THE WEAVER AND THE WEB:
A FOUCAULDIAN ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSES WHICH PRODUCE WOMEN ABUSING WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

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Wendy Cheryl Shaw, candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, has presented a thesis titled, *The Weaver and The Web: A Foucauldian Analysis of the Discourses Which Produce Women Abusing Women in the Workplace*, in an oral examination held on December 4, 2012. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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ABSTRACT

Bullying of women by other women in the workplace has rarely been the focus of research. This dissertation uses feminist poststructural theory and Foucauldian discourse analysis to problematize the belief that workplace bullying is the result of individual personality flaws, skill deficits, or psychopathology in the abuser or in the target, and to trouble the individualization of a serious social problem which has resulted in victim blaming, and turning the focus of public attention away from the consequences of gender and race.

This dissertation analyzes research texts based on transcriptions of open interviews with five women who have experienced abuse by other women in the workplace, in order to illuminate the cultural discourses and humanist discursive practices that shape the women’s constructions of self and others, and their assumptions about the world. It uses discourse analysis to explain the role of discourse in the production of workplace hierarchy, gender and race; to show the construction of the subject positions made available to women; and to explore the complex configurations of power/knowledge facing women in the workplace.

“Woman” is not a natural or an essentialist category. Woman is constituted in discourse. Using concepts from the work of Michel Foucault (biopower, surveillance, power/knowledge, and desire), this dissertation suggests that discourses of the good woman and the good worker offer women subject positions that are both desirable and painful, marked on the body, subject positions that sometimes conflict with each other and become impossible to reconcile. Disrupting the discourses that produce workplace bullying is complex and difficult work, because a woman’s culturally constructed desires
may keep her from resisting the “common sense” of the gendered discourses that surround her, and because she may accept and submit to discursive assumptions in order to survive.

Poststructural theory, because it troubles the common sense of a vast research literature that presents bullying as individual pathology, and because it disrupts gender and racial binaries that allow for misogyny and racism, offers a new perspective on workplace bullying that can be used to help generate possibilities for change.
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The writing of a dissertation can be a lonely and isolating experience, yet it would be impossible without the support of many others. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank those who have contributed.

To my participants who gave of their time and shared painful memories, I would like to express my deepest appreciation. I hope I have provided you with a chance to be heard.

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DEDICATION

I am grateful to my friends for always supporting me and encouraging me with your best wishes.

I would never have been able to finish my dissertation without the support of my family and husband, Patrick Shaw. You were always there and stood by me through the good times and bad. Thank you for your years of support and understanding of the time away from you it took to attend classes and complete the several degrees that brought me to this place.

Finally, it is to my daughters, Meghan, Erinn and Shannon, that I wish to dedicate this research with the hope for a different future for you and young women like you.
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We are in a sense living our lives in a knotted web of discourses and passions, a web that is of our own making, and out of the substance of which we are each continually being made-up. We are each both the weaver and the web, the ones who tie the knots, and who are tied.

(Davies, 2003, p. 202)
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Every woman knows this phenomenon. When I explain that the focus of my research is women’s negative experiences with other women in the workplace, the reaction of the other woman has been telling. Each time, a look of knowing comes over the face of the woman to whom I am speaking. She nods, smiles, and makes a comment that indicates she knows exactly to what I’m referring. Frequently, the other woman offers to tell me about her own negative experiences with another woman in the workplace or she suggests that I speak to someone she knows who has had such an experience. Even my dentist, after asking me about the topic of my research, suggested that I should talk to the women in her previous office. She said they had treated each other so badly she finally had to leave.

1.1 Introduction

In my work as a school social worker with a large school division in Western Canada, teachers often ask me for ideas on how to stop children from bullying and how to support the children who have been bullied. Over the years, I have sought out resources that might explain what was happening and that would provide solutions for teachers. Many of the school bullying resources encourage the implementation of education and prevention programs and suggest that if you tell children what they are doing is bullying and is hurtful, they will stop. Much of the literature and research on bullying in schools places responsibility on the children who witness the bullying, the “bystanders”, by encouraging these children to step in and stop the bullying. Initially, I accepted the explanations and suggestions presented in the literature. As recommended, I encouraged schools to work at developing a culture in which bullying behaviour was unacceptable. I also encouraged and participated in the development of school division policies and
procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying. Despite considerable work by school division staff, there has been minimal progress in eliminating or even decreasing bullying in schools.

It is because of my work as a school social worker that I will begin this chapter by looking at the literature on school bullying. While, an exhaustive in-depth review of the literature on the bullying of children by other children at school cannot be provided here, I present an overview because I believe it is important to understand how this research has constructed our understandings of bullying in schools and, by implication, our understanding of bullying in the workplace. I will then explore the literature on bullying in the workplace and summarize the literature on women’s experiences of bullying by other women in the workplace.

I do not approach this research from a purely analytical perspective, but as a woman who has personally experienced women abusing women in the workplace. At the time, I found very little in the literature that was meaningful to me or that satisfactorily explained what had happened to me. It was for this reason that I made the decision to examine this phenomenon further.

1.2 Bullying in Schools

1.2.1 Early research. Recognition of the mistreatment of children by their peers is not new. On the contrary, most adults can remember experiencing mistreatment by their peers when they were growing up or they have read a story or novel (Attwood, 1988; Blume, 1976; Henkes, 1986, 1988) or watched movies such as The Caine Mutiny, Zorba the Greek, Carrie, Lord of the Flies, School Ties, Mean Girls or Heathers that depict such behaviour. Bullying by children and youth at school, as this behaviour is most often
referred to in recent years, has been constructed in the literature as a widespread and serious problem around the world (Munthe & Roland, 1989, as cited in Sullivan, 2000), often with grave consequences. This construction of bullying involves a number of themes, including the prevalence of the phenomenon, the effects or consequences of bullying, possible causal factors, prevention and intervention strategies and the different ways gender is accounted for. Each of these themes will be examined individually. But first, it will be useful to look at the origins of the concept of bullying.

Peter Heinemann (1969, as cited in Roland, 1989; Heinemann, 1972) a Swedish physician, was the first to write about "mobbing", the destructive behaviour of small groups of children directed against (most often) a single child. The word “mobbing” had not previously been used in this context in English. Around the same time, Dan Olweus, a professor of Psychology in Norway, wrote about mobbing (1973a; as cited in Olweus, 1993) and presented a paper on personality and aggression (1973b; as cited in Olweus, 1993) at a symposium in Nebraska the same year. His work was published in the US in 1978 as Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys. In the 1980s, using a questionnaire he developed, Olweus conducted three large scale studies on school children in Norway and Sweden which informed much of his later work. He became known as the father of school bullying (Perry, 2008). He wrote, “A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (Olweus, 1986; 1991; as cited in Olweus, 1993). He specified negative actions as “when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict injury or discomfort upon another” (Olweus 1973b, as cited in Olweus, 1993), stipulating that these actions could be verbal (e.g. name calling or threats) or
physical (when someone hits, pushes, kicks, pinches or restrains by physical contact), or symbolic (when someone makes faces or dirty gestures, intentionally excludes someone from a group, or refuses to comply with another person’s wishes) (Olweus, 1993). He also included single instances of more serious negative actions and stressed that the term bullying should not be used “when students of approximately the same strength (physical or psychological) are fighting or quarrelling”, and that in order to use the term bullying there should be “an imbalance of strength (an asymmetric power relationship)” (p. 10). As well, Olweus distinguished between open attacks on a victim, which he referred to as direct bullying, and more subtle or indirect forms of bullying such as social isolation and intentional exclusion from a peer group.

Despite Olweus’ work, there is no consensus on a definition for childhood bullying in the literature. On the contrary, there is considerable variability among definitions. Some believe bullying and verbal abuse lie at one end of a continuum of violence that ranges through fighting to rape and homicide (Askew, 1988). Nevertheless, several factors from Olweus’ early work have emerged as common in most subsequent definitions of bullying: repetition over a period of time, intention to harm, and imbalance of power (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995; Coloroso, 2002; Richard J. Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, 1992; Hoover and Oliver, 1996; Pörhöla, Karhunen, & Rainivaara, 2006; Rigby, 1995, 1998, 2002; Ross, 1998; Sharp & Smith, 1994a, 1994b; Smith, 1991; Sullivan, 2000).

1.2.2 Prevalence. I turn next to the research on the prevalence of bullying by children. Olweus (1978; 1991) who reported that fifteen percent of Norwegian students were involved in bullying now and then. By 1995, Olweus was reporting 1 in 7 children involved in bullying. News of Olweus’ Scandinavian work spread and concern about
bullying by children began to grow until bullying came to be seen as a global problem (Munthe & Roland, 1989). Research in Ireland, Britain, and Canada has confirmed bullying as a frequent behaviour in schools (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995; Craig & Pepler, 1997; Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; Yates & Smith, 1989) and a significant and pervasive problem. Many other early international studies, including research from Australia, Canada, Ireland, England and Finland, focused on prevalence, raising concern about bullying as a serious, widespread and escalating problem effecting large numbers of children and youth (Craig & Pepler, 1995, 1997; Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Berts, & King, 1982; O'Moore & Brendan, 1989; Olweus, 1986; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, Slee, & Conolly, 1991; Peter K. Smith, 1991; Yates & Smith, 1989). Batsche (1994) suggested that bullying may be the most prevalent form of violence in schools and likely to affect the greatest number of students. Smith and Shu (2000) reported 12.2% of school children said they were bullied between once and several times a week. Sixty-five percent said they had been bullied on the playground, sixty-one percent said it was in the classroom and thirty-seven percent said it was in the hallway. Other studies reported rates of bullying in England ranging from twenty-seven percent sometimes to 10 percent once a week (Lane, 1989; Stephenson & Smith, 1988; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Salmivalli et al. (1996) investigated bullying among Finish children and reported that 10.5% of boys and 5.9% of girls reported being bullied. Yoshio (1985) wrote about a number of cases of retaliation by victims of bullying in Japan. In a study conducted by Atlas and Pepler (1998) in a Toronto metropolitan school, 2.4 episodes of bullying occurred every hour in the classroom. Ziegler and Rosenstein-Manner (1991) found that one in three students were involved in bullying, that boys were more involved than girls and that younger
children are more involved than older children. In another Canadian study, forty-nine percent of students reported having been bullied at least once or twice during a school term, twenty-two percent more than once or twice and 8% reported being bullied weekly or more often (Charach, Pepler, & Zieglar, 1995). In the U.S., Perry, Kuzel and Perry (1988) reported that 10 percent of their sample could be characterized as extreme victims of bullying. Hoover, Oliver and Hazler (1992) suggested that seventy-two percent of females and eight-one percent of males experienced bullying at some point in their school careers.

It is apparent that many researchers have examined the negative interactions between school children over the last four decades and identified these negative interactions as a pervasive problem for children in schools.

1.2.3 Effects and consequences. Still other researchers emphasize the harm done by bullying. Bullying is seen as the source of a great many problems for children and youth; as “the most malicious and malevolent form of deviant behaviour widely practiced in our schools...” (Tattum & Lane, 1989); as creating a serious threat to life’s opportunities, “hell on earth” (Sullivan, 2000); as “an intolerable social evil” (Rigby, 1998). Greenbaum et al. (1989) wrote, “Bullying, perhaps the most underrated problem in America’s schools today, distracts minds and inhibits the learning process; if left untouched, it can destroy lives and place society at risk” (p. 3).

The effects and consequences of bullying are identified as numerous, significant and distressing for the victims, perhaps putting the mental health of children at risk (Rigby, 2000, 2005). They include feelings of loneliness, anxiety, anger, and depression, an unhealthy avoidance of social interactions (Hazler, Carney, Green, Powell, & Jolly,
1997), irritability, panic (Rigby, 2005), psychosomatic symptoms, chronic illness, school maladjustment and failure, truancy, and dropping out of school (Rigby, 2000). Boulton and Underwood (1992) suggest that bullying plays a role in the development of low self-esteem. Victims are also described as being fearful and anxious in the environment in which bullying takes place (Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, & Short-Camilli, 1994). They avoid and withdraw or try to escape from the situation (e.g. by skipping school, avoiding places where bullying occurs or running away) (Hazler, 1994; Smith & Furlong, 1994). Poor academic performance (Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, 1992; Hoover & Oliver, 1996; Olweus, 1978) has also been identified as a consequence of bullying. Bullying can create a climate of fear that negatively affects teachers’ ability to teach and children’s ability to learn (Olweus, 1993).

It has also been suggested that children who are aggressive tend to be more deviant in adulthood. Farrington (1991) suggests significant continuity of aggression from childhood to adulthood and argues that bullying behaviour places bullies at risk of later maladjustment, adult anti-social behaviour and limited opportunity. Eron, Huesmann, Dubow, Romanoff, and Yarmel (1987) reported that children identified early as bullies in school had a 1 in 4 chance of having a criminal record by age thirty. Similarly, Olweus (1991) reported that approximately 60% of boys identified as bullies in grade 6 to 9 had at least one criminal conviction by age twenty-four and 35-40% had 3 or more convictions. Furthermore, childhood aggression has been identified as the best-known behavioural predictor of future social adjustment difficulties (Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996).

Even more serious, the humiliation, degradation, hopelessness, and helpless self-pity that come as a result of being a target of bullying have a disastrous impact on the
development of a child’s identity and have been highly correlated to suicidal ideation and acts of suicide (Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001; Head, 1996; Rigby, 2005). Olweus (1993) reported that the suicides of three boys ages 10 to 14 in Norway, who were believed in all probability to be victims of severe bullying by peers, were the impetus for the Ministry of Education to launch a nationwide anti-bullying campaign in Norwegian schools in 1983. Carney (2000) supports the view that chronic abuse by peers is a risk factor for adolescent suicidal behaviour. Canadian examples include Emmet Fralick of Halifax, NS, who took his own life on April 8th, 2002, and Travis Sleeva of Canora, ON, who shot himself one January day in 2005 (Art contest offers forum to deal with bullying, 2002). Fifteen year old Jamie Hubley of Ottawa, ON, took his own life on October 14, 2011 (Gay Ottawa teen who killed himself was bullied, 2011). Amanda Todd committed suicide on October 10, 2012 at her home in Port Coquitlam, BC (Amanda Todd: Bullied Teen Commits Suicide, 2012).

Some children have even died at the hands of other children. One example is the well-known case of Reena Virk of Victoria, BC who died after being bullied, attacked, beaten and drowned by her schoolmates on May 8, 1997 (B.C. teen found guilty of killing Virk, 2000). Aggressive behaviours such as bringing a weapon to school for self-defence or retaliation have been cited as a consequence of bullying (Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001). According to Bowman (2001), roughly two-thirds of school shooters felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked or injured by others. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, who shot themselves after killing 13 and wounding 20 others at Columbine High School near Denver, CO on April 20, 1999 (Mellish, 2001) or Seung-Hui Cho who shot 32 professors and students and injured 25 before taking his own life at Virginia Tech on
April 16, 2007 are just two examples of school shootings purported to be retaliation by students who had been bullied (Westhues, 2007).

Despite the relatively infrequent deaths of children purported to be the result of bullying (Head, 1996), the mass media attention to and coverage of the deaths of these children has fuelled public concern and amplified public perceptions that childhood bullying is a serious problem.

1.2.4 Causal factors. Other researchers emphasize causal factors in their studies of children who bully other children or of children who have been bullied. Although there is no consensus, individual personality characteristics, skill deficits and even physical features of the children doing the behaviour, as well as those of the children who have experienced the negative actions, have frequently been constructed as primary causal factors (Besag, 1989; Farrington, 1993; Hazler, Carney, Green, Powell, & Jolly, 1997; Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Berts, & King, 1982; Olweus, 1978).

I will begin by looking first at the literature focusing on the children labelled as “bullies” who are doing the negative actions. These children have been characterized in the literature, under a skills deficit model, as lacking social skills (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000). However, Sutton, Smith, and Swettenham (1999) do not support the application of such a model to children who bully. Instead, they suggest children who bully have a superior ability to understand the mental states and emotions of others and are able to perceive and interpret social cues very accurately; they just have different values. Alternatively, children who bully are sometimes portrayed as mean, cruel, insensitive (Stones, 1993) impulsive (Dusenbury, Falco, & Bosworth, 1997; Rigby, 2001), “brutes” (Zarzour, 1999, p. 16) needing power and dominance over others,
enjoying a “reign of terror” (p. 176), and bullying to damage the self-esteem of victims in order to feel better about themselves (Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, 1992) and to be more in control (Batsche, 1994). Rigby, Cox, and Black (1997) proposed that low levels of cooperativeness were characteristic of children who bully. As well, these children have been identified as having a hot-headed antisocial temperament combined with aggressive rule-breaking behaviour and physical strength (Olweus, 1973a, 1973b; as cited in Olweus, 1993; Smith, Madeson, & Moody, 1999; Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999). It is also suggested that children identified as bullies have little empathy for victims and seem unaffected by the possibility of inflicting pain and suffering on others (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988).

Pepler, Craig, and Roberts (1998) provide an alternative perspective following their observations of bullying. They suggest that, even though children who bully display higher rates of verbal and physical aggression, they also played with other children to the same extent as their peers and initiated more positive interactions than did non-aggressive children. According to Zarsour (1999), children with low self-esteem can be easily swayed into bullying other children. However, Olweus did not find any evidence to substantiate the characterization of children who bully as anxious, insecure or lacking in self-esteem. On the contrary, they generally have average to high self-esteem, may be popular with peers and teachers, and may do well in school (Olweus, 1993).

Considerable research suggests that family relationships are likely to be an important factor in bullying (Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1994; Hoover & Oliver, 1996). Olweus (1993) identified specific child rearing practices on the part of the primary caregiver toward a child, unrelated to socioeconomic factors, which he believed were conducive to
the development of children with aggressive personality patterns: an emotional attitude which lacks warmth and involvement; a tolerance for aggressive behaviour without setting clear limits; the use of physical punishment and violent emotional outbursts; and reasonable supervision. Some research suggests that bullying is intergenerational, and that a bully at school is often a victim at home. The conditions under which children who bully are raised, including the attitude of the primary caretaker, has been branded as particularly important. Curtner-Smith (2000) suggest that the ways in which parents model social interactions in their relationships with spouses, relatives, and friends contribute to bullying by children. Others looked at how parenting styles contribute to aggression by children (Eron, Huesmann, & Zelli, 1991; Olweus, 1993). Also discussed is the role of parents and families in the rearing of children who are more likely not to bully others or be bullied, in knowing what to do if they believe their child is bullying others or in supporting a child who has been bullied (Besag, 1989; Coloroso, 2002; Rigby, 1998; Zarzour, 1999). Seddon, McLellan and Lajoie (2000) encourage parents to teach their children about bullying, to watch for clues that their child is bullying others and to help them take responsibility for their behaviour, or to intervene if their child is being bullied.

That brings me to the research on why some children are on the receiving end of bullying behaviour. Those children who experience the negative actions of other children have been labelled as ‘victims’ or ‘targets’. Olweus (1973b; 1978, as cited in Olweus, 1993) actually subdivided the victims of bullying into two categories, the passive or submissive victim and the provocative victim. The passive victim is described as more anxious and insecure than other children with low self-esteem and less than average
physical strength. Kriedler (1996) supported this view, identifying victims as having low self-confidence. They are also said to feel stupid, ashamed, and unattractive and to believe they are failures. They withdraw from other children, end up with no friends and feeling lonely and abandoned. They appear to do nothing to provoke attacks from other children, are not aggressive and do not defend themselves. The provocative victim is described as having difficulty concentrating so they irritate those around them and provoke negative reactions. They are described as hot-tempered, restless, and anxious and will attempt to retaliate when attacked (Olweus, 1993). Perry, Kusel, and Perry (1988) described victims using the terms high–aggressive and low-aggressive; however, Olweus’ description of victims is the one frequently repeated in subsequent literature (Batsche, 1994). Nevertheless, there are those who disagree with this construction of the victim, arguing that victims may be “well-socialized, well balanced, and pro-social” (Ross, 1998, p. 69).

A third category of “bully/victim” has been suggested. This refers to children who are aggressive toward a weaker child and are then victimized by a stronger, more aggressive peer (Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988; Scaglione & Scaglione, 2006). Despite some literature to the contrary (Stones, 1993), physical characteristics, other than physical strength (e.g. such as looks, ethnicity, disability, weight, hair colour, wearing glasses, unusual speaking, different clothes) are generally considered by others to be unrelated to victimization (Olweus, 1973b; 1978, as cited in Batsche, 1994). Boulton and Underwood (1992) suggest that children may be victims because they are physically smaller and weaker, but may be chosen as a victim for absolutely no reason at all. Salmivalli et al. (1996) went a step further, arguing that all children participate in bullying in some way.
They have assigned participant roles to everyone involved; victim, bully, reinforcer of the bully, assistant to the bully, defender of the victim and outsider. There is no clear agreement in the literature as to what characterizes a victim.

1.2.5 Prevention and intervention strategies. Other researchers emphasize the need for prevention or intervention in their studies of children bullying at school. Suggestions here depend greatly on assumptions about causal factors. Frequently, intervention is perceived to be required at the personal level (e.g. remediation of a skill deficit, for example); that is to say, the individual victim is often seen as the site of intervention in these studies. For instance, identifying the specific deficit in the victim and whether a victim is passive or provocative may be seen as necessary in order to determine the most appropriate intervention. Therefore, although there is no consensus, a good portion of the literature focuses on the need to examine the personal character of a specific victim and on what the victim can do to ward off bullying. For example, some suggestions include using avoidance techniques, encouraging them to stick up for themselves, having a verbal come back, learning martial arts, telling someone or asking for help (Stones, 1993; Zarzour, 1999). Alternatively, the focus is on how the victim can deal with the aftermath by working on feeling good and by doing such things as “happiness work-outs” (Stones, p. 55). Children who have difficulty interacting with or are often in conflict with peers are perceived as being in need of social skills (Dubow, Huesmann, & Eron, 1987). If a child is viewed as passive and weak, then assertiveness training may be seen as an appropriate intervention, whereas if a child is viewed as provocative, s/he may be taught how to reduce aggression being directed toward them through conflict resolution or anger management skills (Hoover & Oliver, 1996).
Beginning with Olweus (1993), building a child’s self-esteem has also been identified as one of the best self-defence strategies against bullying for children.

Other researchers construct bullying as an interpersonal activity (Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Berts, & King, 1982) which arises within the context of a group of peers who play a major role in reinforcing the behaviour. For instance, the effects of insecure children observing someone model aggressive behaviour, the weakening of inhibitions, a decreased sense of individual responsibility and a lowered perception of the victim have been examined as contributing to bullying (Olweus, 1993). In a study by Hawkins, Pepler, and Craig (2001), peers were present during 88% of bullying interactions on the school playground. In another study, peers were present in some capacity in 79% of bullying episodes on the playground and in 85% of episodes in the classroom (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000). Some researchers have focused upon this interplay between childhood aggression and the social context in which the aggression occurs, with the most salient feature being the power imbalance between children (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000; Craig & Pepler, 1995; Fryxell & Smith, 2000; Naylor & Cowie, 1999, as cited in Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Smith & Adelman, 1987, as cited in Fryxell & Smith, 2000). This power imbalance is seen as one of the most important factors. If it were possible to engage and empower “the silent majority” (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Hazler, 1996, p. 18) and to encourage a more productive involvement of the large percentage of onlookers, witnesses or bystanders who regularly observe bullying behaviour at school but do not know what to do to stop it or how to provide direct support the victims (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Carney, 2000; Coloroso, 2002; Craig & Pepler, 1995, 1997; Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; Hazler, Carney, Green, Powell,
& Jolly, 1997; Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli, 1999; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996; Zarzour, 1999), the balance of power would shift and the aggression would be less likely to occur.

Peers as bystanders seem to be powerful moderators of behaviour, and have been found to be effective in reducing negative effects of bullying for victims and creating a “socio-emotional climate of ‘care’” (Naylor & Cowie, 1999, p. 467). When those children who are standing by and observing bullying behaviour refuse to participate or condone the behaviour, social pressure “can be brought to bear by the peer group ….” (Herbert, 1989, p. 80), and children who bully are isolated from their social support. It is suggested that this strategy may ultimately be more effective than targeting the difficult to change behaviour of children who bully (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999). Rigby (1995, 1998) examines additional roles of peers in contributing to a school climate that promotes helping each other and suggests that programs that teach students to recognize and intervene have the greatest impact on curbing bullying. Salmivalli (1999) supports the argument that interventions should be directed not only towards the bullies and the victims but toward the whole peer group, suggesting that these interventions should include general awareness raising, the opportunity to self-reflect, assertiveness training and the opportunity to rehearse new behaviours. Specific anti-bullying interventions involving a small group format have been proposed and include such programs as The No Blame Approach (Robinson and Maines, 1997) and the Support Group Approach (Young, 1998), the Method of Shared Concern (Pinkas, 1989), The Quality Circle method (Cowie and Sharp, 1994), and Circle of Friends (Maines & Robinson, 1998, as cited in Sullivan, 2000).
However, there seems to be consensus that the most effective means of addressing bullying is through comprehensive multifaceted school wide programming that includes both prevention and anti-bullying programs (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Besag, 1989; Bonds & Stoker, 2000; Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Coie, Underwood, & Lochman, 1991; Coloroso, 2002; Dubow, Huesmann, & Eron, 1987; Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, & Short-Camilli, 1994; Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, & Short-Camilli, 1997; Hoover & Oliver, 1996; Hunter, Elias, & Norris, 2001; Marini, Bombay, Hobin, Winn, & Dumyn, 2000; Pepler, Craig, Ziegler, & Charach (1994, as cited in Atlas & Pepler, 1998); Peterson & Rigby, 1999; Rigby, 1998; Peter Smith, 1991; Stevens, Van Oost, & De Bourdeaudhuij, 2000; Zarzour, 1999). Prevention programming involves the promotion of personal and social competencies in all students (Coie, Underwood, & Lochman, 1991; Dubow, Huesmann, & Eron, 1987) through character education (Peterson & Skiba, 2000). This includes such things as teaching tolerance (Scaglione & Scaglione, 2006), assertiveness training (Sharp, Cowie, & Smith, 1994), anger management, self-control, self-esteem, social perspective taking (Coie, Underwood, & Lochman, 1991; Dubow, Huesmann, & Eron, 1987); decision-making, problem solving and conflict resolution skills, resisting peer pressure and active listening, peer mediation (Peterson & Skiba, 2000). Leff, Power, Manz, Cotigan, and Nabors (2001) reviewed five prevention programs and suggested that each program reduced aggressive and maladaptive behaviour. Other interventions discussed in the literature include Peace by Peace (1997); Project Achieve’s School Safety and Effective Behaviour Management Model (Knoff, n.d.); Effective Behavior Support (Nersesian, n.d.); the P.E.A.C.E. Pack (Slee, 1997, as cited in Sullivan, 2000); Roots of Empathy: Changing the World Child by Child (Gordon, 2000); and Peace Power.
In-School Mentoring Program (n. d.) was also recommended.

One of the primary assumptions of anti-bullying intervention is the social democratic notion that bad behaviour is the result of ignorance and that once you educate someone they will stop the bad behaviour. This assumption has resulted in a focus on bullying awareness raising and education of school children (Batsche, 1994; Hoover & Oliver, 1996; 1993; Smith & Furlong, 1994; Sullivan, 2000) as part of a multifaceted school wide prevention and anti-bullying program. Some of the programs recommended include Don’t Laugh at Me (2002); Steps to respect: A bullying prevention program, (2001); Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus, 1991, 1994, 1997, 1999) and RespectED: Violence and abuse prevention, (2001). Cartwright (1995) provides an example of the implementation of a whole school anti-bullying policy at a secondary school.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of prevention or anti-bullying intervention programs in reducing bullying has been recommended (Batsche, 1994) and a number of such analyses have been conducted. Despite the widespread inclusion of character education in bullying prevention, Peterson and Skiba (2000) acknowledge a lack of evidence for or against the effectiveness of character education in the prevention of violence, or in the reduction of bullying, or in other kinds of behaviour problems. Rigby (2002) conducted a meta-evaluation of the effectiveness of twelve bullying intervention programs. Although specific levels of effectiveness were not provided, results ranged from some reduction in aggressive behaviour and bullying to an increase in similar behaviours. Ferguson, Miguel, Kilburn, Jr. and Sanchez (2007) concluded, in a meta-analysis, that the effects produced by school-based anti-bullying programs are too small to be practically effective.
Espelage, Bosworth and Simon (2000) suggest the need to consider the potential influences of social and environmental factors in bullying. They identify schools as the main place where bullying occurs, and essential to consider in the development of appropriate solutions (Olweus, 1991; Whitney & Smith, 1993; Ziegler & Rosenstein-Manner, 1991). A positive school climate, culture or ‘ethos’, described by Sullivan (2000) as “the values or beliefs of the school, its academic and educational aspirations, the nature of the personal relationships it fosters, and the societal attitudes and responsibilities modelled and taught at the school” (p. 53) is seen in the literature as a “fundamental determinant for the rate of bullying” (p. 53) within the school. Erickson, Mattaini, and McGuire (2004) suggest that, as opposed to curricular add-ons or narrowly focused skill training, “constructing cultures incompatible with violence and threat” (p. 102) is more effective in preventing bullying. Some of the factors in schools considered likely to affect variation in bullying rates were whether a school has clear rules against bullying; provides adequate playground supervision; has approachable support people available; uses curriculum to tackle social issues (Cowie & Sharp, 1994); encourages home-school communications and cooperation (Smith, 1991); involves parents and community (Peterson & Skiba, 2000); and promotes effective classroom management and discipline (Coie, Underwood, & Lochman, 1991; Dubow, Huesmann, & Eron, 1987). Askew (1988) provides an alternative perspective about school ethos, suggesting that the structure and organisation of school systems perpetuates bullying by reflecting and reinforcing the values and ideologies of the dominant group in society.

Also discussed in the literature are those aspects of the school environment perceived
to have no relationship to the rate of bullying. These included school and class size (Olweus, 1991; Whitney & Smith, 1993) or the proportion of non-white and white students (Whitney & Smith, 1993). Activities which show little promise in preventing violence in schools have also been identified and include using scare tactics, focusing on self-esteem exclusively, or providing information to children without skill development (Batsche, 1994). As well, it is suggested that adding prevention programs to school systems that are already overwhelmed, segregating aggressive or anti-social students, and instructional programs that are too brief and not supported by positive school climate are equally unsuccessful in reducing bullying (Dusenbury, Falco, & Bosworth, 1997).

Some of the literature focuses on role and responsibilities of teachers in preventing bullying. There is general agreement in the literature that school staff must send a strong message that bullying by students will not be tolerated. A teacher must have the ability to recognize and deal with bullying and reduce bullying behaviour (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Hazler, 1994; Landau, Milich, Harris, & Larson, 2001; Leff, Kupersmidt, Patterson, & Power, 1999) by acting as a “social architects” (Rees, 2002), providing opportunities for children to talk about their feelings and to learn about cooperation, social skills, anger management, assertiveness, and mediation (Hoover & Olson, 2000; Sullivan, 2000; Zarzour, 1999). The literature also suggests that teachers need to support the implementation of interventions against bullying, develop a community of caring and ensure they ‘hear’ their students (Rees, 2002). Children are said not to report to school staff and to resort to avoiding the situation or to retaliation strategies because they don’t believe the staff can or will protect them. Sixty percent of victims reported school personnel responded poorly or did relatively little to intervene in bullying incidents.
(Batsche, 1994; Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992; Olweus, 1991). A number of reasons for teachers’ inaction have been suggested in the literature. Stephenson and Smith (1988) argue that teachers may believe it is helpful to ignore bullying. They may even view verbal intimidation, isolation and exclusion as less serious or harmful and be less inclined to intervene. Boulton and Underwood (1992) suggest that teachers don’t respond because victims have not reported the behaviour and the teachers do not see it happening.

Lambert (1999) argues that a single strategy of focusing on the bully is inappropriate because there are other contextual, school based, influences that trigger bullying. Because bullying tends to occur on the playground, away from adult supervision, Lambert suggests school playground design, the way supervision occurs and the way the playground is used by children may in fact be contributing to bullying. Sullivan (2000) also promotes closer psychological and physical control of the school environment, through training and supervision respectively (p. 125). Providing children with equipment (e.g. skipping ropes, balls) and showing them how to play games at recess (e.g. Mother May I, Red Light Green Light) (Zarzour, 1999) is also seen as helpful.

The construction of bullying by children in schools as a pervasive blight that causes devastating consequences and must be removed has also contributed to the perceived need to focus on school safety, the rights of children to learn and teachers to teach in a safe environment. In May, 1987, researchers, psychologists and public relations professionals gathered at Harvard University to develop a plan for dealing with school bullying in the U. S. Those who gathered believed it was necessary to change the public’s attitudes and opinions about bullying. The basis of a national plan, to be
administered by the National School Safety Center in California, was developed and it was agreed that the media would be prompted to expose what they believed to be a pervasive antisocial phenomenon (Greenbaum, 1987; Greenbaum, Turner, & Stephens, 1989). In the UK, Lane (1989) wrote that “the school is itself part of the problem, …..schools cannot afford to take an ostrich-like position on bullying. The concept of the ‘safe school’, which has begun to take hold in the USA, is perhaps one that should be explored here” (p. 214). A proliferation of legislation and policies followed (Olweus, 1991; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988; Rigby, 1998; Sharp & Thompson, 1994). In Canada, the *Ontario Safe Schools Act* (2000) was passed, setting out standards for safe learning and safe teaching (Roher, 2004). Despite the many researchers who suggest that the answer to the prevention of school bullying lies in raising awareness of bullying as a serious problem, the research literature on prevention is inconclusive and contradictory.

