, although “a lot of girls” did it and they did it “every day” (706-708), Janice distanced herself from this practice. Additionally, the perfect ideal these girls achieved was, presumably, a familiar standard, as indicated by the repeated use of the phrase “you know”. The aesthetic body has long hair, the perfect face, and is tiny. As my analysis in the next section will show, many participants oriented to the physical standards of appearance and attractiveness so familiar and available in western culture, i.e., the aesthetic body, and what counts as violations of these standards (as in Sidonie’s excerpt), but they usually positioned themselves as resisting an extreme concern with the aesthetic body.

The Able Body

Many participants oriented to the able/practical body interpretative repertoire in the context of talk about having strong, skilled, capable bodies that enable them to meet physical challenges and demands required for both personal and professional achievements. In the first example, Terri, a full-time 32 year old personal trainer and

fitness competitor (i.e., competitive body builder), was talking about clients' expectations when they came to her for personal training.

Excerpt 4

- 187 Terri: Yes. Definitely. Um (.) I really, really appreciate people who come in (.)
 188 and have different focuses other than the way that they look. Even though
 189 vanity supports my income?
 190 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 191 Terri: Um I really appreciate it when people have a different agenda.
 192 [Interviewer: Mhmm]. When they want to do a road race or they want to
 193 perform better in some kind of athletics or I really appreciate that as opposed
 194 to people who just want to look good (.) so that other people will like them.

Terri oriented to both the aesthetic body, i.e., people who were explicitly concerned with “the way that they look” (188) and the able body, i.e., people who “want to do a road race or they want to perform better in some kind of athletics” (192-193). She clearly privileged training aimed at developing an able body over training aimed at developing an aesthetic body, but used language that was not explicitly critical of those who “want to look good”. For example, she “appreciated” those in pursuit of an able body and described them as having a “different focus” and a “different agenda” (188,191). This careful choice of words makes sense for someone who is a professional personal trainer and, as she noted, the vain are a source of income. Thus, she positioned herself as offering a sincere opinion about the merits of the able body that was not self-serving.

In the next excerpt, Katie, a 22-yr old student who had worked as a gardener (landscape assistant) for the last four years (May –August), also oriented to the able body interpretative repertoire in talking about having “the kind of strength I can actually *apply* to life”:

Excerpt 5

- 275 Katie: Like there's one guy at work who can bench press so much and he's *huge*,
 276 but if you go on a walk with him, he runs out of breath in, like, ten minutes
 277 because he's all muscle.
 278 Interviewer: Hm. Wow.
 279 Katie: Well, like, a fast walk not, like, a little stroll. But, like, that's what I like
 280 about work, is it's given me the kind of strength I can actually *apply* to life.
 281 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 282 Katie: Like I might not have a six pack, but I can (.) you know, do the things I
 283 need to do.

The able body was constructed here as a body that has “the kind of strength I can actually *apply* to life” (280) and can “do the things I need to do” (282-283). It was worked up in contrast to a body (in this case a male body) with excessive strength that comes from “bench press[ing] so much” and developing “huge” muscles but no stamina (“runs out of breath in, like, ten minutes”) (275-277). Thus, the able body is a practical body involved in accomplishing something.

One final example is from the interview with Rochelle, a 22 yr-old student who had spent the last two summers landscaping:

Excerpt 6

- 427 Interviewer: So is there anything else on the list that strikes you or any?
 428 Rochelle: (sighs)
 429 [Five second pause]
 430 Rochelle: Well definitely the challenge thing. I definitely, I've tried to challenge
 431 myself [Interviewer: Mhmm] physically more and, uh, knowing that I (.) can
 432 do things that, like, I once thought even that only guys could do [Interviewer:
 433 Mhmm] like lift the big rocks, you know, and stuff like that it's definitely
 434 made me want to challenge myself more and push myself more and, like, each
 435 summer I'm finding that I can do, like, more and more [Interviewer: Mhmm]
 436 and like more in less amount of time even.
 437 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 438 Rochelle: So it's, it's really interesting to see it's, it's and like obviously with
 439 things like marathons and stuff like that it's like pushing myself [Interviewer:
 440 Mhmm] to that limit and I'm really up for challenges.

Here Rochelle constructed the able body in the context of ‘challeng[ing] herself physically’ and ‘pushing herself’ to the limit both at work (“like lift the big rocks”) and outside of work (“with things like marathons and stuff”) (433, 439). She positioned herself as successful (“knowing that I (.) can do things that, like, I once thought even that only guys could do”) and attributed her achievement-orientation to this success (“it’s definitely made me want to challenge myself more”) (431-434). The able body is capable as well as practical.

The Healthy Body

The healthy body interpretative repertoire included being active in an ordinary sense (as opposed to “extra-ordinary” physical achievements) and physically well, i.e., not sick, fit, and doing things to keep one in good health. In the next excerpt, Rochelle oriented to two different interpretative repertoires: the aesthetic body and the healthy body.

Excerpt 7

- 457 Interviewer: That’s cool (.) So is there anything you can think of about (.) your
 458 *body* and the way (.) people messages that people send, um.
 459 Rochelle: Um? Well, what, well definitely one thing I’ve found is that like (.) as I
 460 (.) uh have gotten into better physical shape people have been like, ‘Wow!’
 461 Like, ‘You look great, you look healthy’ and, like, that’s, like, my role you
 462 know? Like I wanna look good and look healthy and so it (.) like it definitely,
 463 it definitely *helps* and it lets me know that I’m doing something right
 464 [Interviewer: Mhmm, mhmm] you know? Instead of people being, like,
 465 ‘Should you really be eating those potato chips?’ You know?

Twice, Rochelle distinguished between physical appearance (the aesthetic body) and healthy appearance (the healthy body): “You look great, you look healthy”; “look good and look healthy” (461-462). The repetition of “and” in these two phrases marked the

distinction. By linking physical appearance and health as two different outcomes of getting “into better physical shape” (460), Rochelle did not have to account for her concern with physical appearance. Indeed, her comments about being in shape helping and something she is doing right focussed attention away from the aesthetic body. When she quoted other people at the end of her turn (“Should you really be eating those potato chips?”, 465) , she chose a food that is both unhealthy and could contribute to obesity. This example again illustrates how the participants used the multiple versions of the body in a variety of ways, sometimes to clarify and, as in Rochelle’s case here, to obfuscate the purpose of her getting in shape.

In the next example, Ann, a 21 year old student and skiing instructor, oriented to both the aesthetic and healthy body interpretative repertoires:

Excerpt 8

216 Ann: And like, or like a friend of mine that went through anorexia and now she’s,
 217 you know, *still* working through all that stuff [Interviewer: Yes, it’s really
 218 hard] it makes you realize, like, you know, look at what happened to her and
 219 do you want to look like that? [Interviewer: Mhmm] just to lose, like, a few
 220 pounds, like is it worth it? Is it worth being sick and (.) to look a certain way?
 221 [Interviewer: Mhmm] Like who cares? Just exercise. If it takes you two years
 222 to look the way you want to, so be it, but you’re going to go along it a healthy
 223 way [Interviewer: Yeah] you know? There’s no quick results if you want to be
 224 healthy about it, I think. I think with these friends that are doing the wrong
 225 thing, I think they’re just making me more aware of (.) and me appreciating the
 226 fact that my parents do cook well [Interviewer: Mhmm] and I do eat healthy at
 227 home [Interviewer: Mhmm] to a large extent. I don’t know. I think that helps
 228 and it keeps me grounded. Otherwise I think I could be where they are
 229 [Interviewer: Mhmm] and being, like, ‘Oh, you know, like, I could lose a few
 230 pounds and I could, like, a few-a few’ anyone could, I’m sure. Like-like
 231 everybody you ask would probably be like, ‘I could stand to lose a few...’

Ann oriented to the healthy body interpretative repertoire, both in referring to healthy practices, e.g., exercise, and in referring to not being sick. However, her talk about

“look[ing] a certain way” (220) or taking “two years to look the way you want to” (221-222) clearly drew upon the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire. Notably, she began with a description of her friend who suffered from anorexia, which provided a point of contrast to both healthy and aesthetic bodies: “do you want to look like that?” (219). Being sick “to look a certain way” was contrasted with “just exercise”, the healthy alternative (“health way”) that requires more time (“no quick result”) to achieve the same goal (“to look the way you want to”) (221-224). She moved between the two interpretative repertoires, bolstering her position as someone who engages in healthy practices and normalising concerns related to the aesthetic body (“everybody you ask would probably ...”, 231) .

In the final example, Krista, a 23 year old student and part time climbing instructor and field hockey coach and teacher, also talked about weight loss, but related weight loss to a concern with achieving the healthy body (as opposed to the aesthetic body), providing an illustration of the healthy body interpretative repertoire and the flexible way in which topics like weight loss were worked up.

Excerpt 9

259 Krista: So with like, my certification I guess with field ho-or, with climbing, is
 260 something that I’m really striving for [Interviewer: Mhmm] which I really
 261 want to get towards and I find if I *do* do that I know that I’ll feel better about
 262 myself because I will be in better shape, I will have to lose a bit of weight just
 263 to help me be able to climb [Interviewer: Mhmm] and I mean, for me to lose
 264 weight is healthy. Like I know for some people like if they want to lose weight
 265 it’s not really a healthy goal that they need to, you know? [Interviewer:
 266 Mhmm] Like with some people in this () kind of thing so I think like-like
 267 even like, you know, three, four pounds kind of thing [Interviewer: Mhmm]
 268 would be good for me to do just to help me **up the wall** [laughs]. [Interviewer:
 269 Right]. A little less, you know, kind of thing [Interviewer: Yeah] and just to
 270 build body, like upper body strength and stuff like that [Interviewer: Mhmm]
 271 and I know that if I *do* do that I’ll see results and be able to feel a lot better
 272 about myself.

Krista was a climbing instructor who had not yet achieved her official certification. Here, Krista drew on the healthy body interpretative repertoire in order to make the connection between getting her certification and feeling better about herself: “if I *do* do that I know that I’ll feel better about myself because I will be in better shape, I will have to lose a bit of weight just to help me be able to climb” (261-263). Thus, losing a “bit” of weight was identified as necessary to achieve her goal and defined as a healthy body practice. Krista distanced herself from people with unhealthy weight loss goals: “Like I know for some people like if they want to lose weight it’s not really a healthy goal that they need to, you know?” (264-265). Although she did not elaborate on just what those unhealthy goals might be, her emphasis on losing a “bit” of weight (262), i.e., “three, four pounds” (267) and the “some people” not needing to lose weight (266) implied excessive weight loss and/or weight loss in the absence of being overweight. Krista oriented to the healthy body in describing what would make her feel better about herself.

The Natural Body

The natural body interpretative repertoire was a less frequently utilized resource compared to the others. In the case of the other interpretative repertoires (the aesthetic, able and healthy bodies), participants positioned themselves as contributing to the production of that particular body, e.g., through dieting and clothing (the aesthetic body), eating well (the healthy body), and working hard and developing skills (the able body). When participants oriented to the natural body, the body was constructed as a natural entity with its own demands and needs, and participants positioned themselves as

listening to their bodies, accepting or fighting with their bodies, and doing things that were natural for their bodies, i.e., using their bodies the way they were meant to be used.

In the first excerpt, Jennica, aged 24, talked about doing the things that her body was designed to do. At the time of the interview, Jennica had held a number of physical occupations which included working at the zoo, working as a seasonal landscape laborer for the city (which involved, for example, taking care of a seven-acre ornamental garden and planting 60,000 annuals every year), house painting, and ski instructing (1-17). The tobogganing reference in the first line pointed back to a previous part of the conversation about 'midnight tobogganing' when Jennica told a story about getting up in the middle of the night to go tobogganing during stressful times.

Excerpt 10

167 Jennica: Um (.) cause I, I know as far as, like, even as tobogganing goes...
 168 ...yeah, I've had a stressful semester (laughs) and there's something about
 169 going outside, by myself in the dark, at night, and walking up and down the
 170 hill that makes me feel so much better about everything that's going on in my
 171 life [Interviewer: Cool] and (.) I'm not sure if it's the same thing. Like I think
 172 it is partly the physical kind of aspect of it [Interviewer: Sure] but just being (.)
 173 outside and feeling like (.) my body was made to be there, you know. I don't
 174 feel when I sit at a computer all day that I'm designed for that.

Jennica made a pointed contrast between places her body was made to be (outside, engaged in physical activity) and places her body was not designed for (sitting at the computer all day). She described herself as most content when she was doing what was best for her body: "there's something about going outside... that makes me feel so much better about everything that's going on in my life." In this case, the natural body is one that thrives in some environments and not in others.

In the following excerpt, Terri talked about how much better she felt once she had stopped fighting her body. At the beginning of this turn, she also oriented to the healthy body interpretative repertoire:

Excerpt 11

- 614 Terri: The part of my body that I guess I fight a little bit is the gaining fat, um, but
 615 I think that, you know, as long as I control what I eat and I eat clean foods,
 616 which means they're not processed and they're healthy kind of foods
 617 [Interviewer: Mhmm] then my body fat naturally stays at a lower level. But
 618 my body will naturally gain muscle and I, and I stopped fighting that, I stopped
 619 wanting to be a skinny girl, you know, in my early twenties and I started
 620 working with my body and it made me feel so much better than fighting
 621 against it because the (.) losing the battle against your body is such a powerless
 622 feeling.
 623 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 624 Terri: And when you finally accept what your body is and accept what your body
 625 can do and know that you are doing the best thing for your body [Interviewer:
 626 [coughs]] as opposed to, you know, starving yourself or making yourself throw
 627 up or whatever these girls do, you know, when you're actually working with it
 628 and, and realizing that your body is good at building muscle and you're
 629 working with that, than that feels so good. It feels really good.
 630

In this excerpt, Terri worked up an account in which the body knew best. Using the metaphor of fighting a battle, she contrasted the “powerless feeling” that came from fighting against the body (and ultimately losing the battle, 621-622) with how “working with my [her] body” made her feel “so much better” (627-629). Giving up the battle involved letting go of “wanting to be a skinny girl” and accepting the muscles that her body “naturally” produced (617-620). Here, Terri characterized the body as an entity

which could be fought against, accepted, and worked with, but “doing the best thing for your body” was the most rewarding: “that feels so good. It feels really good,” (625, 629).