Walton (2005) offers the only alternative constructions found in the literature for understanding bullying in schools. He became concerned about the dominant conceptualizations of bullying when he discovered that homophobia was not included, or even acknowledged, as a prominent form of bullying. Walton suggests that a discourse on bullying that implies objectivity and rationality, and the ideology that bullying is only done by bad kids is inadequate and misses the larger context. He uses discourse analysis and critical theory to analyze the power relations of the political, historical and ideological contexts that create an environment in schools which acknowledge and affirm the proliferation of differences such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality. Further, he suggests that schools are important sites in which to dismantle the power and privilege of some, which is constructed at the expense of others.
1.2.6 Gender differences. I will conclude this review of the literature on school bullying by highlighting the ways in which gender has figured in it. Although gender has not been prominent in the literature on bullying by children, gender differences in the forms of indirect and direct aggression used by children were identified years ago (Feshback, 1969, as cited in Crick & Grotpeeter, 1995). However, it was not until 1989 that Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson, and Gariepy explored same gender conflicts among girls. Since then, researchers have argued that there are forms of aggression and bullying considered to be more common for boys (e.g. overt physical fighting, verbal threats) and have argued that, as a group, boys exhibit significantly higher levels of aggression and bullying than do girls (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996; Gropper & Froschl, 2000; Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996; Sullivan, 2000). Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, and Kaukiainen (1996) suggest that males may find bullying more stimulating and arousing and may receive more encouragement and reinforcement from peers for bullying than females. These findings have been interpreted by some as an overall lack of aggression on the part of girls. Crick and Grotpeeter (1995) agreed that boys are significantly more represented in groups of overtly aggressive children. Nevertheless, they suggest that the degree of aggressive behaviour exhibited by girls has been underestimated in prior studies, adding that boys and girls exhibit distinct forms of aggression (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996). However, Olweus (1991; 1993) has suggested that it may be that the more direct physical bullying of boys is more visible than bullying by girls.

Conversely, several studies found that the proportion of episodes with male and
female initiators does not differ and that boys and girls bullied at the same rate (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Pepler, Craig, Ziegler, & Charach (1994, as cited in Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Hoover, Oliver and Hazler (1992) suggest that girls use more ridicule and teasing. Following Feshback’s (1969) earlier work and initial identification of “indirect aggression”, Björkqvist, Lagerspetz and Kaukiainen (1992) and Björkqvist and Niemelä (1992) support the notion of direct and indirect aggression as a phenomenon. Further, they suggest that the social structure of peer groups is tighter among girls, “making it easier to exploit relationships” (p. 403). They also suggest that girls are more likely to use indirect methods of aggression than are boys, perhaps because girls mature verbally earlier which facilitates the use of language as an indirect means of aggression. Pepler, et al. (1994) suggest that girls may be more likely to bully when peers are not present.

Researchers have continued to explore same-gender conflicts among girls and have identified what they referred to as relational aggression, a distinct construct that, although related, is relatively independent of overt aggression (e.g. withdrawing friendship or spreading rumours) (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson, & Gariepy, 1989; Crick & Bigbee, 1989; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). More recent research concurs that girls actively participate in aggressive behaviour; they have simply chosen a unique form of aggression which may be less visible and more difficult to detect (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003; Simmons, 2002; Wiseman, 2002a, 2002b). Relational aggression includes behaviours that are intended to significantly damage another child’s friendships and feelings of inclusion by the peer group (e.g. angrily retaliating against a child by excluding her from one’s play group; purposefully withdrawing friendship or acceptance in order to hurt or
control the child, spreading rumours about the child so that peers will reject her (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). In order to escape detection and punishment and to elude social disapproval, girls are described as retreating beneath a surface of sweetness to hurt each other in secret. Pepler, Craig, Ziegler, and Charach (1994, as cited in Atlas & Pepler, 1998) suggest that girls, who are more likely than boys to spend time with one peer instead of in a group, may be more likely to bully when peers are not present. In other words, bullying for girls may be a “one-to-one experience rather than a group experience” (Craig & Pepler, 1997, p. 65).

In the literature on school bullying, gender groups are constructed dualistically, according to a male/female binary as two opposite and exclusive groups, and the individuals in each group are believed to have gender related innate characteristics. This construction is androcentric in that descriptions of boys’ and girls’ aggression are based on the assumption that the male point of view is the norm for humanity and all behaviour outside this framework is defined as other or deviant, perpetuating the misogynistic hatred and mistrust of women and girls because they are not male. Also, the literature on school bullying does not include an analysis of racism as bullying.

I will now turn my attention from bullying in the school yard to bullying in the boardroom by reviewing the literature on bullying in the workplace.

1.3 Bullying, Mobbing, Abuse and Violence in the Workplace

Many of us naively expect that adults will treat one another with respect and consideration in the workplace; that the kind of behaviour that happens on the playground does not happen in the offices and board rooms of the world. However, Engel (2004) writes, “Backstabbing, lying, covering one’s tracks, nastiness, bullying, outbursts of rage,
sexual impropriety, gossip, and conflictual relationships are common in highly competitive, highly pressured office or department environments” (p. 143-144).

Frequently referred to as bullying but also known as abuse, harassment, and mobbing, this phenomenon has received increasing attention over the last three decades. To some, workplace bullying is the single most important social issue today because it helps us understand the root of almost all conflict and violence (Field, 2006), the effects of which, as with school bullying, can be devastating and have only begun to be understood and studied. Researchers on workplace bullying have attempted to standardize a definition, to categorize specific behaviours and circumstances, to examine the prevalence and effects of various behaviours, to suggest possible causal factors, to recommend prevention and intervention strategies and to present gender differences. I will present the history of talking about bullying in the workplace as a phenomenon by presenting the literature in each of these areas. By examining the considerable discourse on bullying in the workplace as it appears in the field today, I will show how the concept of ‘bullying’ has been constructed and how this construction has influenced perceptions of what remedies are appropriate and necessary; and I will describe the measures and research methods used in previous research. Because women’s negative experiences with other women in the workplace are the focus of my research, I will use a separate section to pay particular attention to how women’s experience of this workplace mistreatment has been presented in the literature. In order to understand how the research has constructed our understanding of bullying in the workplace, I will begin by giving a brief history of the development of bullying in the workplace as a topic of concern.

1.3.1 Early research. As early as 1976, Carroll Brodsky (1976), an American
physician, in his role as an independent medical examiner, wrote *The Harassed Worker*, based on his study of workers claiming to be ill and unable to work because of “ill-treatment by employers, co-workers, or customers, or because of excessive demands for work output” (p. xi). Brodsky’s work, however, received little attention and is rarely mentioned by other researchers of workplace bullying, possibly because Brodsky did not differentiate between stress due to workplace accidents, stress due to exhaustion from long hours and monotonous work, and stress due to intentionally hurtful behaviour by peers and colleagues.

It was a new work environment law and a national research fund in Sweden offering the possibility of new research in industrial psychology that was the impetus for Heinz Leymann’s work in the early 1980s (Leymann, 1996a). Leymann, a German born Swedish clinical psychologist, was working at his treatment center (Violen) in Karlskrona and as a professor of work sciences at Umeå University\(^1\) when he identified what he considered to be a grave threat to health and safety in the workplace. Drawing on Lorenz’s\(^2\) work, and referring to Heinemann’s (1972), Leymann is credited with precisely labelling this threat and coining the phrase “workplace mobbing” (Leymann 1990, 1996b). According to Leymann, mobbing is “hostile and unethical communication, which is directed in a systematic way by one or a few individuals mainly towards one individual who, due to mobbing, is pushed into a helpless and defenceless position, being held there by means of continuing mobbing activities....” (Leymann, 1990, 1996b).

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1 This is the same university which Dan Olweus, who went on to focus on bullying by school children, attended and at which he received his doctoral degree in 1969. Olweus was later a professor of psychology at the University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway while Leymann was also a professor there. This is interesting because it is an example of how a discourse can spread.

2 Leymann took the word *mobbing* from earlier research by ethologist Konrad Lorenz, who had documented “ganging up” among birds. This phenomenon is routine, for instance, in broods of chickens, where a “pecking order” is readily observable. The bird at the bottom commonly dies from the cumulative effect of being shunned, kept from food and water, and physically pecked by the rest (http://www.leymann.se/English/11120E.HTM).
Workplace mobbing had been named as a phenomenon, placing it in the category of an observable fact deserving of scientific interest, description and explanation. Since then, a number of terms have been used to describe the behaviour Leymann first identified as mobbing. Leymann (1990) himself argued that the term ‘mobbing’ should not be used to describe a conflict and that the term ‘bullying’, which he believed carries with it the connotation of physical aggression and threat, should be reserved to describe the activities of children rather than the more sophisticated behaviours of adults.

In 1992, Andrea Adams produced two BBC radio programs on workplace bullying and wrote the first UK analysis of workplace bullying (Adams & Crawford, 1992). Her main concern was to gain recognition of the problem and bring the subject into public consciousness in the UK. An important element of Adams' work was that she linked the problem to the existing widespread concern with the bullying of children in schools. One of the key themes of her campaign was that bullying does not stop in childhood and that millions of adults suffer in silence. A gender analysis was explicitly excluded from her work. Instead, she presented the problem as a consequence of abuse of organizational position and power. She argued that workplace bullying and sexual harassment are entirely separate phenomena and sought to prove that workplace bullying does not necessarily indicate sexual discrimination, citing examples of male managers bullying male and female employees equally. Her book highlighted the significant financial cost of bullying to industry through absenteeism and reduced productivity. Tim Field (1996), himself a target of bullying in the workplace, wrote the second self-help book in the UK and later used his computer skills to let apparent targets of bullying share their stories.

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3 Sexual harassment has typically been a separate phenomenon in the literature.
publicly on the internet (Field, 2006). I will now look at how researchers have defined and categorized bullying behaviours.

1.3.2 Definitions and categories of specific behaviours and circumstances.

Significant variation remains in how researchers conceptualize and study workplace bullying, which often depends upon whether one conceives of the aggression to be culturally conditioned instinctive behaviour, learned behaviour, or a product of culture or history. Dominant conceptualizations have reflected the perspectives of psychology and individual pathology, limiting the focus to the psychological characteristics of the target or the perpetrator of the behaviour. Some of the leading researchers in the area who took Leymann’s earlier work and went about trying to measure, describe and explain the new phenomenon include Stale Einarsen (Einarsen, 1998, 2005; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003a, 2003b; Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen, & Hellesøy, 1996); Helge Hoel (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001; Hoel, Einarsen, & Cooper, 2003; Hoel, Faragher, & Cooper, 2004); Duncan Lewis (1999; 2000, 2004; Duncan Lewis & Rayner, 2003), Dieter Zapf (Zapf, 1999b; Zapf & Einarsen, 2003; Zapf & Holz, 2006); Denise Salin (2003a; 2003b); Andreas Liefooghe (Liefooghe & Davey, 2001; Liefooghe & Davey, 2003; Liefooghe & Olafsson, 1999), and Charlotte Rayner (1998; 1999a, 1999b; Rayner & Cooper, 1997; Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper, 2002).

Nevertheless, there remains considerable disagreement in the literature about a definition and name for these behaviours that would distinguish them from each other, and from other behaviours in the workplace (Cowie, Naylor, Rivers, Smith, & Pereira, 2002).

Some researchers suggest that workplace bullying should be conceptualized as a
subtle and gradually evolving process with different terms distinguishing its uses and contexts (Einarsen, 1999; Leymann, 1996b). For many, bullying remains the preferred term for distinguishing more physically aggressive behaviour or the behaviour of those in managerial or supervisory positions (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Rayner, 1997a; Zapf & Einarsen, 2001). Rayner further argues that bullying is associated with conflictual hierarchical interpersonal relationships where the bully holds the balance of power. Rigby (2000) describes bullying as “repeated oppression, psychological or physical, by a more powerful person or group of persons” (p. 1). He argues that it is not the same as aggression or violence, which can occur between people of equal strength or power. Rather, bullying involves one person or group that is more powerful than another.

Rylance (2001) points to the problems with the heterogeneous nature of definitions and opts for “an approach encompassing the important subjective elements, whilst still ensuring the indecision of basic criteria that distinguish the experience from other phenomena” (p. 24). Thus, for Rylance, bullying happens when someone perceives it happens persistently over a period of time. Some researchers suggest that bullying and mobbing are distinct phenomena and that confusing the terms confuses the issue (Masterman, 2008). They prefer the term mobbing be used to describe a less direct form of aggression or aggression from a group of individuals directed toward a single person (Leymann, 1996b; Matthiesen, Raknes, & Røkkum, 1989; Westhues, 1998, 2004a, 2004b; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996).

On the other hand, many more feel that these two terms are more or less interchangeable, and which you use is a matter of personal choice. The result is an
ambiguity of terms and a complicated mix of definitions (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003) which may or may not describe the same phenomenon. Einarsen (1996), possibly the most prolific contributor in the field, and others (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006), use the terms interchangeably, making no distinction between bullying and mobbing, neither with regard to the number of perpetrators or targets involved, nor with respect to the organizational status of the perpetrator (in relation to the target). Still other researchers have used such terms as harassment (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994; Leymann, 1996b), emotional abuse (Hirigoyen, 1998), and psychological terror (Leymann, 1990). Vickers (2001b, as cited in Hutchinson et al., 2004) argues that “continued use of the term bullying is a euphemism, masking what is, in reality, something far more sinister” (p. 207). Leymann (1990), whose distinctions were subsequently adopted by many other researchers, argued that in order to qualify as bullying, the actions must be frequent (almost every day) and over a long period of time (at least for six months) resulting in considerable psychic, psychosomatic and social misery. Despite the use of this definition by many researchers, there are many others who interpret a single incident as workplace bullying (Lee, 2000; Randall, 1997) arguing, for instance, that the requirement for experiences to be persistent and/or harmful in order to qualify as workplace bullying is restrictive (Lee). In fact, Lee proposed that the discourse on workplace bullying should be combined with the discourse on sexual harassment in recognizing single incidents. Thus, depending on the term or definition used, attention is focused on some aspects of the experience and not on others.

1.3.3 Prevalence. Similarly, there are wildly diverse estimates in the research literature of the prevalence of workplace bullying. Measuring the prevalence of bullying
is also influenced by the researcher’s understanding and definition of bullying. In 1992, Leymann reported that 3.5 percent of Swedish workers were mobbed sometime during their careers. Bjorkgvist et al. (1994), using arbitrary cut-off points, reported bullying rates between 10% and 17%. Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) reported a prevalence of 2.9% for psychologists, 7.8% for industrial workers and 12.3% for health care managers. When a more precise definition was used, the frequency dropped to between 1% and 4% of respondents (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). Leymann (1996a) reported 154,000 of 4.4 million employees had been subjected to bullying. In the Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorisation (LIPT) (Leymann, 1996b), respondents must have experienced at least one of 45 negative behaviours, at least once a week, for at least six months. Rayner (1997b, as cited in Lee, 2000) reported that 53% of respondents to a survey reported being bullied. Thylefors (1999, as cited in Vartia and Hyyti, 2002) indicated that 22.6% of Swedish prison workers reported bullying in the workplace by a supervisor or co-worker in the twelve months prior to the study. Salin (2001) reported an overall rate of bullying by business professionals in Finland to be 8.8%. Hoel and Cooper (2000) reported 16.2% of prison workers in Britain had experienced bullying at work in the previous six months. After reviewing large numbers of European studies, Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, and Vartia et al. (2003), proposed a percentage of between 1% and 4% for serious incidents of bullying and between 8% and 10% for less severe cases. There is little agreement about the prevalence of workplace bullying.

1.3.4 Effects. Bullying in the workplace has been constructed as a real and relatively consistent interpersonal phenomenon (Liefooghe, 2003); a major workplace stressor (Lewis, 2006); a silent epidemic (Namie & Namie, 2000); a significant phenomenon at
shockingly high levels (Hockley, 2002); an extreme social stressor (Leymann, 1996b; Zapf, 1999a; Zapf & Gross, 2001); and pervasive and harmful (Leymann, 1990; Rayner & Cooper, 1997). A plethora of negative outcomes (Rayner, 1997a; UNISON, 1997) and individual mental and physical ill health effects (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001; Zapf & Einarsen, 2001) have been attributed to bullying in the workplace. These include loss of job satisfaction; being threatened with dismissal or labelled a trouble maker (Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2002); psychosomatic complaints; symptoms such as gastric upset, loss of appetite and nausea (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Niedl, 1996; Zapf, 1999a; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996); sweating, shaking, feeling sick and suffering various aches and pains (Brodsky, 1976); social isolation, stigmatization, compulsiveness and despair (Leymann, 1990); cognitive effects such as irritability, aggression, problems with memory (Leymann, 1990, 1996b; Niedl, 1996), “insomnia, nervous symptoms, melancholy, apathy, lack of concentration, and sociophobia” (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994, p. 181); psychological strain, hypersensitivity, nervousness, anxiety, nervous debility anxiety and irritation, panic attacks, stress-symptoms, anger (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Leymann, 1987, as cited in Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2002; 1990; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Niedl, 1996; Vartia, 2001; Zapf, 1999a; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996); feelings of inferiority, desperation and helplessness (Leymann, 1990) and loneliness, and low self-confidence (Vartia, 2001); depression (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994; Brodsky, 1976; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Niedl, 1996; Zapf, 1999a; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996); psychiatric pathology symptoms similar to a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002); and suicide (Leymann, 1996b). As well, some researchers
have identified a negative ripple effect of workplace bullying on third party witnesses and bystanders or on the family members of targets of bullying (Hockley, 1996; Hoel & Cooper, 2001; Charlotte Rayner, 1999b; Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper, 2002; Vartia, 2001; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996).

Along with the personal toll, the collective ill health of organizations has also been identified as a consequence of workplace bullying. Included are factors like absenteeism (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Vartia, 2001); staff turnover (Hoel & Cooper, 2001; Zapf & Gross, 2001); expulsion or being forced out of the workplace (Leymann, 1990); increased intention to leave, low morale, lack of motivation, reduced or impaired productivity and reduced loyalty and commitment (Field, 1996; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Namie, 2003); lack of job security (Baron & Neuman, 1996); and organizational image and public relations (Field, 1996; Hoel & Cooper, 2000).

1.3.5 Causal factors. A considerable portion of the literature has been devoted to identifying the cause-effect mechanisms and relationships between different sets of “variables” responsible for bullying in the workplace. Individual psychopathy, personality traits and reactions of the targets (Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000; Vartia, 1991; Zapf, 1999a) along with poor skills in handling interpersonal conflict (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003a; Leymann, 1996b) are frequently cited as having significant potential for contributing to someone being bullied at work. However, others caution that, rather than being causal, psychological factors, personality traits and reactions could emerge as a result of the bullying (Leymann, 1996a; Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper, 2002). Several researchers mention the low self-esteem of the perpetrators of workplace bullying as a factor (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003b). However, Lewis (2006) suggests
that workplace bullying is more an organizational problem, rather than one which can be attributed to characteristics of the target or bully. Studies that have examined organizational contexts have noted “overly competitive culture, excessive workloads and constant change” (Simpson & Cohen, 2004, p. 166; Vartia, 1991b); downsizing (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Randle, 2006); organizational politics (Salin, 2003a); along with intensified and uncertain work conditions (Lewis, 1999) and a high level of stress (Zapf, 1999a) are also believed to be contributing factors in workplace bullying. More recently, the focus has turned to the motivation of bosses (Carter, 2004; Futternan, 2004; Haight, 2005; Hoover, 2004; Hornstein, 1996; Mueller, 2005; Scott, 2006; Sutton, 2007) or the competency of management (Leymann, 1996b; Rayner & Cooper, 1997) as contributing factors. Brotheridge and Lee (2006) have suggested that heavy workloads, poor team atmosphere and workers being undermined or belittled are predictors of workplace bullying.

Multifaceted organizational and management processes and structures or “ethos” have been identified by some as contributing factors in workplace bullying. For instance, some factors that contribute to workplace bullying may include work climate, enforced team work and cooperation (Vartia, 1996); inter team competition for limited rewards; over work, along with high demand and pressure with little control or decision making latitude, as well as perceived contradiction between expectations and demands and values (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994); compliance, discipline and conformity structures; fewer opportunities for advancement and more competition for promotion as well as limited opportunity for peer support due to part-time employment (Baron & Neuman, 1996); organization size, bureaucracy, pressure for conformity (e.g. prisons,
uniformed, police, health); a way to get rid of colleagues perceived as a threat or a burden, structural change due to downsizing, cost cutting and reducing organizational redundancy (Sheehan, 1999); low satisfaction with laissez-faire, autocratic or authoritarian leadership; using ineffective ways of handling complaints and settling conflict; and creating a climate of fear or abdicating such responsibilities and conflict (Einarsen, 1999, 2000; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003b; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Hoel & Salin, 2003); and lack of clarity about roles, role conflict and unpredictability (Leymann, 1996b; Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper, 2002). Lewis (2006) agrees that an organization’s values and practices that are characteristic of one or the other gender may influence perceptions of bullying. There is little agreement on the causal factors of workplace bullying.

1.3.6 Prevention and intervention strategies. Understandings of causal factors influence the recommendations researchers make for remedies, solutions, interventions and coping strategies. As Kenneth Westhues (2006) puts it, “All of us in the anti-mobbing, anti-bullying movement are open to diverse ways of correcting harm wrongly done: imaginative administrative solutions, publicity of the wrong, redress in the courts, removal to a new workplace, psychological or psychiatric therapy. Yet different experts tilt toward different remedies.”

When bullying is viewed as an individual phenomenon, the fear of making things worse may cause some researchers to recommend doing nothing (Rayner, 1997a; UNISON, 1997). Others recommend strategies such as confronting the perpetrator of the bullying (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Rayner, 1999a; Rayner, 1999b; UNISON, 1997); keeping a diary to gather “evidence” (Rayner et al., 2002) in order to strike back; turning
to colleagues for support (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Rayner, 1997a; UNISON, 1997); possibly withdrawing previous commitment to the organization (Niedl, 1996) or attempting to problem solve (Keashly, Trott, & MacLean, 1994); and attempts to appear loyal and committed to the organization by raising the alarm within the organization (Niedl, 1996). Another recommended strategy may be departing from the organization (Niedl, 1996; Rayner et al., 2002; Zapf & Gross, 2001).

As was the case with children bullying at school, a dominant theme in the literature is the social democratic notion that bullying awareness and education would decrease or end the occurrence. While education about bullying can be valuable (Leymann, 1992, 1996b), there seems to be little evidence that such strategies have effected any real change. Other strategies include administrative reform and the same kind of public education referred to above for remedy of cases that have already occurred. Another popular theme among researchers and activists for making people more accountable and preventing workplace bullying is to enact organizational policies (Keashly & Neuman, 2004; Namie, 2003; Namie & Namie, 2000; Von Bergen, Zavaletta, & Soper, 2006) and public legislation and laws (Yamada, 2001; 2003; 2006) which would specify tactics, lines of accountability and standards of acceptable practice or behaviour in the workplace. This line of thinking corresponds with the notion that the removal of a few bad apples from the organization is the solution, and that examining the organizational structure and practices is unnecessary. One of the arguments frequently used to justify the use of policies, laws and legislation is that the behaviours identified as bullying would be identified as sexual and racial discrimination, and therefore covered by existing policies and legislation, if the bullying is directed toward someone because of their age, sex, race,
a disability or their sexual orientation (Simpson & Cohen, 2004). If the person bullied is white, able-bodied and the same gender as the bully, there is no legal recourse (Jones (2006). Indeed, in 2004, the Quebec Labour Standards Act was overhauled to include psychological harassment in the workplace (Namie, 2003). Nevertheless, few pieces of legislation have been passed and, in fact, Westhues (2006) reported that anti-bullying legislation in France may actually have made things worse. Once again, there is little agreement in the literature on prevention and intervention strategies, with some researchers focusing on targets, others on perpetrators and still others on the organization, policies and legislation.

1.3.7 Gender differences. Unlike sexual harassment, which has drawn extensively on feminist theory and has located such behaviour within a broad framework of gendered power relations (Simpson & Cohen, 2004), bullying in the workplace is often presented as “ungendered” with researchers referring to participants as “employees” (Field, 1996; Leymann, 1996b; Peyton, 2003). Gender has been mentioned in a number of research studies, often as an independent variable (Einarsen, 1999) or when discussing the consequences of bullying (e.g. how many employees consulted a doctor) (Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). Differences in prevalence rates by gender have also been raised as an issue in the literature on workplace bullying. Leymann (1996b) suggests that the fact that the majority of perpetrators are men and men are predominantly bullied by men reflects the fact that more managers are men and in a position to act out the kind of behaviour which is experienced as bullying. Women, on the other hand, may be bullied by men or women but are more frequently bullied by other women. Leymann (1993, as cited in Eriksen & Einarsen, 2004) reported 8% of male kindergarten teachers compared to 4% of females
claimed to have been victims of bullying at work. Dallner et al. (2000, as cited in Eriksen & Einarsen, 2004), in a study of various organizations and professions in Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway, reported that 4.1% of males and 3.9% of females had been exposed to bullying at work. Hoel and Cooper (2000) indicated no differences in bullying in the workplace reporting rates between men and women prison officers in Britain. Salin (2001) found that considerably more professional business women reported bullying in the workplace than did men; 11.6% of incidents were reported by female respondents compared to 5.0% by males. Maarit Vartia and Jari Hyyti (2002), using a questionnaire, conducted a study of gender differences of Finnish prison officers’ experiences of bullying in the workplace. Although 20% of respondents perceived themselves as victims of bullying, no differences in reporting rates between men and women were identified. However, female officers usually reported being bullied by co-workers while male officers reported being bullied equally often by co-workers and supervisors. Several studies concluded that men are usually bullied only by other men, while women are bullied by both men and women (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001; Rayner & Hoel, 1997; Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2003), and that both men and women bully (Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia).

Willy Eriksen and Ståle Einarsen (2004) provide a summary of their 1999 study in which they examined working conditions, lifestyle factors and health complaints of certified assistant nurses in Norway. They sent a mail out questionnaire to 7478 assistant nurses which included a question about whether or not they had been bullied or harassed in the workplace. Bullying was defined as offensive behaviour that has occurred repeatedly over a period of time. Answer options were either yes or no and participants
were not asked to indicate whether this bullying was from a supervisor, colleague or patient. Their results indicated that the number of male assistant nurses reporting exposure to bullying was twice as high as the number of females during the same time period: 4.3% of females and 10.2% of males. Noreen Tehrani (2004) found that 43% of female managers and 30% of male managers perceived themselves as having been bullied in the two years prior to the study.

Ruth Simpson and Claire Cohen (2004) investigated gender differences in the experiences of bullying. They compared the research on sexual harassment and that on bullying. They make the point that sexual harassment has been based on gendered power while bullying has been located within organizational power due to organizational change and cultures of competition and uncertainty. Nevertheless, they also make the point that there is an interrelationship and a degree of overlap between the two. Simpson and Cohen investigated the different forms and effects of bullying, as well as perceptions of bullying, according to gender. They report that 28.5% of women compared to 19.8% of men in their study had experienced bullying. Despite some aspects of bullying being “divorced from gender” (p. 182), Simpson and Cohen argue that organizational power relations are heavily gendered. This is not in terms of whether it is males or females who occupy managerial positions, but in terms of the “gendered nature of the discursive practices and assumptions that underpin the performance of management; the managerial prerogative over key decisions remains the taken-for-granted norm and this prerogative can be seen as part of a highly masculine discourse based on power and control” (p. 182). This view of gender is more complex than a simple “either/or” variable. It is associated with discourse.
Carol Jones (2006) argues that gender is an important feature of workplace bullying. She further suggests that bullying has commonalities to sexual harassment, that the boundaries should be re-examined and that sexual harassment should be reconceptualised to recognize the plurality of forms of sexual harassment. For Jones, sexual harassment has been conceptualized as being linked to structural and collective dimensions of race, sex and disability. Bullying, on the other hand, has been conceptualized as an individual issue (Lee, 2002), the abuse of organizational powers that affects individuals, or individuals being subjected to economic forces and globalisation (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001), but not about sex. Therefore, according to Jones, bullying is often erroneously portrayed as gender neutral. I will now turn my attention to how women’s experience of mistreatment by other women in the workplace has been presented in the literature.

1.4 Women and Bullying in the Workplace

It is worth noting that, for the most part, women have not figured significantly in the literature on workplace bullying, considering the plethora of research that has taken place around the world and the abundance of books, articles, and websites available on the subject. The following studies are the few exceptions I uncovered, after considerable research. They are presented according to the theory and perspective taken in the research.

1.4.1 Scientific theory. Frequently, when other researchers have spoken of women in relation to bullying in the workplace, it has been through comparing women as a group with men as a group. Bjöckqvist, Österman, and Hjelt-Bäck (1994) suggest that, not only may women and men differ in their choice of bullying behaviour, but that women more
frequently report bullying than do men. Similarly, Neidle (1996) suggests that women frequently report greater psychological consequences than do men. Rayner and Cooper (1997) agreed that, frequently, forms of bullying behaviour and their effects differ between men and women. Furthermore, others have suggested that women are bullied more frequently by other women than by men (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996, as cited in Lewis & Orford, 2005; Leymann, 1996b).

1.4.2 Liberal feminist theory. The goal of liberal feminism is to achieve full equality of opportunity in all areas of life within existing political systems and social relations (Weedon, 1987, 1997). Women’s right to choice and self-determination is stressed; women’s economic dependency and their lack of choice in the sexual division of labour is identified as a problem. A key political objective is to create the material conditions for equality (e.g. professionalization of domestic labour and child care), so that decisions about basic family structure, whether to have children and whether to work or stay at home to provide child care, can be made to ensure each woman’s individual choice and full equality with men. Humanist assumptions, that the individual subject is the source of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world, can easily serve as a justification for existing social relations (e.g. structural and institutional oppression of women). Liberal feminism “…tends to place its hope for change in the powers of [humanist] reason and moral enlightenment…” (1997, p. 79). While liberal feminist theory provides a critique of the family to some degree, it cannot account for the family’s appeal to women, nor does it address the question of “complicity with oppression” (Weedon, 1997, p. 80).

Ginny Nicarthy, Naomi Gottleib and Sandra Goffman (1993) use a liberal feminist
perspective to give advice to women about what to do when they experience emotional abuse at work. They construct women as victims and argue that women are more vulnerable and oppressed and are not in a position to resist in the workplace because they are more frequently at or near the bottom of the hierarchy. They argue that the reason why abuse or “mistreatment” of women in the workplace has not been focused on previously, except when it is in the form of sexual harassment, is because women’s paid work has always been considered secondary to their relationships. Through the use of focus groups, Nicarthy, Gottleib and Goffman gathered the stories of women who have experienced such abuse in the workplace. They argue that, in order to expose the abuse women experience in the workplace, it must be named: “A woman names a form of oppression to herself. Or she hears it identified by someone else and recognizes its truth. Now she says it out loud, moving from silence into speech and, perhaps, understanding and freedom” (p. 17). To that end, they provide an extensive questionnaire for the use of women to begin the process of naming emotional abuse in the workplace. They suggest that historical and social circumstances, including the power of male privilege and status, have resulted in the dual roles of women and hindered the equality of their economic success. Nevertheless, they suggest that women should take some responsibility for the abuse they suffer when they decide to give their personal power away. Further, they suggest that women should monitor and change the way they think about themselves and assertively confront abuse.

Deborah Lee (1998, 2000, 2001, 2002) also claims a liberal feminist framework and uses qualitative research methods to explore men’s and women’s workplace sexual harassment and workplace bullying experiences in the UK civil service. Lee (1998)
argues that because all social interactions are gendered, there is little reason to think workplace bullying and harassment would be gender neutral. Lee suggests that there are both male and female victims and male and female perpetrators, regardless of the gender of the victim; therefore, to exclude men from the research creates a hierarchy of oppression by positioning women as more oppressed than men. She also argues that women’s experiences will be taken more seriously if we study men’s experiences of oppression as well. Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1983, 1993) provide a different but related perspective on whether or not doing research on men can be considered feminist. They suggest that “if ‘sexism’ is the name of the problem addressed by feminism then men are importantly involved, to say the least, in its practice” (1993, p. 18) and research must not be limited by excluding men. Rather, they argue, “feminist research must be concerned with all aspects of social reality and all participants in it” (p. 18); therefore, men must be included in research on women’s oppression. Lee (2002) suggests that the bullying of and by men and women is informed by judgments about what is appropriate gender conduct and the pressure to accept the hegemonic masculinity of men as normatively powerful, heterosexual, successful, and virile. Moreover, she also suggests that men are sexually harassed when they fail to conform to ideals of hegemonic masculinity, and both men and women are bullied by line managers when they do not appear to conform to normatively defined gender roles.

Lee (2001) contends that the differentiation of workplace bullying from workplace sexual harassment is problematic and suggests they be conceptualized together under the umbrella of abuse of power. Yet she writes, “It is vital not to conflate types of harassment in a way which obscures distinctive dynamics’ (p. 51). Furthermore, she
disagrees with the emphasis placed by some researchers on the meeting of certain criteria in order for behaviour to qualify as workplace bullying; most notably the criteria of the behaviour persisting over time and the seriousness of incidents. She encourages the use of a more inclusive definition in order that more behaviours and incidents from everyday life, which have previously been accepted as a part of the normal social relations of work, could be considered workplace bullying. According to Lee (2002), while gender may be less visible in workplace bullying, gender prejudice informs line managers and is already embedded within organizations. She argues that, while remaining separate, men’s and women’s experiences of workplace bullying and sexual harassment might be conceptualized on a continuum to highlight the similarities between these experiences.

Lee (2000, 2002) suggests the emergence of workplace bullying discourse in the UK was, in large part, the result of manufacturing, financial and scientific trade union publications along with a television documentary and two self-help texts; one by Adams and Crawford (1992) and the other by Field (1996). She also suggests that the social construction of workplace bullying grew out of the groundwork done on the discourse of sexual and racial harassment. She does not identify bullying by children as influential on the development of workplace bullying discourse. Furthermore, she suggests that the term bullying is too closely associated with children in schools, inmates in prisons, and prison and armed forces personnel to be usefully applied to other workplaces.

Lee (1998) argues that “women have accommodated the male-defined norms of femininity and have consequently developed a very circumscribed sense of personal agency” (p. 16). They may think what has happened to them is the result of a faulty aspect of their own identities. She recommends that the terms or labels given to bullying
in the workplace should be more readily adopted or used by everyone so that employees and managers will more readily recognize and challenge an unwelcome experience. She believes that, by acknowledging bullying in the workplace, society can challenge male dominance, hegemonic (domination) control mechanisms, influence or authority over others, ways of controlling others’ social, cultural, ideological, or economic lives and the influence exerted by any dominant group.

Charmaine Hockley (1996, 2000, 2002) also uses feminist theory to explore the working world of the nursing profession in Australia from an ethnomethodological perspective, to help make sense of the behaviour of nurses toward each other and the meanings they ascribe to their behaviour when it breaches social norms. She uses a feminist framework to analyze the role of women in society, particularly in relation to oppression, domination, and social and economic inequality. Hockley (1996) argues that because nursing is a predominantly female profession, and because male nurses do not experience the same abuse from female managers as the female nurses, her work is primarily concerned with violence among female nurses. She proposes that, even though the profession is largely female and most noted for the trait of caring, women nurses can be just as oppressive and dominant and have the same capacity to abuse power and act abusively to colleagues as their male counterparts, even to the extent of causing moderate to severe trauma. Furthermore, she contends that various forms of violence in the Australian workplace, including bullying of nurses by other nurses, are so widespread and

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5 Hockley discusses her decision to name the behaviours ‘violence’ as opposed to ‘bullying. Noteworthy is her comprehensive inclusion of behaviours under the rubric of violence, such as not using a woman’s name (e.g. Barb Jones being called Jonsey); rolling eyes; favouritism; jokes; transferral to a less sought after area; poor performance appraisals; phone calls to someone’s residence requesting they come in and discuss their job in the morning; exclusion; insults and derogatory comments; ridicule; emphasizing the unequal power relationship; and threats of and actual physical acts against a person.
at such shockingly high levels that they must be supported, condoned, and relied on by the organizational ‘systems.’ Hockley (2002) argues that the violence that is so pervasive in western society generally is being mirrored in the workplace. She suggests this is a consequence of the formal, informal, and tacit rules of daily nursing practice that exist within workplace hierarchical structures. She draws attention to the hierarchical nature of power relations that discourage dissent or challenges to the system and promote lack of loyalty to peers. Further, she suggests that women are “complicit in violent events” (p. 1) in the workplace in that they continue to accept male-defined structures and cultures and accommodate the violence because it makes their world less problematic.

Hockley (2000) suggests that women in general have been perceived as incapable of being violent, arguing that most of the literature on violence against women has come from a liberal feminist perspective which has focused on patriarchy and has relied on binary thinking to portray males as perpetrators, violence as male behaviour, women as incapable of violence, and women as the victims. She writes that, despite the women’s movement in the 1960s, women have continued to “take the subordinate role in society, in the home, at work, and particularly in nursing” (p. xiii). Nevertheless, she argues that it is a myth that women are not aggressive or violent, and that they can be as violent as men. She continues by discussing the societal expectation that nurses will be ‘caring’ professionals. But this caring nature is not seen as a valued quality in management outside of nursing and nurses are only promoted to senior positions within the profession. There is an expectation that a nurse will remain that ‘caring’ professional despite being promoted to a senior management position and will certainly be a more ‘caring’ manager than a non-nurse manager would be. Therefore, there is a certain level of shock when
nurses become violent and abusive toward peers, and demonstrate an even less caring management style than non-nurse managers. According to Hockley, the explanation is often that these female nurses take on ‘male’ characteristics once they are promoted. Hockley (1996) suggests that women “adapt to a male dominated environment” (p. 104); that organizations remain masculine in their nature and structure; that the culture of an organization will “inadvertently encourage and perpetrate bullying” (p. 104); that bullying of co-workers is often accepted and unquestioned. She suggests that women remain silent about their experiences because of a gendered hierarchy “constructed on patterns of power relations between men and women” which “reflects the relationship evident between the genders in society as a whole” (p. 109). As well, she suggests that attitudes and perceptions, expectations, and taken for granted assumptions, are reinforced by powerful myths and stereotypes, and that images from literature and the movies come to constitute “individual truth” (p. 107) and reality.

According to Hockley (2000), the language used to describe violence, the lack of consensus on a definition for violent behaviour, and the reluctance to use “unequivocal language” (p. 24), diminishes understanding of the potential fatal nature of workplace violence and contributes to it being poorly recognized and addressed. She contends that it is important to interpret and name the act within a particular context. If this is not done the focus will not be on the ‘real’ issues: the harm that is occurring, the power relationships, and the history of subservience of nurses to doctors.


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6 Hockley identifies language such as metaphors and euphemisms.
journal article for *Advancing Women in Leadership* that 40% of U.S. executives, managers, and administrators are women, Penelope Brunner and Melinda Costello (2003) suggest that the expectation that women moving into management and supervisory roles would lead to a “feminization or softening” (p. 1) of the workplace has not been fulfilled. In fact, Brunner and Costello use the research of Ruth Namie and Gary Namie (2000) to argue that the workplace is “more violent, competitive, aggressive and hostile” (p. 1) than ever before, particularly for women; that women bully as frequently as men; and that women target other women more than they do men. They suggest that this issue is not named or addressed by corporations out of fear that women’s resistance to a subordinate position will be stimulated. They cite research from social learning theory to argue that gender stereotypes and biases learned in childhood are carried into the workplace. They use a feminist perspective to argue that women are oppressed by the values, the power hierarchies, and the competition of the dominant white male culture of the corporate world.

Brunner and Costello (2003) suggest that men and women have certain ‘traits’; that women are kinder, gentler, more expressive, communal and nurturing than men. They argue that the traits of women are devalued while those of men are seen as the norm and the standard to be met. Oddly, the strategies Brunner and Costello recommend seem disconnected from what they have identified as the problem. The social democratic idea of change through training and education, as well as the push for ‘zero tolerance’ policies and anti-bullying legislation, both fail to look at dominant ideology or explain how it comes about. Corporations are discussed as if they were distinct entities and not made up of people, and power is presented as something we can seek to have and hold.
Marie Hutchinson, Margaret Vickers, Debra Jackson and Lesley Wilkes (2004) describe their research into the experiences of nurses in Australia in order to identify the extent, nature and effects of bullying and provide a critical analysis of factors contributing to bullying, such as the use and misuse of power within organizations. In particular, they suggest the need to examine the role of the organization and its systems of implicitly or explicitly condoning and perpetuating bullying. As well, they suggest that strategies which are implemented to manage bullying may actually illuminate the nature of bullying in the workplace. Interviews were used to develop insights into the perspectives of nurses. In order to develop and administer a quantitative survey, they gathered data on the extent, nature and effect of bullying in Australian nursing.

Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson and Wilkes (2004) move away from liberal feminism when they suggest exploring the language used by people in the workplace to define and describe bullying from the perspective of its potential to “silence critical thought and action.” (p. 127), arguing that the use of such linguistic devices as ‘oppressed group’ or ‘horizontal violence’ to describe nurses may serve to assign blame inappropriately and to “obfuscate the wider reality of bullying, which is not always violent, and can often be subtle and insidious, involving multiple quiet acts of undermining, humiliation, obstruction and alienation” (p. 128). Language can distance the phenomenon of bullying, placing it outside the responsibility of the organization or management structures in nursing. Furthermore, these researchers suggest that the language used in the literature is a powerful tool which has the potential to create and maintain stereotypical images and beliefs about the targets of bullying who are viewed as “weak; unassertive victims; people who cannot or will not help themselves; and somehow deserving of what they get” (p.
As these researchers did, I will also be using discourse analysis to reveal assumptions implicit in language.

1.4.3 Grounded theory. Using in-depth interviews and Grounded Theory methods of analysis, Lewis & Orford (2005) investigated the subjective experiences of women targets and the social processes involved in the workplace bullying experienced by ten British professional women public employees. They contend that as bullying evolves, an unequal power structure results with the perpetrators of the abuse prepared to take advantage of that imbalance (Randall, 1997) by limiting the targets’ resources. Further, they suggest it is because of a lack of conflict management skills along with a lack of collegial support that the target is left unable to defend against the abuse. As a result, the target’s vulnerability to the bully shifts the balance of power toward the bully. The complicated process begins when the target does not feel listened to in their relationships with others, mainly outside work, or they feel their disclosures about work problems are not responded to. This is perceived as a lack of support and has a negative effect on that relationship, further reducing potential support and increasing the target’s distress, isolation, and vulnerability. This analysis carries an element of blaming the victim by suggesting a lack of skill and perceptions in the target that trigger a chain reaction that leads to bullying. Lewis and Orford also link the occurrence of workplace bullying to the social environment of the workplace, to management styles such as abuse of power, to authoritarian attitudes and poor communication (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Vartia, 1996; Zapf, Knozr, & Kulla, 1996).

Despite making the argument that prevention of bullying is rarely feasible for an individual worker, and suggesting that organizational risk factors such as structure and
values be challenged, Lewis and Orford (2005) propose providing individual counselling for targets and bullies as an effective strategy for reducing bullying. They also suggest shifting prevention efforts from the dyadic power imbalances between bully and target and individual characteristics, to group process and power imbalances throughout the organization. They state that gender was not explicitly identified as an issue in workplace bullying by their participants; however, they acknowledge that gender may be a hidden issue that manifests in accepted practices and values.

In 2006, Lewis conducted another qualitative study in Britain exploring the experiences of ten women who had been the target of bullying in the workplace. Lewis attempted to gain knowledge about the understanding of the targets of bullying. In-depth structured interviews were used to gather data. The interviewers used an interview guide with a series of questions and prompts and again Grounded Theory methods were used in analysis. Lewis found that the women interviewed had difficulty identifying their experiences as bullying and struggled to cope with what had happened to them.

She suggests that managers, employers and colleagues may avoid naming workplace bullying for fear of the name having a detrimental effect on the organization. Lewis (2006) suggests that, despite the fact that the naming of bullying by targets may challenge their perception of the workplace, it is important for targets to do so because naming bullying will have an impact on the coping strategies they choose. Lewis (2006) suggests it is equally important for the organization to name the behaviour as bullying because it will impact the resources made available to targets. According to Lewis, previous research fails to capture variability in accounts by focusing on a few identifying characteristics of bullying. As well, she argues that organizations need to be more active
in identifying and coping with bullying because “greater awareness of workplace bullying and more accessible information” (p. 131) and training will somehow help diminish the problem.

**1.4.4 Structuralism.** Similar to my research, Paul McCarthy (2001) uses discourse analysis to look at the phenomena of workplace bullying; however, he does so from a structuralist perspective, treating ‘bullying’ as a signifier or element of society that is part of a cohesive social structure, analyzing it in terms of oppositions, contrasts and hierarchical structures and mapping the interactions between various disciplines, professionals, and institutions interested in its meaning. The construction of bullying as an individual, therapeutic, medical, and managerial issue results in suggesting remedies which have extended duration and cost for victims; the most common being anti-depressants and counselling (McCarthy & Barker, 2000). He questions commonly accepted meanings of bullying that tend to accentuate individual “medical and therapeutic, managerial and particular legal remedies” (p. 235). He raises concerns about the limitations and potentially destructive consequences of current conceptualizations of workplace bullying which serve professional and institutional interests more than those of a victim. Examining such constructions and consequences exposes their limitations and marginalizes alternatives which might extend existing health and safety, discrimination, equal opportunity and human rights laws, policies and practices. McCarthy contends that distress and feelings of fear and anger in the workplace have led to the emergence of ‘bullying’ as a signifier which has, in turn, lead to projecting onto the bully and the characterizing of bullies as ‘evil’ incarnate. According to McCarthy, experiencing bullying and behaving in a bullying manner are “evenly distributed in the human
condition, and at points may be mutually intensifying” (p. 241).

1.4.5 Poststructural theory. Of particular relevance to my study is the work of a small group of researchers who have approached bullying in the workplace from a poststructural perspective. Kennedy (2001) troubles the liberal democratic notions of policing; and the practice of forfeiting some individual rights and freedoms to an authority in exchange for protection of life and property within a competitive capitalist society. He argues that the exclusion of those who provide the direct services from policy discussions and decision making is “exclusion bullying” (p. 37) that is fostered at all levels. He questions the spectacle and the humiliation of inquisition style public tribunals and commissions for police officers in Australia. Kennedy suggests that, through the use of the media’s publicity about such events, police officers7 are scapegoated and sacrificed for political expediency. Indeed, he suggests that these inquiries are simply another form of ‘system bullying’. He goes further to suggest that the web of power may be misplaced, since “much of the power exercised in the web is positive, well intentioned and unrelated to corruption......” (p. 40).

McCarthy (2003), in a later study, aimed to investigate the implications of the construction of workplace bullying and map relations of desire and complicity for those taking the positions of the professional (therapeutic and authority), bully, or victim in the discourse. He argues that, from a poststructural perspective, the notion that ‘normal’ people have the potential for violence helps deconstruct the assignment of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, the bully-victim binary. He further suggests that each position can be scapegoated as the evil doer and points to both the limitations of and the desire for the victim identity.

7 Along with welfare workers, teachers, health care professionals, armed services and correction services personnel.
For McCarthy, the pursuit of the accumulation of goods through the market and workplace bullying discourse both legitimize and increase potential for ‘soft’ or ‘ethical violence’. In turn, real social problems are undermined. But McCarthy does not look at how the ‘self’, the human subject, is involved in the production of these social problems, or how humanist discourse speaks us into existence (Davies, 1997, 2000, 2003) as my study will do.

1.4.6 Habermas and critical theory. Habermas (1971) argues that there is no false consciousness. Instead communication is systematically distorted in language, revealing views of the world. In research that focuses on language, the concept of constructionism is allowed, while objective truth and essentialism are denied. Claiming the use of this theoretical perspective in his research, Liefooghe (2003) conducted focus groups with 132 employees and used critical theory and discourse analysis to analyze the data. He found that bullying was not simply attributed to individuals or groups of individuals. Many people linked their experience in the workplace to bullying at school and the powerlessness of children as a guiding framework for what happened to them, and also linked it to organisational systems. Thus, bullying at work was constructed as a collective identity and described as being perpetrated “by the organization against a group or groups of employees, rather than one individual against another” (p. 29) or between two individuals. They also identified the subtle nature of bullying in the workplace. For the participants, the organization, constructed as an entity itself, was criticized, not just as an environmental factor facilitating bullying, but for actually bullying. Organizational systems\textsuperscript{8} were seen as the means by which bullying takes place. But while Liefooghe

\textsuperscript{8} Such organizational systems as performance pay were identified.
recognized that explanations must go beyond individual psychopathology to organizational practice, he did not go so far as to question the structures of hierarchy and privilege within organizations. He used language as a means of getting at and measuring underlying entities (e.g. personality traits).

1.5 Introducing a Different Perspective

The above review of the literature reveals that, over the past several decades, negative behaviours and bullying occurring in the workplace have been constructed as a new and devastating phenomenon. These behaviours have been submitted to extensive examination by researchers to explain their causes, evaluate their effects on individuals and workplaces, to find ways of preventing the behaviours from occurring, or to suggest or delineate intervention strategies considered appropriate when they do occur.

Most of the literature uses purely positivist research designs with an emphasis on objectivity and statistical analysis. Most use methods of research which include self-report surveys and questionnaires, such as the Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorisation (LIPT) (Leymann, 1996b) or the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003a) for gathering data. The primary focus has been on quantifying incidents and sources, along with a qualitative focus on the effects of bullying on those who experience it. In almost all cases, the researcher defined the variables and permitted certain responses.

A smaller portion of the previous research is in the form of semi-structured interviews. Some researchers emphasize its limitations. The lack of direct observation of bullying behaviours, which are difficult to see, along with the general requirements of self-selection and retrospective self-reporting, are said to limit the validity and reliability
of this research (Coyne, Chong, Seigne, & Randall, 2003; Leymann, 1996b). In addition, much of the previous research has primarily provided frequency data and fails to capture the complexity and diversity of the human experiences being examined.

More conventional humanist research, with a psychological or social psychological perspective, has focused on the relationship between bullying, well-being and health and has frequently provided simplistic explanations that pathologize the perpetrator’s behaviour or the target’s distress. Discourse on workplace bullying supports the views on how things should be that are held by those within the dominant culture: patriarchal, hierarchal, corporatist (Kennedy, 2001). Frequently, the larger social, gender, political and ideological context in which the behaviour occurs is not acknowledged, possibly because constructing bullying in the workplace as an interpersonal phenomenon has allowed for blaming and scapegoating individuals, an easier alternative than ‘renovating’ the corporate and social culture. Few studies have focused on women, their relationships with other women or their behaviour toward other women in the workplace.

A qualitative approach to research, as a few exceptions to the positivist research have revealed (Liefooghe & Davey, 2001; Liefooghe & Davey, 2003; Zapf & Gross, 2001) may allow respondents to speak for themselves, regardless of the researcher’s perspective. As well, a very few studies cited have taken a feminist (Lee, 1998) or poststructural perspective (Kennedy, 2001; Lee, 2000, 2001; McCarthy, 2001, 2003), or have used discourse analysis (Liefooghe, 2003). However, the pairing of feminist and poststructuralist perspectives and the qualitative methodology of discourse analysis have not been undertaken to investigate women’s negative relationships with and bullying of other women in the workplace in any of the previous research located to date. That will
be my project.

Through the use of feminist poststructuralism and Foucauldian discourse analysis, my research will trouble the present conceptualization of bullying in the workplace presented in the literature, moving it away from a focus on the interpersonal and the individual’s behaviour, personality, and psychology to focusing instead on how “discursive articulation of certain kinds of selves or human subjects [is] intimately involved in the production of certain kinds of society” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 109). That is to say, my research will use a feminist poststructural perspective to examine how the language the women participants themselves use produces them as women, produces their relationships with other women, produces effects, and produces their workplace. My research will then use the theories of Michel Foucault to reveal and analyze the discourses which constitute the broader political issues around workplace bullying. In order to illuminate other possibilities and to create resistance that might disrupt the social system and allow for change, this research asks different questions. What produces this discourse and what is produced by the discourse? What has been taken for granted in the discourse? What holds it together and who benefits from it? What are the technologies of power? In order to offer a richer understanding of the discourses on workplace bullying, my research examines the discourse, critiques its construction, and problematizes the discursive elements and influences that have both shaped and been shaped by women. It also explores how these elements have been woven together by women in an effort to understand what they have experienced, and how the discourses have been taken up by women.
1.6 Summary

In this first chapter, I have summarized the literature on bullying by children in schools and in the workplace, and summarized the literature on women bullying other women. I have indicated what brought me to this research and how my own research will differ from what has come before. In the next chapter, I will present the theoretical frames I have used to explore this topic.
CHAPTER TWO
THEORETICAL FRAMES

2.1 Introduction

Lather (1991), extending the work of Jürgen Habermas (1971), suggests that there are four broad theoretical paradigms for qualitative advocacy research: positivist, interpretive, critical and poststructuralist. Because each offers a distinct approach and has a different ontology and epistemology, each differs in its “views of knowledge and power, of justice and injustice, and of how injustice can be remedied” (Cherland & Harper, 2007, p. 9). The first, a positivist view, centres on the acceptance of “truth” as universal, objective and reliable, and knowledge as the discovery of truth. Knowledge can serve power without distortion and justice is the rule of truth, best administered by a wise authority. For example, from a positivist perspective, justice will be served only if the truth is uncovered and the rule of law is applied accordingly by a wise judge. Language does not figure into this view as a separate entity having an impact on constructing reality. Language in this view is transparent, more like the air we breathe, just a way to say what we mean (Cherland & Harper). But in the second research paradigm, interpretive research, knowledge and understanding of reality are socially constructed. In research, we can understand the reality of people by listening to their lived experiences. Power can be obtained and held by individuals and justice, also socially constructed, is informed by cultural norms. Language is seen as a medium for achieving understanding (Cherland & Harper). The third paradigm is critical research in which realities are socially constructed and can be changed, while knowledge is produced and reproduced to serve different vested interests. Power is the unequal distribution of
wealth and privilege, and justice is served by the equitable redistribution of wealth and privilege. The researcher works to “change the world by exposing and shattering systems of privilege and power” (Cherland & Harper, p. 11) enacted through political and historical categories such as race, class, gender, age, religion and sexual orientation. In critical research, the linguistic and grammatical features of language may be examined, the text may be mined for metaphors, euphemisms and textual structures such as turn taking, and the active or passive construction can be analyzed in order to make logical connections between the language and the thoughts of the subject, or the subject’s place in society (Fairclough, 1992).

Poststructuralism, the fourth paradigm, is best suited to my research which seeks to disrupt the assumptions of bullying in the workplace presented in Chapter 1 and reveal a different view. Because workplace abuse is, for the most part, accomplished through language and poststructuralism focuses on language and discourse, it provides ways of understanding the phenomenon of women abusing women in the workplace in a way that humanism and psychology have been unable to, and in ways which are not possible using the previous three paradigms. I intend to use Foucauldian discourse analysis to make visible the discourses, the tropes, metaphors and binaries that produce subjectivities and power relations. I am pairing poststructuralism with feminism because I believe gender is a feature of social life that colours all our experiences, including experiences in the workplace. Feminism makes women visible and takes both women and their experiences seriously, Feminism gives them a voice and seeks justice for disadvantage, something poststructuralism has been criticized for ignoring (Naples, 2003). The combination of feminism and poststructuralism provides strategies for making sense of the everyday
experiences of women in the workplace and opens possibilities for change and social justice for women. The technologies of power, oppression, and the relationship between the individual and the social can all be explained, without claiming individual psychopathology or personal inadequacy.

In this chapter I review the literature of theoretical frameworks most relevant to my research. I discuss in detail the philosophical assumptions that underlie poststructuralism, feminism and feminist poststructuralism in order to situate my research in relation to them and to justify my research questions: (1) What discourses are available to account for the phenomenon of woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace?; (2) How are subject identities constituted through woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace?; (3) What are the power relations at work in the workplace and whose interests do they serve?; (4) What ideological assumptions are disrupted and/or confirmed by a feminist poststructural analysis of woman-on-woman bullying?

2.2 A Poststructural Framework

Humanism (the world view that is “common sense” for most of us) tells us that human beings are the centre of the world and everything else revolves around us. Common sense tells us we are the ones who give meaning to the world and the ones who create history. Common sense tells us that it is our natural ability to think, reason, understand concepts and gain knowledge through our interpretation of our experiences that is the essence of who we are and what allows us to transcend everything else. Poststructuralism, as a contemporary interdisciplinary philosophical movement of thought extending structuralism (Peters, 1999), was developed in contrast to these humanist theories and the positivist quest for objective knowledge. Poststructuralism calls into
question the assumptions of common sense and our ready acceptance of the beliefs we have about what is obvious and natural about the world. It calls into question the authority of common sense itself, that “collective and timeless wisdom whose unquestioned presence seems to be the source of guarantee of everything we take for granted” (Belsey, 1980, p. 3). It attempts to “trouble the grids of regularity produced by the closure of metaphysics, structures of humanism that have become increasingly suspect and insufficient” (St. Pierre, 1997). Catherine Belsey suggests that what we accept as common sense within a given society is produced by the ways in which that society talks and thinks about itself and its experience. Common sense seems obvious because it is “inscribed in the language we speak” (p. 4);

.....common sense is not called on to demonstrate that it is internally consistent.... In this way, empiricism evades confrontation with its own propositions, protects whatever values and methods are currently dominant and so guarantees the very opposite of objectivity, the perpetuation of unquestioned assumptions (p. 3).

Poststructuralism goes further than other philosophies that attend to language such as social constructivism in that it does more than attack fundamental propositions of humanism. According to Elizabeth St. Pierre and Wanda Pillow (2000), poststructuralism does not assume that humanism is an error. They explain that poststructuralism does not offer an alternative, successor regime of truth, it does not claim to have ‘gotten it right’, nor does it believe that such an emancipatory outcome is possible or even desirable. Rather, it offers critiques and methods for examining the functions and effects of any structure or grid of regularity that we put into place, including those poststructuralism itself might create (p. 6).

Bronwyn Davies (1997) supports the argument that the point is not to destroy the humanist subject and create its binary other in the “anti-humanist subject” (p. 272), but “....to show how the humanist self is so convincingly achieved, and goes on being achieved through the inscription of humanist discourses.....” (p. 272). The point is to
enable us to see “the subject’s fictionality, whilst recognising how powerful fictions are in constituting what we take to be real” (p. 272). As Butler, 1993 (as cited in Lather, 1997) points out, “terms understood as no longer fulfilling their promise do not become useless. On the contrary, their very failures become provisional grounds and new uses are derived” (p. 300). Consequently, one of the central tenants of poststructuralism is the subject and subjectivity; the belief that conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions, our sense of ourselves and our understanding of our own relationship with the world is a product of the society and culture, the social world, in which we live. The subject is perpetually in the process of construction and reconstruction (Belsey, 1980, p. 60).

2.2.1 Discourse and discursive practices. Poststructuralism focuses on how discourse and “discursive articulation of certain kinds of selves or human subjects [is] intimately involved in the production of certain kinds of society” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 109). Crucial to poststructuralism and my analysis of woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace is discourse and the belief that discourses, which are ways of talking and understanding, construct the social world. The main object is to displace attention from the self as an entity and focus it on the methods of constructing the self. Michel Foucault (1972) saw discourse as not merely words or “groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49). He wrote

Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse’, I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements (Foucault, 1972, p. 80).

Marion Court (2004) understands discourses as “not just language, or ideas and beliefs, or
theories about the world” (p. 599) but as

historically, socially and culturally specific bodies of meaning and knowledge, which offer a range of competing and often contradictory ways of giving meaning to the world. They constitute (historically and culturally specific) ways of being in the world through constructing different subject positions that individuals can ‘take up’ (Davies, 1989, as cited in Court). They exist in, produce and are produced by, social practices, such as the way we ‘do things with words’ (Fraser, 1997) and organize institutions and processes (p. 599).

Freema Elbaz (1990) wrote that we can think of discourses “as ‘social texts’ of [a given community or cultural group].....; the particular signifying practices of a given group [that] are both constituted by and constitutive of the discursive field in which members of the group live and function” (p. 15). Sara Mills (1997) adds that discourses do not exist in a vacuum but are “in constant conflict with other discourses and other social practices which inform them over questions of truth and authority” (p. 19). One discourse becomes produced as the dominant discourse and is “supported by institutional funding, by the provision of buildings and staff by the state, and by the respect of the population as a whole, whereas the other is treated with suspicion.....” (p. 19). While Foucault is not the only theorist to use and define discourse, his definition has been extremely influential and particularly relevant to my research.

Poststructural theory opens up discourses and discursive practices to questioning and provides strategies for questioning that which is the considered common sense of dominant discourses and practices (Davies, 2000). Poststructuralism attempts to shed light on how we are subjected to and constituted by structure and language and, even more importantly, how we “continue to speak and write into existence those same structures through those same discourses” (Davies, 2003, p. xx). One of Foucault’s most significant contributions has been to “enable us to see that what we understand by ‘being
human’ has shifted radically” (Davies, 1997, p. 272). Foucault (1972) wrote:

We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation [...]. Discourse is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form [...]. it is, from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history [...]. posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality (p. 117).

Foucault’s (1972) archaeological analysis of discourse is important here. According to Mills (1997), he is not interested in simply analysing the discourses which are circulating in our society at present. What he wants is for us to see is the arbitrariness of a range of discourses, the strangeness of those discourses, in spite of their familiarity and taken for grantedness. He also wants to chart the development of certain discursive practices, so that we can see that, rather than being permanent, as their familiarity would suggest, discourses are constantly changing and their origins can be traced to certain key shifts in history. According to Mills, Foucault believed that discourses cause a narrowing of one’s “field of vision, to exclude a wide range of phenomena from being considered as real or as worthy of attention, or as even existing” (p. 51) creating an inextricable link between discourse, authority and legitimacy. Mills, explaining Foucault’s position, states that “we categorize and interpret experience and events according to the structures available to us, and, in the process of interpretation, we lend these structures a solidity and normality which it is often difficult to think outside of” (p. 54). Foucault (1972) argues that we should think of discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49). For Mills (1997), this means that a discourse is something which produces something else (an utterance, a concept, an effect), rather than something which exists in and of itself and which can be analysed in isolation. A discursive structure can be detected because of the systematicity of the ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving.
which are formed within a particular context, and because of the effects of those ways of thinking and behaving (p. 17).

She uses the example of discourses of femininity and masculinity, of what it means to be male and female; “the discursive frameworks demarcate the boundaries within which we can negotiate what it means to be gendered” (p. 18). Terry Threadgold contends “It is not just looking at the text and bouncing off to what must have been the context; it is actually looking at this text and then really researching the context in order to see how you might locate traces of that context in the text” (Kamler, 1997, p. 449). This perspective undermines the belief that “reality is somehow out there waiting to be captured by language” (Britzman, 2000, p. 32). There is no unmediated experience of the world and knowledge is possible only in terms of the categories and the laws of the symbolic order (Belsey, 1980).

2.2.2 Subjectivity and subject positioning. According to a poststructural perspective, subjectivity, that sense of ourselves which we construct in interaction with others and the world, is not innate or genetically predetermined. It is socially constructed and emerges in social relations and processes, and it is through language and various discursive practices that many forms of social organization (relations, processes, practices) and their social and political consequences are created and through which individuals are discursively constituted as subjects. Foucault (1972) writes:

‘Words and things’ is the entirely serious title of a problem; it is the ironic title of a work that modifies its own form, displaces its own data, and reveals, at the end of the day, a quite different task. A task that consists of not – of no longer – treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (p. 49).

Much of Foucault’s (1982) work has focused on the subject and the modes of
objectification which transform human beings into subjects. First is the mode through
which we have come to understand ourselves scientifically: the scientific classification of
the speaking subject. For example, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental
Disorders (DSMIV) is a classification system used by psychiatrists and other mental
health professionals in the diagnosing of mental illness and disorders. There have been
four revisions and a fifth is currently being prepared, since the manual was first published
in 1952. With each addition, new mental disorders are included while others are removed
because they are no longer considered to be mental disorders. Over time, the DSMIV has
formed subjects in a variety of ways, such as “the” homosexual or “the” autistic.

According to Foucault, certain scientific classifications have a privileged status and
influence social norms, resulting in the socially produced specifications and
categorizations of normal and abnormal behaviour, which he refers to as totalization. The
Western cultural practice of specifying “the subject who labors” (p. 208) as an employee
is one example of totalization. There are any number of jobs at which one may labour,
yet it is normal practice for everyone who labours to be classified as an employee.

A common practice is the creation of files (e.g. personnel, medical) that capture the
individual, fix them in time and are used to gather statistics for fixing “norms”. These
norms can then be used as mechanisms of social control. For example, student school
cumulative files may contain psychological reports, even diagnoses, which follow a
student throughout her school career. Information from these files can be used to make
decisions about a student’s placement or eligibility for special programming, regardless of
whether the information in the file is still relevant.

A second mode of objectification is the use of dividing practices in which the subject
is either divided within themselves (e.g. the mind from the soul) or divided from others (e.g. the sick from the healthy). In these first two modes of objectification (scientific classification and dividing practices) the individual is basically passive. However in a third mode, subjectification, human beings turn themselves into subjects and the individual is much more active. This process involves understanding one’s self as the internalization of dialogue mediated through external cultural norms (1980, 1982). Foucault suggests that humanist claims of self-determination, transcendence and understanding are difficult to achieve because everything in our daily lives is tied to cultural discourses. Individuals monitor themselves according to their interpretation of cultural norms.

From this perspective, we are “not socialized into the social world but go through a process of subjectification” (Davies, 2003, p. 14). We are subjected to powers that shape us in particular ways; continually constituted through multiple and contradictory discourses that one takes up at the same time. Chris Weedon (1987) writes:

‘Subjectivity’ is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relations to the world. Humanist discourses presuppose an essence at the heart of the individual which is unique, fixed and coherent and which makes her what she is. ………poststructuralism proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think and speak (p. 32-33).

Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell (1987) explain that just as a subjectivity is produced in discourse, the self is subjected to discourse, and, that in constructing the self or subjectivity in discourse other constructions are excluded, creating a particular kind of subjection. The subject itself is “the effect of a production, caught in the mutually constitutive web of social practices” (Henriques et al., 1984, p. 117, as cited in Davies,
In other words, each person actively takes up the discourses through which they and others speak and write the world into existence... through those discourses they are made speaking subjects at the same time as they are subjected to the constitutive force of those discourses. Deborah Britzman (2000) argues that:

Every discourse constitutes, even as it mobilizes and shuts out, imaginary communities, identity investments, and discursive practices. Discourses authorize what can and cannot be said; they produce relations of power and communities of consent and dissent, and thus discursive boundaries are always being redrawn around what constitutes the desirable and the undesirable and around what it is that makes possible particular structures of intelligibility and unintelligibility (p. 36).

Davies (2000) explains it this way: “The process of subjectification, then, entails a tension between simultaneously becoming a speaking, agentic subject and the corequisite for this, being subjected to the meanings inherent in the discourses through which one becomes a subject” (p. 27). She further suggests that an individual emerges from this process, not as a fixed end product but as one who is “constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which he or she participates” (p. 89). She (2003) writes, “We are in a sense living our lives in a knotted web of discourses and passions, a web that is of our own making, and out of the substance of which we are each continually being made-up. We are each both the weaver and the web, the ones who tie the knots, and who are tied” (p. 202).

Discursive constitution of subjectivity begins at birth as a constantly repeating process of written, oral and social practices of everyday life that continues throughout our lifetime. Meredith Cherland (1994) suggests that the process of constructing a ‘subjectivity’ is a highly individual one complicated by our personal circumstances (e.g. cultural discourses in our lives) and our responses to them (e.g. individual resistance to
these discourses), making these ways of becoming a subject difficult to avoid or change. Depending on one’s social status (race, class, gender, age), some forms of subjectivity may not be readily available to a particular person.

Subject ‘positioning’ is the process whereby the subject is located or assigned to a category (e.g. female) within a storyline (discourse) within the culture and historical moment, and takes up that positioning as its own, those discourses through which it has been constituted (e.g. femaleness). Being able to read situations correctly, to determine what is an obvious or a taken for granted quality of a category, and in particular the ways of being a ‘subject’ and constituting our lives, is a requirement of being part of the social order (Davies, 2000, 2003). It involves “knowing how to be positioned and to position oneself as a member of a particular group of people who know and take for granted what other people know and take for granted in a number of different settings” (Davies, 2000, p. 22). Once a particular position is taken up as one’s own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, binary pairs, tropes and concepts that are made relevant within the particular discursive practices in which they are positioned

Social relations, which are always relations of power and powerlessness between different subject positions, will determine the range of forms of subjectivity immediately open to any individual on the basis of gender, race, class, age and cultural background (Weedon, 1987, p. 95).

Most children are positioned as girl or boy, then later as man or woman. Most have no sense of being able to choose our subject position and achieve agency. Davies (2000) suggests the following processes are involved:

1. Learning of the categories that include some people and exclude others, (e.g. male/female;
2. Participating in the various discursive practices through which meanings are
allocated to those categories. These include the storylines or tropes through
which different subject positions are elaborated;
3. Positioning of self in terms of the categories and storylines. This involves
imaginatively positioning oneself as if one belongs in one category and not in the
other (e.g. as girl and not boy, or as good girl and not bad girl);
4. Recognition of oneself as having the characteristics that locate oneself as a
member of various subclasses of (usually dichotomous) categories and not others
– i.e., the development of a sense of oneself as belonging in the world in certain
ways and thus seeing the world from the perspective of one so positioned (p. 90).