In sum, participants drew mainly upon some combination of the four interpretative repertoires listed here. They often oriented to more than one interpretative repertoire during the interviews and sometimes moved with ease between seemingly contradictory subject positions. In the rest of the chapter, I consider the following questions. What were participants trying to accomplish in orienting to these interpretative repertoires? How did they position themselves (what subject positions did they take up) in relation to these discourses? In examining what participants were trying to accomplish in their talk, I concentrated particularly on talk in which participants negotiated potential conflicts, considerations and expectations that were relevant to embodiment. In the next three sections I consider the following: 1) how participants positioned themselves as not too concerned with appearance, and yet concerned enough; 2) how participants made claims about being comfortable with their bodies in order to bolster their position as confident, independent and, in some cases, not concerned about appearance; and finally 3) how some participants negotiated the challenges that arise from having women’s bodies in male-dominated occupations.

Not (Too) Concerned About Appearance

With few exceptions, the participants frequently oriented to the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire in their conversations. While the psychology literature on women and body image suggests that many women have a distorted perception of how their bodies look or are obsessed with meeting certain standards of appearance (e.g., Blood, 2005) the participants in this study actively distanced themselves from a concern with

appearance during the interviews. In drawing on the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire, they almost always positioned themselves as not being overly concerned with appearance, which I will refer to as the “not (too) concerned with appearance” subject position. They constructed the pitfalls of being too concerned with appearance as obsessive dieting, eating disorders, and unrealistic expectations and resisted being

positioned as having a pathological concern with their bodies. On the other hand, participants also resisted positioning themselves as “not being concerned enough with appearance”, which they constructed as being overweight or unattractive. Instead, they oriented to the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire in terms of being average or meeting the realistic ideal of “looking nice” and being accepted by others. This balance between “not too concerned but concerned enough” – as precarious as it sounds – was skillfully negotiated. Furthermore, it is an example of the rhetorical nature of discourse and an indication of the contradictory cultural resources available to the participants.

The dilemma of “not too concerned but concerned enough” is illustrated in the following excerpt from my interview with Janice. Earlier in the interview, she talked about how, when she first started life guarding at 16, she could not wear any make-up at the pool, saying, “it was all a bit scary so you actually have to be like what you look like when you wake up in the morning...” This was the joke we shared at line 580. She had also talked earlier about attending Weight Watchers after returning from a trip to South America, and this was the reference in line 571.

Excerpt 12

571 Janice: Whether I mean the Weight Watchers obviously, I lost some weight and
 572 stuff but with my social life and going to bars and meeting people and **never**,
 573 it, like it never actually hindered guys coming up to me like it was, they were
 574 still [Interviewer: Right] you know it was still fine so I was like, well (.) you
 575 know, ah! I don't need () because of this *so* I did it just because I felt good
 576 and then once I felt good [Interviewer: Right] the () and I was like well this
 577 is, you know, this is good people still come, you know, I'm still **attractive** to
 578 other people and then so, so that was good. And, um, right now I'm dating one
 579 of the lifeguards at my pool and so that's kind of interesting because he gets to
 580 see me when I'm, like, in the water teaching (laughs) [Interviewer: Right] and
 581 then so I mean that's, it's really, it's cool like that because we're not a, cause
 582 we just started dating so you're not really at a comfort level with the person?

583 [Interviewer: Mhmm] Like you would be with someone that you knew for a
 584 long time but at the same time it's really (.) you know it's not like a big deal
 585 for me it's not like if we go out for dinner or something I'm not gonna try and,
 586 like, doll myself up you know [Interviewer: Mhmm] you know like **crazy**,
 587 **crazy** like you know I'll look nice but I just won't [Interviewer: Right] it
 588 doesn't really matter.

Janice positioned herself as not being (too) concerned with appearance in accounting for her participation in Weight Watchers. It was not about weight or appearance, because “guys” found her attractive despite the weight (571-574; 576-578). It was about feeling good: “*so I did it just because I felt good*” (575). She built on this version of herself as not being concerned with appearance when she talked about her boyfriend, a “kind of interesting” relationship, because he knew what she looked like without make-up from working with her at the pool (579-580). This was a notable accomplishment because they had just started dating and normally comfort with appearance in a dating relationship was established over time (582). Finally, she positioned herself as being concerned enough about her appearance, i.e., if they were going out to dinner she would try to “look nice”, but not too concerned, i.e., she would not “doll” herself up or be “crazy, crazy” about it (585-587).

I began with this excerpt because it clearly demonstrates the dilemma associated with taking up the “not (too) concerned with appearance” subject position. Even though Janice worked to position herself as not concerned about appearance, she moved back and forth between this subject position and “being concerned enough”. On the one hand, she attributed her weight loss to motives other than a concern about appearance. On the other hand, she supported this claim by emphasizing her appearance, i.e., without the

weight loss, she was attractive to others, and specifically to “guys” at the bar. Similarly, even though she would not “doll” herself up, she would “look nice”. Thus, Janice oriented to the common understanding that appearance does matter, in terms of having others find you attractive and the importance of meeting some standards of physical appearance. Nevertheless, she also positioned herself as not being too concerned with appearance. Importantly, this conversational manoeuvring occurred with minimal intervention on my part.

Often, participants drew upon other interpretative repertoires as an alternative to the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire and the “not (too) concerned with appearance” subject position. In the following excerpt, Chris oriented to the healthy body interpretative repertoire in order to avoid positioning herself as ‘not about appearance’. Chris was a 22 year old gymnastics coach who had been coaching since she was sixteen. In addition to being a student, she coached toddlers (2-4 years) thirty hours a week. Prior to this excerpt, Chris had been talking about attending dance classes and going to the gym.

Excerpt 13

- 238 Interviewer: So (.) would you say you have a healthy body image then or?
 239 Chris: Umm? Relatively healthy. I think, I think it's kind of skewed because of
 240 the fear of becoming my father? Be, be [Interviewer: Okay], so I think I
 241 sometimes I overly worry about it? But, I mean, I, I take a look around and I feel,
 242 like I don't feel awful and, like, there's certain areas, like, 'Oh god I wish I could
 243 get rid of my hips or whatever,' but it's not, I'm not obsessive about it, you know.
 244 Like I can live with it. And it's not so much the (.) you know standing in front of
 245 a mirror and looking at me, it's when I, you know, when I'm trying to do
 246 something and I know it's been awhile since I've done it and it's, that's what
 247 frustrates me more than the way I *look*, I guess, cause it's actually the physical
 248 *feeling* of being out of shape and not necessarily the physical look of it. Cause I, I,
 249 I feel like I've stayed *pretty* close to the same shape for several years so (.) but I

250 can tell when, like, you know, you're huffing and puffing trying to do something
 251 simple or, or (coughs) trying to lift something and I can't because it's been a long
 252 time since I've done that kind of stuff that bugs me, I guess. More than the
 253 physical look of it.

In response to my direct question (238), Chris provided qualified agreement that her body image was “relatively healthy” and “kind of skewed”. She attributed this to a fear of becoming overweight, like her father (239-240). Then, in the form of a disclaimer, she first raised the concern, stated in the form of a question, that she worried too much (“so I think I sometimes I overly worry about it?” 240-241) and positioned herself as someone who was “not (too) concerned with appearance”, i.e., she did not “feel awful”, was not “obsessive”, and “can live with” the way she looked in the mirror. Drawing on the healthy body interpretative repertoire, she reworked the problem, i.e., her feelings of frustration were attributed to not being physically fit and in shape: “it’s actually the physical *feeling* of being out of shape,” (248); “you know, you’re huffing and puffing trying to do something simple” (250-252). Finally, she re-positioned herself as someone who was “not (too) concerned with appearance” (“not necessarily the physical look of it”). Thus, Chris constructed her concern with weight as more about health (having a healthy body) than appearance (having an aesthetically pleasing body).

Just prior to the next excerpt, Hannah, a 34 year old student who had worked before returning to school cleaning houses and as a factory labourer, was talking about how Western standards of beauty have become the norm in her native Czechoslovakia (unlike during her childhood there): “I went and visited now and they have all the commercials now and they have, they have, you know, they shave their armpits [laughs] and they do

everything that we do here” (328-330). The excerpt began with my asking her about resisting the influence of Western values of beauty and body ideals:

Excerpt 14

- 350 Interviewer: So how has (.) do you feel like you’ve resisted sort of that kind of
 351 commonization [laughs].
 352 Hannah: I’ve seen, uh, that’s really interesting cause I, I think I never had it or,
 353 you know, so not, not much resisted as if, um, I see it which is [Interviewer:
 354 Mhmm, you’re aware of it.] protecting me. Ah yeah I think but, um, but no I,
 355 I’m definitely influenced, you, you *have* to be [Interviewer: Mhmm]. Um you
 356 know when I go shopping and I get pants I think, ‘Oh my butt is big’ but my
 357 butt’s not big, my butt’s just fine but it could be smaller [Interviewer: Right]
 358 you know so there is that, there is that nagging, ‘Oh well maybe I’ll just, I’ll
 359 stick to eating salads or something’ because it’s healthier but who knows?
 360 Interviewer: Right.
 361 Hannah: Because my, because my butt’s getting big so I don’t know it’s really,
 362 really hard to separate except, except I always say, ‘Um why did I just do that?
 363 Was it because I am caving in,’ um, yeah. I like, I like my body the way it is
 364 and I think if anything I want to keep it that way?

Hannah tactfully refused my feminist take on the problem of common standards of beauty as potentially requiring resistance by phrasing her answer in terms of ‘seeing it’, which, she claimed protected her: “I’ve seen, ... I think I never had it or, you know, so not, not much resisted as if, um, I *see it* which is protecting me,” (352-354; emphasis mine). Thus, she initially positioned herself as aware of the standards and potentially independent of them. She then claimed, however, that the influence of common standards of beauty was “unavoidable”: “Ah yeah I think but, um, but no I, I’m definitely influenced, you, you *have* to be,” (354-355). Switching from first person to the generalized pronoun “you”, Hannah emphasized her commonality with women in general. This move allowed Hannah to retain her position as knowledgeable about standards of beauty for women but also offered a stronger response to my proposal that

resistance is possible. Indeed, resistance is not possible – everyone is influenced and there is no choice. In effect, Hannah avoided positioning herself as having (too) much concern about appearance by emphasizing the impossibility of no concern.

In the next section, Hannah positioned herself as both satisfied with her body (my butt's not big) and wanting to change her body ("but it could be smaller"; 356-357). She described the back-and-forth struggle in a manner akin to a verbal tug of war (356-358). Who is doing the "nagging" remained unclear, although in her second turn, she worked up a distinction between her own preferences and some unstated "other": "it's really, really hard to separate except, except I always say, 'Um why did I just do that? Was it because I am caving in,'" (362-363). Again, this obvious preoccupation with appearance, i.e., the size of her butt, was offset by attributing the concern to some third party.

Like Chris, Hannah oriented to the healthy body interpretative repertoire, thereby bolstering her position as not (too) concerned with appearance. Eating salads to be healthy (358-359) might also reduce the size of her butt, but Hannah claimed that even she was unclear about her true motivation ("who knows?"). Her final declaration, "I like my body the way it is and I think if anything I want to keep it that way?", can be understood as a further way of avoiding the (too) concerned with appearance subject position. The tentative manner in which she advanced this, however, may have anticipated further questions from me, because after all, she had just stated, "my butt's getting big", thereby positioning her as concerned about appearance. This further underscores the rhetorical nature of these subject positions, i.e., what constitutes "enough" but not "too much" concern about appearance is always open for debate.

A further example comes from Terri who was 32 years old and had been working full time as a personal trainer and a fitness competitor for eight years. From the beginning of the interview, Terri made a distinction between the half of the year that she was preparing for, and participating in, competitions (the on season) and the half of the year when she was not involved in competition (the off season). She described the on season as a time when she kept to a very strict diet and training regime, resulting in a “thin body” with a very low body-fat percentage that was unhealthy. In the off season, she returned to a healthy body fat percentage and was more moderate in her training. Thus, in drawing on both the aesthetic body and healthy body interpretative repertoires, she positioned herself in contradictory ways, i.e., as both concerned about her appearance during the on season to the point where her body became unhealthy but also concerned about health in the sense that she limited her extreme thinness to the on season and was knowledgeable about the effects of her training regimen on the health of her body. In this excerpt, Terri explained why the competition half of the year (the on season) was so important:

Excerpt 15

- 35 Interviewer: So how do you (.) you think that the way, the stuff that you do for a
 36 living affects your body?
 37 Terri: Absolutely, one hundred percent. Um my job involves, um, people’s vanity
 38 and so I feel a lot, a lot of pressure to look the way that people *want* to look?
 39 Interviewer: Hm.
 40 Terri: Um and sometimes um (.) being a bodybuilder my weight will go up and
 41 down depending on what type of year it is and I notice that when I’m leaner
 42 and closer to competition, um, I get a lot more clients, um, who are younger
 43 and who want to be thin, um, and (.) not so much, um, when I’m heavier? So
 44 when I’m heavier, I notice that people aren’t as drawn to me to show them
 45 how to workout because they automatically assume [Interviewer: Wow] that I
 46 don’t (.) that I don’t know what I’m doing.

- 47 Interviewer: Wow.
 48 Terri: Actually I shouldn't say that because I don't know what they're assuming
 49 but I just notice that I don't get as much [Interviewer: You notice a
 50 difference]. Absolutely there's a difference, there's a difference.
 51 Interviewer: Wow.
 52 Terri: So I do, I really do feel, um, pressure to keep my physical appearance, um,
 53 appealing? [Interviewer: Mhmm] Um because it does help my business.

In the excerpt above, Terri explicitly oriented to the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire as something her clients sought: "Um my job involves, um, people's vanity and so I feel a lot, a lot of pressure to look the way that people want to look?" (37, 38). 'The way people want to look' she described as corresponding to the "leaner and closer to competition" (41-42) time of the year, thus positioning others as (too) concerned about appearance. She then claimed that she attracted fewer clients off season when she was heavier and consequently felt "pressure to keep my physical appearance, um appealing?" (52-53). Thus, she positioned herself as concerned enough about appearance to keep her physical appearance in line with what others found "appealing" and justified this on the basis of her "business". In the next section, Terri positioned herself in a contradictory way as *liking* to be thin; however, as I discuss below, she equated being thin with being unhealthy.