Positioning is interactively produced and is, therefore, open to shifts and changes as
the discourse changes. Valerie Walkerdine (1997) also makes the case that people,
subjects, are formed at the intersection of often competing discourses, practices and
claims of truth. When speaking of female teachers and school girls, Walkerdine (1990)
argued that women are not one subjectivity, but are produced as a nexus of subjectivities,
in relations of power which are constantly shifting, rendering them at one moment
powerful and at another powerless. She writes,

Understanding the individuals not as occupants of fixed, institutionally determined
positions of power, but as a multiplicity of subjectivities, allows us to understand
that an individual’s position is not uniquely determined by being ‘women’, ‘girl’
or ‘teacher’. It is important to understand the individual signifiers as subjects
within any particular discursive practice. We can then understand power not as
static, but produced as a constantly shifting relation (p. 14).

Potter and Wetherell (1987) concur. They write “There is not ‘one’ self waiting to be
discovered or uncovered but a multitude of selves found in the different kinds of
linguistic practices articulated now, in the past, historically and cross-culturally” (p. 102).

When the subject position which an individual assumes within a particular discourse
supports her self-interests, when it satisfies her desires and helps her feel good, then her
subjectivity contributes to the maintenance of the hierarchy of power relations. However,
women can resist a subject position when the fit is uncomfortable. Weedon (1987)
writes, “Knowledge of more than one discourse and the recognition that meaning is plural
allows for a measure of choice on the part of the individual and even where choice is not available, resistance is still possible” (p. 106).

Walkerdine (1990) reminds us that individual women are not produced as unitary subjects, but as an interconnection of contradictory subjectivities. These competing claims to truth, these contradictions are produced through a variety of discourses in the complexities of everyday practice, producing an individual who is sometimes powerful and sometimes powerless. Weedon (1998) speaks of “……precarious and contradictory subjectivities” (p. 9) reconstituted in discourse each time we speak.

Davies (1989) developed the concept of category maintenance work “whereby children ensure that the categories of person, as they are coming to understand them, are maintained as meaningful categories in their own actions and the actions of those around them” (Davies, 2003, p. 20). This involves the signaling, in one way or another, of the unacceptability of activities that disrupt the obvious meaning of a category, which is unmistakably recognizable. For example, in North American culture, behaviours that disrupt the obviousness of the male/female binary are seen as unacceptable. If a male is seen behaving in ways believed not to correspond to the category of male (e.g. flexing his wrist while speaking) or a woman is seen behaving in ways not believed to correspond to the category of female (e.g. sitting with her legs apart), these behaviours are viewed as disrupting the obviousness of and the exclusivity of the categories of masculinity and femininity respectively. In her work, Davies explores how children actually engage in category maintenance work. In particular, she observed children engaged in activities aimed at behaviour by other children that disrupted the obviousness of “male” or “female.”
While women could ignore the comments or request that they stop, the woman making the comments had the power to control whether she would stop or not. However, more often women succumb to the category-maintenance work done and position themselves within the subject position accepted, within the discourse cited by those pressuring them to conform. According to Davies, (2003) social competence, in the form of knowing the signs that signal each category, requires being able to appear normal within the terms of the available category and knowing what category is possible and what is forbidden.

### 2.2.3 Tropes and storylines through which gendered persons are constructed.

According to poststructuralism, language does not represent reality. ‘Real’ stories do not exist. All stories, whether observed, heard, or read, lived and imagined, are imaginary storylines. Tropes, the words or expressions used in a figurative or metaphorical way within a story, enable us to see one thing in terms of another. The choices I make at any given moment in time will depend on the tropes or storylines I take myself to be living out. For instance, if I believe myself to be the person who provides for my family, the people with whom I choose to play out this story will need to be able to live out the one being provided for and to live out whatever is necessary in my storyline (Davies, 2000).

When we read a story, see it on television or experience it in some other way, it is not a passive process but something we do very actively. As readers or observers, we position ourselves and take on the position of one of the characters in the story, usually one of the same gender as ourselves. We find ourselves reading or watching the character from our own experience. Even though we may understand that the story is telling a ‘fiction’ we also see it as a story of what we are or could experience in real life. We bring the
characters to life by bringing the emotions of our own experience to bear on the
characters in the story (Davies, 2003).

According to a poststructural perspective, a woman does not have a nature which
pre-exists discourse. Davies (2003) outlines the process of becoming a gendered person
as she deconstructs the classic childhood readings of Western culture which
unconsciously organize our talk and our relations by constantly repeating certain cultural
discourses. She suggests the need to discover the ways in which our category
membership (e.g. as male or female, as white or black) leads us to be positioned
differently within the text and the ways in which tropes and cultural story lines are taken
up as our own in the form of our subjectivity. For example, many storylines and
discourses position women as victims. Walkerdine (1990) argues that idealizing a certain
kind of family, presenting heroines who never get angry, and portraying anger and
jealously as bad, produce passivity in girls and women.

In constructing subjectivity, women are caught up in the subject positions made
possible and, in some cases, inevitable, by (dominant) discourses (Davies, 2000).
Women are subject to social relations and processes in different ways than men. Women
have historically been positioned as powerless, outside the discourse of power and not
entitled to power.

Women have often been positioned as the objects of others’ desire. This positioning
through everyday discursive practices makes it difficult to experience one’s self as
powerful. Bourdieu (1991) suggests:

…people come to accept these…suggestions inscribed in the practices of everyday
life, no matter what their status or class, and no matter what the effect on them,
because cultural discourses position them as people who must accept the warning,
while they in turn come to interpret themselves as those who must submit. In this
way, domination is sustained through interpersonal relations (as cited in Cherland, 1994, p. 42).

Once certain subject positions have been made the norm for women, any deviation can be seen or experienced as abnormality (e.g. insubordination) or personal pathology (e.g. lack of self-esteem, mental illness). According to Marie Louise Pratt (2008) the first step toward change is to “recognize that one’s tropes are neither natural nor, in many cases, native to the discipline. Then it becomes possible, if one wishes, to liberate oneself from them, not by doing away with tropes (which is not possible) but by appropriating and inventing new ones (which is)” (p. 50).

2.2.4 Binary oppositions. In humanism, systems or structures are created of binary pairs or oppositions. One side of the binary is defined by the absence of qualities or characteristics which are present in the other side, creating a dualism in which one side is afforded normality and the other side, in opposition, is relegated to deviance (Patricia Hill Collins, 2000). Binary logic constitutes the world in hierarchical ways through its privileging of one term or category within the pair and depriving the opposite term of meaning in its own right. The first, the privileged or ‘unmarked’, foregrounded term, defines the meaning of the subordinate or dependent term as ‘other’ to itself (Davies, 2000). For example, light/dark, legitimate/illegitimate, normal/abnormal, appropriate/inappropriate, boss/employee, male/female, professional/non-professional, heterosexual/homosexual, being/nothingness, reason/madness, good/evil, word/silence, presence/absence, culture/nature, mind/body are all binary pairs. The first term is set up as the ‘natural’ or inevitable and elevated to performing as expected while ‘other’ or anything else is exposed as the opposite to natural (as unnatural or abnormal). Thus, normalization hinges on the construction of pathology. Psychology and psychiatry are
implicated in the “production of norms crucial to modern apparatuses of social
regulation” (Walkerdine, 1990). When linked with oppression by race, gender and
sexuality, being positioned and defined by the negative or dependent term locks people
into repeated patterns of powerlessness (Collins, 2000; Davies, 2000). According to the
male/female binary, men belong in the public world of work and women in the private
world of home. Davies (2003) argues that to be able to see the constitutive force of social
structures, such as the male/female or white/black binaries, and ourselves as “speaking
subjects” or as someone who can “continue to speak/write into existence those same
structures through those same discourses”, those same discourses need to be made visible.
To deconstruct the unmarked position, the discursive practices must be recognized and
the binaries that shape the possibilities women see and the positions women take up. One
of the goals of my research is to make visible the binaries women live within the
workplace and the effect of such binaries on their relationships with one another.

2.2.5 Language. While poststructuralism does not seek to obliterate previous
discourses, it does offer theories, critiques, concepts, practices, and forms of analysis that
call into question the humanist enlightenment version of the person (Davies, 2003).
Textual analysis enables us to see the ways in which language traps us and to attend to
see that which we normally do not see (Davies, 1997); to understand how something is
constructed the way it is (Kamler, 1997); to open us to further possibilities (Pillow, 1997).
From a poststructural perspective, then, we must begin with an analysis of language, for it
is in concrete language use that “the structure is created, reproduced and changed”
functional; that is, it has an action orientation performing blaming, accusing, justifying or
denying. The meaning of terms is closely related to their particular context and it is within the context of the talk that we gain a fuller understanding of the details of this action orientation. Language is not viewed as simply a transparent medium through which autonomous individuals transmit messages to each other about an independently constituted world. On the contrary, Belsey (1980) argues that the transparency of language is an illusion. She proposes that, in fact, it is language that offers the possibility of constructing a world of distinct individuals and things, and of differentiating between them. Belsey further suggests the social aspect of language is those possible pictures that can be formed by a sentence, depending on the reading by the hearer; the multiple meanings that can be taken. She argues that “we all participate in a range of knowledge – political, literary, scientific, and so on – and these are `subjective` only to the extent that they - and the contradictions and collisions between them - construct our world of meaning and experience. A word or a sentence is intelligible only within a specific discourse, and discourse is in turn constitutive of subjectivity....subjectivity itself is a discursive construct” (p. 49-50).

Belsey (1980) argues that if meaning is socially constructed and the social construction of the signifying system is a way of articulating experience, then language necessarily participates in ideology, “the sum of the ways in which people both live and represent to themselves their relationship to the conditions of their existence” (p. 39). Language provides the “conceptual lenses through which we see the world” (Walton, 2005); and the “lens through which historians, philosophers, and economists, linguists, social scientists, and so on fashion or construct a `picture` or representation of `reality` that is logical and rational and that has the human subject as its main actor or at its
privileged center” (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2005, p. 848). For Belsey, ideology is a way of thinking, speaking, experiencing; it is inscribed in language in the sense that it is literally written or spoken in it. However, in refuting the expressive realist notion that literature reflects the reality of experience when perception is expressed in a text which then enables others to see the truth, Belsey makes a case for the weakness of this theory in that it attempts to locate meaning in a single place, in the words of the text on the page. For her, language is not static and meanings are not fixed or given. Texts are plural in that they are open to any number of interpretations. The only thing that is inherent in the text is a range of possibilities and meaning released by a “culturally determined” (p. 34) reader in the process of reading. Belsey proposes that common sense itself is ideologically and discursively constructed, but it was Barthes (1993), in Mythologies, who originally exposed the ways in which ideological myths are naturalized to form common sense in society (as cited in Belsey, p. 42). However, rather than a separate element which exists independently in some free-floating realm of ‘ideas’ that is deliberately adopted by self-conscious individuals and is subsequently embodied in words, ideology is the very condition of our experience of the world, unconscious precisely in that it is unquestioned, taken for granted. Ideology is inscribed in signifying practices – in discourses, myths, presentations and re-presentations of the way ‘things’ ‘are’ - and to this extent it is inscribed in the language (Belsey). According to Althusser (1971), it is the role of ideology to construct people as subjects. He writes:

I say: The category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology, but at the same time and immediately I add that the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of “constituting” concrete individuals as subjects (p. 160, as cited in Belsey, p. 54).

Accordingly, for Belsey, the work of ideology is to present the position of the subject as
fixed and unchangeable, an element in a given system of differences which is human nature and the world of human experience, and to show possible action as an endless repetition of `normal`, familiar action. She provides several previously taken for granted examples of language constituting the normal, examples that we have recently become aware of because they are in transition. I will explain two. The first is the signifying practice of patriarchal society to use ‘man’ or ‘men’ to mean people. For example, when we say phrases such as mankind, Western man, policeman, or fisherman, the word for a male person is being used as the common noun for both genders. The effect of equating a man or male person with all people is that women are constituted as a secondary sex, different from the implied male norm. Besley provides a second example of the way that ideology is inscribed in ordinary language in the differentiation between women who are available for marriage and those who are not (Miss, Mrs.):

The marking of this difference implies a distinction which is in some way essential between married and unmarried women, while men remain Mr. whether they are married or not......in a society in which men have been conventionally responsible for taking the initiative in selecting a marriage partner [this] is easily overlooked in favour of its naturalness. The introduction of Ms. has ideological implications, as well as the advantage of saving time or embarrassment in addressing women whose marital status is not known (p. 40).

Belsey’s (1980) point is that ideology “is both a real and an imaginary relation to the world – real in that it is the way that people really live their relationships to the social relations which govern their existence, but imaginary in that it discourages a full understanding of these conditions of existence and the ways in which people are socially constituted within them” (p. 53). According to Althusser (1971), ideological practices were originally supported and reproduced in the institutions of our society, such as the police and penal system. In contemporary society, it is the education system which
prepares children to act in accordance with the values and expectations of society by
“inculcating in them the dominant versions of appropriate behaviour, …. [through]
history, social studies and, of course, literature. Among the allies [of the educational
system] ……. are the family, the law, the media and the arts, each helping to represent and
reproduce the myths and beliefs necessary to induce people to work within the existing
social formation” (as cited in Belsey, p. 53). The role of ideology is to suppress any
contradictions, ambiguities, and inconsistencies in the interests of the preserving of the
existing dominant social formation. Nevertheless, Foucault (1980) cautions that ideology
is difficult to make use of because it is “produced within discourses which in themselves
are neither true nor false …. [ideology] is a notion that cannot be used without
circumspection” (p. 118).

Poststructuralism supports the view that we must begin to use language differently
and ask different questions that might produce different possibilities for living (St. Pierre,
2000, p. 484). We must create resistance to disrupt the social system, thereby
necessitating change. Poststructuralism explains how it is “the regulating and constituting
functions of language that it studies: its aim is to describe the surface linkages between
power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of populations, and the modern
state as these intersect in the functions of systems of thought” (Bové, 1990, p. 54-55, as
the impossibility of existing outside representation through discourse that universal truth
cannot exist.

With language, we create representations of reality that are never mere reflections
of a pre-existing reality but contribute to constructing reality. That does not mean
that reality itself does not exist. Meanings and representations are real. Physical
objects also exist, but they only gain meaning through discourse. …… Language,
then is not merely a channel through which information about underlying mental
states and behaviour or facts about the world are communicated (p. 8-9).

For Belsey (1980), poststructuralism undermines common sense in a more radical way
and so “provides a theoretical framework which permits the development of a genuinely
radical critical practice” (p. 34). germane to this discussion is the humanist support for
an essentialist view that everything and everyone has a unique and fixed essence that
makes us what we are. Humanism works at defining that essence; that single “unique
factor that enables one to identify something or someone and group it with others of its
kind in various structures…..” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 480). Poststructuralism is not
concerned with essentializing; it is contrary to it.

A word or a sentence is intelligible only within a specific discourse, and discourse
is in turn constitutive of subjectivity, ...to posit the subject as an authority for a
single meaning is to ignore the degree to which subjectivity itself is a discursive
construct. To find a guarantee of meaning in the world or in experience is to
ignore the fact that our experience of the world is itself constituted in language
(Belsey, 1980, p. 49-50).

It is through and in language that we are constructed as subjects. It is through and in
language that we experience the world. It is through and in language that women are
constructed as subjects and positioned in the workplace. The study of language and
discourses will allow us a different kind of understanding of women’s experiences in the
work place, and this is the reason I believe poststructuralism is the appropriate theoretical
framework for my research.

2.2.6 The metaphors of everyday life. For most of us, metaphors are colourful
comparisons poets use to comment on some pre-existing reality. They are not a part of
our everyday thoughts and activities or capable of creating realities. The work of Lakoff
and Johnson (1980) leads us to see metaphors as an integral part of the conceptual system
of humanism and as contributing to our understanding of and insights into everyday life; so much so that what we have come to think of as common sense knowledge is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. While Lakoff and Johnson do not subscribe to a poststructural perspective (in that they understand metaphorical constructions as stable and unproblematic concepts), their work helps to make visible the metaphors within discursive practices that produce subjectivities and power relations. For instance, they point out that some metaphors provide spatial orientations in which a whole system of concepts is organized spatially in binary oppositions (e.g. up-down, in-out, on-off). Feelings and qualities are associated with these special binaries. Happy is up; sad is down. More is up; less is down. Good is up; bad is down. Having control or agency is up; being subject to control or force is down. Rational is up; irrational is down, and so on.

Ontological metaphors create reality in other ways. Based on our experiences with physical objects or bodies, they serve a range of purposes as they structure our physical and cultural experiences as if they were entities, substances, containers, or people. By focusing on a certain part of our experiences and treating that part as a discrete entity, we can refer to objects and bodies, categorize them, group them, quantify them and eventually, reason about them in ways that would otherwise be difficult. For instance, someone might say “her fear of spiders drives me crazy” or “it will take a lot of patience to clean up this mess.” Ontological metaphors allow us to elaborate our understanding further than orientation metaphors such as the mind is a machine and the mind is a brittle object metaphors. For instance, someone might say “you look a little rusty at this”, “my brain just isn’t working right today” or “I can almost see the wheels turning in your
head”. The machine metaphor allows us to think of the mind as a mechanism, having a capacity for being productive and efficient and as having on and off states. The *brittle object* metaphor allows us to think of the psychological strength of the mind and the potential for consequences if it were to “shatter.” This metaphoric way of looking at and describing experiences becomes so natural and so pervasive in our thoughts that we begin to see metaphors as actual descriptions of reality (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). It no longer occurs to us that these are metaphors.

Structural metaphors, also grounded within our experience, allow us to do much more than orient concepts, refer to them, quantify them. They allow us to restructure one concept with another as we do in the *argument is war* metaphors. For example, “I see what you’re saying now” or “Let me *point out* something to you.” In thinking of an argument in terms of a war which can be won or lost, we see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We see ourselves as needing to attack that person’s position and defend our own. Another example of a structural metaphor is the *time is money* metaphor which allows us to think about time as a limited resource, a valuable commodity not to be squandered. Examples of this type of metaphor might be “that was a *waste* of time”, “where are you *spending* your summer?” or “she doesn’t *use* her time *wisely.*” Work, at least in Western cultures, is often thought of and quantified in terms of the time it takes. People are often paid by the hour for their work. Time can be spent, wasted or used wisely. By examining the metaphorical expressions in our everyday speech we can gain insight into the metaphorical concepts that structure our everyday lives.

### 2.2.7 Reflections on power and knowledge

In order to understand the subject, Foucault (1980) believes we need to look at notions of power and knowledge. For
Foucault, the divide in humanism between power and knowledge is a “mistake”. He suggests that power and knowledge are integrated with one another; there is a constant articulation of power on knowledge and of knowledge on power. In other words, the exercise of power perpetually creates new objects of knowledge, and information and knowledge constantly induce effects of power. One is impossible without the other.

I will begin this discussion by looking first at power, key in the discussion of women abusing women in the workplace. According to the pervasive discourse of humanism to which we have all been exposed, the world is constructed as dualistic and hierarchical and power is a thing to be possessed, to have or attain. From an early age we are taught to regard anyone positioned in authority as the one with unquestioned knowledge, including the knowledge of who should have power and authority. We are taught not to challenge or question. We accept that this is the way it must be, or the world would not work properly. We can’t imagine it any other way. Unfortunately, throughout history, the desire by one group to attain power over another group has led to terrible consequences such as mass genocides of those with different ideas or different cultural practices.

Foucault’s beliefs about power differs from these traditional humanist beliefs. For Foucault (1980, 1982), power is not domination by one individual over others or the domination of one group or class over others. It does not exist in a concentrated form as a “commodity or piece of wealth” (1980, p. 98), nor is it in anyone’s hands, or the deciding factor between those who possess it and those who submit to it. Further, “power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (p. 93). Foucault (1978) writes
…power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; ...as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system …. The omnipresence of power: … because it is produced from one moment to the next…. Power is everywhere… because it comes from everywhere (p. 92-93).

For Foucault, power replaces the privilege of the law, of sovereignty, and of objectivity with the multiple and mobile field of force relations.

Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, ...circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy (p. 101-102).

In addition, Foucault does not understand power as exclusively oppressive, but rather as productive. He writes:

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (1980, p. 119).

He sees power as being dispersed throughout social relations; producing or restricting possible forms of behaviour. Thus, power provides the conditions of possibility for the social; it is in power that our social world is produced.

One of Foucault’s major insights is that power is exercised, not simply held. It is through the exercising of power over others that the controllers are also controlled. Those who exercise the power, as well as those who are subjected to it, are fixed, regulated and subject to the administrative control of ordering behaviour (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 192). Some of the most significant regulatory practices were described by Foucault (1975) as instruments, techniques, and procedures. Of particular importance is his illustration of the Panoptic technology, providing a formula for practices which create the
efficient running of organization and institutions without the need to exercise over
violence by illustrating disciplinary technology. The Panopticon is a way of organizing a
prison with cells around a large circular courtyard with a tower in the center. The tower
provides a view of all the cells around the circle, cells are organized so that each
individual is, in and out of the cell, visible to the person in the central tower. Prisoners
are aware they are being watched so they learn to regulate themselves and surveillance
becomes internalized. This prison metaphor provides an understanding of the
mechanisms (e.g. visibility, surveillance) that bring together power and knowledge in an
efficient way to achieve external control of individual behaviour. Foucault describes the
Panopticon as:

a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms
of the everyday life of men….. It is the diagram of a mechanism of power
reduced to its ideal form…. It is in fact a figure of political technology that may
and must be detached from any specific use… it is polyvalent in its application;….It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation
to one another, of hierarchical organization (italics are mine), of disposition of
centres and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of
intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops,
schools, prisons (p. 205).

The genius of this apparatus of power is in its multipurpose design which can be used by
anyone in a position of power and to which anyone can be subjected (Dreyfus &
Rabinow, 1982). It brings together knowledge, power, the mechanisms for controlling
bodies in space for hierarchical organizations “exercised in the interest of increasing
power” (192) without the need for overt violence.

These technologies and practices, the everyday instruments through which a
population is managed, were taken over and adapted for use in schools and mental
hospitals as a means of reinforcing the internal mechanisms of power and getting as much
time and work out of each person as possible. The multiplicity of these everyday instruments includes such strategies as time-tables, collective training, perpetual assessment, and classification. Principal among these techniques is continuous surveillance.

In his later work, Foucault (1980) suggests that the generalizing of surveillance has replaced the spectacular and public punishments of the past, which had become too economically and politically costly in proportion to the results. When too much violence is displayed or the punishment is not done in a continuous manner, there is a risk of resistance and disobedience developing. He suggests that the result of the inspecting gaze of a system of surveillance will result in each individual under surveillance eventually internalizing the system to the point that each person exercises this surveillance over and against themselves, and becomes his or her own overseer. Foucault called this “a perfect formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost” (p. 155). By managing knowledge through the use of practices of discipline and regulation, the subject is defined and formulated.

Foucault’s (1978) theory of biopower sheds further light on the practices of modern states and the regulation of their subjects through “….an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of “biopower” (p. 140). Biopower is the technology of power, a way of managing people as a group.

For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence: the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge’s field of control and power’s sphere of intervention. Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate domination was death, but with living beings, and the mastery
it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body. ...one would have to speak of biopower to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life (p. 143).

In his lecture course, which he gave at the Collège de France between January and April, 1978, Foucault tried to clarify. He said

By this [biopower] I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the 18th century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. This is what I have called biopower (Foucault, as cited in, Senellart, et al., 2007, p. 1).

These technologies of biopower, which are the link between the individual and social structures, are invisible to the straight forward observer. Examples include the use of statistics and probabilities, threat of expulsion, psychotropic drugs or a discourse that life will be better if you follow the rules. My research will make visible the technologies of biopower at work on women’s lives within the workplace.

According to Foucault (1975, 1980), the goal of disciplinary technology was to produce human beings who could be treated as docile bodies which lend support to the proliferation of regimes of truth, and techniques of power, all at the same time. Walkerdine (1990) agreed saying, “Docile bodies would become a self-disciplined workforce” (p. 21). Without docility and compliances which result in workers who work hard and produce, capitalism could not exist.

Foucault (1982) suggests that the issue of power should be approached in terms of how, rather than who; that is to say, the focus should be on the relations of power rather than on power itself. Exercising power, Foucault explains in an interview with Michael
Bess (1980, cited in Hartmann, 2003),

does not mean picking up this [tape] recorder and throwing it on the ground. I have the capacity to do so – materially, physically, sportively. But I would not be exercising power if I did that. However, if I take this tape recorder and throw it on the ground in order to make you mad, or so that you can’t repeat what I’ve said, or to put pressure on so that you’ll behave in such and such a way, or to intimidate you – well, what I’ve done, by shaping your behaviour through certain means, that is power. … I’m not forcing you at all and I’m leaving you completely free – that’s when I begin to exercise power. It’s clear that power should not be defined as a constraining force of violence that represses individuals, forcing them to do something or preventing them from doing some other thing. But it takes place when there is a relation between two free subjects, and this relation is unbalanced, so that one can act upon the other, and the other is acted upon, or allows himself to be acted upon. Therefore, power is not always repressive. It can take a certain number of forms. And it is possible to have relations of power that are open (p.2).

For Foucault, unless we trace the actual material function of relations of power, they will continue to operate, and the illusion that power is only applied by those at the top to those at the bottom will continue (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). In power relations, objects are separated from one another and thus attain their individual characteristics and relationships to one another. He believes that a power relationship can only exist if two indispensable elements are in place. One is that “the other, (the only one whom power is exercised over and who is never allowed or invited to speak) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up” (p. 220). The second indispensable element is that power is exercised only over free subjects who have various possibilities in which to behave or react, at the heart of which is resistance. Foucault (1978) wrote, “Where there is power, there is resistance” (p. 95).

John Hartmann (2003) argues that this analysis leads to a conception of resistance in which it is the possibility of reversal within specific force relations, the contesting of specific objects and impositions of power on subjects, that is fundamental to the creative
possibilities for resistance within power. This interpretation of power and resistance is that “resistance becomes entirely reactive…, or merely a reacting-to power and not a positive action on its own terms” (p.3). However, Foucault (1982) later writes that power “exists only when it is put into action …it acts upon their actions” (p. 219-20). It circulates between and within each of us; we are always simultaneously undergoing power and exercising power. He adds that “there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or the possibility of flight” (p. 225). He is not, however, suggesting that dominance does not exist, but that dominance is not the essence of power. We are the vehicle of power at the same time as we are constituted by it. He does not deny the existence of the domination of one class over another, and Foucault does expose the nature and brutality of domination. His point, however, is that power is exercised upon the dominant as well as upon the dominated. According to Hartmann, Foucault’s interpretation of power is

no longer conceived as the abstract relation of forces but as the structuring of the field of possible actions by means of action……power functions by structuring a field of possible action in which a subject must act……emphasis on the effect of action upon action, also serves to highlight the positive manner in which the subject is able to act upon his or herself, or the relation of oneself to oneself. Resistance – positive resistance – is no longer merely reversal, but consists in a subject’s becoming-autonomous within a structured set of institutions and practices through immanent critique (p. 10).

I will now turn my focus to Foucault’s understanding of the hierarchy of knowledge. Foucault (1980) suggests to be a set of alternative knowledges, what he calls popular knowledges, are often silenced. They are disqualified as “inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity” (p. 82) (e.g. the knowledge a psychiatric patient has of her own problems is silenced and replaced with the knowledge of the
psychiatrist). For example, women who live in an abusive relationship are often diagnosed with anxiety or depression and prescribed medication as a solution. Their knowledge of their experience of abuse is silenced and, therefore, their situation often remains unchanged. Foucault suggests that privileging specific cultural practices over others disqualifies the knowledges of whole groups of people who are, through their actions, viewed by the culture as different (e.g. people with different sexual practices, different spiritual practices). These groups are often marginalized.

The hierarchical positioning of one knowledge, idea or practice over another promotes the notion of actual truth. Foucault (1980) argues that there are no truths, only ideas given “truth” status. These “truths” act to set standards and establish normalization and influence how people are able to shape their lives. One example of this is the culture’s view of the various disciplines (e.g. psychology or religion) as truths. He writes, ‘Disciplines are the bearers of a discourse, …. The code they come to define is not that of law but that of normalization…. It is human science which constitutes their domain, and clinical knowledge their jurisprudence” (p. 107). Subjugated knowledges result, those blocs of historical knowledge which are present in the culture but discounted (p. 82). Once a person takes up a society’s discourse, certain cultural truths are then privileged that limit the construction of alternatives. In this process, less dominant and less scientific truths become subjugated. Foucault believes that it is through the re-appearance of local or popular knowledge that criticism is able to do its work (p. 82). According to Foucault (1980), without certain discourses of truth, power cannot be exercised. He wrote:

We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. …..we are judged, condemned,
classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or
dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific
effects of power (p. 93-94).

The rules of right and power and the effects of truth and discourse were the focus of
much of Foucault’s work. The central role of right was to determine legitimacy of power
(and obligation to obey) as the instrument of domination.

Davies (2000) argues that

the desire for power may not be defined as such by those who...systematically
control and shape the lives of others who are seen as lacking in the discourses and
practices of the dominant group. They may define their own actions, instead, as
laudable, as “correcting” or “saving” another group from its own practices. They
may remain oblivious to the fact that their activity is part of a complex system of
ensuring that their own discourses and practices prevail as recognizably
“superior,” that recognized “superiority” facilitating their take-up of powerful
positionings within the culture, and ensuring that their own utterances remain
hearable as legitimate (p. 20).

Furthermore, according to Davies, what is particularly sad is that we are mostly unaware
of the discourses and practices that judge those who do not have access to the power
available through the dominant discourse. Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that we
“become fixed in position through the range of linguistic practices available to us to make
sense [of the world]. The use of a particular discourse which contains a particular
organization of the self not only allows one to warrant and justify one’s actions, it also
maintains power relations and patterns of domination and subordination” (p. 109). This
will be a key idea in my research.

I have reviewed the philosophical assumptions that underlie poststructuralism in
order to show that the strategies provided by this paradigm make it possible to come to a
new kind of understanding of the phenomenon of women abusing other women in the
workplace. Through a poststructural focus on language, it is possible to trouble the
metaphors, binaries, tropes and storylines of my interview data, to examine the
collection of the subjectivities of women and make visible the disadvantaged subject
positions made available to and taken up or resisted by women. It is for this reason that I
believe poststructuralism is the most appropriate theoretical framework for my research.

I also believe that becoming a gendered subject is a feature of the experiences of
women in the workplace. Feminism informs my knowledge of poststructuralism because
feminism takes both gender and experience seriously. It is concerned with women’s
knowledge and all aspects of women’s experiences, including the workplace. It is for
these reasons that I now turn the focus of my discussion to feminism.

2.3 A Feminist Perspective

One of the most central and common beliefs of feminism is that women are
oppressed, that this oppression is not inevitable and that it can and should be changed
(Stanley and Wise, 1983). This belief that oppression exists is grounded in the shared
personal experiences of women. For example, in many feminist writings “the family is
seen to play a central role in the development and continuance of women’s oppression”
(p. 68), because for many women the patriarchal family has been experienced as
oppressive.

2.3.1 Feminist research. What makes a research project “feminist? As Joey
Sprague and Diane Kobrynowicz (2004) point out, it would be easy to assume that
feminist research simply involves women academics using qualitative methods to reveal
the insights of other women. According to Stanley and Wise (1983), feminist research
ought to be “on and for women, and should be carried out by women” (p. 17). However,
they go on to argue that in order to be open to all aspects of social reality for women
including oppression, feminist research must include the part that men have played in producing oppression. Certainly, feminist researchers have always been concerned with including women in their research and most often conduct research with and for women in order to rectify the historic reliance on men as research subjects who speak for all. Nevertheless, for research to be feminist means much more. Feminist research differs from other research approaches in several important ways. Feminists have specific ideas about the entire research process from the formulation of the research question to the reporting of the results. As well, feminist researchers may choose to use a wide variety of methods in a single project or to use methods that may be considered unique to feminist research. People who are the ‘objects’ of feminist research may participate in choosing the method to be used, decide what the focus of the research will be, and be involved in the interpretation of results (Stanley & Wise, 1993).

Feminism has also challenged conceptions of what truth is, of who can be a knower, and of what can be known. Feminists have criticized the traditional positivist research distinction between ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’, arguing that emphasizing objectivity denies women’s understandings and women’s experiences of everyday life, which are subjective. It follows, then, that the nature of the relationship between the researcher and “the researched” is an important consideration in feminist research. Feminist research is “intended to unravel dominant relations of power” (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004, p. 12) and endeavours to be inclusive of difference, rather than trying to eliminate difference.

Feminist researchers reject this positivist requirement for a researcher to achieve and maintain objectivity. On the contrary, feminist researchers believe that, for human
beings, objectivity is impossible. Nancy Naples (2003) contends that “if researchers fail to explore how their personal, professional, and structural positions frame social scientific investigations, researchers inevitably reproduce dominant gender, race, and class biases” (p. 3). Researchers are influenced and contaminated with their own history, everyday life and society as a whole, always anchored in one or another discursive structure, often exactly the same discourse the researcher wants to analyse, without any hope of escaping from it and “telling the pure truth, truth in itself being always a discursive construction” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 49). In an interview with Barbara Kamler (1997), Threadgold asserts “we cannot think about the subject who speaks or writes, or the subject who is spoken or written, without thinking about the body, the way it’s been inscribed and the way it’s been located as the source of those things…..you couldn’t have a text and a context without a body” (p. 447).

Feminist “objectivity” acknowledges the fact that the researcher is going to bring the influences of life into the project. For feminists, it is a re-examination of the personal, experience and emotions, that ought to be at the heart of feminist research, and presumably because of being aware of power relationships involved in the research process, the researcher’s own consciousness and her experience of being a woman ought to be a central focus of the research process. Stanley and Wise (1983) also suggest that “the researcher’s own experiences are an integral part of the research and should therefore be described as such.” Walkerdine (1997) adds, “…..it is an impossible task to avoid the place of the subjective in research, and that, instead of making futile attempts to avoid something which cannot be avoided, we should think more carefully about how to utilize our subjectivity as a feature of the research process” (p. 59). The kind of person that we
are, and how we experience the research, all have a crucial impact on what we see, what we do, and how we interpret and construct what is going on” (p. 50).

Thus, feminist researchers believe that their own assumptions and motivations should be acknowledged and revealed in order to promote transparency (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992). In order to “reveal” there must first be a process of self-reflection, a reflexivity, by which a researcher identifies and explores her own biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences, and so on (Schwandt, 2001). Davies (2000) describes reflexivity as catching oneself in the very act of constituting the world in a particular way by the patterns of our speech and interactions in the very moment they occur. Hertz (1997) too makes a case for the need for researchers to be reflexive in order to explain their own production. Threadgold (Kamler, 1997) further explains that it is important to know as much as possible about the person who made the text, the context in which the text was made, and to whom the text was directed, in order to see the traces the researcher leaves in the text. Similarly, Marcus, and Fischer (1986) argue that it is particularly important for the researcher to be aware of the ways in which he or she influences data collection and reporting the findings. Ann Oakley (1981) argues that “….a relationship of mutuality between researcher and subject of research through self-revelation and emotional support produces better data and richer understanding” (p. 86).

In other words, researchers themselves are part of and influence that which they study. They are not a neutral entity, giving further credence to the feminist argument for reflexivity as a way of minimizing the potential for duplicating androcentric perspectives. Reflexivity can point to the fact the inquirer is part of the setting, context, and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand. Hence, reflexivity can be a means for
critically inspecting the entire research process, including reflecting on the ways in which a field-worker establishes a social network of informants and participants in a study and examining one’s personal and theoretical commitments to determine how they serve as resources for generating particular data, for behaving in particular ways vis-à-vis respondents and participants, and for developing particular interpretations (Schwandt, 2001, p. 224).

2.3.2. Troubling of the public/private binary. Feminism’s criticism of the notion of public versus private social spheres is crucial here. A pervasive, and much criticized, assumption in social theory is that the public and the private constitute a binary pair, distinct spheres of social life and that the public sphere, defined as the official economy, the polity, and related institutions has greater value than the private (Fraser, 1989; Mies, 1986; Pateman, 1983; Sprague, 1988, 1997; Stanley & Wise, 1983, 1993; Ward, 1993, as cited in Sprague & Kobrynowicz 2004, p. 86-87). Feminism seeks to disrupt this assumption.

Pillow (1997) reminds us that feminist theory has challenged the separation of theory from experience, arguing that “the personal is political” (p. 350); that is, the “practices, representations and knowledge of the female body are not simply innate natural occurrences but are political...contrived, monitored, controlled, and moralized by a social system in which the female body as a collective has not had much say” (p. 350-351). Some feminist theorists argue that the public and the private spheres of social life are integrated in personal experience. For example, the women who participated in my research did not separate their private lives from their public. They took home their experiences at work and brought their experiences from home into the workplace.
2.3.3. **Empowerment.** Another theoretical perspective useful to feminism has to do with “empowering” subjugated peoples. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), postmodern scholars emphasize an oppositional politics aimed at empowering previously subjugated peoples; thus research can be a “transformative endeavour” (p. 18) practiced in order to denaturalize and transform oppressive power-knowledge relations with the intent of creating a more just world. As Sharlene Hess-Biber, Patricia Leavy and Michelle Yaiser (2004) argue “…. epistemological assumptions on which positivism is based have been shaped by the larger culture and perpetuate the hierarchies that characterize social life ……..” (p. 11), maintaining the unequal power relations of the dominant worldview. Taken a step further, “As a consequence of studying the oppressed through the lens of the privileged, oppressed people are objectified, represented not as people “like us” but rather as the “other” (Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 2004, p. 86). Postmodern feminists are concerned with bringing the “other” into the research, creating political resistance to hierarchical modes of structuring social life by being attentive to the dynamics of power and knowledge (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). St. Pierre (2000) asserts, “We must create resistance to disrupt the social system thereby necessitating change” (p. 484). Walkerdine (1997) contends that no other non-feminist approach adequately questions the place of the researcher within the research. Further, poststructuralism does not allow us to “place the blame elsewhere, outside our own daily activities, but demands that we examine our own complicity in the maintenance of social justice” (St. Pierre, p. 484). Working toward social justice requires thinking that goes “beyond our current boundaries, [exposing] what we may be too uncomfortable to portray”; “[giving] voice to the voiceless” (Pillow, 1997, p. 361), and making explicit
what is obscure. According to Hess-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser (2004), by including “situated and partial knowledges, by attending to the intersection of gender and other categories of difference such as race, class and sexual preference in its analysis of social reality, feminist research is open to new knowledge-asking new questions” (p. 22). Thus, in trying to understand the “other,” we learn about ourselves. St. Pierre (1997) calls for, “ethical concern for the damage done to those trapped in the everlasting, insidious grids constructed by prevailing power and privilege......one senses the thrill and the pleasure of doing work outside heavily normalized and regulated structures, work that offers other chances for social justice” (p. 282).

As a reflexive feminist researcher, my own participation in this research is more than just interviewing participants or analyzing data. I am part of the culture at the centre of my research; therefore, I share many of the taken-for-granted, common-sense beliefs of the research participants. As well, I am a woman and have worked with women in the workplace, as a colleague, as a subordinate to women supervisors and managers and as a supervisor and manager of other women. I see myself as having had my own experiences in all of these contexts; experiences which have influenced my theoretical perspectives and may be shared with participants as the interviews proceed. I believe the sharing and conversation with my participants, as well as encouraging my study participants to act as researchers of their own processes, constitutes a dialogue between me, the researcher and the women participants which will allow me to learn from and with them. Similarly, taking myself into account as a researcher and justifying the choices I make in performing “the researcher” will be important. As the researcher, it will also be important to accept and acknowledge my enormous unspoken responsibility: the responsibility to express and
write the stories of the women who participate in my research, to make decisions about which data is included and which is excluded, whose voices I choose to represent and whose are not represented. Since, from a poststructural perspective, discourses are always changing and subjectivities are always in flux, there is no one truth for which I am searching and contradictory data is expected.

In summary, feminist theory takes into account women as gendered subjects as well as their experiences. Feminism is concerned with women’s knowledge and all aspects of their experience in order to achieve social justice. Therefore, it is the appropriate theoretical framework for my research. Together, feminism and poststructuralism provide the strategies for examining power, and oppression, and for making sense of women’s everyday life in the workplace. I will now turn to the tenets of poststructuralist epistemology and briefly outline why I chose a feminist poststructural framework as most appropriate for this research.

2.4 Feminist Poststructural Theory

I wanted, and in fact needed, a theoretical framework through which to examine women’s experiences of other women’s behaviour toward them in the workplace; a framework that would explain and increase understanding of how women make sense of this behaviour to themselves and others. In Chris Weedon’s (1987) words, I needed “…. a theory which can explain how and why people oppress each other, a theory of subjectivity, of conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions, which can account for the relationship between the individual and the social ” (p. 3). Poststructuralism offers such a framework; one that can be employed to “examine any commonplace situation, any ordinary event or process, in order to think differently about that occurrence – to open
up what seems ‘natural’ to other possibilities” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479); but also serve as a framework for “understanding the mechanisms of power in society and the mechanisms for change” (Weedon, p. 10). Poststructuralism troubles the humanist idea that language is stable, fixed and unchangeable and simply mirrors the reality of the world. Instead, poststructuralism locates social realities in language. Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that we become fixed in position through the range of discursive practices available to us to make sense of the world. Poststructuralism supports the view that we must begin to use language differently and ask different questions that might produce different possibilities for living (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 484). My research looks at the social reality of women’s subjectivity; at how they are produced through language and discursive practices; at power/knowledge relations; and at women’s positioning in the workplace as related to their experiences with other women. Therefore, feminist poststructuralism is the most appropriate perspective for my research. I hope my research suggests possibilities for the future.

According to Britzman (2000), because discourses produce subjects, changes in discourse are a means by which the social world is changed. Every discourse constitutes by authorizing what can and cannot be said and producing relations of power. “Thus discursive boundaries are always being redrawn around what constitutes the desirable and the undesirable and around what it is that makes possible particular structures of intelligibility and unintelligibility” (p. 36). Poststructural theory holds promise because it allows us to understand how knowledge, truth, and subjects are produced in language and cultural practice as well as how they might be changed. St. Pierre (1997) explains, a poststructural critique aims to “trouble the self-evidence of the meaning made by a
knowing subject through the right use of reason; ......... to trouble the grids of regularity produced by the closure of metaphysics, structures of humanism that have become increasingly suspect and insufficient” (p. 279). Humanist theory has failed to produce an understanding of “bullying” in the workplace, how to cope with it or how to make change for the future, without individualizing and pathologizing women.

Poststructural epistemology suits my study, as does feminism. Bringing the two together in my research is the most appropriate approach. The frequent paralleling of feminism’s main tenets with the tenets of post-modern epistemology explains the affinity clearly and has facilitated the development of unique methodological research approaches aimed at producing research inclusive of difference (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004). Davies (1997) contends that feminist poststructuralists “generate good understanding both of change and of the part played by persons, both individually and collectively, in bringing about change” (p. 15). Feminist poststructuralism is particularly helpful in describing the constitutive nature of discourse by assuming people are the “effects of language, knowledge, power, and history, rather than their essential authors....” (Britzman, 2000, p. 36). The subject is perpetually in the process of construction and reconstruction (Belsey, 1980p. 60). Potter and Wetherell suggest that in constructing the self or subjectivity in discourse, other constructions are excluded and a particular kind of subjection is created. Just as a subjectivity is produced in discourse, the self is subjected to discourse (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 109). From Foucault, we learn that “dominance is related more to the relations of power and knowledge enfolded in a discourse or ways of seeing and acting, than to truth values” (Smart, 1985, p. 41). In the exercise of power, positions are taken and identities formed as a positive strategic
accommodation to the problems of everyday life. The use of a particular discourse which contains a particular organization of the self not only allows one to warrant and justify one’s actions. It also maintains power relations and patterns of domination and subordination (Wetherell & Potter, p. 109). The partnership of feminism and poststructuralism provides opportunity for a greater spectrum of responses and a greater insight into the lives of research participants because it encourages the research participants, rather than the researcher, to control the sequencing and language of the interview (Oakley, 1981, as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2005).

We categorize and interpret experiences according to structures available to us and in the process give these structures normality, making it even more difficult to think outside the structures. Feminists employ poststructural critiques to respond differently to the questions about living that humanism has answered in certain ways, and also to ask questions that the discourses and practices of humanism do not allow, given the existence of patriarchy, racism, homophobia, and ageism as cultural structures. St. Pierre (2000) argues that feminists have concluded that “the world as it has been produced by humanists is harmful to women as well as other marginalized groups” (p. 479). “We have constructed the world as it is through language and cultural practice……… There are many structures that simply do not exist prior to naming and are not essential or absolute but [are] created and maintained every day by people” (St. Pierre, p. 483). According to McCarthy (2003), naming “validates and attributes meaning to an experience” (p. 90).

Jacques Derrida (Derrida, 1974, as cited in St. Pierre, 2000) set out to critique structures using an analysis called deconstruction, a critical practice that aims to dismantle metaphysical and rhetorical structures and reinscribe them in another way.
Deconstruction has become one of the most powerful aspects of poststructuralism; “a powerful tool for critiquing any structure and ... a practice of freedom that can help us rewrite the world and ourselves again and again and again”. St. Pierre (2000) writes, “...deconstruction is not about tearing down but about rebuilding; it is not about pointing out error but about looking at how a structure has been constructed, what holds it together, and what it produces. It is not a destructive, negative, or nihilistic practice, but an affirmative one” (p. 482). For her, one of the most significant contributions of deconstruction is that it shows how ‘language does not simply point to pre-existing things and ideas but rather helps to construct them and, by extension, the world as we know it. In other words, we word the world. The ‘way it is’ is not ‘natural’” (p. 483). Feminist poststructuralism makes political assumptions explicit, indicates discourse particular to women and makes visible the implication of such discourse to the social reality of women. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), this poststructural understanding provides a solution to structuralism’s traditional problems, understanding and dealing with change. What Lather (1996, as cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479) describes as “doing it’ and ‘troubling it’ simultaneously” (p. 3). Poststructural feminists are concerned with critical deconstruction as a method of exposing and transforming oppressive power relations (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004), not to reconstruct another view but to unravel the social processes and relations that have constructed the social world in hierarchical ways. Accordingly, deconstruction makes visible “how language operates to produce very real, material, and damaging structures in the world, troubling the idea that language mirrors the world” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 481).

Essential to this discussion is an examination of how feminist epistemology
influences specific strategies or research techniques which allow feminists to do research differently. The traditional positivist survey interview in which a pre-established format is strictly adhered to presents problems from a feminist perspective because it does not allow participants to digress or elaborate their thoughts or concerns. In this kind of interview, a hierarchical social relationship exists, with the interviewee being in a subordinate position (Fontana & Frey, 2005). According to Stanley and Wise (1993), there is a link between feminist epistemology and a feminist ethic. Epistemological ideas and theories are constituted through activities. Thus, they will arise throughout the research. Of great concern is the level of effort by the researcher to ensure that the techniques and tactics used in the interview process do not lapse into traditional positivist patterns, becoming manipulative of research participants while treating them as objects. Of particular importance is the need to pay attention to rather than blurring positions of power in the research relationship. Although not a comprehensive list, Stanley and Wise recommend a number of standards and procedures be followed:

- Recognition of the reflexivity of the feminist researcher in her research as an active and busily constructing agent
- Insistence that the ‘objects’ of research are also subjects in their own right
- Acceptance that the researcher is on the same critical plane as those she researches and not somehow intellectually superior; and
- No opinion, belief or other construction of events and persons, no matter from whom this derives, should be taken as a representation of ‘reality’ but rather treated as a motivated construction or version to be subject to critical feminist analytical inquiry. (p. 200)

Ultimately, feminist ethical concerns are more than behaviours or activities of the researcher, such as gathering the research data. The epistemologies of the theoretical perspective framing the research question, analysis of data, and writing up the findings are important considerations. Stanley and Wise (1993) therefore pose a series of
questions related to a researcher’s view of knowledge, including: whose knowledge is it, who decides or defines this, how and under what terms, and what counts as knowledge? As Denzin (1989) argues “gender filters knowledge” (p. 116, as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 710); in other words, the gender of a researcher and the gender of the person they are interviewing makes a difference because “the interview takes place within the cultural boundaries of a paternalistic social system in which masculine identities are differentiated from feminine ones” (p. 710). Warren (1988, as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2005) points to some advantages for a female researcher because she may be seen as harmless or invisible and therefore have access to more information. Notwithstanding, feminist researchers embrace multiple subjectivities. The fact that “scholars of color have pointed out the degree to which …. [their] understanding of the dynamics of gender have been generalized from the experience of economically privileged white women” is evidence that investigators impose their own cultural frameworks on the data (Dill, 1983; hooks, 1981; King, 1988, as cited in Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 2004, p. 86). Some feminists wonder “if it is legitimate to study a category over which one has privilege” (Edwards, 1990; Harding, 1993, as cited in Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 2004, p. 86). For instance, for men to study women or for whites to study people of color

Nevertheless, feminists have attempted to minimize status differences; to make the interview relationship more egalitarian and less hierarchical by giving research participants being interviewed more control over the direction of the interview and the topics discussed, by answering questions about themselves, by showing their human side, by disclosing their own feelings and personal experiences to research participants, and by giving research participants the opportunity to provide feedback to the researcher on their
interpretations of interviews (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1991; Edwards, 1990; Fine, 1994, as cited in Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 2004, p. 90; Fontana & Frey, 2005). Feminist researchers attempt to share power. Gubrium and Holstein (2002, as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 714) actually consider the interview to be “a contextually based, mutually accomplished story that is reached through collaboration between the researcher and the respondent” (p. 714). In other words, the argument is that just describing what happened is not enough. What is essential is the interaction between the researcher and the research participant. Oakley (1981) suggests that in interviewing there is “no intimacy without reciprocity” (p. 49 as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 711). Ultimately, the development of a closer relationship between the researcher and the research participant is essential. I have reflected on my own research and the relationships I was able to develop with each of my participants. I believe that I was able to build a closer relationship with several of the women, but not as close as I would have liked with others. This may have been a function of the limited time that was available for each interview and the fact that some relationships require more time in which to develop.

In addition, “traditional notions of what is and is not data have also been reformed” (Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 2004, p. 90) and the concept of valid data has been expanded in other directions by feminist poststructural researchers. Aptheker (1989) and Collins (1990, as cited in Sprague & Kobrynowicz, p. 90) respond to the elite selection bias of the usual documentary evidence by expanding the field of data to include the “documents” of “those who are marginalized in official discourse.” Consequently, in an attempt to equalize the power relations between the researcher and research participants, feminist poststructuralists see it as important for a researcher to put herself on the same plane as
the research participants. To that end, the research participants’ comments on the interview questions, the use of the accounts given by participants and the interpretations of these accounts by the researcher are highly valued. Despite these efforts, the researcher retains, and should remain cognizant of, her ability to place more emphasis on her own interpretation of the data than the participants.

Thus, the strengths of a feminist poststructural approach provide ways of making sense of the contradictions in our everyday lives and looking at the everyday practical implications of what happens between women in the workplace, all the while continuing to recognize the crucial role of feminist politics, mechanisms of power in society and the possibilities for change. By using a feminist poststructural perspective in this research, I am acknowledging that women and other marginalized groups possess knowledge, that there are many ways of gathering knowledge, and that no one method is inherently better than any other. Ultimately, one of my hopes is that, after my research, discussions about the problems and conflicts of women in the workplace will no longer be framed as the result of personal inadequacies of psychopathology, or experienced as personal failings, but will be recognized as being socially produced and shared by many women. I also hope that through the knowledge gained, women will be empowered in their workplaces and opportunities for change will be revealed.

2.5 Race in the Workplace.

Despite the abundance of writings by Foucault on power, he wrote relatively little about his thoughts on how force relations or relations of power take specific forms in particular societies and are organized through relations of class, race, gender, religion and age. Nevertheless, his theories of power are particularly well suited to the analysis of
class and racism and have provided a basis for the work of others. For instance, Said’s (1978) exploration of orientalism as a discursive construction enabled the analysis of the way West understood East, the relationship of power, cultural domination and the effects of colonialism. According to feminist poststructuralism, it is language in the form of conflicting discourses which constitutes us and enables us to think, speak and give meaning to our world. As Foucault said (1978) “…it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (p. 100). I will continue this section on power and knowledge with a discussion of the way in which power relations have taken form through racist and classist discourse, constructing people of colour and other oppressed groups as less valuable and disposable.

As Wetherell and Potter (1992) write, “Categories change and what was once ideologically useful [for the privileged] and persuasive can become obdurate and awkward material stubbornly resisting the reworkings of later generations” (p. 118). This suggests that once discourses are in place, they are difficult if not impossible to eradicate. Julie Kailin (2002) details the historical proliferation of racist discourse by the ruling class. For example, in order to justify slavery, it was argued that there were biological differences between the races and whites were superior to people of colour. Academics have disseminated this racist ideology through scholarly publications. Psychological testing of intelligence, claiming a much more objective way of assessing the inferiority of people of colour and the working class, eventually replaced biology as a way to reinforce relations of power between the races and ‘scientifically’ justify a range of class as well as racial inequalities” (Kailin, p. 32). According to Kailin, white immigrants (e.g. Italians, Jews, Irish), unlike people of colour, were eventually given hope of ‘assimilating’ and
participating in the dominant culture. In the U.S. legal racial discrimination (in schools and in employment) reinforced apartheid for people of colour. Many U.S. states were segregated until the decision of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954) which disallowed segregated schools for black children, resulting in the bussing of black children into white neighborhoods. Politicians of the time (e.g. Nixon, Reagan) who were looking for votes and campaign support, and other white citizens, were part of a white backlash that incited racist sentiments. Backlash led to Black poverty being attributed to cultural deficiency, and to affirmative action being interpreted by many whites as reverse discrimination. The discourse of “reverse discrimination” had been born. Cultural inferiority, environmental circumstances and personal illness were blamed for people of colour internalizing a culture of poverty. “Blaming the victim” (Ryan, 1971) has had a devastating impact on the racially marked, suggesting that financial support for poverty or affirmative action would be a waste of time. Even though openly racist language is unacceptable in most workplaces today, racist sentiments remain. Ignoring history, many whites resent the perception of special treatment being given to people of colour. The focus is on blaming the victim rather than on the system of social structures that has created inequalities and social problems. Whites “have been convinced to blame the victims, arguing that affirmative action takes away opportunities for whites” (Kailin, p. 41).

Neither race nor culture are natural phenomena. They are constructed categories. Without these discourses of truth, relations of power based on race or class cannot exist. The subject positions constructed within race and class mark people of colour and poor people as inferior, inadequate, and undeserving. According to Kailin (2002), “viewing
ethnicity as analogous to race is a denial of institutional racism and serves to distract attention away from the oppression and exploitation by the white ruling class” (p. 40).

My research will identify and trace the discursive patterns of race and class, the maintenance of social patterns of race and class, and the construction of social categories and relations of power for women within the workplace.

2.6 Summary

I have discussed the theoretical frameworks of poststructuralism and feminism and reviewed the literature in each area in order to situate my research in relation to them. I have explained why the coupling of poststructuralism and feminism is useful in examining how the language the women participants themselves use produces them as women, produces their relationships with other women, produces effects, and produces their workplace. I have discussed how Foucault’s theories of power and knowledge are well suited for identifying and understanding the mechanisms of power, as well as broader political issues, while respecting the knowledge women possess and providing the possibility of changing women’s realities. These frames will be used to disrupt the present conceptualization of women’s experiences of workplace bullying created by the literature in chapter 1, moving it away from blaming and pathologizing women. In the following chapter I will look at the methodology and research methods informed by these frameworks and therefore employed in this research study.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

Theoretical perspectives imply certain methods and philosophies of method. Feminist poststructural theory leads me to begin this chapter by looking at the different language of humanist and positivist perspectives on method; exploring the differences between quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches; and explaining what it means to me to be a feminist researcher within this context. I then discuss discourse analysis, varieties of discourse analysis, and why I have chosen Foucauldian discourse analysis as my research method. I next turn my focus to the methods I have used for gathering the data for this research study, and for transcribing and analyzing the data. I then summarize and reflect upon the process that brought me to this research and, lastly, I introduce the women who participated in the research.

3.2 Other Views of Research

Humanism has informed most of the research on workplace bullying and it has failed to explain the phenomenon to my satisfaction. I will attempt to stand outside humanism as I conduct and present my research, in the full awareness that this may not be possible. St. Pierre (2000) reminds us that humanism is like the air we breathe. But in my attempt to see the social world through a poststructural lens, I will do well to remain conscious of the ways in which it contrasts with humanism.

3.2.1 Humanism. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (2003) write “humanism…..is a theme or, rather, a set of themes that have reappeared on several occasions, over time, in
European societies; these themes, [are] always tied to value judgments…….” (p. 52).

Jane Flax (1990) summarizes humanist beliefs: That the self is stable and coherent; that language is transparent; and that knowledge, having been acquired through the appropriate use of reason will be ‘true’ and that ‘science’ can provide an objective, reliable and universal foundation of knowledge. Humanism claims that “by grounding claims to authority in reason, the conflicts between truth, knowledge, and power can be overcome” (p. 41-42). I do not accept these ideas, but humanism is important because it is the rational and empirical tradition that now constitutes the basis of our Western approach to science, political theory, ethics, and law. Humanism is considered by most as the only legitimate process by which truth and morality are sought. As St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) argue, “we are always speaking in the language of humanism, our mother tongue, a discourse that spawns structure after structure after structure – binaries, categories, hierarchies, and other grids of regularity that are not only linguistic but also very material”(p. 4). The language of humanism is stable, fixed and unchangeable and simply mirrors the reality of the world; it is a “transparent language secured and structured by categories, binaries and hierarchies” (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 280). My research disrupts the categories, binaries and hierarchies of humanism.

3.2.2. **Positivism.** Positivism is a philosophy based on humanist premises which holds that authentic knowledge can come only from affirmation of theories through strict scientific method. Positivism insists that only one reality or truth exists (Stanley & Wise, 1983). According to Stanley and Wise, because in a positivist approach the data is collected, interpreted and evaluated based on the researcher’s assessment of the research participant’s competence and understanding, research constitutes one of the major ways
in which researchers can exercise power. Of particular interest is the hierarchical subject-object split of positivist research. A clear boundary is placed between subject and object that highlights difference and establishes one as being more able than the other (Rylance, 2001); the power of expertise, which is derived from access to and command of specialized knowledge and resources, is not accessible to those to whom service is provided.

In addition, the subject/object split of positivism assumes the researcher to be value-neutral and objective. The researcher is to gain the participant’s trust and confidence so she will reveal even more without the researcher having to reciprocate trust and confidence. According to this approach, the scholar or researcher is the one who has to uncover that truth. It denies that subjects are capable of enlightening scholars. Thus, this dichotomy privileges the researcher as the knower, with the research participant being in the subordinate position as the knowable one, the object. Both contemporary positivism and humanism are motivated by parallel ideals of enlightenment-through-science and knowledge and are believed to be the basis for rational public policies (Tibbetts, 2007). I will not be conducting a positivist study. My research will trouble the subject/object binary and value the knowledge produced by my research participants. I will be using qualitative methods and turn now to look at the differences between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and explain why I have chosen qualitative approaches.

3.2.3 Quantitative or qualitative approaches. In attempting to stand apart from humanism and positivism, I must reject the quantitative research methods that are rooted in humanist and positivist epistemologies. The debate about the two social research methodological paradigms of quantitative versus qualitative has raged for decades.
Humanist and positivist epistemologies assume that a true reality exists to be studied and understood. Following this line of thought, if an account is to truly reflect reality, it is necessary to adopt procedures that will ensure an “accurate” representation. Quantification is a key feature of this process and the way to isolate cause and effect, to operationalize theoretical relations, to measure phenomena and to allow for the generalization of findings. Positivists argue that all of these aspects are good science and necessary in order to ensure freedom from individual bias and subjectivity. There is a deliberate lack of concern about the absence of rich descriptions because such detail is believed to interrupt the process necessary to meet the much sought after expectation of generalizability. Instead, an objective, confirmatory, explanatory and positivist approach is valued (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Methods used in quantitative approaches are based on probabilities and mathematical models, statistical tables and graphs. Data are derived from the study of large numbers of randomly selected cases, typically gathered either through experiments or surveys. The point is to measure the effects of the independently manipulated variables. These positivist techniques are meant to play down variability by restricting and controlling the subjects and circumstances of an experiment and by constraining the format and limiting the responses of survey participants. Thus, potentially variable information is excluded, flexible opinions are eliminated, and inconsistent responses are ruled out. Rather than being treated as theoretically interesting, these things are treated as obstacles to the production of reliable research findings (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and, therefore, must be eliminated.

Quantitative research methods and materials have had their critics. Potter and
Wetherell (1987) argue that the infallibility of quantitative methodology is a myth; “infallible criteria exist only in the land of positivist mythology; there are no crucial experiments, knock down refutations or definitive replications in the real world of science” (p. 172). Additionally, researchers using such methods have been accused of excluding the study of the world directly. They have also been accused of being unable to capture the perspectives of the research participants because the appropriate methods are considered inferential. Experimental methods have been criticized for being written in impersonal third-person prose. As well, data derived from such methods cannot be generalized to the world outside the artificial environment of the laboratory. Similarly, the use of surveys has been criticized because of the unnatural control and limitations placed on possible responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

In contrast, a qualitative approach rejects the notion of only one reality and is described as subjective, exploratory, descriptive, and interpretive. While statistical methods may be used, data would seldom be reported in terms of complex statistical measures. Qualitative research does not have one distinct set of methods or practices it calls its own. It has many. In fact, although this tolerance is not shared by everyone, some qualitative researchers reject the idea that any one method is better than another (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Most qualitative researchers believe they are more able to uncover the perspectives of participants through the use of detailed interviews, attention to the specifics of individual cases through case studies, and direct observation within the context of everyday life. They see value in rich detailed description of the social world.

Nevertheless, qualitative research also has its critics. It has been suggested that qualitative research methods, despite taking place in a more natural setting, are less
rigorous and, therefore, less reliable than quantitative methods. Potter and Wetherell (1987) dispute this suggestion, arguing that the adequacy of qualitative research, particularly that using discourse analysis as its method, has undergone extensive critical examination in recent years. They argue that discourse analysis is also rigorous:

It is often suggested that non-experimental work or qualitative research is less rigorous than the standard alternative, often promoting experimental research as the arena for hypothesis generation, with the rigorous work of testing and evaluation done through experiment. Yet, there is no need for this to be so; research through discourse analysis has undergone a searching and critical examination, on a variety of levels, to assess its adequacy (p. 172).

Four techniques suggested by Potter and Wetherell to validate the analysis include: showing how the discourses work to produce effects; showing both variability and consistency; the creation of new problems through the solving of others; and the generation of new and novel ideas and explanations.

I have provided a brief overview of the differences between quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches not to set up another binary, but because the theoretical frames I have chosen make epistemological assumptions that call for qualitative approaches. I now turn my focus to my own research. I will explore the challenges and impossibilities of doing research outside humanism, outside positivism, using qualitative approaches. I will explain the reasoning behind my choices.

3.3. My View of Research

3.3.1 Objectivity and neutrality. My research is neither neutral nor objective. It has been informed by my belief that knowledge is socially constructed and, that it is impossible for any of us to take a position outside discourse. All research is informed by the researcher’s own view of what knowledge is and by the researcher’s views of the
world in general (Cherland & Harper, 2007). Objectivity and neutrality in research cannot and do not exist. Every researcher has previously grown up within a particular culture. It is here that the researcher’s values and first views of the world have been constructed (Sears, 1992, as cited in Cherland & Harper). These views will influence the research topic, the perspective from which the research is undertaken and what is found in the research. As the researcher, I have situated myself as the interpreter of the data (Lather, 1992, as cited in Cherland, 1994, p. 23). I have placed the views of the women participants within the framework of my own views and experiences of the world.

3.3.2 The truth. There was a time when my aim in doing this research would have been to find the Truth; however, I no longer view research as a quest to uncover the Truth. Poststructuralism troubles humanist truth and sees reality and knowledge as socially constructed and co-constructed, rather than externally existing and discoverable. From a poststructuralist perspective, one Truth does not exist. There are multiple truths. The dominant discourses only appear to be natural and represent the Truth and certain groups of people are only perceived to be superior to others. Because dominant discourses support and perpetuate existing power relations, my research will trouble these dominant discourses and what counts as knowledge and truth. I will try to give voice to the many alternative discourses, multiple truths, and meanings, but draw on knowledge that values women and look to the language and discourse of women for their truths.

I am not interested in testing hypotheses. I don’t have any. Similarly, I am not interested in or worried about the generalizability of my research findings. I am interested in understanding what these particular women experienced and in privileging those experiences.
3.3.3 Feminist perspective. As a feminist, I recognize gender as a pervasive division in social life and I am aware of patriarchal power relations and gendered oppression. As a feminist researcher, my research is political. I am interested in rectifying the invisibility and misrepresentations of women’s experiences. I am also interested in social justice and creating change; that is, in changing power relationships that exist between women and men in society. I am interested in bringing about positive changes in the lives of all women as well as serving the interests of the women who participated in my research. I would like to give women a venue for their words. My intention is to represent the subjectivities the women participants were experiencing at the time of the research. Feminist methodology is inclusive of difference. Knowing the particular circumstances of these women’s working lives will assist me with adequate interpretation of participant responses, without the necessity of trying to eliminate difference.

I acknowledge the impossibility of adequately interpreting what the participants say, the impossibility of stepping outside of humanism and constructing a plausible representation of the participants’ Truths. I can only study their language, hoping it will reveal possible meanings, and describe the subject positions they may have occupied at the moment of speaking. I can only do discourse analysis on the data I have gathered.

I will struggle to remain aware of the challenges of doing research grounded in feminist poststructural theory. I will now discuss discourse analysis in general, a variety of forms of discourse analysis, and why I have chosen Foucauldian poststructural discourse analysis as the method for my study.
3.4 Discourse Analysis.

Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that the vast majority of research attempts to give a humanist intra-psychic explanation for social behaviour which draws on notions of attitudes, rules, the rational self, categories and representations which are concerned with such terms as *beliefs* and *memories*. They argue that many social researchers believe that people are able to and can be trusted to describe their internal states and, therefore, their verbal accounts about their actions and the reasons for those actions are “accurate”. On the other hand, others argue that a person’s verbal report about the reasons for their own behaviour is highly inaccurate and cannot be trusted (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977, as cited in Potter & Wetherell, p. 177-178) because the person is telling more than even she knows about her own mental processes. Instead, they argue, these reports reveal conventionally held beliefs about behaviour or simply make sense at the time (for example, when someone says they became angry because someone made them angry or that it would have been rude not to accept a drink when one was offered).

So which is the case? On the one hand, the researcher must assume what is said is true. On the other, she must remain vigilant and sensitive to potential inaccuracies, conscious or unconscious. While Harre and Secord’s (1972, as cited in Potter & Wetherell, 1987) proposal to adopt an ‘open souls’ doctrine might initially suggest that we simply need to ask someone why they did what they did, they are suggesting much more; that, through appropriate analysis of someone’s account, a researcher can uncover the person’s social competence. Thus, they suggest that the researcher’s aim is not to analyze the language but to try to understand the internal mechanisms of social competency. Many studies see no problem in taking this approach. Nevertheless,
concern has been expressed about the use of terms such as knowledge, belief, envy, anger, motives and memory (Coulter, 1979, 1983, 1985; Harre, 1983; Sabini & Silver, 1982; Wittgenstein, 1980). Rather than being recognized as descriptions of mental states, these words have become an autonomous part of particular social practices. Potter and Wetherell use the example of the term ‘understanding’:

when first thinking about the word we are probably tempted to view it as a description of some private or inner experience. However, if we look closely at the way this word is actually used this view seems less convincing......this term is often used to mark a claim to success, the sort of situation where one might say “I have been working at the problem and I think I understand it now (p. 179). However, they also point out, a moment of insight or the belief that we have solved a problem is not all there is to it. If, for instance, the person who thinks they “understand” tries to apply their solution, but it doesn’t work, they will know they were mistaken in their belief. Similarly, if someone else tries to assess the level of understanding, they may decide the person really doesn’t understand as much as they think they do. This is not to say that cognitive processes are not happening; they undoubtedly are. Even so, the degree to which understanding has taken place is measured by ‘public criteria and practical tests’ (p. 180) and understanding is deemed to have been achieved only when these criteria have been met, not because someone has experienced something or because they say they have understood something.