Excerpt 16

- 61 Terri: But I mean (.) um (.) half of the year I feel really good about myself and I
 62 feel, feel really, really great about how I look and I'm very confident and my
 63 clothes fit me great [Interviewer: Mhmm] and then the other half of the year I
 64 sort of (.) live with it because it's unhealthy for me to be that low body weight
 65 all year long?
 66 Interviewer: Ohhh, okay.
 67 Terri: So for health reasons and, and because it's *way* too hard to diet all year
 68 long. Um I, I sort of eat like a normal person half the year [Interviewer:
 69 Right] and the other half of the year I'm very strict on diet and wear my
 70 skinny clothes and, and, you know, the other time of the year that I'm not

71 dieting. I have two wardrobes basically. One of them is basically for my off-
 72 season [Interviewer: Right] and one of them is for my *on*-season and, and
 73 there's probably about two dress sizes or three dress sizes difference
 74 between the two of them.

Terri described the way she felt when she was in the on season: "I feel really good about myself" which she followed with "really, really great about how I look", clearly emphasizing both her feelings and her appearance as positive (61-62). By contrast, in the other half of the year she "lives with" a larger body for "health reasons" and "because it's *way* too hard to diet all year long" (63-65, 67). At this point, she elaborated on the difference between on and off seasons in terms of diet and wardrobe. The off-season entailed eating like "a normal person", i.e., "not dieting", and wearing her "skinny clothes". Finally, she offered a further detail regarding the difference, i.e., the difference is equal to two or three dress sizes. In insisting on the necessity of the off season for health reasons and the strict dieting required during the on season, she positioned herself as a morally responsible person who did not let the advantages of her on season appearance govern her life off season. Furthermore, her on season preoccupation with appearance was justified in lieu of her activities as a competitive body-builder. Terri negotiated her focus on the physical appearance of her body in part by drawing on the healthy body interpretative repertoire. She specifically worked up her account to emphasize body fat vs. thinness as the reason for looking a certain way. Noting that it's unhealthy buttressed her argument that she was not concerned about thinness or conventional standards of female physical appearance but then created a new problem regarding accounting for her continued devotion to unhealthy body practices when she is

so knowledgeable and works in a healthy body field. She justified this on the basis of economics, i.e., as a way to attract clients.

In drawing on the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire, participants positioned themselves as not about appearance, thus resisting being positioned as having a pathological concern with their bodies. In taking up this subject position, participants often found themselves in a potentially dilemmatic situation: while it was important not to be too concerned with appearance, one must also be concerned enough. This balance between “not too concerned but concerned enough” was skillfully negotiated by participants across a variety of contexts, ranging from one’s appearance at the pool, out on a date, and working as a personal trainer in the gym to considering one’s butt while trying on pants. The fact that participants made a similar rhetorical move across multiple contexts indicates that negotiating a concern with appearance is common practice. It also emphasizes the multiple ways in which the interpretative repertoires and subject positions are taken up and how this multiplicity is tied to the specific conversational context – body building is a different matter compared to swimming, for example. I discuss in Chapter 5 why I think the participants resisted positioning themselves as all about appearance when the psychology literature suggests that all women have this concern, as well as the implications of this result.

Being Comfortable With One’s Body

Participants oriented to the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire in making the claim that they are comfortable or satisfied with their bodies, thereby simultaneously bolstering their position as not about appearance and positioning them as autonomous,

self-determining individuals. Those who worked up this claim talked about accepting, or being comfortable with, their bodies, and this was done in most cases in the context of physical appearance. In many cases, making the comfort claim allowed participants to be “positive” about their bodies in the sense that they: a) were able to draw upon the idea that some level of concern over one’s appearance is normative and b) positioned themselves as content, and generally satisfied, despite the normative standards of the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire. On the other hand, there were participants who talked about being *not* comfortable with their bodies. Sometimes the concern was explicitly with appearance, such as looking good in a bathing suit, and sometimes implicitly so, such as a concern with weight or “self-pockets”. Participants who made the claim to be comfortable with their bodies did so contrary to what might be expected from psychology’s focus on body dissatisfaction. Interestingly, participants who claimed to be uncomfortable often characterized this positioning as temporary, that is, either they did not always feel this way or only felt this way sometimes. This too contradicts claims in the psychological literature that women in general are dissatisfied with their bodies.

In the next two examples, I will show how making the claim to be comfortable is a rhetorical move participants made to bolster their positioning as independent individuals with the ability to make decisions for themselves in the face of concerns with not meeting ideal standards of appearance.

In the first excerpt, Rochelle, a 22 yr-old student who had spent the last two summers landscaping, claimed to accept her body. Prior to the opening line, Rochelle had explained that before she started working she did not feel very good about her body,

specifically, how her body looked (thus drawing upon the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire). This concern about how her body looked was the “it” she referred to in line 66.

Excerpt 17

- 64 Rochelle: Just, you don't feel very good and then as soon as I started working
 65 physically, kind of mentally I was thinking, 'Oh I'm getting more in shape,'
 66 [Interviewer: Yeah] 'I'm getting fit' and so it was kind of pushed into the back
 67 of my mind so it definitely made me feel better.
 68 Interviewer: Right (.) So how, how do you feel about your body now?
 69 Rochelle: Good. Like (.) like with (.) continuing the working out and everything ,
 70 like I'm seeing results even more so [Interviewer: Mhmm] than I have in the
 71 summer still (.) like I feel pretty good. I mean, like, there's **always** a time
 72 when you put the bathing suit on the first time in the summer and it's like,
 73 'Hmm' but, I don't know, you kinda get used to it and it's just, you gotta be
 74 comfortable in your body so [Interviewer: Mhmm] you get what you get
 75 (laughs).
 76 Interviewer: (laughs). That's right. So what, what do you feel when you put the
 77 bathing suit on in the summer for the first time?
 78 Rochelle: Well it's kinda like, you know, you stand in the mirror and you kind of
 79 pick out [Interviewer: Uh huh] *all* of the little pieces, like, my thighs are too
 80 big, 'Oh what about this piece of fat on my stomach?' Like that and I'd just
 81 say it's just, you kinda get more comfortable, like you get used to it. Nobody
 82 comes up to you and is like 'Ohmigoodness you're so fat,' you know?
 83 Interviewer: Yeah.
 84 Rochelle: So you kind of, you don't have that whole thing where people will tell
 85 you, it's just yourself? [Interviewer: Right] And so you kind of just try to push
 86 that mindset out.

In the opening lines of the excerpt, Rochelle oriented to the healthy body interpretative repertoire in explaining how “working physically” helped her “feel better” about herself by shifting her focus from how she looked to how healthy she was becoming: “Oh I’m getting more in shape, I’m getting fit” (65-66). My question in line 68 shifted the talk from then (the summer, when she was working) to now (during the school year, when she was not working). Again, in her reference to working out, Rochelle drew upon the

healthy body interpretative repertoire to explain feeling “good” about her body: “like with (.) continuing the working out and everything, like I’m seeing results even more so” (69-70). However, her reference to “seeing results” was ambiguous and, especially given the bathing suit talk that followed, could also be interpreted as a concern with appearance. Next, Rochelle qualified her “good” feelings as “pretty good” and then oriented to the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire: “I mean, like, there’s **always** a time when you put the bathing suit on the first time in the summer” (71-72). The pronoun shift from “I” when talking about feeling “pretty good” to the ambiguous “you” when talking about the bathing suit trial was a distancing move, away from a personal concern with bodily appearance. “You” might or might not include her and drew others into this event, implying that others do this too. Thus, in drawing on the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire, Rochelle distanced herself personally from concern with appearance.

A further shift away from being concerned with how “you” look was accomplished with a three-part list following “but”: “you kinda get used to it”, “you gotta be comfortable in your body”, and “you get what you get,” (73-74). As she moved down the list, the claim became more emphatic: from “kinda get used to it”, to the prescription “gotta be comfortable”, and finally to the unavoidable “you get what you get”. Although I confirmed and supported her claims, I pursued the bathing suit topic further, pointedly asking about her experience of putting on her bathing suit for the first time. Rochelle elaborated on the bathing suit trial but maintained her use of the impersonal, second person pronoun, “you” and preceded her response with the non-specific “it’s kinda like”:

“you know, you stand in the mirror and you kind of pick out [Interviewer: Uh huh] *all* of the little pieces, like, my thighs are too big, ‘Oh what about this piece of fat on my stomach?’” (78-80). Rochelle briefly reinserted herself in the conversation: “*I’d* just say” (emphasis, mine) before making the “comfortable with your body” claim for “you” (80-81). She worked up concern with physical appearance to be a personal matter: “Nobody comes up to you and is like ‘Ohmigoodness you’re so fat,’ you know?” (81-82) and “you don’t have that whole thing where people will tell you, it’s just yourself?” (84-85). In making the comfort claim (albeit, in the second person “you”), Rochelle also made concern with appearance a matter of choice: “you kind of just try to push that mindset out,” (85). Thus, Rochelle easily moved from orienting to the healthy body interpretative repertoire to talking about concerns with appearance without taking up a contradictory subject position. This also enabled her to be concerned ‘enough’ about appearance without being too concerned.

The next excerpt followed Excerpt 12 used in the previous section. There, Janice positioned herself as *not* being concerned with appearance in talking about how people found her attractive despite her weight (572-578), and how she had reached a certain comfort level with her boyfriend because he worked with her at the pool and already knew what she looked like without make-up (578-582). In this subsequent excerpt, Janice used the comfort claim to characterize herself as someone who is not concerned with what others think.

Excerpt 18

586 Interviewer: Right cause, like, he (.) he’s seen you-
 587 Janice: Yeah exactly.

- 588 Interviewer: (laughs). In the pool and.
 589 Janice: Yeah and I just like, and I think that's just the way I am right now it's not
 590 a big deal like I'll wear sweatpants out and it's not, cause I love sweatpants
 591 and if I'm comfortable than who cares [Interviewer: Exactly, yeah] what
 592 anyone else (.) thinks.

In distancing herself from concern with appearance and the opinions of others, Janice made what I've come to call "the sweatpants move," that is, talk about not dressing to please others but instead dressing to please herself (she loved sweatpants and she felt comfortable wearing them). Juxtaposed with the account of her relationship with her boyfriend, the comfort claim served to affirm that she was not (too) concerned with appearance and enabled her to position herself as an independent, self-determining individual.

The next excerpt is from the interview with Marie, age 46, who operated her own residential cleaning service and worked full time cleaning houses for her income. Throughout the interview, Marie consistently maintained that beyond the aches and pains that came from work, she did not spend much time thinking about her body. Marie oriented to the natural body interpretative repertoire and made the comfort claim in order to bolster the assertion that she did not spend much time thinking about her body. Prior to this excerpt, Marie and I had been discussing how much she enjoyed growing up in Montreal (cf "that" in line 576):

Excerpt 19

- 576 Interviewer: So do you think that might have something to do with too how you
 577 feel about your body? That you're in that kind of enjoying like environment
 578 or?
 579 Marie: Oh prob-probably. I'm sure it has a lot to do with it but it's the
 580 subconscious level, you don't [Interviewer: Right, right] you know you don't
 581 think about it?

- 582 Interviewer: Hm.
- 583 Marie: So I sort of always just, you know, went along, I accepted my body the
584 way it was and, you know.
- 585 Interviewer: Do you think aging, like getting older, has an effect on how you feel
586 about your body?
- 587 Marie: Ahh (.) well yeah a little bit, uh, cause I know that in the last four, four or
588 five years I started putting on a little bit of weight [Interviewer: Mhmm] but
589 then I can also say it's, it's, it's in the [Smith] girls, uh [Smith] family, that's
590 okay. Anyways we, we=
591 [the next few lines we talked about how I would use pseudonyms in transcription]
- 592 Marie: Right. Us girls that's, it's, it's in, it's in our genes [Interviewer: Right]
593 that we all put, started to put it on around our tummy lines, right?
- 594 Interviewer: Right, yeah.
- 595 Marie: But it's not only we thought oh it's just a [Smith] thing you know but it's
596 not, you know, it's age or getting older. We're all going to put it on a little bit,
597 you know, whether it's your hips [Interviewer: Right] or butt or, you know, I
598 just happen to put it on here but uh, uh what was the question? Oh yeah about
599 the changing=
600 Interviewer: =Yeah getting, the age.
- 601 Marie: The, the age of course, of course it is going to happen like I said at first it
602 may have bothered me a little bit but not to the point that I went on a diet or
603 whatever cause I was always still active anyways then I just accepted it
604 [Interviewer: Mhmm] That it's a part of the aging process, we're going to put
605 on a little bit of weight so (.) how I proceeded and how I deal with it is, I just
606 accept it and I still strive to stay in shape [Interviewer: Mhmm] and stay
607 healthy.

In the opening lines of the excerpt, I asked Marie if “that” (growing up in Montreal) had affected how she thought about her body, and Marie offered an ambivalent response (“probably”), suggesting its effects are at “the subconscious level”, and using the second person pronoun, “you know you don’t think about it?” (579-581). She then talked about accepting her body the way it is, i.e., she made the comfort claim in order to position herself as not too concerned with her body. Next, I introduced the topic of age, asking if that affected how she thought about her body. Although my question about Montreal implied a reason for her comfort, Marie clearly interpreted my question about age as asking about negative body changes and perhaps challenging her comfort claim. Her

initial agreement (“Ahh (.) well yeah a little bit, uh”, 587) was minimal, i.e., “a little bit”, and provided a transition between the comfort talk that went before and the negative changes talk that my question required. First, she acknowledged that she had “started putting on a little bit of weight” and attributed it to genetics, i.e., developing the ‘Smith girls’ tummy’ and “it’s in our genes” (588-589; also 592-593, 595). She then noted that aging and its accompanying body changes happened to everyone: “We’re all going to put it on a little bit, you know, whether it’s your hips or butt or, you know, I just happen to put it on here”, (596-598). Working up the negative body changes associated with aging as normative allowed Marie to maintain her position as not too concerned with appearance and comfortable with her body. She passed off any concern she had about gaining weight as both minimal and temporary and stated explicitly that she avoided dieting and remained active (601-603). In the final lines of the excerpt, Marie reaffirmed her claim of accepting her body and the changes that come with aging. She oriented to the healthy body interpretative repertoire to bolster her claim: “I just accept it and I still strive to stay in shape [Interviewer: Mhmm] and stay healthy,” (605-607).

Both Rochelle and Janice oriented to the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire, that is, they made the comfort claim in part to position themselves as not too concerned with appearance, which also bolstered their positioning as autonomous, independent people. On the other hand, in her talk about the inevitability of the Smith family tummy and her construction of body changes as a natural fact of getting older, Marie oriented to the natural body interpretative repertoire. In Marie’s case, making the comfort claim was not exclusively about positioning herself as not concerned with appearance, but also

about positioning herself as accepting the natural changes in her body, which worked to bolster her position throughout the interview as not consciously concerned with her body.

In addition to making claims of being comfortable with their bodies, participants sometimes made claims about themselves as not comfortable or dissatisfied with their bodies. In the cases of both Rochelle and Marie, who generally claimed to be satisfied with their bodies, they also talked about being uncomfortable or dissatisfied with their bodies, but in ways that minimized that dissatisfaction and constructed it as normal.

In the next example, Sidonie clearly claimed to be uncomfortable or dissatisfied with her body, although even in her case, she gave an account in which she used to be “content”. The next excerpt follows Excerpt 2, in which Sidonie talked about how the mirrored staircase at work had made her “more self-conscious” about her body: “I check my behind and see (.) how far out is it,” (120-121); “and I notice that I can feel, like, self-pockets,” (125-126). This is the talk I’m referring to when I ask about “any of that” in line 128. The reference to her brother’s new job in line 130 referred to the fact that now Sidonie had to spend more time working in the family cleaning business. In the excerpt below, Sidonie explained how she used to be comfortable (“I never had a problem with... my body”), but nowadays wore bigger clothes to cover up.

Excerpt 20

- 128 Interviewer: So had you thought about (.) any of that before you?
 129 Sidonie: Not as much. Not as much until, like, I’ve noticed this semester I,
 130 because my brother got a job, I never had a problem with, um, my body so
 131 much (.) like I mean I’m self-conscious like anybody is like [Interviewer:
 132 Mhmm] but not to this extent. So [Interviewer: Mhmm] and that’s why I’m
 133 wearing, like, bigger clothes that covers up, like, you know, my sweater and
 134 stuff and (.) like before I used to never? be that conscious but now I really am
 135 so.

- 136 Interviewer: So before would you have said that you were happy with your body?
 137 Sidonie: Umm I wouldn't use the word happy but I was content.
 138 Interviewer: You were content.
 139 Sidonie: I was (.) you know it wasn't, see I knew I had some weight to lose?
 140 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 141 Sidonie: And I knew I could do it if I put my mind to it but I never did?
 142 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 143 Sidonie: And, um, so I just never bothered losing weight because (.) I'm still this
 144 size but now (.) I guess now that I see it in the mirror [Interviewer: Mhmm] it
 145 just bugs me and it's always on my mind.

Sidonie worked up her concern with her appearance as being normative: "like I mean I'm self-conscious like anybody is" (131), but as now being different: "but not to this extent," (132); "like before I used to never? be that conscious but now I really am so," (134-135). Her comfort claim (when she was "content" with her body even though she "knew I had some weight to lose") was formulated in the past tense. Since her brother got a [new] job (130), Sidonie had to spend more time working in the family cleaning business which meant working in the building with the mirrored staircase: "I guess now that I see it in the mirror [Interviewer: Mhmm] it just bugs me and it's always on my mind," (144-145). In this way, Sidonie worked up an account of the "problem" as not about weight per se: she knew she had some weight to lose and she knew she could lose it if she "put my [her] mind to it"; she "just never bothered losing weight," (139, 141, 143). Instead, she constructed the current problem as a matter of excessive self-consciousness (concern with appearance). As further evidence of her change of mind, she noted her change in clothing: "that's why I'm wearing, like, bigger clothes that covers up, like, you know, my sweater and stuff" (132-134). In this example, Sidonie claimed that she was not comfortable with her body at the moment and blamed it on external circumstances, i.e.,

her reflection in the mirror. In sum, Sidonie actually positioned herself as concerned with appearance, although she constructed this as a recent development.

In the next two excerpts, Katie worked up body dissatisfaction as normative but variable.

Excerpt 21

- 223 Interviewer: Well, do you feel like you have a positive relationship with your
 224 body or? You're kind of indifferent to it or?
 225 Katie: Um? I think I'm kind of like everybody, like some days you do and some
 226 days you don't.
 227 Interviewer: Right.
 228 Katie: some days you wake up and you feel disgusting. Like this morning I was
 229 like 'Ah, sweatpants day,' but (laughs) I didn't do it because I'm like, 'if I
 230 wear the sweatpants then I'm going to feel more disgusting.'
 231 Interviewer: Awww.
 232 Katie: So, I don't know, some days you don't feel as strong as other days and
 233 some days you don't feel as pretty as other days but (.) I think that kind of
 234 happens to everybody.

In answer to my question about whether or not she had a positive relationship with her body, Katie constructed herself as normal in fluctuating between positive and negative feelings: "I think I'm kind of like everybody, like some days you do and some days you don't," (225-226). She reiterated this point in the last lines of the excerpt, using again the second person pronoun "you", "some days you don't feel as strong as other days and some days you don't feel as pretty as other days", which was consistent with her final claim that those days happen to everybody (232-234). Katie used strong descriptive language to indicate how "you" feel on sweatpants days, i.e., instead of feeling strong or pretty, Katie used the word, "disgusting." In excerpt 18, Janice talked about wearing sweatpants in making the comfort claim, that is, in positioning herself as not concerned

about what others think and comfortable with her appearance. Here, Katie talked about sweatpants as a means of covering up in describing moments of dissatisfaction with one's bodily appearance. Thus, sweatpants served as a kind of shorthand, denoting clothing that is not in keeping with the aesthetic body.

In between excerpts (lines 235-244), Katie talked about how doing physical work made her feel better about herself. Her work is the "it" that Katie referred to in line 245 (below):

Excerpt 22

- 245 Katie: So I think it does make me feel better, like I can [Interview: Mhmm] I
 246 could still, like, have the same lifestyle if I didn't do that job [Interview: Right,
 247 right], only I'd probably be a lot more disgusted with myself.
 248 Interview: Have more sweatpants days?
 249 Katie: Yep (laughs).
 250 Interviewer: (laughs)
 251 Katie: And why not. But what is it about society that doesn't let us have
 252 sweatpants days?
 253 Interviewer: True. But what is it=
 254 Katie: = about ourselves.
 255 Interviewer: That makes you want to have a sweatpants day, like what does that
 256 mean to you?
 257 Katie: I don't know. You know when you just wake up and you just feel like you
 258 should you should just stay in bed and you don't want anybody to see you
 259 cause you feel like, I don't know. Like, you just feel gross, in general. Like
 260 you just want to be under the covers (laughs). And it's, like, the sweatpants
 261 could be the covers.
 262 Interviewer: That's a good analogy.
 263 Katie: Nobody notices the person in the sweatpants.
 264 Interviewer: Right. Kind of a societal marker for, 'Don't look at me.'
 265 Katie: Well, I'm sure we do but you'd like to think that you're invisible when
 266 you're in them (laughs) and nobody wants anything to do with you

In the opening lines, Katie talked about 'feeling better' because of her job and not as prone as she could be (were it not for her work) to having days where she felt disgusting:

“only I’d probably be a lot more disgusted with myself” (245-247). Thus she constructed ‘disgusting’ days (or, as I suggest in line 248, sweatpants days) as the exception – not the rule. That established, Katie went on to work up sweatpants days as not altogether a bad thing, that is, as something that society, and we ourselves, should allow without condemnation (251-254). In lines 255-256, I misunderstood and changed the question slightly from a focus on society to Katie’s opinion. Consequently, Katie went on to elaborate. Again, she used the more general pronoun “you” to include everyone. Her description was quite detailed, and equated sweat pants with becoming invisible and therefore unavailable for potential critical comments about appearance. Under such conditions, one need not be concerned about appearance.

Participants who made the comfort claim (of being comfortable with or accepting their bodies) constructed their concerns with appearance as normative. On some occasions, this not only allowed them to negotiate the dilemma of not being too concerned with appearance while at the same time being concerned enough, but it also built versions of each woman as being strong, independent and not easily influenced by other’s opinions. For others, like Marie, orienting to the natural body interpretative repertoire allowed her to bolster her claim to be comfortable with the changes that genetics and time wrought on her body. Importantly, participants variously claimed to be comfortable as well as not comfortable --- that is being comfortable (or not) was not constructed as a static location, and participants often waffled between the two claims. This directly contradicts the assumption within psychology that body image or body satisfaction are static and quantifiable.

Gendered (Women's) Bodies and Gendered (Male-Oriented) Workplaces

In this section, I analyse how two participants talked about their bodies in relation to their work environments. Both Rian and Lana oriented to multiple interpretative repertoires and different subject positions in order to negotiate the dilemmatic aspects of being a woman and having a woman's body while working in male-oriented occupations in which sexual harassment of female workers is common. Rian drew on the able body interpretative repertoire, the androgynous body in her words, and the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire, the sexual body in her terms. Lana drew on the aesthetic body and natural body interpretative repertoires in providing an account of body practices, such as applying perfume and nail polish in order to remind herself of the feminine self that hid beneath the work clothes. Both women constructed sexual harassment in the workplace as normative, a claim that is consistent with research on sexual harassment and women working in non-traditional occupations (e.g., Ragins & Scandura, 1995). For both these accounts, I have used multiple or longer excerpts in order to demonstrate how each participant worked up the dilemma throughout her interview.

Rian, a 19 year old student who had worked for three years full-time in general construction (framing, roofing, renovations, etc.), provided a gendered description of herself at work from the beginning of our conversation, i.e., she spoke about what it was like as a woman to work in a workplace full of men (actually, "guys" was her term). In the following two excerpts, Rian constructed her work place as gender neutral, where women who have the bodily strength to handle the physical demands of the work are accepted and treated the same as the men. Just prior to the first excerpt, Rian had

described her work as being very demanding, usually involving “eighteen hour days, six days a week,” (24). In the excerpt below, she positioned herself as a capable employee, able to meet the challenges and perform equal work to the men:

Excerpt 23

- 42 Rian: And I was expected to do everything that the guys could do, lift the same
 43 amount of weight=
 44 Interviewer: =Okay.
 45 Rian: Keep up the same amount of work, um, all that stuff so same physical
 46 demands I wasn't treated differently at all and the last four of the other workers
 47 expected me to do my job so that they could do theirs.

Here, Rian made two claims: she was expected to do the same work as the men, and she was treated the same by her male coworkers: “I was expected to do everything that the guys could do, lift the same amount of weight” (42-43) and “Keep up the same amount of work, um, all that stuff so same physical demands” (45-46). She repeated “same” three times, bolstering her eventual point that she was not treated differently because she was a woman (42, 45-47). In further support of her claim, she noted her male co-workers relied on her doing her job “so that they could do theirs”. Thus, Rian constructed an account of a gender neutral workplace where everyone has the same physical demands.

Between the first and second excerpts, Rian explained how she “worked for the same company” with basically the same team, “we had...changing employees every once in awhile,” (49-50):

Excerpt 24

- 59 Interviewer: And you only met one other girl in the whole time?
 60 Rian: Only one other girl and she was an electrician so she wasn't even in my
 61 field.
 62 Interviewer: Right.
 63 Rian: But=

- 64 Interviewer: =Wow.
 65 Rian: You get used to it, though. So.
 66 Interviewer: So did anybody, it seems like everybody sort of treated you like as an
 67 equal or?
 68 Rian: Yeah after, after I started and did my training, um, I was treated as an equal.
 69 Um=
 70 Interviewer: =Was it difficult for you? [laughs] When you were doing training
 71 or?
 72 Rian: I think doing my training they kind of expected because I'm not, I don't
 73 look very big, they didn't think I would be able to pull my own weight but I
 74 proved myself and then once you've proven, you're alright.

Rian continued to construct her workplace as a place in which she was treated equal, despite her smaller stature and the fact that she was one of very few women in the workplace (59-65). She positioned herself as a competent worker, overcoming diminished expectations associated with her size, leading to acceptance as an equal: once she had proven herself, then she was "alright". In positioning herself as successful and her workplace as gender neutral, she accounted for that success on the basis of individual competence.

Thus, in these two excerpts, Rian constructed an account of a gender neutral workplace where everyone has the same physical demands. Having established herself as a competent worker able to meet those demands, in the next excerpt, she contradicted herself and described her workplace as *not* gender neutral, i.e., , she described her male co-workers as sometimes making "sexual" comments:

Excerpt 25

- 146 Rian: I, I've had some really good contractors that have () it, have offered me
 147 jobs basically anywhere I want in Canada.
 148 Interviewer: Great.
 149 Rian: Yeah so you, but you earned it, you've *really* earned it as a woman. You go
 150 and just get it.
 151 Interviewer: Right.

- 152 Rian: For sure.
 153 Interviewer: So you figure if you were a six foot tall man it might be different?
 154 [laughs].
 155 Rian: Oh yes, oh yes. Very, very different.
 156 Interviewer: Mm.
 157 Rian: And you get treated a lot differently too on the basis of being a woman. So
 158 you have to be able to kind of accept, you know, I am a woman, I am gonna
 159 get the sexual comments and you have to build up your own confidence-
 160 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 161 Rian: A level enough to just shoot them back with something.
 162 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 163 Rian: And, um, you know, just take it, don't be offended.

Again, Rian positioned herself as being very good at her job – so good in fact that “some really good contractors” had offered her work “basically anywhere I want in Canada” (146-147). However, contrary to her earlier construction of the workplace as gender neutral, she implied that women work extra hard to gain recognition for their performance: “but you earned it, you’ve *really* earned it as a woman” (149). When I then asked explicitly about the difference for men, her response emphatically acknowledged that it is more difficult for women to earn recognition, repeating herself and using maximizing language: “Oh yes, oh yes. Very, very different.” (155). At this point, Rian introduced another difference: “And you get treated a lot differently too on the basis of being a woman” (157). This new difference was marked as something separate from what came before it (i.e., 146-155) by the use of “and” and “too”. She then specified that “you have to be able to kind of “accept” that “sexual comments” will be made about you. The nature of these sexual comments are included in the next segment (190-192), but here Rian presented it as an inevitable consequence of being a woman (“I am a woman, I am gonna get”). Interestingly, but not surprisingly, she placed the onus for dealing with this squarely on herself (or on women in her situation), as indicated by her use of the

generalizing pronoun “you” instead of the first person “I”. She hedged on the matter of acceptance (“kind of accept”), implying that she does not really accept such comments but does not let her lack of acceptance show. She used a construction metaphor (a kind of self-fortification) combined with an aggressive response to describe the ideal way to handle the sexual comments: “you have to build up your own confidence...[to] a level enough to just shoot them back with something” (158-159, 161). In the final line, she summed up her view: “just take it, don’t be offended” (163), emphasizing inaction.