Discourse analysis, one of the most widely used approaches of social constructionism, aims at the deconstruction of the structures that we take for granted; it tries to show that the given organisation of the world is the result of political processes with social consequences. The talk and texts are not indicative of “underlying psychopathology in the manner of much social psychological work, nor are they being
used as the basis for a reconstruction of events and histories…. The focus is squarely on
the discourse and its operation” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 104). Threadgold suggests
that discourse analysis is to stop the process or “even understand that there has been a
process” (Kamler, 1997, p. 443) “making things explicit” (Kamler, p. 444). Discourse
analysis and poststructuralism are underpinned with the following four basic premises:

a) Our knowledge of the world should not be viewed as a reflection of the world but
as the product of our ways of categorizing the world; knowledge is the product of
discourse (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985, as cited in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). In
other words, “Language is not a reflection of a pre-existing reality” (Jørgensen &

b) The social world is constructed socially and discursively and not determined by
external conditions, and people do not possess ‘essential’ or fixed characteristics
or essences (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985, as cited in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).
“Language is structured in patterns or discourses – there is not just one general
system of meaning…..but a series of systems of discourses, whereby meanings
change from discourse to discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, p. 12).

c) Our understanding of the world is created and maintained by social processes and
interactions by which ‘truths’ are constructed (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985, as cited in
Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Discursive patterns are “maintained and
transformed in discursive practices” (Jørgensen & Phillips, p. 12).

d) Social construction of knowledge and truth has social consequences and
determines social actions (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985, as cited in Jørgensen &
Phillips, 2002). “The maintenance and transformation of the patterns should
therefore be explored through analysis of the specific context in which language is
in action” (Jørgensen & Phillips, p. 12).

Thus, discourse analysis shifts the focus from the search for underlying entities, and
treats descriptions of mental states as discursive social practices, arguing that the
researcher should not focus on the quality of accounts and whether they are accurate or
inaccurate descriptions of mental states. Doing so misconstrues the problem entirely.
Instead, the focus should be exclusively on discourse itself: how it is constructed, its
functions, and the consequences which arise from different discursive organizations. In
this sense, discourse analysis is a radically non-cognitive form of social psychology
Nevertheless, this approach is not suggesting that phenomena traditionally thought of as ‘mental’ should be excluded simply on the basis of being unknowable. Discourse analysis simply doesn’t require delineation between what is the inner, private, subjective or mental state and how closely the person’s account matches. That is irrelevant. What is key is the “discursive struggle”. “Different discourses – each of them representing particular ways of talking about and understanding the social world – are engaged in a constant struggle with one [an]other to achieve hegemony” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 6-7), the dominance of one particular perspective to fix meanings of language in its own particular way. Wetherell and Potter (1992) suggest that the study of discourses can be like “the geology of plate tectonics – a patchwork of plates/discourses are understood to be grinding violently together, causing earthquakes and volcanoes, or sometimes sliding silently one underneath the other” (p. 90).

A high degree of variability in accounts is an expected feature of discourse analysis. Therefore, the aim is not to try to resolve the variation between accounts, but to use that variation as a way into analysis; to look “at how participants’ accounts are constructed and organized to try and reveal what is achieved by different accounts (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). They write, “[in discourse analysis] we also study variability in linguistic context in relation to function and give this a priority (p. 38); ......the different ways in which texts are organized, the consequences of using some organizations rather than others” (p. 46). Through discourse analysis, a much more workable explanation of the variations which occur in a participant’s discourse can be provided. By highlighting the function of talk, why a category of people should be described in one way on one
occasion and in a different way on another can be explained. Discourse analysis is “a distinctive and novel social psychological approach to language” (Potter & Wetherell, p. 177) with radical implications for our understanding and interpretation of findings derived from traditional methods. One of its most important aspects may well be the questions it raises about the taken for granted aspects of currently accepted models and theories. If we take a functional perspective toward talk and writing, we must also think about the performative aspect of the talk participants produce in experiments or the written answers given to survey questions. One of the main advantages of discourse analysis, as Potter and Wetherell point out, is that the data are everywhere; in everyday conversations, on television and movies, in novels, magazines and newspapers, and, most recently, over the internet. The resources needed to do the work of discourse analysis are minimal. Thus, discourse analysis is a broad theoretical framework concerning the nature of discourse and its role in social life, along with a set of suggestions for how discourse can best be studied and how others can be convinced findings are genuine. There are no methods particular to discourse analysis such as an experiment, a survey or content analysis. As stated above, in discourse analysis the focus is exclusively on the discourse; how it is constructed, its functions, and the effects of discourse. It is heavily dependent on the ability to pick up that which is implied or indicated by an act or by silence but not actually expressed.

Nevertheless, Potter and Wetherell (1987) provide a summary of steps to be considered. To begin, they suggest the need for a research question focusing on its

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9 An expression that serves to effect a transaction or that constitutes the performance of the specified act by virtue of its utterance as described in Potter and Wetherell, (1987), p. 177.
construction in relation to its function. That is, questions should centre around how the
discourse is “put together, and what is gained by this construction” (p. 160). The
following are my research questions:

1. What discourses are available to account for the phenomenon of woman-on-
woman bullying in the workplace?
2. How are subject identities constituted through woman-on-woman bullying in the
workplace?
3. What are the power relations at work in the workplace and whose interests do they
serve?
4. What ideological assumptions are disrupted and/or confirmed by a feminist
poststructural analysis of woman-on-woman bullying?

Wetherell and Potter (1992) point out that the sample selection is where discourse
analysis differs most radically from traditional methods which generally involve large
sample size. Discourse analysis is labour-intensive, requiring the researcher to read and
reread large quantities of transcripts and other documents, and there is no equivalent to
entering data into a computer and letting the computer make sense of patterns of
significance. There is a danger of “getting bogged down in too much data and not being
able to let the linguistic detail emerge” (p. 161). As well, the focus should be on the
language, not the people generating the language, so large numbers of linguistic patterns
are likely to emerge from a few people. Consequently, the success of a study is not
dependent on sample size and large numbers. While they may add to the labour, they will
not necessarily add to the analysis. Therefore, only a few interviews are sufficient to
provide the data. Potter and Wetherell point out an advantage to analyzing transcripts of
interactions between people when possible: they often undermine each other’s versions in
an illuminating way.

The goal in gathering traditional interviews is ultimately to look for consistency in
participant responses. This is assumed to be evidence that the interviews are not biased or
distorted and that a genuine phenomenon has been uncovered. But, in discourse analysis, the interview itself is very different. The internal state of the participant and consistency between participants is of no concern. The only consistency a discourse analyst is concerned about is the extent to which regular patterns can be identified in the language used, which suggests that participants are drawing on a limited number of compatible discourses or interpretative repertoires when answering questions. In fact, variability in interviews is often useful. The primary focus is on how talk is constructed and what is achieved. Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue that “analyses which identify only the consistent responses are thus sometimes uninformative because they tell us little about the full range of accounting resources people use when constructing the meaning of their social world, and do not so clearly reveal the function of participants’ constructions” (p. 164). They suggest the use of techniques which will encourage rather than restrict diversity. For example, not confining participants to simple yes or no answers, but instead conducting more interactive and informal interviews, and treating the participants as active in the process rather than simply “speaking questionnaires” (p. 165).

Analyzing each interview is the next consideration, first by carefully considering what information will be required in the analysis. In order to make the data more manageable and gather together instances for examination, the choice of coding categories related to the research question analysis, where data are put into categories for the purpose of determining frequency (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

As mentioned above, there are no mechanical procedures for producing findings through discourse analysis, no experimental design and no test for statistical significance. Analysis of discourse is unique and involves the careful reading and rereading of the
documents. Potter and Wetherell (1987) point out this can become crucial and should be as inclusive as possible, including even those categories or codes which seem only vaguely related. This is different from content that most academic education teaches us to “read for gist” (p. 169); to produce summaries and ignore nuances, contradictions and vagueness. The exact opposite is required for discourse analysis. The discourse analyst must “...move backwards and forwards between what could be described as the ‘established’ and ‘constitutive’ aspect of discourse” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 86), concerned with the detail, however fragmented and contradictory, and with what is actually said or written; not the general idea that seems to be intended. Initially, the analyst identifies the pattern in the data, in the form of both variability (differences in either the content or form of accounts) and consistency (the identification of features shared by accounts). The data must then be analyzed for function and consequence. The basic theoretical thrust of discourse analysis is the argument that people’s talk fulfills many functions and has varying effects (Potter & Wetherell). The analyst must then hypothesize about these functions and effects and find the linguistic evidence. As mentioned above, there is no analytic method, “only a broad theoretical framework focusing on the constructive and functional dimensions of discourse and the reader’s skill in identifying significant patterns of consistency and variation” (p. 169).

Discourse analysis also examines the statements made and the innumerable statements that are never uttered; what it is not possible to say in a particular discourse and what would never be accepted as meaningful (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 13). In other words, it will be important for me to find the silences and gaps in the texts of interviews with women participants; to question what it is that women understood as
obvious and therefore not in need of saying; to understand the power of the silences (Davies, 2000). Davies suggests that it is necessary to find the humanist texts and discourses that interact within the act of individuals being shaped and shaping what they see. She further suggests that it is necessary to find the process; to see why individuals find those texts desirable and pleasurable, and why the texts of themselves as humanist subjects are so hard to eradicate. The discourse analyst must attend to the details of the texts they read, and see and hear the texts they produce which includes the texts of themselves. Doing so in poststructuralist ways must be struggled after continuously” (Davies, 2000, p. 143).

Potter and Wetherell (1987) also suggest a number of strategies that can be used to validate the research findings. These include whether the research gives coherence and reveals how the discourse fits together and how discursive structures produce effects and functions. Further, Potter and Wetherell make the point that the kinds of phenomena which interest discourse analysts have genuine consequences for people’s everyday lives. This is particularly interesting since discourse analysis is sometimes criticized for ‘just looking at words – not real things’ (p. 170-171). The orientation of the participants, what the participants see as consistent and different, is what is important. One of the goals of discourse analysis is to clarify the linguistic structures (e.g. turn taking during conversation) used to make certain things happen. Another important consideration is the ability of an analytic theme to make “sense of new discourse and to generate novel theories and explanations” (p. 171). The entire reasoning process from discursive data to conclusions, including a detailed interpretation, should be documented in some detail so that the reader has an opportunity to evaluate the process and agree or disagree with the
3.4.1 Varieties of discourse analysis. According to Wood and Kroger (2000), “approaches to discourse differ (not always explicitly) in how they are theorized” p. 24. In *Discourse Analysis in Social Psychology* (DASP), researchers such as MacMillan and Edwards (1999, as cited in Wood & Kruger, 2000) are more likely to consider the possibility that it may be some nonlinguistic feature (e.g. the implications of particular words or phrases) that is most crucial.

Wood and Kroger (2000) describe Conversational Analysis (CA), with its origin in sociology, as the “most microanalytic” (p. 24) variety of discourse analysis, with the foundation for the analysis in a wide variety of conversational practices (turn taking, gaps/silences; lapses, interruptions, etc.) and a focus on situated utterances. They point out that CA stresses the ways in which people are the active users of language.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a shared perspective rather than a homogeneous method, for “doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis” (van Dijk, 1993, as cited in Wood & Kruger, 2000, p. 131) that has grown out of critical theory and sociolinguistics. CDA emphasizes the role of language in creating and maintaining systems of power and the role of discourse analysis in social and cultural critique. CDA “demonstrates the ways in which discourse defines and positions human subjects, constructing ‘truths’ about the world” (Cherland & Harper, 2007). Rather than defining how people construct texts, CDA reveals how texts construct and sort people. CDA demonstrates how minority discourses are written out and written over by the discourses of privilege. Norman Fairclough (1992; 1995, 2006; Fairclough et al., 2007; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), who focus on social issues or social problems such as racism or sexism, stress the linguistic
features of words and phrases using CDA (Wood & Kroger, 2000). For example, Fairclough (1995) has used CDA to analyze the construction of identities as it occurs in the interactions between media personnel, audiences and others (e.g. participants or guests) in an episode of the Oprah Winfrey Show which focused on women who had been “dumped” by boyfriends. Fairclough suggests that Oprah orchestrates the contributions of audience members and guest panellists, which includes people identified as experts in particular fields, in a way that provides opportunity for people to express opinions and speak authoritatively on the issue. Fairclough is concerned here with how ‘others’ actually participate in the media output. In this particular example, Fairclough argues that the various voices (Oprah, audience, expert and “others”, the ordinary people who participated as guests) were ordered in relation to one another. He emphasizes, that while ordinary people, the ‘others’, were given the opportunity to voice their opinions, Oprah consistently deferred to the expert to have the opinions endorsed. The value of the opinion of the ‘other’ was judged by the expert, and the social hierarchy was maintained.

3.4.2 Poststructural discourse analysis. Initially, when I personally experienced workplace abuse, I found it helpful to be able to name what my colleagues and I were experiencing. Taking up a humanist discourse of bullying seemed to validate that there was something going on that was beyond us, and our own individual faults and inadequacies. Humanist discourse led me to make connections with the literature on bullying in schools which, in turn, lead me to a plethora of books and articles on bullying in the workplace. But, despite the fact that I had experienced many of the emotional and physical consequences described in that literature, what I read did not reflect my experience as a woman and it did not explain why the abuse had happened.
It was only when I began to look at what had happened through a feminist poststructural perspective that it began to make sense. It helped me understand the subject positions that resulted in thoughts and emotions about what was happening. Discourse analysis made visible to me what happens between women in the workplace and the effects of the limited and disadvantaged subject positions made available to women, I was able to understand and see possibilities for change. This was my experience, and I believe that feminist poststructuralism made it possible to reach this understanding, all the while recognizing the mechanisms of power and respecting the knowledge women possess, without pathologizing them.

Poststructuralism presupposes a subjectivity which is precariously contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak, a presupposition which has proven very useful both in explaining the use of power on behalf of specific interests and in analyzing opportunities for resisting it (Cherland, 1994). Poststructuralist theories identify language as the place where our sense of self, our sense of subjectivity, is constructed. Poststructural discourse analysis emphasizes the ways in which “people are positioned by and effected through discourse” (Edley & Wetherell, 1997, as cited in Wood & Kruger, 2000, p. 24), as it produces subjectivity.

As Cherland (1994) points out, another key concept in poststructuralism is that of ‘discourse’ used “to represent certain interests and to convey certain meanings” (p. 21). It is through poststructurally informed discourse analyses that the constitutive force of discourse is made visible (Davies, 2000) and the “precondition of a politically engaged critique” is revealed (Judith Butler, 1995, p. 39 as cited in Davies, 2000, p. 11).

As a consequence, I chose Foucauldian discourse analysis for my research. Foucault
never articulated specific methods for the analysis of discourse. The closest he came to doing so was his theory of discursive formation (Michel Foucault, 1972). However, Foucault also said:

I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area... I would like the little volume that I want to write on disciplinary systems to be useful to an educator, a warden, a magistrate, a conscientious objector. I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers (Michel Foucault, 1974, p. 523-524, as cited in Motion & Leitch, 2007, p.2)

The best we can do as researchers using Foucault’s theories is to use them as best suites our own theoretical perspectives. Foucauldian discourse analysis is a way of questioning the common sense of everyday humanist discourses and practices, and the type of discourse analysis done by Foucault himself in The History of Sexuality: An Introduction (1978), Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1975), The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception (1973) and other writings. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis has allowed me to examine and account for the complexities of how we become gendered subjects and on how we continue to speak/write ourselves and the social structures that have created inequalities into existence.

According to Threadgold (2000), one of the principles of action articulated by Foucault as necessary “to restore to discourse its character as an event and to abolish the sovereignty of the signifier” (Michel Foucault, 1971, p. 21-22, as cited in Threadgold) and which allows us to act in the world is the principle of exteriority. “We should not ‘burrow’ into discourse looking for meanings. We should instead, look for the external conditions of its existence, it appearance and its regularity. We should explore the conditions of its possibility. Just how is it possible to know that, to think that, to say that – these are the questions we should be asking…” (Threadgold, p. 49). These are the
questions I will be asking of the discourse, which is not an easy task. For Threadgold, for those who use discourse analysis, “mapping such terrain requires a different kind of geography and a different sort of map …. [it requires] digging it up, imagining how it came to be as it is, searching, but never for a beginning” (p. 41). My account must examine, as Foucault and others suggest, “the specification of reality and the social in discourse, how agents and subjects are formed, how the social world is grouped and categorized, how material interests and the nature of relevant objects are determined” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 86).

Having discussed discourse analysis in general, a variety of forms of discourse analysis, and why I chose Foucauldian discourse analysis as the most appropriate for this research, I will now describe in detail the methods I used to gather and analyze the data.

3.5 Method

One of the difficulties in trying to identify a method of discourse analysis is that the term ‘method’ itself comes from a discourse “developed for quantitative, positivist methodologies such as experiments and surveys. Method in those situations consists of a distinct set of procedures: aggregating scores, categorizing instances, performing various sorts of statistical analysis and so on” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 101). As a result of the authority given these kinds of procedures, some researchers may assume it is necessary for a similar procedure of coding data to be used in discourse analysis. But this is not the case in my research. I will not be coding data.

Instead, I will be analyzing discourses as they become apparent to me through my study of the language of the data. In doing so, I will focus on meaning, and patterns of
meaning about how the social world works, meaning that is never stable. Poststructural theory tells us that there is no one truth, no one reality, and no correct method of analysis. Thus, rather than trying to be systematic in my analysis and attempting to find the truth, I will remain open to possibilities, both in method of analysis and meanings.

I am part of this analysis. I will become part of my search for meaning and will try to be insightful. I am aware, though, that my own subjectivity will only allow me to do what I can do from my various subject positions.

3.6 Interviews

Interviews are not understood in discourse analysis as they are in many other research areas (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In other models, an interview is used to elicit clear and consistent responses that will allow the researcher to make inferences about underlying beliefs. For example, the researcher is to ask clear, standardized and unambiguous questions in the “correct” manner, and do nothing more. This is believed necessary to ensure reliability, consistency and precision from one interview to another, and to neutralize the effects of the researcher. In contrast, in discourse analysis, interviews are treated as pieces of social interaction in their own right, and the conversation is much freer flowing. The interviewer is contributing just as much as the interviewee, and the interviewer is considered to be as interesting as the interviewee. Both are constructing versions of reality. Both are topics of analytic interest (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Viewed in this way, the conventional idea that interviewers should be as neutral and uninvolved as possible is no longer applicable.

Following the model of poststructural discourse analysis then, the interviews I conducted were done in a much more interactive fashion. I was not looking for the Truth.
I wanted to see the variations rather than restrict them. This involved me, as the interviewer, engaging in conversation with the participants, commenting, asking questions for clarification and providing feedback in the form of ‘ums’ and ‘yes’ responses that are characteristic of informal conversation.

Davies (2003) argues that to be able to see the constitutive force of social structures, such as the male/female binary, and ourselves as “speaking subjects,” or as people who can “continue to speak/write into existence those same structures through those same discourses,” we need to make them visible. Inviting women to talk about their ideas and beliefs about women’s relationships with other women in the workplace, and to share the negative experiences they have had with other women in the workplace, made ideas and beliefs visible. A checklist (see Appendix C) was followed to ensure that each participant was provided with information about the interview process prior to starting the interview. Cultural and historical categories, which are generally understood as natural or inevitable, could then be examined and power and powerlessness in relationships could be made relevant by discussing the boss/employee binary and the discourse of those relationships (e.g. supervisors know best, the good worker etc.).

An important consideration is concern about power relations, and the potential for influence of the interviewer on the interviewee. Arguments have been made about the researcher’s duty to avoid creating wider exploitative relationships with their participants (Bhavnani, 1991, as cited in Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

The role of the discourse analyst’s own understanding is of vital importance. I am a white woman who has grown up surrounded by the same discourses as the women who participated in this research (my participants were all white women). In poststructural
terms, my sense of self, my values and my place in the world are at least in part constituted by the same discourses as the women I interviewed (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). While it is difficult to articulate this shared knowledge, which is most often taken for granted (Davies, 2000), being a member of this group gives me a particular understanding that may be different from that of another interviewer.

3.6.1 Follow-up interviews. I subsequently contacted each participant over the months that followed the interviews, to inquire if they had anything further they would like to share with me or if they had any comments, questions, or concerns. In poststructural theory, meaning is never stable and subjectivity is always being constituted as we are spoken and speak ourselves into being. It was for this reason that I felt it was important to contact the women again to give them another opportunity to speak with me about their thoughts and ideas.

3.6.2 Why I did not use an interview survey. I decided against developing questions for use in a survey format. Doing so would have taken the question out of the context of that particular woman’s experience and would instead have made it a black and white question on a piece of paper. It would also have made it more difficult for me to pick up on and elaborate the subtle nuances and meanings of each woman. I was also concerned that this would have obscured rather than illuminated my interpretation of each woman’s experience.

3.6.3 Using an interview schedule. In developing an interview “schedule” (a prepared list of possible questions), I wanted to ensure that the questions were posed in a way that did not restrict the responses of the women participants and, in qualitative tradition, would capture as much as possible the woman’s own words. I did not want my
research to just be about meeting my needs as the researcher, and not the needs of the participants involved; therefore, I needed the freedom and flexibility to adjust the interview to meet the participant’s needs as the interview progressed. Another consideration in using an interview schedule is that my concern about following the schedule might unnecessarily interfere with gathering the data. Instead, I chose to use a few open questions. The questions were as follows:

- Can you tell me about the organizations where you have worked?
- Can you tell me about any negative or troubling experiences you have had with other women in the workplace?
- What is your take on what happened to you?
- How do you account for what happened to you?

The questions are meant to be used only as guides and “conversation starters” and are very open-ended in nature, allowing for any response. The questions are sufficiently flexible to allow me to note and collect data on the unexpected dimensions of any topic of conversation that might emerge. The sequencing of questions was not important to me. I was prepared to go wherever the woman I was interviewing wanted to take me, so long as it was within the framework of my research questions.

3.6.4 Field notes and immediate impressions. Immediately following each interview, I wrote down information about where the interview had taken place and themes I had identified that I wished to remember from the interview. As well, I noted details of the interview setting, discourses I wanted to remember, and my immediate observations and impressions.

3.7 Recording and Transcript

All the interviews were tape-recorded. I later transcribed the tapes in their entirety,
including my own comments as the interviewer. This procedure follows from the idea that the interview is a conversation, with two contributors, each equally important (Burgess, 1984; Mischler, 1986, as cited in Wetherell & Potter, 1992). To have transcribed just the respondent’s talk would have been to buy into the orthodox view of interviews as a measuring instrument. For the purpose of the original transcription, I used the Jeffersonian (Jefferson, 1984) system commonly used by conversation analysts. This included recording speech errors and vocalizations (e.g. er, umm), pauses and changes of volume and emphasis, speed of speech, breathing and intonation. During the transcription process, I began analyzing the data by making comments on important ideas in the margins.

As I read the work of Foucault, Walkerdine, Davies, Butler, St. Pierre, Cherland and others, themes began to emerge. Initially, in order to manage the data and ideas, I developed a chart based on a number of practices I had identified and began to look at what was being said about each. What emerged were more questions that I would need to ask the women I interviewed. Many of these questions were related to the discourses of the language of the women. Foucault’s ideas on what constitutes knowledge figure prominently in looking at the constitutive force of discourse. My hope was that the way that language identifies what is not normal would be revealed by asking questions of the discourse as to how beliefs and ideas are communicated, either consciously or unconsciously, and how claims of knowledge are made. By looking at binaries, metaphors and cultural storylines and how the discourse privileges some while the interests of others are marginalized, the technology of normalization would be revealed.

10 The timing of pauses was estimated in seconds.
It is through this analysis that I hoped to address my first research question: What discourses are available to account for the phenomenon of woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace?

I then focused my analysis on the question relating to subjectivity and subject positioning of women in the workplace. I would ask how discourses of the language relate to subjectivities, in particular the way in which subjectivity and subject positioning are constructed through the discourse, what subjectivities and subject positions are made available to women, and how those subjectivities and subject positions reflect power relations within the workplace. It is through this analysis that I hoped to address my second research question: How are subject identities constituted through woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace?

To answer my third research question (What are the power relations at work in the workplace and whose interests are served?), I would look at how techniques of power are manifested in the discourse and identify the mechanisms of power in the workplace. Foucault’s principles of classification, totalization, practices and techniques of regulation, biopower and surveillance figure prominently in looking at the effects of power relations in the workplace.

To answer my final research question (What ideological assumptions are disrupted and/or confirmed by a feminist poststructural analysis of woman-on-woman bullying?), I relied on the findings of the analysis described above. By analyzing the discourses of the women, the binaries, metaphors, and tropes, I hoped to reveal women’s subjectivities and subject positions. It was also my hope that by analyzing the practices that regulate women, I would illuminate the mechanisms that maintain the power relations of the
workplace. I sought to disrupt those discourses by envisioning new discourses around women in the workplace and a non-hierarchical workplace, discourses other than those of the dominant hierarchical discourses.

3.8 Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

In Foucauldian discourse analysis, how you arrive at conclusions about what social practices are taking place is quite different than in traditional research. In Foucauldian discourse analysis, the analytic procedure is largely separate from the justifying of claims. In traditional research, the “correct” implementation of the research procedures is itself used to justify claims made about the research data and conclusions. Thus “the impression of the solidity of a finding is reinforced through the operationalization of the variables, the appropriate stratification of the sampling, the appropriateness of the statistical analysis and so on” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 101). Understanding about the kinds of social practices and processes that are constructed through the discourse may be different from these understandings about how conclusions are justified. I continued my analysis by listening to the data and then reading over the transcripts multiple times in order to get a feel for what was there and to familiarize myself with the language and discourse of each participant.

I then read through the transcripts again, this time making notes in the margins. From these notes I began to group the participants’ comments by themes and topic area threads. Some of these themes arose as answers to the discourse analysis questions I had developed, some from the concerns that had inspired the research and others from the vivid descriptions by the participants of their experiences. The purpose of grouping by theme was to focus attention on relevant issues and thereby make analysis easier. I then
read through the data again and began transferring the data for each woman to a chart of these themes or conceptual areas. These areas included: subjectivity (practices in which people are made subjects, are regulated and subjected); subjectionification (how we become subjects and live our subjectivity, at both a social and psychic level); subject positioning (the process whereby the subject is located or assigned to a category [e.g. female] within a storyline, within the time and culture, and takes up that positioning, as its own); performativity; gender (becoming a gendered being); power/knowledge; agency (individuals who make choices about what they do, and who accept responsibility for those choices); privilege; resistance; discourses (storylines); binaries; and desire (constituted through discourse).

After reading Foucault (1972, 1975, 1978, 1980, 1982) and Walkerdine (1990, 1997), I believed that looking at power “at the point where its intention ….is completely invested in its real and effective practices …. at the point where it is in direct and immediate relationship with that which we can provisionally call its object” (Foucault, 1980, p. 97), was important and that women’s subjectivities and subject positioning were being produced in the practices that regulate social interaction in the workplace. It was evident to me that I had to go back to read and re-read the data. As a result two additional themes, metaphors and practices that regulate, were created and the data was organized under these additions.

3.8.1 Foucauldian discourse analysis revisited. Wetherell and Potter (1992) describe the work of discourse analysis as a “craft skill, something like bicycle riding or chicken sexing that is not easy to render or describe in an explicit or codified manner” (p. 101). They emphasize the active nature of discourse analysis as “a process of developing,
testing out and justifying interpretations and readings of texts” (p. 105).

In consultation with my committee in September 2011, it became clear to me that the process of analysis I had been using was not poststructural and despite my efforts to avoid them, humanist discourses were evident in my work. I was psychologizing and speculating on the interiority of the women by looking at their intentions, motives and states of mind rather than at the effects of the discourse. It was clear that I needed to interrogate my data in a different way. The statements made by the women I interviewed were more than simple responses to my interview questions. Their statements were indicative of what each woman understood the problem to be. The discourses constructed how the problem should be solved. I went back to the drawing board and began my analysis anew, this time asking the following questions (suggested by Dr. Carol Schick) of the data:

1. What is produced through the reading? What is produced in discursive practices? What are the effects of discourse? What is accomplished by it?
2. How is each woman disciplined by discourse?
3. What is the problem for which these statements are the answer? Why is this a problem? What discourses have been violated?
4. What is the woman is objecting to?
5. How is each woman positioned in the discourses?
6. How does each woman position herself in the telling?
7. How are their bodies marked by the discourse?
8. How is power produced?
9. What are the discourses of gender and race produced through these tellings?
10. What performance of gender and race do the discourses enact?
11. What does the woman want to be true in the telling?

This time I looked at larger sections of data pertaining to one incident or experience in order to more readily analyze the discourse.

3.8.2 Transforming ‘field text’ to ‘research text’. As a result of this re-evaluation, it was necessary to transform my data into larger but more workable sections. After
reading through all of the transcripts many times, I selected those sections from the
transcript of each woman that pertained to her experiences with other women in the
workplace. I then began the process of turning these ‘field texts’, defined by Clandinin
and Connelly (2000) as essentially raw data collected from the field, into ‘research texts’. In my research, the field texts are the transcripts from each of the interviews I conducted with each participant, in their raw form. According to Clandinin and Connelly, the “field texts” are the “texts of which we ask questions of meaning and social significance” (p. 130). They acknowledge that “sometimes, our field texts are so compelling that we want to stop and let them speak for themselves….but as researchers we cannot stop there, for our inquiry task is to discover and construct meaning in those texts. Field texts need to be reconstructed as research text” (p. 130). Clandinin and Connelly help us to recognize the need to transform the raw data into research texts so that we can more effectively search for what we set out to explore. They also remind us of the effect of the researcher in shaping the research text and imprinting it with her own voice, signature and perceptions.

The process of reconstructing the field texts of each interview transcript into research text began with reading and rereading the sections of the transcripts I had previously identified as pertinent to my research focus. Within each transcript, I sometimes combined words or sentences from one paragraph with that of another. In doing so, I made every effort not to change the meaning of the transcript but tried, instead, to create clarity while honoring what each woman was saying. Since we speak very differently than we write, I also made minor adjustments to the language structure each woman used in the interview. I did not alter or exchange words that the women used, but rather removed some unnecessary words such as “and” and “so”, as well as speech errors and
vocalizations (e.g. er, umm), pauses and changes of volume and emphasis, speed of speech, breathing and intonation which had been included in the field texts in their raw form. I also ended what would have appeared in writing as run-on sentences by occasionally adding a period. While this was a delicate and time consuming process, the adjustments were necessary in order to present easily readable chunks of the data, and sufficiently minor so as to preserve the meaning and tone of each woman’s interview.

After creating the research texts, I began my discourse analysis. I first developed a chart. This time the chart was based on the research text for each woman and related to the discourse rather than to themes. I then carefully and laboriously interrogated the data again, reading and re-reading each line looking for discourses and subdiscourses. Every analytic question has not been asked of all the data. In each case, only those questions that seem most relevant to that particular woman and her research text were asked.

3.9 Process

Dr. Sonya Corbin Dwyer, a professor of educational psychology with the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina, who had originally agreed to be my PhD advisor, was no longer available following a move to another province near the beginning of my PhD program. Dr. Meredith Cherland, an educational sociologist, subsequently agreed to be my advisor. As a requirement of the PhD program, I enrolled in a course entitled “Issues in Epistemological Foundations of Education” with Dr. Carol Schick. It was in this class that I was introduced to and first became interested in poststructuralism and the work of Michel Foucault.

3.9.1 Committee selection. Near the end of my course requirements (in the fall of 2007), I selected my committee: Dr. Carol Schick, an expert in Foucault and
Foucauldian Discourse Analysis; Dr. Darlene Juschka, an expert in feminism and women’s studies; and Dr. Paul Hart, an expert in qualitative research.

3.9.2 Comprehensive examination. After I completed the course requirements, my committee provided three Comprehensive Exam questions meant to assess whether I was ready to be a doctoral candidate and prepared to write my dissertation. The three questions were:

1. Critically review the literature on women abusing women in the workplace, explaining the theoretical frames which inform what has already been done. How will your dissertation research on this topic be different? Please consider both theoretical frames and research methods.

2. Feminist poststructuralism, the theoretical perspective which will frame your dissertation, can be useful in work for social justice. Please explain the theories of knowledge, power, language, discourse, gender and resistance which are part of feminist poststructuralism. In what ways are they feminist? How might they be useful in work for social justice? Using this theoretical perspective, explain why this topic has not been named and studied before.

3. Qualitative research methods (including discourse analysis) have been the subject of discussion and debate over the last 20 years, as scholars who work with poststructural theories of language, subjectivity, knowledge and power have undertaken qualitative research projects. Please review the literature in this area which you feel most relevant to your research question(s) and the dissertation you plan to do. Explain why it is relevant.

3.9.3 Research questions. I developed a number of possible research questions and
submitted my draft research proposal to my committee prior to my Oral Candidacy Examination. Through discussions with my advisor and my committee members the following four research questions were developed:

1. What discourses are available to account for the phenomenon of woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace?
2. How are subject identities constituted through woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace?
3. What are the power relations at work in the workplace and whose interests do they serve?
4. What ideological assumptions are disrupted and/or confirmed by a feminist poststructural analysis of woman-on-woman bullying?

3.9.4 Candidacy approval. Following the completion of the research for each comprehensive exam question, I presented the results in writing and orally to my committee and Dr. Warren Wessel, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies, Faculty of Education, at an Oral PhD Candidacy Exam and was accepted as a doctoral candidate on March 23, 2009.

3.9.5 Application for approval of research procedures. I prepared my Application for Approval of Research Procedures for submission to the Research Ethics Board. Upon receipt of approval from the Research Ethics Board I proceeded with gathering my data. A copy of my Research Ethics Board application and its approval are included (in Appendix A) and dated August 14, 2009.

I have described the process that brought me to this research. I will now describe the process used to recruit research participants.

3.10 Recruiting Participants

Participants were recruited using a purposive or “popcorn sampling” approach; that is to say, I approached specific women known to me or to my advisor, Meredith Cherland,
to see if they would be interested in participating in the research. I contacted the women identified by telephone to pre-screen them for participation in the research (see Appendix B). I asked about their current or previous work history, whether they had ever had a supervisor or manager who was a woman and treated them badly, whether they had ever been in a supervisory or management position, if they had ever had a negative experience with women in the workplace and, if so, would they be willing to share these with me during an interview.

The participants were advised that their participation would involve one, one to two hour, face-to-face interview with me and a follow-up telephone interview. Each participant was advised that, as part of my PhD, I was doing research on women’s relationships with other women in the workplace and that the information they shared would be kept confidential. A consent form would be presented, reviewed and signed by each participant immediately before the interview.

The participants were advised that their participation was confidential and that steps would be taken to maintain confidentiality and to protect the data collected. Despite procedures for recruiting or selecting participants that may have compromised the anonymity of some participants (e.g. two participants were referred to the study by friends of mine), participants were assured that their personal identities would not be revealed through any information they provided, but that data might be used in an anonymous fashion for publication or other research purposes. They were also advised that audio tapes of the interviews would be kept until after the completion of my PhD for the mandatory waiting period of three years, at which time they would be destroyed. In the meantime, they would be locked in a secure storage place and only I and my research
advisor would have access to these audiotapes.

Prior to proceeding with each interview, each participant was to be provided with a Participant Information and Consent Form (see Appendix D) explaining the purpose, benefits and limitations of the research and how the information they shared will be held in confidence. Participants were advised that they would not be paid for their participation. As well, they were advised of the option for withdrawal from the research at any time without penalty, and provided with information about community resources (see Appendix E) available to them if their participation in this research resulted in feelings of distress. All of the potential participants who met with me agreed to participate in the research.

I have described the process of recruiting the women who participated in this research. I will now introduce each of the participants.

3.11 Research Participants

The five women who agreed to participate in this research were all white middle-class women who had worked with other women and had a supervisor or manager who was a woman, or women who had been a supervisor or manager of other women. They had all experienced being treated badly by other women in the workplace. The names of the women and certain details about their workplace and the city in which they lived have been changed to protect their identity and privacy.

3.11.1 Allison. Allison was a woman in her late 50s at the time of the interview, a library assistant for a large school division in British Columbia. She said her role in the resource centre was to help school librarians. She was born and raised in a French community in a family where French was spoken. She is married and has two adult
children who live on their own.

Allison had several hand written notes from which she read from time to time during the interview. She was frequently in tears as she described the incidents which had occurred between her and her direct supervisor, who was a black woman, about ten years earlier. She talked about how she began to drink at home as a way of handling the stress at work, and the stress that resulted in her marriage during this time. Since then, Allison has moved to another department and has found this work experience less stressful and more satisfactory.

3.11.2 Jennifer. Jennifer, a woman in her late 50s, was a senior administrative assistant for a hospital in Alberta. Jennifer said her childhood had been difficult and she left the family home when she was fifteen years old. At the time of the workplace abuse, Jennifer was married and had two children at home. She later divorced and came out as a lesbian. She currently has a new partner and they have three foster children, some with special needs, along with her other two children who are still living at home.

The incidents, which she described in great detail, occurred in the early 1990s between Jennifer and her department head. She talked about going home after work and vomiting because of the stress she was experiencing at work. She was eventually admitted by her doctor to the psychiatric ward of the local hospital for a period of three weeks to recover. The department head resigned just prior to Jennifer’s hospitalization. Upon her return to work, Jennifer applied for and was appointed to a new position which Jennifer found quite rewarding.

3.11.3 Hanna. Hanna was involved with employment equity in the Human Resources department of a western Canadian university. She had been married and was
going through a divorce at the time of the negative experiences in her workplace.

The incidents she shared with me occurred approximately ten years earlier, after she had complained to the manager of Human Resources about sexual harassment from her immediate supervisor. Hanna's complaint was referred to a female sexual harassment officer for investigation, someone Hanna did not find helpful or supportive. She felt that the investigating officer had the university’s interests in mind, rather than hers. Hanna also described her negative experiences with the female department head and the female vice president during the same time. Because a number of people within the immediate workplace were involved, Hanna felt very isolated and eventually transferred to another department, where she has remained since.

3.11.4 Ellen. Ellen was a woman in her forties at the time of the abuse who worked for a provincial government department. She was married and had one foster child. She and her husband had their own motel business in a small town in Western Canada, prior to accepting the position with the government. The incidents she described had occurred between her and as many as six other colleagues a number of years earlier. One of the women had been a good friend of Ellen and her sister. Ellen eventually transferred out to another department where she found the work and colleagues more enjoyable.

3.11.5 Bonnie. Bonnie was a sixty-year-old woman who had been the Executive Director of a non-government agency and then a government department. Her father died when she was quite young and she and her brother were raised by her mother. She is married and has four adult children who all live in other cities. She has three grandchildren.

Bonnie described the circumstances that had occurred approximately five years
earlier when she heard through a colleague that she was being investigated for harassment of a female employee. Despite the fact that no charges had ever been laid, Bonnie was dismissed from her position with a severance package. Since her dismissal from the government position, Bonnie has started her own private consulting business. She has since endeavoured, so far unsuccessfully, to obtain the documents surrounding her case from the Privacy Commissioner. She also described a negative experience she had with a female employee at her previous place of employment.

3.12 My own Story

I was born straight and female into a middle class family and grew up in a small town in Western Canada. My father, who had been raised on a farm with his twelve siblings, was self-employed. My mother, also raised on a farm, had three siblings. As a young single woman, she had worked as a cashier but after my brother and I were born, aside from the odd job, she was a homemaker. Both my parents were of white European ancestry. My family had little money but enough to own their own home. My parents took in boarders and my mother did some in home child care to make extra income. As a family we attended a Protestant church regularly. I married in my early twenties and we have three daughters, all now living outside the home, and 4 grandchildren.

3.13 My Reasoning Process

We are exposed to, and our sense of ourselves is constructed through, humanist language and discourses through which we interact with others and the world. As I have noted in chapter one, the majority of the previous research on woman-on-woman workplace bullying has been done from a humanist perspective, individualizing and
pathologizing women and ignoring nuances, contradictions and vagueness. I wanted to find a process that would allow us to see why we find the language and the discourses of humanism so desirable and pleasurable. I wanted to understand why humanist language and discourse are so difficult to live outside of. I hypothesized that feminist poststructural discourse analysis, which is concerned with the details and the variability of what is said or written, would make visible that which has been discounted or ignored by humanism. I thought that if I first let the participants of my research describe their experiences of workplace abuse, I would then be able to analyze the discourses of their language with greater awareness of their subjectivities and the subject positions which they had taken up.

3.14 Summary and Conclusion

I began this chapter by looking at the language of humanist and positivist perspectives, exploring the differences between quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches, and explaining what it means to me to be a feminist researcher within this context. I then discussed discourse analysis in general, summarized several varieties of discourse analysis, and explained why I chose Foucauldian discourse analysis. I then turned my focus to the methods I used for gathering the data for this research study and the process of transcribing and analyzing the data. I then summarized the process that got me to this research and I introduced the women who participated in the research. Lastly, I provided an overview of my reasoning process in analyzing the discourse. In the next chapter I present some of the data and explore the “findings” of this discourse analysis.
CHAPTER FOUR

DISCOURSES THAT CONSTRUCT AND CONFLICT

Instead, it is a case of studying power at the point where its intention, if it has one, is completely invested in its real and effective practices. What is needed is a study of power in its external visage, at the point where it is in direct and immediate relationship with that which we can provisionally call its object, its target, its field of application, there – that is to say – where it installs itself and produces its real effects.

(Foucault, 1980, p. 97)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will be using Foucauldian discourse analysis to analyze the discourses within the interview transcripts that produce the phenomenon of women abusing women in the workplace. Discourse analysis is a term describing a range of qualitative methods which are used to understand language, language practices and a variety of texts including documentation, conversation, and interviews. Most types of discourse analysis assume that discourse does not describe reality but constructs and reflects our experience of the world. Another assumption underpinning most discourse analysis is that agency, a person’s ability to make choices, is limited by the discourses available to them. People cannot think or speak outside of the discourses available to them and, therefore, are subject to discourse and only certain subject positions are available within each discourse.

Humanist approaches to bullying assign blame to the individual, pointing to inadequate skills, faulty personality or psychological disorders as the cause of problems. Discourse analysis is the most appropriate method of questioning the common sense of everyday humanist discourses and practices. It allows the examination of how we
become gendered subjects. Discourse analysis reveals what happens between women in the workplace and the effects of the limited and disadvantaged subject positions made available to women, while recognizing the technologies of power and respecting the knowledge that women possess.

There are many different types of discourse analysis. I use Foucauldian discourse analysis which draws on the ideas of Michel Foucault and is generally concerned with the power relations that are enacted and constructed through discourse.

Discourse analysis becomes a research method by asking questions of the text. I first selected excerpts from the interview data of each participant. The following are the questions I then asked of the research data:

1. What discourses are available to account for the phenomenon of woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace?
2. How are subject identities constituted through woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace?
3. What are the power relations at work in the workplace and whose interests are served?
4. What ideological assumptions are disrupted and/or confirmed by a feminist poststructural analysis of woman-on-woman bullying?

I have not asked every question of every participant’s interview data, only those questions that seem most relevant for that particular woman and her interview data.

I want to acknowledge that what I present here is not ‘truth’ but a possible version of meaning, which I understand as never fixed once and for all, but as constantly in process. I am not arguing that change can happen merely through changing language. “Discursive
practices are embedded in material power relations which also require transformation for change to be realized” (Weedon, 1987, p. 106) and I have personally experienced how entrenched these discursive practices are. However, I believe women’s subjectivities and the subject positionings made available to women are interactively produced and are, therefore, open to shifts and changes as discourses change. By making these visible, I hope to open the possibility for change.

4.2 Allison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work/workplace</th>
<th>Race, class, age, ethnicity</th>
<th>Social context (at the time of these experiences)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Library assistant  
• School division in B.C. | • White  
• Middleclass  
• Late 50’s  
• Raised in French speaking home | • Married  
• Two adult children living out of the home |

When Allison’s new supervisor arrived in the department, Allison tried to foster a relationship with her. Her supervisor was not interested in having the kind of relationship that Allison wanted. The following section includes eight research texts from Allison. In the first, Allison speaks of her supervisor questioning her about putting boxes into her office when her supervisor was away. The next two are Allison speaking about the problems she had with her supervisor related to her own work space. She also speaks about the multiple effects of these experiences on her. The fourth is Allison speaking about the trouble that followed when a letter of her supervisor’s was opened before she got it. The fifth research text is Allison talking about her supervisor making a claim that Allison had made a racial slur. The sixth and seventh are Allison speaking about two separate incidents; one when her supervisor told her to stop what she was doing and
return to her desk and the other when her supervisor complained to her about a book display Allison had put up. The final research text is Allison speaking about being questioned by her supervisor about a workshop she planned to attend.

In the following section of interview data, Allison tells me about a time when her supervisor questioned her about going into her supervisor’s office without permission.

A. C. had given me a key to her office because there were a lot of materials that would come from publishers. I still had this key. It was only a couple of months after my supervisor started to work in the department that she asked me how three or four boxes had ended up in her office. I said, “The guys from stores brought them to me and said your supervisor’s not here and we have a delivery for her.” I said, “Well that’s not a problem. I’ve got a key to her office. I’ll let you in and you can put them in there.” She had a desk and a table. That’s what she was questioning. She wanted to know whose authority I had to go into her office. I said, “I’ve always gone in. I go in to put your mail and magazines that are circulated to you on your desk and deliveries. I shut the door and lock it again.” She asked, “How often are you in my office?” She questioned whether I would leave her office open for other people and how do I determine who I’m going to allow in her office. I said, “Well, I don’t unlock the door for other people to go into your office. I just received some of the stuff that you need to have.”

She said, “I want you to give me the key and you’re not allowed in my office.” My impression was she doesn’t want me in her office when she’s not there so I said, “So what am I to do with deliveries?” She said, “Keep them at your desk.” I said, “Well, when you’re out of the building or if you’ve been away for a while it could be quite a bit of stuff that piles up on my desk when you have a table in your office that I could put the stuff on.” I have to admit that I would argue with her about some of her comments. I don’t know if it’s so much an argument or if I just tried to explain myself. It wasn’t long after that that she was in her office with her office door open and I walked into her office to ask her a question. She told me that I wasn’t permitted in her office, that I was to stand outside of her office and when she wanted me to come in she would acknowledge me and have me come in.

In this excerpt, Allison tells me that she has always had a key to her supervisor’s office. As part of her job, she would open the office door in order to place inside materials that had arrived for her supervisor. Her new supervisor asks her about how boxes end up in her office. She also asks Allison how often she goes into her office, who else Allison lets into her office, how she decides who she will let in and by what authority, and whether
she leaves the door open afterward. Allison tells her supervisor it has been her practice to place mail, magazines that are circulated and deliveries that arrive in her office, but she locks the door afterward. Here Allison acts on a discourse of scientific theory that assumes it possible to observe the behaviour of rational people and predict decisions that they will make in the future. Allison does not expect her supervisor to make decisions that are different from the decisions of previous supervisors. However, Allison’s supervisor tells her that she is no longer permitted to go into her office and asks Allison to return the key. When Allison asks what she is to do with deliveries, she is told by her supervisor to keep any materials that may arrive at her own desk until her supervisor returns. Allison tells her supervisor that, if she does this when she is away for an extended period of time, quite a lot of material will accumulate on her desk. Again Allison wants her supervisor to make decisions that will not change the way things were done under the previous supervisors.

Allison’s supervisor, on the other hand, objects to Allison’s freedom of movement into her office. Allison goes into her space at will, without permission and uninvited. Allison, in the act of telling, objects to being questioned by her supervisor about her practice of putting materials in her supervisor’s office, to having her movement restricted by her supervisor, to having her access to her supervisor’s office restricted, and to not being able to access the extra table on which she could put the materials.

Allison tells me that once when her supervisor was working in her office with the office door open, she walked in to ask her supervisor a question. Her supervisor told her to wait outside the office and said she would acknowledge Allison when she wanted her to enter. Allison objects to her supervisor being the one to make the decision about
Allison entering her office and to not being allowed to enter the office without her supervisor’s permission, even when her supervisor is there. The organization in which Allison is employed is a hierarchical organization. Her supervisor is higher in the hierarchy and refuses access to her office, but Allison does not remain outside her supervisor’s office space. Allison violates the rules of organizational hierarchy which place Allison below her supervisor when she enters her supervisor’s office without permission. In taking the office key away from Allison, Allison’s supervisor restricts access to her space.

By arguing with her supervisor, Allison is objecting to her supervisor’s authority and her refusal to enact an equal, mutual, and reciprocal relationship assumed by the gendered discourse of the “good woman.” According to this discourse, there are numerous qualities essential to being a good woman. A good woman must be caring about others to the point of being selfless, putting others’ desires and welfare before her own. Another aspect of the discourse of good woman implies that there is solidarity among women based on their shared conditions, experiences and concerns. The assumption is that the bond between women will help them unite in a sisterly relationship to fight for equality. Thus, women, especially good women, care about each other, are friends and belong to a sisterhood in which all women are equals. Allison’s supervisor does not reciprocate with the gendered discourse of the “good woman.” Instead she violates the discourse of equality and mutuality between good and caring women when she objects to Allison accessing her space at will and without permission, in order to take in materials delivered when she is not present. She challenges Allison’s use of authority and decision making when Allison lets others into her office, because she is the decision maker, not Allison.
Allison constructs the problem as her supervisor refusing to accept her efforts and thwarting Allison’s attempts to have an equal relationship. The problem to be solved is that Allison’s supervisor needs to realize the error of her ways and treat Allison as an equal.

Allison is a white woman and in a subordinate position to her supervisor, who is a black woman. According to the social discourse of white superiority, black people are positioned below whites in the social hierarchy, making it unusual for a white woman to have a black supervisor. The discourse of race that places Allison’s supervisor at a disadvantage is violated by the supervisor’s superior position, above Allison in the organizational hierarchy. Allison, in telling this story, is objecting to the violation of this normative discourse of white supremacy/black inferiority. With space being a marker of dominance and entitlement, when Allison’s supervisor refuses access to her space, she disrupts both racial and gender codes of white access and female mutuality respectively.

Allison, reading from notes she made during the early months of her relationship with her supervisor, begins to cry as she tells me about another experience she had and the effects of those experiences.

*My relationship with my supervisor has changed in the two months that we’ve been working together. When she first started, I found that we were working well together. She would ask my opinion on various issues. We would talk about our roles with each other and our goals, some of the changes we wanted to make and areas where we thought we could improve the service provided. I found that we were working as a team, each with different responsibilities, but as equals. For about the last month, I feel that our relationship has changed. I no longer work with my supervisor but for her. She has exerted her authority over me on various occasions. T. had plastic bugs, spiders and ants and when he was leaving he gave them to me and he said, “Here, keep these and put them on top of your computer. Give them a home. They’ll be good company for you.” I had some artificial peonies in a vase and I had little artificial ants on the peonies. My supervisor saw them and said, “I don’t like those bugs.” I said, “Oh, people come to take out materials and when they’re standing there they comment on them.” She left a signed note on my desk one
day telling me to remove my bugs off my computer. I ignored it and there was a
second note on my desk a couple of days later, again saying get rid of your bugs,
they’re inappropriate. So I scooped them up and threw them in the garbage, more
out of anger. I don’t know why I just didn’t challenge her. I don’t know why I just
didn’t say, “That has nothing to do with you.” If I want to have a picture of my child
on my desk I can. If I want to have ants on my desk that aren’t interfering with my
work I can.

I was coming home at night and it was nothing for me to drink four or five drinks in
the evening. I wouldn’t have supper. I would just sit there and drink. I’m lucky
I have a husband who is as patient and as understanding as he is. He kept saying to
me, “You know you’re going to kill yourself. Don’t let her ruin your life.” My
mother is an alcoholic and A. said, “You know, it runs in the family. Don’t let it get
to you like that.” I had said financially I can’t afford to quit. I had no confidence in
myself at all. I was so afraid that if I challenged that they would just say, “Oh,
you’re not a good fit for us.” I really didn’t think they would back me. I’d be gone.
I thought if they didn’t get rid of me they would move me to another department
where I didn’t want to be.

I went for counselling. The first time I went to my clinic. I talked to the lady and
then she asked me why I was going to see her. She said we have a counselling
service with your workplace so I never went back to her. I went through my office.
I’d gone to speak to this person maybe two or three times but by then I had switched
jobs. You’re only allowed to have so many visits and I think I exhausted those. It
was helpful to some extent. It’s difficult when you’re lacking confidence. You don’t
think you have the skills, the ability, the knowledge, the training, or the education.
You feel under qualified for the job.

Allison tells me about her relationship with her supervisor within the first couple of
months after her supervisor started working in the same department. She tells me how
her supervisor would ask for her opinion; they would talk about their roles, goals they had
for the department, and the changes and improvements they wanted to make. Allison tells
me that she and her supervisor were working as a team. They had different
responsibilities but were working as equals. Here Allison subscribes to the discourse that
assumes a benefit from teamwork; working together as one unit rather than individually.
It assumes the balance of team member contributions and efforts, mutual support and the
subordinating of personal prominence. According to this discourse, teamwork leads to
better decisions, products, and services and is correlated with effectiveness, efficiency, and the production of high quality work. Teamwork is constructed as the key to success and, anything without teamwork is going to be less successful. Allison tells me that this relationship changed so that she was no longer working with her supervisor but for her. She objects to her supervisor changing their relationship from what she believed was a unified team to one of authority and subordination.

Allison goes on to tell me about being given some artificial bugs to put on her computer by an employee who was leaving. One day, her supervisor tells Allison she doesn’t like the bugs and Allison should remove them. When Allison did not remove the bugs, her supervisor left a note on her desk, again telling Allison to get rid of the bugs. Allison tells me that when she did not respond to the first note, she received a second note from her supervisor telling her that the bugs were not appropriate and to get rid of them. Following the second note, Allison threw the bugs in the garbage without talking to her supervisor about it again. Allison’s supervisor objects to Allison’s authority in making decisions about her own space. The problem for Allison is that she wants a reciprocal and egalitarian relationship with her supervisor. She objects to her supervisor’s resistance to this kind of relationship and to being in one in which her supervisor has the authority and she is the subordinate. The discourse of reciprocity and egalitarianism constructs a relationship as a mutual and cooperative interchange given and felt by each person in the relationship and based on mutual interests, dependence and influence. By telling Allison what to do in her desk space, her supervisor violates the rules of an egalitarian relationship by demonstrating her authority over Allison.

Allison tells me that often, when she went home at night, she would not eat supper
but would instead have four or five drinks. She tells me she was fortunate that her
husband was patient and understanding with her. She says that her mother was an
alcoholic and her husband reminded her it ran in her family. He also told her she was
going to kill herself if she let what was going on at work get to her in this way. Allison
tells me she couldn’t afford to quit and was concerned that her employer would either fire
her or move her to another department where she didn’t want to be. Allison tells me she
found seeing a counsellor helpful. She tells me she lacked confidence in her skills,
ability, knowledge, training, and education, and was under qualified for the job. Here,
Allison subscribes to discourse of medicating emotional pain. According to this
discourse, when what is happening at work is having an effect on Allison, an appropriate
way of dealing with it is to numb her feelings with alcohol. Allison’s husband counters
this assumption when he encourages her to re-examine this practice. Allison assumes her
inability to go it alone. She needs backup to stay strong and carry on. Allison is
invoking the discourse of individual pathology. According to this discourse, it is better to
blame a person, in this case, Allison herself, than it is to blame race and hierarchy.
Allison says it is because of her low self-confidence and overall lack of ability and
qualifications that this is happening to her. Once again, she cannot manage alone and
seeks the help of a professional to deal with the effects.

Allison also tells me about her supervisor placing a bell on her desk.

*She put a bell on my desk for patrons so that I would know they were there and I
could attend to them immediately. That all came about because I’d been sick one day
and my supervisor said that somebody was in the office looking for me and couldn’t
find me. I said, “Yeah, I was home sick. It’s kind of hard to find me.” She said, “I
decided to put a bell on your desk and then when patrons want you and you’re filing
they can ring this bell. I said, “Well, that’s not going to solve the problem if I’m at
home sick or if I’m in another part of the building.” She put the bell on my desk*
Anyway and everybody going from other departments would ring the bell so I threw it out.

Allison returned to work after being away due to illness and found a bell on her desk. Her supervisor told her that someone had been looking for her while she was away and the bell would provide a way of alerting Allison that patrons had come in to the department. Allison tells me that, after the bell was placed on her desk, other staff who were passing through her department from their own would ring the bell. So she eventually threw the bell out.

For Allison too, space is a marker of dominance and entitlement. By performing her authority when she tells Allison to remove the bugs and places a bell on her desk, Allison’s supervisor has interfered with her space. Allison objects to this interference in the illusion of Allison’s autonomy or entitlement. Allison also objects to her workspace being treated as public space. The bell puts Allison in the position of a servant who has to answer to the bell. Allison wants her supervisor to respect her workspace as private. The discourse of privacy implies anonymity and a separation from the rest. When applied to an individual, private creates something special, secure and protected. When Allison’s supervisor changes this by putting a bell on her desk, it means that Allison is no longer protected and has lost a level of control and security. Allison takes back her own authority by throwing away the bell. Allison’s supervisor performs the control of Allison’s space and time, using the discourse of office efficiency and prompt service delivery to patrons who come in looking for Allison. The discourse of efficiency assumes competency in performance and accomplishment. This discourse constructs the extent to which time and effort are well used for an intended task or purpose with a minimum amount of waste, expense or unnecessary effort as the ideal. In this case, the discourse of
efficiency is paired with the discourse of service which requires the accountability and dependability of the provider of a service. When Allison’s supervisor places the bell on her desk, she positions Allison as unaccountable and undependable.

The discourse of good woman includes belonging to a sisterhood in which loyalty to other women in the sisterhood is one of the virtues. In the three excerpts from above, Allison positions her supervisor as the cold mean woman; the uncaring one, the unreasonable one, the one whose behaviour is unjustified, and the one who is unwilling to be part of the sisterhood. Her supervisor is the bad woman, the one who is not doing “woman” right. The supervisor resists the pressure to have a reciprocal egalitarian relationship with Allison, as good women do. Allison, on the other hand, positions herself as the innocent one, the kind one, the reasonable one, the one who is doing woman right. The discourse of whiteness positions white women as responsible and trustworthy workers, deserving of respectful treatment. Allison’s race leads her to expect to be treated with respect. She has been performing whiteness well.

In the following section of interview data, Allison tells me that she attempts to get along with her supervisor by complimenting her on how she looks and on what she’s wearing. When her supervisor demonstrates anger and challenges Allison about opening a letter that was addressed to her (the supervisor), Allison speaks of her own anger.

*I would just say okay, let’s try to make this day good. Let’s put aside what happened. I would go out of my way to do different things. I would complement her on how she looked. I’d say, “Those are really nice colours. That looks really really nice on you. I really like those colours on you.” Then she would say, “Oh, thank you very much” and five minutes later she would do something to hurt my feelings and deflate my balloon again. I would say, “Why do you even try to get along with her?*

*She had gone away. There was a letter that had been opened and then taped shut and it was in her mail slot. H. was at the front desk as our receptionist then and she had opened it to see who it was supposed to go to because she couldn’t see in the*
window. After she opened it, she repositioned it back in the envelope so that she could see the name through the envelop window and taped it shut. My supervisor came back and she had this envelope and was slapping her hand with it. She said, “Tell me about the letter. What did it say in it?” I said, “Well, obviously it’s an envelope, a letter addressed to you. I don’t know what it said. I didn’t open it. I didn’t read it. What does it say?” She said, “This letter has been opened. You are not to open my mail under any circumstances.” I said, “I did not open that letter.” “Who did? Who opened it?” I said, “I don’t know. I’m not the one that opened it. You are barking up the wrong tree. It’s been in that mail slot while you were away.”

She said, “I’m warning you. You are not permitted to open my mail.” She went to her office so I went and saw H. I said “Remember that letter that was sitting there for my supervisor? Do you know who opened it? She said, “I opened it. I couldn’t see in the window so I didn’t know who it was addressed to. Your supervisor was away and I was doing mail so I opened it, saw that it was for her, sealed it and put it in her mail slot.” When my supervisor came into the office, H. said, “I’m the one who opened the letter and when I saw that it was for you I put it in your mail slot. Allison’s a little concerned because you implied that she had opened it.” My supervisor said, “Oh, no, no, no. Don’t worry about it. I understand how this could have happened. It’s no big deal.” I said, “No big deal. You sure made it a big deal. Standing here in front of me, slapping the envelope against your hand, accusing me of opening it and barking is what you were doing.” It was towards the end of my time in that department. I found that I was becoming rather rude to her. I really didn’t give a damn what she thought of me.

Allison talked about a time when a letter arrived for her supervisor but, because the woman who distributed the mail could not read the name of the addressee in the envelop window, she had opened it, repositioned it, taped it closed and placed it in Allison’s supervisor’s mail box. When her supervisor opened the letter and realized it had already been opened, she questioned Allison about whether she was the one who had opened it. Allison told her supervisor she did not open the letter and did not know who did. After her supervisor returned to her office, Allison approached H., the woman who typically opened the mail. She asked H. if she knew who opened the letter and H. acknowledged it was she who had opened it and explained why. Allison told H. about being questioned by her supervisor. H. went to Allison’s supervisor and told her it was she who had opened the letter. Allison’s supervisor responded by telling H. she understood how this could
happen. Allison’s anger at her supervisor’s cordial and forgiving response to H. is telling us that the problem for Allison is that she objects to her supervisor’s authority to question her about the letter. By questioning her, Allison’s supervisor is implying to Allison that she does not trust her and that they are not equals. Trust is part of the discourse of female friendship. Being trusting and trustworthy is doing “good woman” right. Allison also objects to not being recognized as racially dominant. When her supervisor violates the discourses of female friendship and white supremacy, she demonstrates that they are not friends, not equals. H., the woman who had opened the letter, appears, by her lack of emotional angst, to accept the workplace hierarchy and does not press for an egalitarian relationship with Allison’s supervisor.

By going out of her way to “do different things”, Allison attempts to establish mutuality with a woman who is clearly her supervisor. The supervisor assumes it is Allison who has opened her mail. The matter is of no concern when another employee explains the mistake was hers, because the supervisor's relationship with H. does not appear to be contested. Allison, on the other hand, is trying to perform “good woman” over and over in a number of ways. She is trying to appeal to her supervisor by going out of her way to be nice and thoughtful, complimenting her supervisor on how she looks and what she is wearing. Giving a compliment to another woman is part of the gendered discourse of egalitarian female friendship. Doing so establishes equality and requires equality between women. It is a way for women to say “I see you, you are my equal.” It affirms that the other woman is “doing woman” right. Allison objects to her supervisor’s unwillingness to cooperate in creating and participating in a reciprocal relationship with her. She wants to be friends with her supervisor, but her supervisor doesn’t want to be
friends with her. Her supervisor is again violating the “good woman” discourse, a
discourse of equality among women, by insisting on her authority within the organization.
Allison has been subordinated by her gender and her place in the workplace hierarchy,
but she has never been subordinated by her race. She is resisting the workplace hierarchy
and the power given to her black supervisor.

In the following research text, Allison tells me about her supervisor calling her into
her office.

*I didn’t have a lot of confidence in myself or in my ability. I think I thought she
really thinks I’m incompetent. She got to the point where she quit talking to me and
she would e-mail me from her office which was just across the hallway. Her e-mails
would always have a positive or a nice thing; I hope you had a nice weekend. I have
to speak to you. She would often summon me to her office, usually to reprimand me
for whatever reason. A lot of times I’d knock and she’d say come in but then I’d go
in and she wouldn’t acknowledge me. She’d be busy doing something and I would
have to sit in the chair or I would stand in front of her desk and wait and wait and
wait. I know on one occasion she said to me “sit.” I said “No, I’m fine standing.”
She raised herself from her desk with her arms on her desk and said, “I said sit.” I
sat. I was very disappointed in myself that I did that so the next time she called me
into her office I thought I’m going to be strong about this. She says, “Sit down.” I
said, “No, I’m fine, I’ll stand.” She never says, “Would you like to sit down’ or
“take a seat.” Again she said, “I said sit.” I said, “I don’t sit, roll over or play
dead. If you want to offer me a chair it’s my choice whether I take it or not.” Her
eyes just got absolutely huge and she just kind of put her hand up to her mouth. Like,
I dare challenge what she said to me. It’s stupid to let people get to you like that. I
talked to R a few times but she just thought that, if we sat down and worked out our
differences, everything would be okay. R, on the one occasion, sat in with us and
then she had a meeting to go to and she had to leave. She said that we could stay in
her office until we resolved our issue.

R. called me and asked if I would come up for a meeting with my supervisor. R. said,
“Your supervisor felt that you gave her a racial slur yesterday.” I said, “I don’t
understand. What do you mean?” My supervisor said, “It’s when I called you into
my office.” I said, “On what occasion? If I remember correctly you had me go into
your office six or seven times the day before, always to reprimand me for something.
She said when I went into the office I said, “Yessum.” I said, “I don’t talk that way.
I never said that.” She said, “Yes, you did. I heard you and I know that’s what you
said.” I said, “Well, I’m sorry if that is what you thought you heard me say, but I did
not say that. I don’t talk that way” and it was back and forth. She said I did, I said I
didn’t and I just said to R, “I don’t think there’s any point in us having any further

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conversation. It’s her word against mine. R. said, “I think you have to accept what Allison said; that she didn’t say that, that maybe you just misunderstood. My supervisor said, “I wasn’t.” I said, “If that is what you thought, why didn’t you say something to me right at that moment, but you didn’t.” My supervisor said, “It wasn’t until I went home and thought about it that I knew that’s what you said.” I said, “Then I’m surprised you didn’t even come up with something worse than that if you had all night to think about it and to decide what it was that you thought you heard me say.”

At that point R said, “I have to leave for a meeting and I hope you two will stay in my office as long as you want and resolve your differences.” As soon as R left my supervisor said, “I know what I heard.” I said, “And I know what I didn’t say and I won’t sit here and have any further conversation with you about it” and we both walked out at the same time.

Allison tells me that her supervisor would often call her into her office. When Allison got there, she would stand in front of her supervisor’s desk and wait for her supervisor to acknowledge her. At other times, her supervisor would tell her to sit and Allison would sit in the chair in the office. Allison tells me that, on one occasion, when her supervisor told her to sit, Allison refused to sit. Her supervisor stood up from her desk and again told her to sit. Allison again said she would be fine standing. Her supervisor once again told her to sit. Allison then told her supervisor that she doesn’t sit, roll over or play dead and that if the supervisor offers her a chair, Allison will decide whether or not to sit in it. Allison resists the authority given to her supervisor by the hierarchical organization in which she is employed and in which her supervisor is higher in the hierarchy.

The human body, the basic biological feature of humans, is the link between the individual and social structures. Technologies of biopower are strategies targeting the body, rather than using traditional modes of power based on threat of death. These technologies are used to manage groups of people and achieve social control within social institutions of power (the family, schools, medicine, public health and the workplace).

Allison’s supervisor, who was seated at her desk when Allison walked in and stood in
front of her, uses biopower when she repeatedly tells Allison to sit down. In this
technology, she is regulating Allison’s body, by reducing Allison to her level. Allison
resists when she insists that she will be the one who will make the decision about whether
to sit or not. In doing so, Allison has violated the discourse of organizational hierarchy
which requires her obedience to a superior.

Allison also tells me in this excerpt that eventually she is called to the department
head’s office along with her supervisor. There, she is told that her supervisor says she has
made a racial slur toward her supervisor. Allison denies this and, even though the
department head suggests they both remain in her office until they work out their
differences, Allison leaves. By leaving, Allison demonstrates her objection to her
supervisor’s violation of the “good woman” discourse: the discourse which assumes that
women care about and for each other; the discourse which assumes that women should be
friends with each other as equals. The supervisor is not treating Allison as a friend or an
equal. The discourse constructs the problem to be solved as the supervisor’s refusal to
treat Allison with the respect due to an equal.

Allison also told me about a time when she and several other women were
renumbering some books.