A few lines later she reiterated this point: “You really have to build confidence in a place like this, you can’t just go in and do whatever or you’ll, I think you’ll break.” (166-168), and it is this confidence I refer to in the opening line (172) of the next excerpt:

Excerpt 26

- 172 Interviewer: So do you think it’s made you stronger as a person?
 173 Rian: Definitely.
 174 Interviewer: Wow.
 175 Rian: Definitely. Yeah I think I’m better able to respond to people and be happy
 176 with myself and=
 177 Interviewer: =Mhmm.
 178 Rian: And feel the capacity I have to do anything, you know. Like that’s why I
 179 don’t feel I have to have the urge to call, you know, my boyfriend or my
 180 brother, you know.
 181 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 182 Rian: It’s not a big deal.
 183 Interviewer: Right.
 184 Rian: Mhmm.
 185 Interviewer: That’s cool. So what, how, how does being in that position make
 186 you feel about your body then?
 187 Rian: Um [three second pause] It’s a conflict between good and a little mixed up
 188 (.)
 189 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 190 Rian: Because you are wondering, so you’re gonna get rude comments about your
 191 butt and your chest and all that so (.)there’s, there’s, you feel a little bit self-
 192 conscious about, um-
 193 Interviewer: Mmm.

- 194 Rian: Working in that a long time you find it's just easier to wear (.) baggy
 195 clothes or whatever just to (.) eliminate as much as possible, you know, you
 196 don't want to, you wear revealing outfits you, you get worse comments than
 197 ever.
 198 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 199 Rian: Like it's just too much work for me. But, um, the good part is, um, you've
 200 got strength training, you're building your muscles=
 201 Interviewer: =Mhmm.
 202 Rian: Um (.) and so, like I have a good deal of confidence about that and the more
 203 (.) useful parts of my body I guess [laughs].
 204 Interviewer: Okay, yeah.
 205 Rian: So it's, it's a balance.
 206 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 207 Rian: There's good and there's bad so it's more (.) it doesn't build confidence as
 208 being, like, your sexual body=
 209 Interviewer: =Mhmm.
 210 Rian: It's more your androgynous body that you build confidence in.
 211 Interviewer: Interesting.
 212 Rian: Yeah.
 213 Interviewer: Could you elaborate on that? The sort of androgynous body.
 214 Rian: Um (.) I think in a physical field as a woman you're not valued for being a
 215 woman, you're valued for being able to keep up with the guys.
 216 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 217 Rian: And you have to be able to display the same qualities?
 218 Interviewer: Okay.
 219 Rian: That's, that's what I mean. If you can lift, you know, a couple pounds of
 220 shingles and haul them up a two-storey roof, that's valuable.
 221 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 222 Rian: You know but (.) being able to show yourself off in a bikini, not so
 223 valuable.
 224 Interviewer: [laughs].
 225 Rian: So it's, it's the useful, the more masculine-
 226 Interviewer: Mhmm.
 227 Rian: That's (.)=
 228 Interviewer: =Interesting.

My question (172) worked to support Rian's positioning as a competent person. In response, she answered "definitely" (173), which she then repeated (175), adding emphasis to the point about her strength. She went on to elaborate with a three-part list how she is a better person for having faced sexual harassment in her workplace: she is

“better able to respond to people” (175), to “be happy with myself” (175-76), and to “feel the capacity I have to do anything” (178). She reinforced her positioning as independent and capable by elaborating that she did not have to call on her boyfriend or brother. At line 182, she adopted a more modest position that simultaneously shored up her positioning as a competent person. “It’s not a big deal” made it clear that she was not bragging, but also that she could handle things herself.

My next question again affirmed her positioning as independent and competent but moved the topic of conversation back to her body (185-186). There was a three-second pause before Rian responded, and her response was more ambivalent than the previous “definite” answer: “It’s a conflict between good and a little mixed up” (187). The three-second pause is important – seldom does one pause so long in an interview context - and marked a transition in the conversation to an account of how she dealt with the sexual comments referred to earlier (see 159 above). The “good” was obviously consistent with the confident, strong, and competent person she had just constructed herself as being. She attributed feeling “a little mixed up” to “rude comments” leading her to feel “a little bit self-conscious”. She constructed such comments as inevitable and beyond her control (“you’re gonna get”). Nevertheless, she used *minimizing language*: “a little” (187) and “a little bit” (191) that reduced the contradiction between her earlier “strong” position as a competent, self-confident and successful worker and her more troubled, “mixed up” position.

Rian was very specific here about the parts of her body targeted by the rude comments: your butt, your chest, and “all that” (190-192). “All that” completed a three-

part list of body parts associated with femininity, sexuality, and the aesthetic body. Interestingly, she never identified the source of the comments, so gender, sexuality, and her situation as a woman working in a male-dominated occupation remained implicitly relevant. In lines 194-197, Rian talked about handling the situation by wearing “baggy clothes” and avoiding “revealing outfits”. She justified this as “just easier” to “just eliminate as much as possible”, reinforcing her previous claim about the inevitability of sexual comments and once again placing the responsibility with her, this time for preventing such comments. The unfinished phrase, “you don’t want to”, and “you get worse comments than ever” implied that to not cover up would be to exacerbate the problem. Thus, in talking about the problem of sexual comments, Rian had to negotiate the contradictions between the two versions of her work place – gender neutral (she’s treated the same) and sexist (her male co-workers make comments about her butt and chest) and the two versions of her self – the independent, competent, self-confident, successful worker and the female worker who tries to minimize sexual comments by concealing her feminine body. She did this through her vague, minimizing language and omission of specific details related to gender.

Rian concluded the sexual comments topic by justifying her accommodation to a sexist work environment (“it’s just too much for me”) and turned from talking about the “mixed-up” part to the “good” part of how work made her feel about her body (195-201). She explained the “good” part using the general, second-person pronoun, “you” (“you’ve got strength training, you’re building your muscles”, 199-200) and orienting to the able body interpretative repertoire. She then moved to the first person to claim that the

strength training and muscle building contributed to “a good deal of confidence about that and the more (.) useful parts of my body I guess.” (202-203). Thus, she constructed a contrast between the good feelings that came from work and the more useful parts of her body with the less useful parts (i.e., ‘butt, chest and all that’). The “I guess” and the laughter marked this as an unusual way of talking about one’s body, i.e., in terms of “the parts” that are useful for work and “the parts” that one’s male co-workers take note of. She concluded that there’s “a balance” between “good” and “bad”, equating “good” with the “androgynous body” you build confidence in and “bad” with the “sexual body”. Here, she explicitly oriented to gender by applying the “androgynous” label to the able body that is strong and has muscles, thereby affirming that she has a woman’s body. There is an irony here because it is the sexual body and the not-useful parts that are normally the criteria by which women are evaluated. In positioning herself as having an able body, Rian made a clear distinction between that body and the less useful, aesthetic body (or, as Rian described it, the sexual body).

Rian replaced the more adversarial term “conflict” with “balance”, thereby implying a less adversarial coexistence. Her choice of the word “androgyny” bolstered her revised account of “balance”, i.e., her claim to a female body that can do “male” things, because it is strong and muscular. In her focus on building confidence, repeated three times here, she solidified her positioning as a competent, successful worker. Thus, she constructed an argument that despite the ever-present possibility of sexist comments, she is capable and competent in her work, a point that is also recognized by others, e.g., the contractors she referred to earlier.

In the final part of this excerpt (213-228), Rian (at my request, 213) elaborated on the difference between the sexual body and the androgynous body. In the context of Rian's work, the able body (or androgynous body as she called it) is a body that is "able to keep up with the guys" and "able to display the same qualities". She provided a vivid example: "If you can lift, you know, a couple pounds of shingles and haul them up a two-storey roof, that's valuable," (219-220). On the other hand, "being able to show yourself off in a bikini, not so valuable," (222), i.e., the aesthetic body, is not useful in a work context that demands a "more masculine" body. In clarifying what she meant by the androgynous body, Rian oriented strictly to what is required for the job and made no mention of the sexual comments that potentially challenged her equality in the workplace.

In sum, Rian positioned herself as a competent woman worker in a male dominated occupation by orienting to two interpretative repertoires. Specifically, she contrasted the able body (the useful, valuable androgynous body) with the aesthetic body (the less useful, value-less sexual body). In orienting to the able body interpretative repertoire, she positioned herself as a competent worker who, if anything, was more successful than her male co-workers and was treated equitably. In orienting to the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire, she constructed the aesthetic body as the object of sexual, rude comments and her workplace as one where the aesthetic body is not useful and is best covered up by baggy clothing. Consequently, she defended her suitability for the work and her acceptance in the workplace by constructing her own body as feminine as well as able.

In the next set of excerpts, Lana, age 45, a tradesperson who worked for many years as an industrial spray painter, also negotiated having a feminine body in a male-oriented occupation. At the time of the interview, she had been forced to retire due to trade related injuries and was a university student. To set the context, the conversation immediately prior to the first excerpt focused on the kinds of things that Lana did to make herself feel more feminine at work. She talked about two things in particular: keeping long manicured nails and wearing perfume. About her nails, she said,

“and I had, like, a *zillion* colours and I would spend every Thursday night at home, never went out Thursday night I had to do my nails”, (215,16) “But yeah, I was definitely the only painter that wore nail polish (laughs) *definitely*.” (222-3).

About her perfume, she said

“And I wore perfume you know, well, yeah, you don't want to stink like paint all the time so, you know, I'd go out for lunch, throw on some perfume and, I must have smelt really nice, half Coco Chanel and half acrylic acid.” (225-7)

Here, Lana oriented to the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire (in terms of how a woman looks, how a woman smells) in her talk about the nails and the perfume. These served to set her apart: “I was definitely the only painter that wore nail polish”; as well as having her own distinct smell: “half Coco Chanel and half acrylic acid”. In the first excerpt, Lana described gender as a problem in the workplace:

Excerpt 27

229 Lana: What should they think of this girl, you know? (laughs) [Interviewer: You
230 have many sides (laughs)] You know you try to, you know, remember, you
231 know, who you are [Interviewer: Right]. That's one thing about working at a
232 physically demanding job [Interviewer: Okay] is sometimes the line between
233 genders gets *really* confusing. [Interviewer: Mhmm] You know? Like you
234 have to (.) be who you are, I'm a woman and I was a woman, you know, back
235 then so you want to be who you are but you want to elevate above that

- 236 because if you behave like that you're not gonna get your next job
 237 [Interviewer: Mhmm] and you're gonna get, you know, your bum pinched
 238 and, you know, all that sexual harassment stuff that goes on (R: Right) and it's
 239 huge. Well it was huge around me [Interviewer: Mhmm] you know so you
 240 have to elevate yourself above that and even, like, something simple as
 241 walking how, every woman has their sway [Interviewer: Mhmm] You know I
 242 would be, like, conscious of the way I walked in front of these guys in the
 243 shop.
 244 Interviewer: Really? [Lana: Yeah] So you would try to walk like a man?
 245 Lana: I would try to, like, stiffen up a little bit and not have that feminine flow
 246 [Interviewer: Right] but you can't hide the fact that you're a girl. [Interviewer:
 247 No]. You can't hide the fact that you (.) have sensual qualities and it's gonna
 248 come out whether you wear coveralls [Interviewer: Mhmm] or whether you
 249 wear a bikini if you, you know, if you're that type of person it's gonna come
 250 out [Interviewer: Right, yeah]. So, yeah I had difficulty with that. I found-
 251 well I wish these stupid men would keep their hands to themselves and keep
 252 their comments to themselves.

Lana constructed gender as having a permeable boundary (“sometimes the line between genders gets *really* confusing”), and noted the importance of remembering “who you are” (230-231), because it can become confusing (232-233) when “working at a physically demanding job”. Nevertheless, in orienting to the natural body interpretative repertoire, she clearly affirmed her own gender: “Like you have to (.) be who you are, I’m a woman and I was a woman,” (233-234). Her account is similar to Rian’s, i.e., in a male-dominated occupation, being feminine puts one at risk for sexual harassment and therefore it is necessary to hide one’s femininity. She described the need “to elevate above that” (235, and again in line 240) or risk the consequences, described as a three-part list (“you’re not gonna get your next job”, “you’re gonna get ... your bum pinched” and “all that sexual harassment stuff that goes on”. She finished the sentence with “and it’s huge. Well, it was huge around me...” (236-238), a qualification that worked to establish her account as credible, i.e., she was not over-generalizing, and based on personal experience. As an example, and to reinforce the “hugeness”, she offered “even,

like, something simple as walking” (240-241). She then positioned herself as a responsible person in being “conscious of how she walked” in front of her male co-workers.

When I brought the topic back to gender, asking whether she tried to “walk like a man”, she responded that she tried to walk less “feminine”, thereby affirming her positioning as a feminine woman, and oriented to the natural body interpretative repertoire: “but you can't hide the fact that you're a girl. You can't hide the fact that you (.) have sensual qualities and it's gonna come out whether you wear coveralls or whether you wear a bikini if you, you know, if you're that type of person it's gonna come out,” (246-248). She used repetition for emphasis, “you can't hide the fact” said twice, and “it's gonna come out.” In drawing on the natural body interpretative repertoire, Lana constructed a female body that has a particular way of moving (“feminine flow”) and characteristic “sensual qualities” that cannot be hidden. It is simply “who you are”. Consequently, Lana, unlike Rian, held the men accountable (“I wish these stupid men). However, in the next excerpt, Lana, like Rian, talked about having to hide the feminine parts of her body in order to avoid sexual harassment:

Excerpt 28

- 253 Interviewer: So did you do the fingernails and the perfume to make yourself feel
 254 more feminine?
 255 Lana: I did it to remind myself that I was a woman because I would go home and
 256 have a bath and wash my hair and guess what, there's a good-looking girl again
 257 (Interviewer: Right) and it's like, 'Oh, okay, this is me' (Interviewer: Right).
 258 Like I used to wear a total bandana over my head, like one of those Aunt
 259 Jemima bandanas (Interviewer: Right) so you couldn't even see my hair when I
 260 worked (Interviewer: Mhmm) you know, big baggy coveralls so you couldn't
 261 see my body. Well, of course you had to stay, you know, away from the paint
 262 too, that's what the coveralls are for cause it could poison you if it seeps in

263 (Interviewer: Ooh) Yeah thinners and stuff, they're bad, you know, it's poison.
 264 You know then the big face mask (Interviewer: Wow) Oh yeah when you're in
 265 your gear, you can't tell. They could only tell I was a girl when I walked and
 266 talked (R: Really) Yeah if they just saw me standing there they wouldn't know
 267 (Interviewer: Wow) it was just walking and talking then they would know.
 268 Interviewer: With all that gear on.
 269 Lana: Yeah and then you kind of had to switch identities afterwards I mean you
 270 still want to date and you still want all that nice stuff and you want the door
 271 opened and (Interviewer: Right) flowers, you want the guy to pay for dinner,
 272 of course, you know and you're not gonna get that (Interviewer: Mhmm) you
 273 know (laughs) if you don't act like a woman (Interviewer: Right) basically. So
 274 it was kind of, like, different, you know.

In asking Lana whether doing her fingernails and wearing perfume were actions aimed at making her feel more feminine, my opening question implied that she was less feminine at work. Her reply that they were intended “to remind” her that she “was a woman” (255) oriented once again to the natural body interpretative repertoire and her positioning as a feminine woman. She emphasized her point by working up a contrast between the “natural” woman she re-discovers at home (“I would go home and have a bath and wash my hair and guess what, there's a good-looking girl again and it's like, 'Oh, okay, this is me,' 255-257) with this natural body at work, hidden by “a total bandana”, “big baggy coveralls”, and “the big face mask,” (258-264). The maximizing language (“total”, “big”) emphasized the distortion from the “natural” woman underneath. Although there was a practical reason for the protective gear (the toxins), the outcome was a kind of gender incognito: “Oh yeah when you're in your gear, you can't tell. They could only tell I was a girl when I walked and talked,” (264-266). Thus, although disguised, the natural body still showed itself when Lana “walked and talked”. Still, Lana described the difference between herself at work and after work as requiring “switching identities afterward”. She positioned herself as a traditional woman, emphasizing

traditional gender roles and desires: “*you still* want to date”; “*you still* want all that nice stuff”; “*you want* the door opened and flowers”; and “*you want* the guy to pay for dinner” (269-271), which were consistent with her orientation to the natural body interpretative repertoire.

In sum, both Lana and Rian worked up versions of the workplace where having a female/feminine body was a problem, i.e., the potential for sexual harassment was a normative aspect of the workplace environment. In describing themselves as covering up (for Rian, wearing baggy clothes and avoiding wearing revealing outfits; for Lana, trying to hide her feminine flow), both women positioned themselves as active and accountable in coping with the problem (although Lana did attribute responsibility to men who did not keep their hands to themselves).

Rian however faced the additional dilemma of reconciling her account of sexual comments in the workplace with her version of the work environment as being gender neutral, a place where there were equal expectations for women and men, and once she’d proved herself, she was treated as an equal. She negotiated this by working up the androgynous body (a female body with the muscles to do physical work) in contrast to the sexual body (a female body with no practical value in a workplace setting). In so doing, Rian affirmed her positioning as competent and successful in her work despite having a female body.

Lana, on the other hand, negotiated what she described as “the line between genders”: between working in an environment where, for safety reasons (wearing protective clothing to protect her body from harmful toxins) and for concerns about

possible sexual harassment (trying to hide her sensual qualities), she hid who she is and her feminine body, and how things are at home where she is a traditional woman with a feminine body. Lana positioned herself as being able to switch identities, and in effect, walking on both sides of the line, to get the best of both worlds – doing small, personal things to remind herself she was a woman at work (like wearing perfume and nail polish), and uncovering the “good-looking girl again” when she got home. This affirmed her competence at work and her “natural” femininity.

These two examples illustrate the varied and creative ways that participants drew upon the different interpretative repertoires of the body and constructed different rhetorical strategies in negotiating similar problems (in this case, that of being a woman in a male-oriented occupation). While participants’ accounts were shaped by discourse, i.e., the interpretative repertoires available to them, the participants actively produced their accounts, drawing on some resources and not others and using these resources in creative ways within the context of the specific conversation.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

When I first proposed this study, I sought, amongst other things, positive ways in which women might understand their bodies, i.e., alternative discourses that would indicate that women need not always have pathological relationships with their bodies as suggested by the psychological literature. To this end, part of my rationale for interviewing women in physical occupations was that women who use their bodies regularly to make a living might attach different meanings to them than those reflected in mainstream psychology. In one respect, I did identify positive discourses, i.e., the participants positioned themselves as liking their bodies, having skilled able bodies, and rejecting an excessive concern with appearance and what others think.

However, I quickly came to realize two things: First, this way of talking about women and their bodies is clearly dualistic, and yet it is difficult to talk about or challenge the traditional psychological treatment of bodies without falling into this Cartesian discourse. This also reflects the positivist, realist assumptions that inform traditional psychology. In this case, there is an assumption that bodies are real, out there, separate from selves, and possessing measurable qualities. It is partly in reaction to this account that I was drawn to the notion of embodiment as an explanatory framework. The premise that women live embodied lives challenges dualistic thinking, that is, women's identities are worked up within a cultural context that is gendered and constrains the identities and meanings that are possible. Recall that Frank (1996) talked about how the forced immanence of illness makes people aware of their bodies; arguably, there is a forced immanence in the notion that women lead embodied lives.

Second, although participants themselves often constructed their accounts in dualistic ways, it was immediately obvious that they were doing more than simply drawing on positive or pathological discourses about their bodies. To start with, they took up available interpretative repertoires and positioned themselves in relation to them in dynamic and political ways, that is, they changed from context to context, depending upon what they were trying to accomplish within the conversation (e.g., making claims and working up versions of themselves). Additionally, while participants constructed their bodies in positive terms, much of this talk was dilemmatic in the sense that it involved the negotiation of contradictory or competing versions: including constructing a discursive space between being too concerned about appearance and being concerned enough; making sense of being comfortable with a body that does not always meet ideal, aesthetic standards; and negotiating having a feminine body and being a woman in a workplace setting where femininity and being a woman are not only undervalued but put one at risk for sexual harassment.

Four Interpretative Repertoires

Participants oriented to four different interpretative repertoires of the body. In addition, they drew upon various subject positions in relation to these interpretative repertoires. Thus, they positioned themselves in multiple ways and negotiated implicit and explicit contradictions in their talk. Here, I briefly review and comment upon the four interpretative repertoires.

The interpretative repertoire that participants drew upon most commonly was the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire. Recall that participants who drew upon the

aesthetic body interpretative repertoire oriented to the idea that women are expected to strive for a certain standard of appearance. While the particulars of this standard vary (be it thin, tiny, blond, long hair, etc.), it had some shared characteristics across interviews. First of all, participants talked about the ideal body or an ideal standard of appearance as something that many people (but not necessarily they) seek. Secondly, there was the understanding that it is normal for most women to fail to meet the ideal standard, at least some of the time. Sometimes this was talked about as a personal problem (e.g., carbohydrate pouches, the Smith family tummy, self-pockets), or as problems that other people worry or obsess about. Frequently, participants described scenarios involving checking one's body for flaws (e.g., checking one's behind in the mirror and trying on the bathing suit for the first time since last summer). Of course, the familiarity with which participants talked about the aesthetic body is not surprising. In movies, on television, among peer groups, women constantly encounter societal ideals of beauty involving youthful, lean and attractive bodies (Bordo, 1993). What is perhaps most surprising about this interpretative repertoire was participants then positioning themselves as not concerned with their bodies and rarely explicitly talking about the sexual aspect of the aesthetic body.

The able body interpretative repertoire was often taken up in the context of talk about work, particularly in talk about being a skilled, competent worker (for instance, Katie's talk about being able to pull her own weight; Terri's talk about the discipline and training required for competition; and Rian's talk about being able to drag shingles up a roof). The able body is useful and practical and, as Katie described it, "about having the

kind of strength I can actually apply to life.” Recall that Katie positioned herself as having the kind of strength and stamina that would enable her to hike (a fast walk) up a hill without having to stop to catch her breath, unlike the bulky body builders at the gym. The able body interpretative repertoire was drawn upon in the context of meeting challenges or personal goals. For example, Terri talked about clients who wanted to perform better or prepare themselves to run a road race. Rochelle talked about ‘challeng[ing] herself physically both in the context of work (lifting the big rocks) and outside of work in the context of “running marathons and stuff”’. Participants drew upon the able body interpretative repertoire in order to position themselves as physically skilled workers, to defend their positions as able to keep up with the guys, and overall, as able to meet challenges within and outside of work. They regularly drew upon the able body interpretative repertoire as an alternative to their position as not too concerned with appearance or as a way of accounting for a concern with appearance.

While the able body interpretative repertoire constructed the body as skilled, enabling the participant to accomplish both personal and professional achievements, the healthy body interpretative repertoire constructed the body in relation to overall wellness, i.e., as meeting a certain standard of health, and was often talked about in terms of being physically fit or in shape. The healthy body interpretative repertoire served different purposes. Like Hannah, who described a debate with herself about whether or not she had a big butt leading to a decision to eat more salads in order to be healthy, participants often accounted for what might be taken as concern about appearance as instead a concern about health. Similarly, Rochelle worked up getting “into better physical shape”

in a way which focussed attention away from the aesthetic body. Concerns with weight were often talked about in terms of an overall concern with health. Hannah's salad eating, Krista's concerns with 'gravity', and weight loss in general were talked about in terms of getting into shape or making oneself feel better. Some authors have noted that sometimes women appeal to health because it is more socially acceptable to diet for health reasons than it is to diet to change how you look, and yet the tyranny of diets and workouts does not change (Bartky, 1998; Bordo, 1993; George, 2005). Terri was different in that she constructed appearance as an acceptable preoccupation during the competition on-season and health as her focus during the off-season when she gained weight. Her participation in competitive body-building legitimated the varied concerns but also shored up her position as a responsible person who privileged health over appearance. Some participants oriented to the healthy body interpretative repertoire as a means of positioning themselves as not sick (e.g., Ann and Jennica). The participants' constructions of weight and appearance as either a concern with health or with the aesthetic body highlights the flexible ways in which appearance, weight loss, and illness were worked up to fit the conversational context.

The natural body interpretative repertoire involved an appeal to the inborn, biological predispositions of the body, i.e., talk of listening to the body, the body knowing what it needs, doing what is best or natural for the body. For example, Jennica talked about using her body the way it was meant to be used; Terri worked up an account in which she stopped fighting with her body; and Lana talked about peeling off the layers to reveal the real body or real self underneath. This idea is a familiar one, especially in

the psychology literature, i.e., the notion of a real body that exists independently of our attempts to shape or change it (e.g., Leder, 1992; Whiston, 1993). Also, this pre-existing body is given human attributes (i.e., it could fight, be listened to, etc.). The tendency for body anthropomorphism is consistent with Western culture's dualism, i.e., not only does the body have needs, wants and knowledge independent of our minds/personalities, but also we, as persons with minds/personalities, could actually be ignorant of what those needs are (hence, the need to listen or climb a hill with a toboggan in the middle of the night). Heeding the needs of the natural body was always characterized as beneficial: Jennica claimed that it keeps her healthy in the sense that it keeps her from distorted thinking linked with her struggle with anorexia; Terri simply claimed that it feels good; and Lana claimed that it entails being true to herself.

Notably, all three of the latter interpretative repertoires were worked up as alternatives to the aesthetic body, although they served other purposes as well. Although the participants positioned themselves as not concerned with appearance, they nevertheless invested considerable effort in maintaining this position, an irony that underscores the ubiquitous emphasis on appearance almost everywhere else.

Not (Too) Concerned About Appearance

For the participants in this study, concern with appearance was a dilemmatic subject position. On the one hand, while participants who drew upon the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire were clearly familiar with cultural standards for how women should look, including the ideal body, how to feel about fat, and so on, they nevertheless frequently positioned themselves as not being overly concerned with appearance. On the

other hand, participants did not go as far as positioning themselves as wholly unconcerned with appearance. Appearance does matter, in terms of having people find you attractive, in looking “nice”, and in meeting some basic standards of public display, for example, in deciding whether or not to wear sweatpants. The dilemma, then, is finding the balance between too concerned and not concerned enough. As my analysis made clear, this accomplishment is a rhetorical undertaking, and as such, always a matter of negotiation. For example, Hannah oscillated between these two positions in her musings about whether or not her butt was too big. In the discussion that follows, I first consider why so many participants worked consistently to position themselves as not being concerned with appearance. Next, I talk about the meaning of participants also positioning themselves as concerned enough about appearance.

Discourses of Western society construct obsession with appearance, especially for women, as normal. Feminists like Susan Bordo (1997), Naomi Wolf (1990), and Simone de Beauvoir (1952), to name a few, have carefully documented the production and legislation of femininity. For example, recall Bartky’s account of how women have become docile bodies (1998). What enabled the women in my study to give persuasive accounts of themselves as not overly concerned with appearance?

The research context I constructed is one consideration. Recall that as part of my introduction to the interview session, with each participant I talked about how I was interested in whether women had anything good to say about their bodies. I also explained that my rationale for choosing women in physical occupations was that women who used their bodies for a living might have different things to say than other women.

While this was part of the conversational context and thus formed part of the rhetorical setting, I am not claiming that my participants simply co-operated in providing responses that met my interests. Within the framework of critical discourse analysis, talk is action, engaged in by speakers for their own ends. The open-ended nature of the research conversations meant that participants were free to orient to their own concerns, and even when participants took up similar subject positions, e.g., not being concerned about appearance, these were worked up in varied and personal ways in terms of the claims made, the specific examples used, and specific action accomplished. Also, the participants constructed versions of positive or alternative discourse about their bodies that were neither implicit nor explicit in my researcher talk. For example, the subject position, not being concerned about appearance, was not something I anticipated or proposed. That said, the conversational context I created did invite positive body talk and discussion about particular topics related to bodies and appearance.

One interesting aspect of the “not about appearance” subject position is what was not said -- in particular, that participants avoided talk about being fat or overweight. In positioning themselves as not concerned about appearance, they accounted for dieting or weight loss as practices designed to make them feel good, feel healthier, or better at their jobs. Dieting and other practices aimed at weight loss were not accounted for on the basis of being fat, nor, even more emphatically, about trying to be thin. None of the participants claimed to be fat or overweight. Instead, for example, Katie talked about how her size meant that she could stand to lose some weight; Rochelle referred to having trouble with gravity, and even Sidonie who ‘knew she had some weight to lose’ talked

about finding self-pockets. Euphemisms like “big”, “big boned”, and “putting on a tummy” were common, and for the most part, participants avoided using direct language to talk about themselves as fat, overweight, or unattractive. Even Lana, who talked about being “large”, still talked about being sexy: “you do feel good about your body when you're workin'. Yeah, even if it's *large*, you know, yeah” (303-305). Consistent with this, the participants worked to construct versions of themselves as well-adjusted, normal, competent individuals. Clearly, being ugly, does not fit such a construction. Thus, I would argue that avoiding explicit talk about being overweight enabled the participants to position themselves as normal and competent. Where does this come from? In part, it may be due to a wider social and cultural emphasis on individualism which emphasizes the importance of the wants and desires of the individual (Bordo, 1993; Sampson, 1983). In a cultural milieu replete with self-help books and self-help talk shows, most people are well versed in such psychological notions as self-esteem. Another factor to consider is that all but one (Terri) of my participants had some level of university education which may have included psychology and would therefore also be familiar with psychological language.

Participants also explicitly avoided positioning themselves as wanting to be thin or aiming for the aesthetic body ideal. This is consistent with the liberal individualism of Western culture with the emphasis on individuals as self-determining and independent (e.g., Bordo, 1993; Sampson, 1983). Furthermore, feminist campaigns have made some inroads in informing the public of the impossibility of achieving the ideals for women that are promoted in popular media: “everyone” knows that no one really looks like that.

Thus, many people today are familiar with the knowledge that a person with Barbie's real proportions would not be able to walk upright, and pictures of anorexic models are widely published. Even the advertisers are taking up (or, at least, co-opting) this critical view of the aesthetic ideal for women (for example, consider the Dove campaign for "real" beauty). While this may be cause for cynicism more than optimism, most participants consistently positioned themselves as not (too) concerned about their appearance and therefore able to resist the hegemony of the ideals of the aesthetic body.

The participants' moves to resist being positioned as excessively concerned with appearance highlights how they oriented to cultural standards for women's bodies while simultaneously distancing themselves from them. This provides an example of the exercise of power through discourse. Consistent with Miller (2000) and Edley, (2001), participants were both constrained by cultural discourses, such as the aesthetic body interpretative repertoire, and produced discourse on the body in flexible ways that fit the specific conversational context. This challenges the accounts of feminists like Bartky (1998), who, drawing from Foucault, emphasize women's bodies as docile bodies that are shaped through many levels of disciplinary practices. It also challenges those who criticize the idea of docile bodies as leaving little room for agency or resistance (McLaren, 2002). While participants' talk about their bodies drew on the cultural discourses available to them, i.e., in one sense they exemplified docile bodies, the dilemmas and negotiations of meaning that occurred in the local context exemplified the productive exercise of power.

This resistance to being positioned as (too) concerned about appearance also challenges the account of women's body concerns provided in the traditional psychology literature. Much psychological research on the body, and particularly women's bodies, proposes that most women have distorted or unrealistic perceptions of their bodies, which can be measured as a variety of outcomes: poor body image, body disturbance, perceptual distortions and unrealistic feelings concerning the body, and clinical diagnoses like body dysmorphic disorder, bulimia and anorexia. Blood (2005) claims that what researchers in this area fail to consider is the possibility that women's painful, distorted or misguided feelings about their bodies are culturally produced. While I regard this claim as a step in the right direction, my research leads me to take Blood's caution a step further: perhaps it is misleading to claim that women have a pathological relationship with their bodies. Undoubtedly there are many cultural discourses and practices available to women that contribute to sexual fears, eating disorders, and an obsessive concern with looks, but, as the women in my study articulately demonstrated, women are not merely passive conduits for these discourses, but instead actively construct themselves as resisting these cultural discourses.

As already noted, although participants resisted being positioned as (too) concerned with appearance, they nevertheless positioned themselves as being concerned enough. What constitutes enough concern, of course, is always open for debate and changed from participant to participant and from one context to the next. From a discourse analytic perspective, the question then becomes: what are women accomplishing in their talk when they position themselves as concerned enough, but not overly concerned? Here, it

may be helpful to consider macro-level cultural discourse, the appeal of the average man (and, in this case, woman); that is, the normal, everyday people who work hard and raise kids and who do not have inflated opinions of themselves. This ideal was called upon repeatedly in the recent American election in which hockey wives and Joe the plumber(s) were held up as heroic everyday people. In terms of what this might mean for my participants, they too oriented to the concept of being everyday, normal women (not too concerned with appearance and yet not too unattractive). Thus, the participants oriented to “normal” standards of appearance, not too fat, too dirty or too ugly – a kind of moral bottom line for acceptance by others. This concern with being at least average is similar to the modesty noted in a study of young British males who positioned themselves as average or normal rather than macho or sexy (Gill et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, most participants worked up any concern with appearance as being a personal issue. Even Janice, who at one point talked about how people still found her attractive, elsewhere in the interview described her concerns with what others think as being part of the past: “I mean it doesn’t even matter anymore because I’ve gotten older I’ve gotten used to the fact that I’m in the water and it doesn’t really matter. People see, you know, I know, I guess I just don’t change for them” (62-64). Similarly, Lana talked about looking like a woman to get the benefits of doing that (266-270), but even in that case, her concern was more about being treated properly than about what other people thought of her appearance. This move is consistent with the participants’ accounts of themselves as autonomous, independent women and Western culture’s emphasis on individualism where people are encouraged to look good to make themselves feel better.

An example is the tag line in an advertisement in the September 2008 issue of *Cosmopolitan* for L'oréal daily anti-wrinkle cream: "Because you're worth it." This inverts the more expected focus on buying cosmetics to improve one's body image or self-worth, and may be viewed as the other side of the coin. At the cultural level of discourse, women are encouraged to focus on themselves as individuals, whether in the sense of taking care of themselves as they are or pursuing personal goals of self-improvement.

Being Comfortable With One's Body

Claiming to be comfortable with one's body was a frequent means for participants to position themselves as independent, self determining individuals, i.e., as confident in their bodies and not concerned what others think. This was accomplished through bolstering the 'not about appearance subject position' in the sense that being concerned with how one looks or what others think is in effect antithetical to being satisfied, accepting or comfortable with one's body. Those participants who did talk about being uncomfortable with their bodies usually produced accounts in which this discomfort was a temporary state of affairs, a personal matter, and one about which they could make choices. In these ways, talk about being comfortable enabled participants to negotiate the dilemma of how to be concerned enough without being too concerned with appearance.

An interesting aspect of these accounts is that this was a context in which talk about clothing regularly occurred. Such talk about comfortable clothing was invested with meaning, much of it unspoken and thus part of the shared cultural resources the participants and I drew on. It allowed the participants to accomplish a variety of actions

within their specific conversational context. For example, Janice used talk about wearing sweatpants as a means to claim that she was not concerned with appearance or others' opinions. Katie talked about sweatpants as a means to position herself as being proactive in avoiding sexual harassment by hiding her body. That clothing talk is integral to embodiment is perhaps not surprising given the power of the fashion industry to shape cultural discourses related to women's bodies.

Perhaps the comfort move is a way to present oneself as positive or accepting one's body without being seen to be conceited or to be claiming to meet what people commonly orient to as excessive, unrealistic standards of beauty. That is, to position oneself as good-looking or attractive is to set oneself up for criticism. Again, the desirability of being normal comes to mind. Perhaps this is why there are so many pictures in papers like the *National Enquirer* of super stars (mostly women) without their make-up, or having a sweatpants day. This is another way in which the comfort claim helps people to find the balance between too concerned and not concerned enough.

Gendered (Women's) Bodies and Gendered (Male-Oriented) Workplaces

Participants oriented to multiple interpretative repertoires in dynamic and resourceful ways in order to construct believable accounts of themselves and to resolve contradictions or competing versions of events in their work lives. In the cases of Rian and Lana, each woman negotiated the dilemma of being a woman and having a woman's body in male-dominated work places where the potential for sexual harassment was a normative aspect of the workplace environment. Rian drew on a gendered version of the able body interpretative repertoire, the "androgynous body", in order to position herself

as competent on the job and able to ‘build herself up’ to protect herself from the sexual comments about ‘the less useful parts’ of her body, i.e., the sexual, aesthetic body. Lana oriented to the natural body interpretative repertoire in order to position herself as a feminine, sensual woman. Both women described themselves as covering up (Rian wore baggy clothes, Lana described being hidden beneath her work clothes and trying to hide her feminine flow when she walked), and in so doing, positioned themselves as active and accountable for coping with the problem.

That Rian and Lana treated the occurrence of sexual harassment in their workplace as par for the course is, sadly, not unusual. The incidence of sexual harassment faced by women in the trades is well documented (e.g., Ragins & Scandura, 1995). Furthermore, that Rian and Lana positioned themselves as responsible for dealing with the problem is also not unusual. This is worth commenting upon if only to note the absence of change with regard to sexual harassment for women working in male-dominated occupations. However, neither Lana nor Rian positioned themselves as victims. In contrast, they both positioned themselves as actively, indeed proactively, dealing with the problem effectively. In short, not only did they position themselves as successful workers but also as successful in overcoming challenges in their male-dominated workplaces, including sexual harassment. This is not to say that the problem *should* be Rian and Lana’s, or any other woman’s for that matter. Indeed, Lana stated that she wished it were otherwise: “I wish these stupid men would keep their hands to themselves and keep their comments to themselves,” (246-248). Other than Lana’s wish, the notion of blaming the men or their employers was strikingly absent.

Of note is the way the participants constructed and deconstructed gender in these accounts. Consider Lana, who in drawing on the natural body interpretative repertoire constructed her feminine, sensual qualities as an essential part of ‘who she was’: “I’m a woman and I was a woman,” (233). Nevertheless, she also described “the line between genders” (232) as unstable and permeable, and having to switch identities in order to adapt to the situation at hand, i.e., covering up at work and uncovering that “good-looking girl again” when she got home. Rian, on the other hand, described herself as having more than one body. The androgynous body was the useful body, the one she has faith in, but for all intents and purposes a masculine body. Nevertheless, she labelled it the androgynous body, a label conventionally used to identify someone or something that has both masculine and feminine traits: in this case, masculine traits in a female body. Thus, both the androgynous and the sexual body were gendered bodies. In constructing gendered bodies in these complex ways, both participants negotiated the contradictions of doing a man’s job but having a woman’s body. That Rian and Lana worked up very different accounts of gendered bodies belies psychology’s assumption that gender is a stable construct. This highlights once again the poverty of researching static constructions of psychological notions of gender, body image (body satisfaction inventories) and embodiment and points to the value of discourse analysis as an investigative tool.

Limitations and Suggestions For Future Research

An ongoing challenge for researchers is how to incorporate the notion of reflexivity into their work. Reflexivity takes into account the understanding that all knowledge (including scientific research and analysis) is socially constructed – that is, it

is produced by specific individuals with specific agendas who draw on particular assumptions within a broader social, cultural and historical context of making meaning (cf, Finlay, 2003; Harper, 2003, Miller, 2000). From this it follows that research is a joint production of both researchers and participants. Thus, special attention needs to be paid to the influence that the relationship between the researcher and her participants has on the production of knowledge. I have elsewhere talked about the influence of the research setting and my description of the research goals on the conversations that followed (pp. 105-106). At this point, I would like to add two further considerations. First, while I did not explicitly introduce myself as a feminist researcher, my concern with women's talk about the body may nevertheless have signalled my feminist sensibilities and thus been a factor in my participants' talk. Second, I am, by most conventional standards, a fat or obese person. This may have affected my participants in a number of ways: for example, it may have made some participants feel less judged and more comfortable to talk about their own perceived bodily short comings; conversely, participants may have been reluctant to talk about feelings of being fat for fear of offending me. As a discourse analyst, I must confine myself to participants' concerns as they come up in talk however.

As part of the give and take of conversation, I often found myself giving back to my participants in the sense that, on occasion, I talked about myself, feelings of being fat, and how I felt about losing a fair amount of weight to combat having sugar diabetes. Explicit talk about feminism rarely occurred across the interviews. A detailed analysis of how my contributions to the research conversations were occasioned by the participants' talk and taken up by the participants is possible, however, it would draw me away from

the focus of my thesis. In selecting my interview excerpts for detailed analysis, I oriented to my research questions and my participants' concerns. Thus, I am not in a position to evaluate the specifics of any constraints operating as a function of my construction as "feminist and fat" and can only note that the research conversations might have been different with a different researcher.

Another potential limitation of my study concerns my choice to use open-ended interviews to collect my data. The use of open-ended interviews for qualitative research is not without its detractors, some of whom make very good points. Some have argued that the use of researcher conducted interviews is not as compelling as more naturalistic data (e.g., Potter and Hepburn, 2005), for instance, conversations as they occur in "natural" settings, presumably pubs, locker rooms, and chats between friends or coworkers. While recognizing that the unnatural set up of the research interview is likely to constrain the resulting talk, I argue that all conversations (natural or otherwise) are occasioned, interactive productions and thus influenced by the setting, and in particular, by the interaction between speakers as they build up accounts of themselves and others. Additionally, while the research setting contributes to the production of talk; the talk is still personal, interpersonal and dynamic, that is, the setting alone does not predict the outcome of the talk.

Another worthy consideration has to do with the level of transcription and subsequent analysis. In their article outlining the challenges of using open-ended interviews, Potter and Hepburn (2005) criticized what they described as the "block of text" form of transcription (p. 289). They argue that many researchers who use

transcription sacrifice analytical features (such as the back-and-forth details of talk) in choosing to transcribe talk as a prose summary which consists of large, uninterrupted blocks of text.

In order to address some of the shortcomings of open ended interviews highlighted by Potter and Hepburn (2005) and others (e.g., Antaki, Billig, Edwards & Potter, 2003), I used a variation of Gail Jefferson's transcription system designed to highlight the interactional and jointly constructed nature of talk during the interviews. This was done by including the interviewer's questions, as well as documenting within the transcript all instances of interruptions and overlapping comments, which in turn highlights the general turn-taking nature of the talk. While this transcription style thus preserves the representation of talk as interactional and jointly constructed, I have deliberately chosen what Potter and Hepburn describe as a "Jefferson Lite" version of notation (p. 288). My decision is informed by Potter and Wetherell's (1987) earlier recommendation that the analysis of broader ideological discourses and participant's positioning in relation to these discourses are not enhanced by such a detailed level of transcription, and by later examples of a similarly "lite" transcription style in other discourse analytic research (e.g., Edley & Wetherell, 2001; Seymour-Smith & Wetherell, 2006). Thus, I have not used the more detailed transcription conventions recommended by Potter and Hepburn (2005) such as inbreaths and outbreaths, timed pauses, changes in the speed or tempo of speech, the conversational rise and fall of pitch. However, I have chosen a level of transcription, which, as recommended by Potter and Hepburn (2005), "makes most apparent the jointly constructed, socially engaged nature of what is going

on, including the close dependence of what the interviewer says on the interviewer's question (and vice versa)" (p. 289). Additionally, for a more elaborate consideration of the shortcomings of analysis using transcribed interviews, I recommend the excellent online paper of Antaki et al., 2003. I recognize that my conclusions are limited by the level of detail included in my transcripts, however these conclusions fit with the purpose of my research.

A further limitation of this research was that most of the participants (all but two, Marie and Terri) were students, and thus not currently working full time in their respective occupations. This is not to say that the students' accounts were not insightful or rich. However, in future research I would not only like to interview more women working full-time, but I would also like to interview people from a broader spectrum of occupations, including police women, firefighters, dancers, and so on. Originally, my interest in talking to women in physical occupations started with an issue of *Fireweed* that was about the challenges of the sex trade and written by sex workers. The articles were fascinating and started me wondering how women who use their bodies for a living are similar or different in their bodily concerns compared to those of the typical female university undergraduate, who is so frequently represented in psychological research on body image and eating disorders. Clearly, the study of embodiment as an aspect of everyday living remains a productive avenue of future research.

Another limitation that is commonly levied against discursive research is that, due to the small number of participants, the findings of this study are not generalizable to the female population at large. It is possible that I could interview another seventeen women

and come up with a whole new set of interpretative repertoires, dilemmas and subject positions. However, it is not the goal of discourse analysis to make wide homogenizing claims about the populations they study. While this may be perceived as a weakness, it is nonetheless one of the strengths of discourse analysis that it provides a space for diverse and often marginalized accounts and in so doing makes it possible to look at one idea or claim (like that women lead embodied lives) from a variety of perspectives. The contrast between the discursive approach to research and an approach which emphasizes the search for universal cognitive and behavioural norms, and significant predictors of psychological outcomes is an epistemological one. From the latter perspective, the search for knowledge is a search for universal principles of behaviour in which diverse or outlying versions are seen to be a nuisance. From the former perspective, the ways in which individuals make sense of the cultural demands, assumptions and contradictions provides insight not only into how individuals make meaning, but also into how cultural discourses are formed, adhered to and challenged. Of the two approaches, the discourse analytic approach is a far superior way to investigate women's embodiment.

To understand that women lead embodied lives requires a theory and a methodology that highlights the resourceful and creative ways in which we produce and reproduce discourses about bodies. It also requires a systematic analysis of talk which recognizes that the negotiation of meaning is a political act which can work to reinforce or conversely challenge and destabilize the status quo. I believe that the best way to do this is to ground research in the situated talk of women in their everyday conversations. It

is only at this level of analysis that we can begin to theorize how women negotiate living embodied lives.

Finally, one of the things that has stayed with me long after the interviews were over was the intimacy and intensity of the conversations. Participants seemed really eager to talk and were forthcoming about very personal parts of their lives. During one of the interviews, one participant told of being sexually assaulted by a doctor in training while in the hospital for surgery. After the taped interview had ended, she confided that she had never told anyone that before. I offered to erase it from the tape, but she asked me to leave it there because she wanted people to know – she didn't want to keep it secret any more. I was amazed at the candour that participants showed as they talked about themselves. The women in my study wanted to talk about selves and bodies, which perhaps indicates the need for more studies like this one.

Conclusion

As can be seen by the diverse ways in which participants constructed accounts of their bodies and of their lives as women who use their bodies in physical occupations, women's embodiment is far more complex than static definitions of body image or pre-conceived categories can begin to capture. In the accounts of the participants in this study, we have seen the dilemmas that many women face, including: finding the balance between being too concerned about their appearance and not being concerned enough; working up an account of oneself as comfortable with one's bodies, in spite of not measuring up to the standards of the aesthetic body; and positioning oneself as a competent worker who is successful in coping with sexual harassment in the workplace.

Thus, the problem of women's bodies is not that women are pathologically related to them; rather, the challenge is that women's bodies are produced through discursive practices that are partial, contradictory, unstable, and sensitive to the interactional context. The women who participated in this study employed a variety of rhetorical strategies in order to give accounts of themselves as competent, confident, independent and autonomous people. In short, accounts of the body are simultaneously accounts of the self.

This research demonstrates how discourse analysis can be a powerful investigative approach to understanding women's embodiment. It provides an understanding not only of the kinds of cultural discourses available to women (such as the aesthetic body, the natural body), but it also provides valuable insight into how resourceful women can be in negotiating the challenges, contradictions and implications of positioning oneself in relation to those discourses. This research challenges notions both inside and outside of academia about women's inherent dissatisfaction with our bodies, and gives psychologists pause to think about where these ideas come from and what purpose they serve in regulating our assumptions about embodiment, gender and appearance. Additionally the emphasis on women in the workplace spotlighted the embodied experiences of women who physically labour in non-traditional as well as more traditionally female occupations. This in turn will open up an analysis of women and their bodies beyond the narrow constraints of the research literature providing a discursive space in which we can begin to re-theorize psychology's view of the body.

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APPENDIX A**CONJOINT FACULTY ETHICS REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

CERTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW

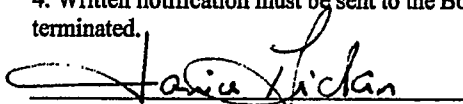
This is to certify that the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board at the University of Calgary has examined the following research proposal and found the proposed research involving human subjects to be in accordance with University of Calgary Guidelines and the Tri-Council Policy Statement on *"Ethical Conduct in Research Using Human Subjects"*. This form and accompanying letter constitute the Certification of Institutional Ethics Review.

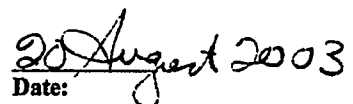
File no: **CE101-3662**
 Applicant(s): **Julle Elizabeth A. Quinn**
 Department: **Psychology**
 Project Title: **Embodied Lives: Women at Work**
 Sponsor (if applicable):

Restrictions:

This Certification is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the project and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modifications to the authorized protocol must be submitted to the Chair, Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for approval.
3. A progress report must be submitted 12 months from the date of this Certification, and should provide the expected completion date for the project.
4. Written notification must be sent to the Board when the project is complete or terminated.


 Janice Dickin, Ph.D, LL.B.,
 Chair
 Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board


 Date: 20 August 2003.

Distribution: (1) Applicant, (2) Supervisor (if applicable), (3) Chair, Department/Faculty Research Ethics Committee, (4) Sponsor, (5) Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (6) Research Services.

APPENDIX B

SCRIPT TO INFORM PARTICIPANTS ABOUT THE STUDY

Most psychological research on women's bodies focuses on how body awareness impacts negatively on women's self-esteem (especially with regard to weight and social expectations). This research suggests that women are dissatisfied with their bodies – to the point where they diet, develop eating disorders or seek out cosmetic surgery. My research asks whether or not this rather negative picture has limits. In other words, are there situations in which women feel good about their bodies? In their everyday lives, women's bodies are part of their daily experience as they go about their day-to-day activities. It is this everyday sense of the body that I am interested in exploring. This research involves interviews with women in physically demanding occupations. We will talk about your work experiences, and how you use your body in your work environment and elsewhere.

I'm specifically interested in talking to women who work in *physical* occupations – that is, jobs which require bodily skill and stamina in order to perform well. Some examples of this kind of work include (but are not limited to): skilled laborers, military personnel, personal fitness instructors as well as nurses, factory workers and janitorial staff.

The interview will last at most about 60 minutes. It is open-ended, which means that I will put us back on track if we stray too far off topic, but you are generally free to lead the discussion and talk about the things that are important to you.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: Embodied Lives: Women at Work
 Investigator: Julie Quinn (Ph.D. Student, Department of Psychology)
 Supervisor: Dr. H. Lorraine Radtke (Project Supervisor, Department of Psychology)
 Funding Agency: SSHRC

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please ask. Please take the time to read this form carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Description of Research Project

Most psychological research on women's bodies focuses on how body awareness impacts negatively on women's self-esteem (especially with regard to weight and social expectations). This research suggests that women are dissatisfied with their bodies – to the point where they diet, develop eating disorders or seek out cosmetic surgery. My research asks whether or not this rather negative picture has limits. In other words, are there situations in which women feel good about their bodies? In their everyday lives, women's bodies are part of their daily experience as they go about their day-to-day activities. It is this everyday sense of the body that I am interested in exploring. This research involves interviews with women in physically demanding occupations. We will talk about your work experiences, and how you use your body in your work environment and elsewhere.

I'm specifically interested in talking to women who work in *physical* occupations – that is, jobs which require bodily skill and stamina in order to perform well. Some examples of this kind of work include (but are not limited to): skilled labourers, military personnel, personal fitness instructors as well as nurses, factory workers and janitorial staff.

The interview will last at most about 60 minutes. It is open-ended, which means that I will put us back on track if we stray too far off topic, but you are generally free to lead the discussion and talk about the things that are important to you.

You are free to terminate the session at any time.

All interview sessions will be conducted, taped, and later transcribed. The interview and all resulting data will be **anonymous** and **confidential**. In transcribing the interview, we will eliminate any information that could be used to identify you. Pseudonyms will be used to refer to you and any other individuals identified in the interview. Any information that we publish will not reveal individual identities. In the reporting of the data, transcript excerpts may be included, but care will be taken not to include any identifying information.

This is to certify that I, _____, hereby agree to participate as a volunteer in this research project within the Department of Psychology, University of Calgary, under the supervision of Dr. H. Lorraine Radtke.

The research project and my part in the research project (i.e., the interview) have been fully explained to me by Julie Quinn and/or Dr. Radtke, and I understand the explanation. The procedures of the project have been fully described and discussed in detail with me. I have been given an opportunity to ask whatever questions I may have had and all such inquiries have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I am free not to talk about specific topics or answer questions in the session. I understand that any data or answers to questions will remain confidential with regard to my identity. All confidential data (interview tapes, transcripts, computer disks) will be stored in Dr. Radtke's research lab, at the University of Calgary, in a locked filing cabinet to which only Julie Quinn and Dr. Radtke will have access. Raw data will be disposed by the investigators at the end of the project: after a five year period, the tapes and transcripts will be destroyed as part of the Canadian Psychological Association Code of Ethics. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation in the study at any time without penalty. I understand that I may request a summary of the results of the study.

In signing this form I fully understand that I am participating in this study as part of my educational experience in the Department of Psychology. In exchange for my time, I expect to gain some understanding of research and some of the ideas currently being explored in psychology. If, after the study, I feel I have not gained sufficient educational benefit, or have other concerns regarding this experience, I may register my concerns with Dr. Michael Boyes, Chair: Department of Psychology Research Board. He will ensure that my comments are acted upon with no fear that I will not be identified personally. Dr. Boyes can be reached at: Admin. 230, 220-7724 or

boyes@ucalgary.ca

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a participant. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the Investigators,

Sponsors, or involved Institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

If you have further questions concerning matters related to the research, please contact:

Julie Quinn, 220-7130, jeaquinn@ucalgary.ca

If you have any questions regarding the ethics review of this project, or the way you have been treated, you may also contact **Mrs. Patricia Evans, Research Services Office, Room 602 Earth Sciences, telephone: 220-3782**. If you have any concerns about the project itself, please contact the researcher.

Participant

Date

Investigator/Witness (optional)

Date

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. This research has the ethical approval of the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

APPENDIX D

CONVERSATION GUIDE

Discussion Questions

I am interested in talking about you and your body, particularly in relation to the kind of work you do. If you are unsure what to talk about, these are a few questions to get you started:

- Does your work require any kind of physical training?
- How did you learn the physical skills necessary to be good at your job?
- How much physical skill do you believe is necessary to be good at what you do?
- In terms of your job, if you could change yourself (your body) in any way (to make yourself more efficient / a better worker) what would you do?
- How do you use your body in your work?
- Has your body changed as a result of the work you do? How?
- In general how do you feel about yourself, your physical appearance? What qualities about your body are important to you (for example, attractiveness, strength)? Why are these qualities important?
- Do you consider yourself to be feminine or masculine, both or neither? Why?
- Do you feel differently about your body when you are at work compared to at home or in other social situations?
- Before this interview, had you ever thought about any of this stuff before?

APPENDIX E

DEBRIEFING HANDOUT

Thank you for volunteering your time and your expertise to be part of this important research. Most psychological research on women's bodies focuses on the many negative aspects of women's body awareness (especially in terms of issues like weight, diet, body image, and self-esteem). By participating today, you are contributing to research that challenges this take on women and asks whether or not this rather negative picture has limits. In other words, are there situations in which women feel good about their bodies? In their everyday lives, women's bodies are part of their daily experience as they go about their day-to-day activities. It is this everyday sense of the body that you have helped to explore by agreeing to talk with me today.

Description of Research Project

Most psychological research on women's bodies focuses on how body awareness impacts negatively on women's self-esteem (especially with regard to weight and social expectations). This research suggests that women are dissatisfied with their bodies – to the point where they diet, develop eating disorders or seek out cosmetic surgery. My research asks whether or not this rather negative picture has limits. In other words, are there situations in which women feel good about their bodies? In their everyday lives, women's bodies are part of their daily experience as they go about their day-to-day activities. It is this everyday sense of the body that I am interested in exploring. This research involves interviews with women in physically demanding occupations. We will talk about your work experiences, and how you use your body in your work environment and elsewhere.

I'm specifically interested in talking to women who work in *physical* occupations – that is, jobs which require bodily skill and stamina in order to perform well. Some examples of this kind of work include (but are not limited to): skilled laborers, military personnel, personal fitness instructors as well as nurses, factory workers and janitorial staff.

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