*She thought nothing of asserting herself, saying what she thought her role was, that
she was the boss in front of other people. She decided that we should change the call
numbers and put down the year of publication so it would be Prof 398.2 FAG 1984. She
wanted us to pull all the books off the shelves and redo them. The women in the
back were able to pull all of our cataloguing and print new spine labels. What we
had to do was match up the sheets with the books. It wasn’t a hard process. So we
started doing that. There was N, G, and myself who all took a section. My
supervisor always gave us time lines. This has to be done by Wednesday. So we all
were sitting there working. I was three quarters of the way down on the books on
one shelf and my supervisor came out and, in front of G and N, she said, “Allison, I
want you to stop doing what you are doing and you go back to your desk.” I said
“well, I’ve only got about five or six more books left to do.” She said, “I said you*
will stop doing what you’re doing immediately and return to your desk.” G. and N. just sat there and looked at me. I was so embarrassed. I just put down my stuff and I said, “Fine” and turned around and walked away. I didn’t go back to my desk. I went to the bathroom and cried. I was very very humiliated. It was almost as if I was being disciplined for something. Even now it still hurts.

Allison tells me that while she and several other women are working to renumber books, her supervisor approaches and tells Allison to stop working and return to her desk.

Allison tells her supervisor she has only a few books to finish; however, her supervisor tells Allison to return to her desk immediately, without finishing. Allison gets up, turns and walks away but does not return to her desk. She goes instead to the washroom and cries about what has just happened.

Allison’s supervisor is demonstrating her authority over Allison when she orders Allison, who is her subordinate in the workplace hierarchy, to respect that authority and obey her direction to stop what she is doing and return to her desk. Allison’s supervisor objects to Allison’s refusal to be subordinate when she does not immediately obey her supervisor’s instruction to return to her desk and she issues the order a second time.

Allison disrupts the discourse of organizational hierarchy when she does not immediately obey the direction of her supervisor. She objects to her supervisor performing authority in front of other workers and attempts to establish mutuality when she questions her supervisor’s instruction. Allison is humiliated to be placed in a subordinate position. When she does not return to her desk and goes to the washroom instead, Allison is resisting her supervisor’s authority and being a subordinate.

We see Allison’s distress when she goes to the washroom and cries. Her supervisor’s actions violate the discourse of “the good woman.” She does not perform “caring woman” by cooperating with Allison’s attempts to have a mutually reciprocal relationship
in which they are friends and care about each other. For Allison, the problem that is to be solved is the supervisor’s refusal to treat Allison with the respect due an equal, and a white woman.

On another occasion, Allison told me about the day she set up a book display in her department.

*We had another incident when I set up a book display. There was a book called Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus. A teacher came in and saw the book. She said, “I’m surprised that you have this book. I tried to borrow it from the Public Library and there’s a two year waiting list.” She asked if she could borrow it and I gave her the date when the display would be over. I said, “I haven’t read the book but I happened to see a talk show where the author was talking about it. I’m looking forward to having an opportunity to read it too.”*

*My supervisor looked at the display and said, “I like how you’ve done the display. You have a good variety of materials.” I pointed out the book, ‘Men are from Mars and Women are From Venus’ and told her about the teacher’s comment. She picked it up and looked at the inside leaf writing and said, “Isn’t that interesting. I’m going to have to make sure I read this book.” It wasn’t a book that she had ordered. D. ordered those materials for the next book display before my supervisor came. M. happened to see that book. She took offense to it and questioned why we had it on display. She felt that it was very sexist and did not think it was an appropriate book for our collection. Before I had an opportunity to talk to my supervisor, M. went and talked to her about her concerns about the book.*

*In the meantime, G. was in the office with my supervisor and my supervisor called me in. She asked me, “How do you select materials you’re going to put on display and how do you determine the range of topics?” I said, “Well, I try to have a range of topics from any of the books that are classified and catalogued according to the Dewey Decimal System. I just try to pick a variety of books and titles that look interesting.” She had the book in her hand and she said “You had this book on display. What made you decide to put this one up?” So I explained that I thought the title was interesting. I had seen a talk show on it and that this teacher had come in and was talking about it. She said, “I really question your ability to select materials.” I said, “I didn’t select the book. I’m not the one that purchased the book.” She asked G, “Would you have this book on display?” G said, “I wouldn’t even have it in my library.” My supervisor said, “We’re not going to have this book on display. In my opinion you’re not qualified to decide what books are going to be on the display.” I said, “Well, I only work with materials that we have. If you were that concerned about it why didn’t you say something when you first looked at the display and I pointed that book out to you? Why did you wait until somebody else came to you?” She said that I could leave. That was the end of the discussion.*
Allison’s supervisor acknowledges the display and comments to Allison that she likes what Allison has done and that Allison has chosen a good variety of books. Allison points out one particular book to her supervisor and tells her that someone has already commented that she wants to borrow the book, to which her supervisor responds that she will have to read the book as well. Allison tells me that the book in question is not one that her supervisor ordered, but is one that was ordered by the previous supervisor.

After her supervisor leaves, another member of the staff notices the book and questions Allison as to why that particular book is on display. She tells Allison that she thinks the book is sexist and that it is inappropriate for their collection. Before Allison has the opportunity to speak with her supervisor about these comments, this staff member approaches Allison’s supervisor herself with her concerns. Then, Allison’s supervisor, in the presence of the other staff member, questions Allison about her choice of the book in question. Allison defends her choice by explaining that she does not order the books and makes her choices for displays from the collection that has been ordered by supervisors. She explains that she chose the book in question because the title seemed interesting and she had seen a talk show in which the book had been discussed. Allison again tells her supervisor that she did not purchase the book but chose it from the current collection.

The discourse of knowing what’s best for others is at work here. More specifically, only some people can make judgments about what is appropriate for others to read. Allison is positioned as the person who has to explain to others and defend her choice of books. Also at work here is the discourse of defending against an attack. According to this discourse, criticism is an attack on that person and a reflection of their value as a person. When the criticism is about the person’s work it is also a reflection of their value. In
order to be valuable, someone’s work must be valued. Here, Allison subscribes to the discourse when she defends herself against the criticism of her choice of books to put on display. Allison’s supervisor exerts her authority again when she questions Allison’s ability to make decisions and to select library materials. Allison objects to being questioned and resists her supervisor’s authority when she questions her supervisor as to why she did not mention her concerns when she first looked at the display but waited until someone else raised a concern. We see Allison’s distress as she objects to her supervisor’s unwillingness to cooperate with having a reciprocal and mutual relationship with her as she questions the timing of her supervisor’s questions about the book display. 

By making decisions about which books will be part of the book display, Allison has violated the discourse of organizational hierarchy which places Allison below her supervisor. Her supervisor is higher in the hierarchy and wants her place in the hierarchy as the decision maker respected. Allison objects to her supervisor having this authority. Allison’s supervisor insists on Allison performing respect for her authority by telling Allison she is not qualified to make such decisions.

The gendered discourse of the “good woman”, that says good women are supportive friends and members of the same sisterhood, has again been violated by Allison’s supervisor. This discourse constructs the problem that is to be solved as the supervisor needing to realize the error of her ways and treat Allison as an equal. The problem for Allison is that her supervisor objects to Allison’s efforts to have a reciprocal and egalitarian relationship and is not treating her as if they are in one. The supervisor is positioned as unreasonable and arbitrary.

Allison also told me about applying for a workshop she wanted to attend on a
professional development day.

_I think she thought that I was trying to pull the wool over her eyes. We were having a PD Day in February. The form came out from G. and it said that these were the options that secretaries could go to. If they decided not to attend any of the workshops, upon approval of their principals, they could just stay at work. I said to my supervisor, “I’m going to go to one on ergonomics in the morning and then I’m going to come back to the office in the afternoon because a lot of people will be here attending workshops in the morning and have a tendency to want to borrow materials afterward. So I filled out the form and gave it to my supervisor to sign._

_So she came back a few days later and she says, “What are you doing again that day?” I said, “I’m going to the ergonomics.” “Why are you going to ergonomics?” I said, “Well, I think it’s important to look after my back and my body.” She said, “Well, I think there was something else that you could go to.” I said, “But it’s my choice. Secretaries could go to one of five things. That is what I chose to go to. It’s my PD day and that is what I’ve chosen to go to.”_ She said, “What are you going to do in the afternoon?” I said, “I’m coming back here to the office because staff will be in and will want to sign out materials.” She asked me about it a third time and said, “I want you to go get your form from G. I want to see it and I didn’t make a copy of it.”

_In the meantime, I saw N. and she said, “You’re going to that ergonomics workshop aren’t you? I would like to go to that ergonomics one as well. If you are coming back and you’re going to be here this afternoon, do you think we could car pool?” I said, “Sure. Did you hand in your form already?” She said, “Yes, I handed in my form and I got back my sheet saying that I was approved to go to these two things.” I said, “Did my supervisor have to sign off on your form? She said, “Yes.” I said, “Has she questioned you about why you are going to that particular workshop?” She said, “No. She hasn’t questioned me about it at all.”

_I went upstairs and got my form from G. She wasn’t very happy that I’d asked her for it because she had to go through all these forms to find mine. My supervisor had signed it. I came back down, made a copy of it and gave it to my supervisor. She hardly even looked at it. I said, “I have a question for you. N. is going to this workshop as well. You’ve never questioned her about it. You didn’t ask her to go and get her form. I’m assuming you don’t have a copy. Why don’t you trust me? Do you think I’m skipping out? Do you think I’m not going to where I said I was going? Are you accusing me of being dishonest?” I found when she got caught doing these kinds of things she would take on that startled look and put her fist up to her mouth._

Allison tells her supervisor that she is going to a workshop on ergonomics for half of the upcoming professional development day, but is planning to return to the office in the afternoon because she expects people will be coming into the office to borrow materials.
A few days later, her supervisor questions Allison about her plans for the day and why she has chosen that particular workshop. She suggests there may be another workshop Allison could attend instead. Allison tells her supervisor the workshop is for her to choose and that she thinks it will give her information about how to look after her back and body. She reminds her supervisor that she will be returning to the office in the afternoon. Her supervisor then asks Allison to retrieve her workshop application form because she wants to see it, and so that she can make a copy of it. Allison tells me that the woman from whom she had to retrieve her application form was not happy about having to find Allison’s among the many others.

Again we see Allison’s objection to her supervisor’s unwillingness to participate in an egalitarian relationship with Allison when she asks one of her colleagues if her supervisor signed off on her workshop application or questioned her about which workshop she planned to attend. The colleague tells Allison she has not been questioned. Allison objects to her supervisor questioning her when she points out that the supervisor did not ask another staff member about what workshop she planned to attend, and did not ask her for a copy of the application form. When Allison asks her supervisor whether or not she trusts her, she is objecting to her supervisor’s continued unwillingness to have a mutual relationship. Her assumption is that women friends in an equal relationship don’t question each other. They trust and care for each other.

In each of the above examples, Allison positions herself as the righteous one and the beleaguered one, the one who is hurt and hard done by. She is the one who is trying to do “woman” right and wants to be seen as a good woman by others. Allison, a white woman, is resisting the workplace hierarchy and the power given to her supervisor to
make decisions about her work, her space, her time and her body. Instead of subscribing to the expectations of the discourse of hierarchy, Allison is attempting to have an equal, reciprocal, and mutually caring relationship with her supervisor, a black woman who in another situation might be considered her social inferior. The discourse of female friendship and sisterhood among women is invoked when Allison challenges her supervisor’s authority. For Allison, by assuming a position of authority, her supervisor is not doing “good woman” right. The discourse of the good woman assumes that good women are not more powerful than other women.

Allison positions her supervisor as the contradictory one, the demanding, dominant and inconsiderate one, the one who uses people for what they can give her. She thwarts Allison’s attempts to be equal as she performs her authority by asking Allison not to enter her office without permission; by taking back the key; by challenging Allison’s decision to display certain books; by mistrusting her handling of the mail; and by questioning Allison’s choice for a training workshop. The problem for Allison’s supervisor is that Allison is not respecting her authority, her space or her decisions.

Allison uses her gender to ask for mutuality between herself and her supervisor, who is also a woman, but she doesn’t get it. If Allison’s supervisor had been a male, she would not have expected a caring, egalitarian and reciprocal relationship. The gendered discourses of caring and egalitarian female friendship and the respectable and respectful “good woman” are in conflict with the discourse of workplace hierarchy which constructs the worker as subordinate and the supervisor as superior. The discourses are raced because a black woman would normally be positioned as inferior to Allison. Allison cannot abide not having her whiteness work for her. She cannot tolerate this reversal of
the racial hierarchy. Righting this racial discord requires equality and mutuality in her relationship with her supervisor and she cannot get either from her supervisor. She tries to use social class.

The above are again examples of what Foucault called biopower, the technologies of power which are numerous and diverse techniques for managing people by achieving the subjugation and the control of their body, space, and time. When Allison’s supervisor stopped her from entering her office when she wanted to, when her supervisor told Allison to sit when she entered the office, when she told Allison to stop cataloguing books and return to her desk, when she placed gender solidarity to overcome the dissonance in her racial world view, and it doesn’t work. The discourses are also classed. The artificial bugs on Allison’s computer which her supervisor said were inappropriate for the workplace are markers of lower a bell on Allison’s desk for patrons to use to summon Allison, when she told Allison it is inappropriate to have artificial bugs on her computer and that she should remove them, and when she e-mails Allison to come to her office so she can speak to her, these are all examples of Allison’s supervisor using technologies of biopower to subjugate, manage and control Allison’s body.

The ordering and control of Allison through the subtle and unseen force of surveillance is also present in the above examples. Here, I am referring to Foucauldian surveillance rather than the high-tech human tracking surveillance that is now possible through the use of video camera, GPS and the like. The surveillance is one way of enforcing the discipline, a mechanism of power, by regulating space, time and behaviour. For instance, Allison’s supervisor wanting to know which workshop Allison was planning to attend, and questioning the choice Allison had made, as well as wanting to know where
Allison was planning to be during the afternoon of that workshop day are all ways her supervisor kept Allison under surveillance.

### 4.3 Jennifer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work/workplace</th>
<th>Race, class, age, ethnicity</th>
<th>Social context (at the time of these experiences)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior administrative assistant</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital in Alberta</td>
<td>Middleclass</td>
<td>Two children living at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>New partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Left home when she was 15 years old</td>
<td>Three foster children (some with special needs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After starting a new job, Jennifer reported that she had been persecuted by her office manager and the director of her department. The following section includes seven research texts from Jennifer. The first is Jennifer speaking about her department head suggesting to Jennifer that she take a position vacated by another employee. The second is Jennifer speaking of being put through a pre-probation evaluation. The third is her experience of purchasing a bicycle from her department head. In the fourth research text, Jennifer talks about the potluck dinner that was organized for her department head after she resigned. The next two are Jennifer speaking about her experiences with a counsellor. The final research text is Jennifer talking about how she made sense of what happened to her in her workplace.

In the following research text, Jennifer tells me about her department head trying to get her to accept a vacated union position before the position is posted.

> When V. quit and took a job down the hallway because she couldn’t handle it any more, she said, “Jennifer, I know she’s going and I should stay. I just don’t think I can. I just feel sick. I have to go. I am going to have a break down.” I said, “Then get out. I totally get it. You need to go.” So she left and then of course the position was supposed to be posted. About two weeks later, the position hadn’t been posted.
I’d see V. in the hallway and she’d say, “I wonder what she’s up to?”

On the Friday she called me into her office, and she said, “I have a proposition for you. I want you to think about it over the weekend. I’d like you to take the job. No, I’m telling you.” I said, “Can I think about it?” “What’s there to think about?” I said, “Well, I like the job I’m doing. I enjoy working with Dr. K. and Dr. F. and I think I’m doing a good job. I really don’t have an interest in admin support.” She said, “Well, I’ll give you until Monday morning to let me know but I strongly encourage you to take it.” I walked out and sat down at my desk and thought I have no choice. I take this job or I’m going to lose mine. I talked to my team mates. I talked to one woman in particular and she said, “Don’t do it. Just tell her no. She can’t do it, Jennifer. It has to be posted.” I said, “Well, she obviously thinks she can because she’s strongly encouraging me.”

I was sick on Monday deliberately. I just was physically ill and I thought I can’t do this. So, Tuesday morning I walked in and the woman that I worked with in the clinic, P., said to me, “You’ve got trouble.” I said, “What do you mean? What’s going on?” She said, “Union’s looking for you. Shop Stewards were looking for you all day yesterday. They want to see you, right now. You better find them.” So, I went into their office and the Shop Steward saw me coming in and she said, “Come in here. I’m telling you right now. Your director cannot offer you a job without posting that position. We will grieve it if you take that job.” I said, “I’m not taking that job. I have no intention of even considering the job. I asked her about the posting and she said she didn’t have to do it.” She said, “Well, that’s a lie. It would be one more grievance filed against her. We’re just letting you know that if you take that position, we’ll grieve it. You’ll be pulled out and you won’t have a position to go to.” I said, “Well, I didn’t have an intention to take the job so it’s a moot point.”

I was so angry and I went back into my office. I knew who it was that had reported this to the union and I walked right up to her and said, “You know what, the next time you have a problem you need to come to me instead of sicking the union on me. You heard me Friday say I’m not interested in that job. I can’t believe you did that.” She didn’t say anything. So, I went to my desk and my director came in. She wanted to see me right away so I went into her office. I said, “I’m going to decline your offer. Thank you very much but it’s just not a role that I’m interested in.” “Well, I told you that I was strongly suggesting you do. Alright. Goodbye.” So I got up and I went back to my desk and I stewed all day, thinking well, she can’t fire me because I haven’t done anything to be fired for. She did post the position. No one applied because they knew her track record and she had to go external to hire.

In this research text, Jennifer tells me that a colleague of hers decided to leave her position due to emotional stress. This meant that someone else could apply for the position once it was posted. However, before the position was posted, Jennifer’s
department head called her into her office and told Jennifer she wanted her to take the job. She strongly advised her to do as she had suggested.

Jennifer explains that she enjoys the job she has and believes she is doing it well, so she is not interested in the vacated position. Nevertheless, her department head again encourages her to take the job. Jennifer tells me that when she left the department head’s office, she felt as if she didn’t have a choice. If she didn’t take the vacated position, she stood to lose her current job. The problem for Jennifer is that her department head speaks as if Jennifer will suffer some sort of consequence if she does not take the job. Jennifer is threatened. She speaks with her colleagues in the office and they discourage her from taking the job because it has not yet been posted.

We see Jennifer’s distress when she tells me that, as she anticipates having to make the choice (either taking a job she doesn’t want or risk losing her current job), she becomes physically ill. She deliberately avoids making the decision by staying away from work on Monday. Jennifer does not have agency in this situation. She is unable to think outside the boundaries of conceptualizing herself as the subordinate in a hierarchical workplace and, therefore is unable to see other possibilities than what has been laid out to her by her department head.

When Jennifer arrives at work on Tuesday, she is advised by her colleague that a union representative has been looking for her. When she goes to the union office she is told that her department head cannot offer her the position without posting it first. Jennifer tells the union representative that she has been told by her supervisor it was not necessary to post it, but that she does not want the position anyway and she does not intend to take it. The union representative tells her the position must be posted, and if
Jennifer accepts the position, the union will grieve it and Jennifer will end up without any job. Jennifer’s department head is about to violate union rules and Jennifer is caught up in the violation.

When Jennifer returns to her department, she confronts the woman who told the union representative that Jennifer had been offered the position. Jennifer reminds the woman that she’d told her the day the position was offered to her that she would not be taking it. The problem for Jennifer is that her colleague has betrayed the sisterhood to which she assumed she and her colleagues belonged. Jennifer expects that women will stick together, care for and about each other. They will have each other’s back and will not cause harm to each other. Jennifer positions herself as an innocent victim who has been duped, and positions her colleague as unfair and deceptive. She subscribes to a discourse which assumes that, in the sisterhood, if there is a problem between women, they will identify it and work it out with each other without going to a higher authority.

Jennifer’s colleague, while she initially appeared to subscribe to this discourse, is instead part of the union’s surveillance of workers; the small scale everyday Foucauldian surveillance. These are the everyday strategies of biopower that act on women’s bodies. Women workers are not only involved as the watched, but also as the watchers.

Jennifer’s colleague participates in the subtle and unseen control of Jennifer by reporting her discussion with Jennifer about the job offer to the union representative.

When Jennifer’s department head arrives on Tuesday morning, Jennifer thanks her for the offer but tells her she plans to decline it. After leaving her office, Jennifer worries for the remainder of the day that she will be fired because of her decision, but she reminds herself that she has done nothing wrong. Later Jennifer tells me that eventually the
position was posted; however, when no one within the department applied, someone from outside the organization was hired.

On another occasion, Jennifer told me about the day her office manager informed her that she had been asked to assess Jennifer as part of a probationary evaluation, before the evaluation was actually due.

*The office manager came into the office at three thirty and pulled out this form and said, “I’ve been asked to do your probationary evaluation.” I said, “Well, that’s not until six months. I thought probation was up in six months.” “We do one here called a three month probationary evaluation, a pre-probation evaluation.” I said, “Okay, well, let’s get on with it.”*

*It was horrible. It was absolutely the worst evaluation. At that point, I was thirty-five, maybe thirty-six. I’d been working since I was sixteen and never in twenty years had I ever had a poor job evaluation. There were twenty items on the list of things she had to evaluate and the only positive thing that I got was ‘dresses professionally’. It was their evaluation of me. There was no input required from me.*

One of the items offered was, “How does employee take direction?” Then it had some options and one of the options was ‘takes direction well’. The second option was, ‘takes direction with support’ and the third one was ‘does not take direction well’. She had ticked off ‘does not take direction well’. Then there was a place for their justification. I think I must have been pale. I was sitting there thinking, does not take direction, my God, I just trained in six jobs. How can they say I don’t take direction?

*I said, “Can you give me an example of that?” She said, “Yes, I have two examples. One is that you don’t acknowledge the work hours of this department.” I said, “Oh, I sure do.” She said, “Our work hours are eight fifteen to four o’clock. You are here every morning at seven forty-five and you don’t leave until five o’clock.” I said, “So you’re getting an extra hour of work out of me every day and that’s bad?” “Well, you’re not acknowledging the hours of work, Jennifer. That’s what I’m saying.” I was working too long. I said, “I get a ride to work every morning and my husband picks me up in the afternoon, so what would you like me to do with that extra hour and fifteen minutes?” She said, “Well, bring a book and you can just sit out in the concourse and read.” I said, “Truly? You want me to ignore the bell from the people that arrive here at seven thirty every morning for an eight o’clock appointment. I’ve been registering those clients so they’re done by the time we open at eight o’clock.” “I’m just asking you to follow directions.” I said, “Okay. You’re on. I’ll do that.”*

The next one was ‘does not use good judgment’. I said, “Okay, can you give me an example?” She said, “Well, you were advised that you should watch the
relationships that you make and a week ago, when I told you that I didn’t think it was
good idea for you guys to go for lunch, you went anyway.” I said, “My lunch and
how I spend it is my business.” “Well, I told you we, the director and I, didn’t think
it was a good idea and you went ahead anyway.” I said, “Well, I’m going to have to
argue that point with you.”

We went through all of the items. None of them were positive and at the end, she
said, “Do you have anything to say?” I said, “Oh no, any responses I have will be in
writing.” “Well, that’s not necessary.” I said, “I think it is. You wrote it and you’re
giving me a hard copy of it so I’ll respond to you in writing.” She just slammed the
file closed and said, “Do what you have to do.”

I don’t think she was comfortable with giving it. I knew she had no faith in what
she’d written or what had been written for her. I honestly believe it was given to her
and she was asked to deliver it. I took my copy home and I phoned S. right away. I
said, “I’m quitting. This is ridiculous, S.”

She said, “I told you. This is what they do. They will break you and then they’ll
build you back up in the manner they want you to be. That’s how that department
works.” She lived through it but I think S. was one of those people who just put her
head down, did her work and never questioned anything and they left her alone. It
was when you challenged it that then, you know, then you were on the list and they
pick you apart.

I spent the whole weekend writing the letter. I think it was eight pages long. I
addressed every single point and I rebutted everything. I signed it and I cc’d Human
Resources and the Director of Human Resources, the woman who had hired me and
her boss, my director and the office manager.

On the Monday morning I made my first stop at Human Resources. I gave the letter
to J. and asked her to put a copy on my file. I said, “I want to be sure it gets there. It
is a rebuttal to my pre-probation evaluation.” She said, “We don’t do pre-probation
evaluations. They can’t do that.” I said, “Maybe you don’t but my department
does.” I said, “They did that and here is mine.” She said, “Your director did this?”
I said, “No, the office manager did.” “She can’t do that. She’s an in-scope
supervisor. She cannot evaluate another in scope person.” I said, “Well, she did
because she delivered it to me Friday afternoon at three fifteen.”

She took a copy and gave her boss a copy. I went down to the office. I put a copy on
my director’s desk, one on the office manager’s desk and I sat down at my desk to
wait. They both came in, walked right past me and never spoke. They never said
good morning or anything. The office manager went into her office and the director
went into hers. The director slammed her door and picked up her phone. The office
manager’s phone rang. She picked up her phone and shut her door. It was probably
five minutes later that the director opened her door, stormed out. The office manager
opened her door and said, “I need to see you now.”
I went in and she said, “Shut the door.” I shut the door. She said, “We got your letter. Maybe I shouldn’t have said this or that.” I said, “Well, you probably shouldn’t have but you did.” She said, “Well, I’ll just wipe this out.” I said, “Oh, don’t touch it. It needs to stay the way it is or I’m not signing it. You obviously believed it when you delivered it or you wouldn’t have delivered it, and was I hurt? Absolutely. I have never ever been so insulted in my life but it needs to stay the way it is.” She said, “Well, I think you’re being hardnosed about this Jennifer.” I said, “No. I don’t think so. I think I need to defend myself. You said things that you believed were indefensible and I’ve defended them. There’s a copy in HR and a copy in my file and now you have a copy. You can do what you want with the letter but I earned the position. I worked hard for it. I’ve done everything anybody’s asked of me here and more and I cannot believe that you would do this. Where’s this coming from?” She couldn’t answer me.

I don’t know if that was the turning point. I stood up to them and didn’t crumble. It was certainly a turning point for me because the Jennifer that I knew would have gotten up and quit. I was so angry, and I just thought if you don’t like me then I don’t want to be here. I earned this and you’re trying to take it away for no reason.

As foreign as that was to me and it was, I was not somebody who fought for anything, I was somebody who just kind of tried to find a hole some place to crawl in or just do my job and be quiet, but they raised something in me. I was so angry. I thought you can’t treat women like this. You can’t treat anybody like this.

I think by doing that I earned some respect, but it was not their respect that I wanted. I wanted to work in a workplace where I felt valued and with people that I enjoyed working with. I was doing a really good job and I cared too much about what it looked like. She was such a miserable director that I thought I have to get on her good side. I don’t want to go through this again so I put in a hundred and fifty percent effort. When there was something required of the department I was the first one to volunteer and when they were looking for people to do extra work, I was the first one to volunteer. Everybody else would go home. I’d still be working.

I busted my butt in that job. The funny part was, I made it through the next three months and when I got my final evaluation, honest to God, Wendy, it didn’t even remotely look like the same two people. She used words like “stellar”, “creative”, “innovative”, “well-educated” and “well spoken”. I’d either had a brain transplant or a personality transplant over the last three months or the pre-probationary evaluation was a deliberate attempt to break me.

When Jennifer’s office manager tells her she has been asked to do Jennifer’s probationary evaluation, Jennifer questions this and points out that her evaluation is not due for six months. Her office manager tells her they do one at three months and call it a
pre-probation evaluation. Jennifer tells me that the evaluation she is given by the office manager is very negative. In fact, it is the worst evaluation she has ever received in all her working years. In this telling, it is evident that Jennifer has subscribed to the discourse of superiors evaluating the work of subordinates, and she has received and accepted these evaluations in the past. However, in this situation, the evaluation of Jennifer is extremely negative. She tells me the only positive identified by the office manager is that Jennifer dresses professionally. When she is told she is rated as not taking direction well we see Jennifer’s distress. She says she must have been pale as she listened to this, and think to herself, “My God, I just trained in six jobs. How can they say I don’t take direction?” The problem for Jennifer is that she is operating according to the discourse of the “good worker” and that discourse has been violated through the critique of her contained in the pre-evaluation. Jennifer’s evaluation of herself is dependent upon or at least influenced by what others say about her. She wants to be seen as the competent and capable worker who is valued and respected for her initiative, achievement and hard work for the good of the organization. Jennifer works hard at and takes great pride in performing “the good worker” well. By saying she does not take direction, her office manager is saying they do not recognize that Jennifer is a good worker and positions her as inferior or a ‘bad worker.”

Jennifer asks her office manager to give examples for what she has criticized and is told that she does not acknowledge the work hours of this department. Jennifer argues that she does. However, her office manager explains that, by arriving fifteen minutes before she is supposed to start work and staying an hour after she is to finish, she is not following the work hours of the department. She is, therefore, working too long. Jennifer
explains to her office manager that the reason she arrives and leaves when she does is because her husband drops her off and picks her up. She also explains that this gives her the opportunity to begin registering people who arrive early. Her office manager suggests that, in the future, she should read a book instead and follow the office hours outlined. We see Jennifer’s distress again when she asks, “truly” as if she is unsure that she has correctly heard what was said. The discourse of the “good worker” is clear and she has followed it for many years without negative feedback. Arriving early, staying late and putting the smooth and efficient running of the organization before her own needs, as she does by registering early arrivals, have been part of this discourse for Jennifer. When the office manager reiterates that she wants Jennifer to follow her directions, Jennifer’s reply is, “Okay. You’re on. I’ll do that.” Now under attack by her office manager, Jennifer has gone into defensive mode. She objects that her efforts at being the conscientious “good worker” are not being recognized. She objects to not being valued, respected and appreciated as a good worker. She also objects to the office manager’s use of strategies of biopower. By trying to control Jennifer’s body by controlling her hours of work she is thereby controlling how Jennifer will perform “good worker.” Jennifer wants to perform good worker by working hard, by going above and beyond the minimal requirements of the job, and by caring for others. It is this latter aspect of the good worker discourse that is gendered. It is women who are required to be kind and caring in the workplace. Men can be acknowledged as good workers without displaying these qualities. For Jennifer, being a “good worker” is a reflection of who she is. Her value as a woman is attached to this and she wants to be acknowledged and valued for her goodness. The poor evaluation tells Jennifer that she is not valued in this way or for these efforts.
The office manager goes on to tell Jennifer that she does not use good judgment. The example she gives Jennifer is that she was told to watch the relationships she formed in the workplace and that, despite being told it wouldn’t be a good idea to go for lunch with colleagues, she went anyway. Jennifer objects to the office manager’s attempts once again to use the technologies of biopower to control Jennifer’s body by controlling with whom she can have lunch, by controlling her time, and by controlling with whom Jennifer can have a relationship. When Jennifer says it is her right to decide how she will spend her lunch hours, she subscribes to the discourse of individual freedom which assumes that lunch hours are free time for employees to do as they please and are not under the governance of the employer. When the group returns from lunch, the office manager demonstrates her dissatisfaction with Jennifer’s decision by retreating to her office and slamming the door. Jennifer is positioned as subordinate to the office manager in the workplace hierarchy. However, Jennifer violates the hierarchy by refusing to be subordinate and making her own decision about with whom she will go for lunch. Jennifer positions herself as independent and equal by disregarding her office manager’s advice and going for lunch with her colleagues anyway. Her office manager, on the other hand, is positioned as intrusive and overbearing.

As she leaves the pre-probation meeting with her office manager, Jennifer tells her that she will be responding to the evaluation in writing, even though her office manager has said that will not be necessary. Jennifer says that she believes the office manager was told by someone else to deliver this information. Her initial thought after getting home was that she should quit, but she decides against this. She tells me that her office manager and department head break staff down and rebuild them up in the manner
want. When staff challenge this, they come under attack. Jennifer spends the weekend writing her response letter, addressing and rebutting each point.

On Monday morning, Jennifer delivers the letter to Human Resources, requesting that a copy be placed in her personnel file as a rebuttal to her pre-probation evaluation. She is told pre-probation evaluations are not an approved practice and that her office manager cannot evaluate another employee, because she is also a union employee. Jennifer then proceeds to her department where she puts a copy of her response on the desks of her department head and the office manager. She then sits down at her desk. When Jennifer’s department head arrives at work that morning and reads the letter, she phones the office manager. Jennifer tells me that, within a few minutes, she is called into the office manager’s office and told they have received the copies of her rebuttal letter. Her office manager admits she probably should not have said the things she did and offers to remove them from the evaluation. Jennifer tells her not to remove anything and that the document should remain as it is or she will not sign it.

We see Jennifer’s distress when she tells her office manager that she was hurt and insulted by the evaluation. The problem for Jennifer is that she subscribes to the discourse of “good worker.” Accordingly, it is through hard work and doing everything that is asked of her and more, that she will earn the respect of her office manager and department head. She has worked at getting on her department head’s good side by putting in a hundred and fifty percent effort. She is the first one to volunteer. She has done extra work or stayed to work when everyone else has gone home. She is operating in accordance with the discourse of “good worker” and has done her job well; therefore, respect and appreciation are due her. They were trying to take away from her something
she had earned. She has earned her position in the workplace and expects to be rewarded for her efforts, rather than having to fight for the position. She tells me she is angry and finds it difficult to believe the office manager would do this to her. She does not understand why this has happened, nor does she see the discourses at work here.

Jennifer tells me she had to defend herself and that standing up to her office manager and department head in this way, and not crumbling, was a turning point in her relationship with them. Jennifer tells me that, previously, she was not someone who fought for anything. In similar circumstances in the past, she would have done her job and kept quiet or she would have quit. This time, something was aroused in her. At work here is the discourse of fight or flight stress response. This discourse assumes that when someone experiences shock or perceives a threat, a hormone is released that helps them survive by helping them run away quickly or fight harder. Jennifer has to decide whether to run or stand her ground and defend herself against an attack. According to this binary, criticism of Jennifer or of her work is tantamount to an attack on Jennifer as a person and on her value as a human being. Jennifer has chosen to defend herself against this attack on her as a valuable worker. Here Jennifer also invokes the discourse of power as something exercised by one person to dominate someone and reduce them to subservience; something that you either have or don’t have creating an imbalance between those who have power and those who don’t. In Jennifer’s situation, she was respected more by her department head and office manager when she stood up for herself and was unwilling to take the criticism in the pre-evaluation.

In the previous two research texts, Jennifer also invokes the discourse of a work ethic; the belief in the moral benefits of hard work in strengthening one’s character by
improving such virtues as honesty, dependability, loyalty, efficiency, initiative and self-direction. It also includes punctuality, dressing appropriately for the job, having a positive attitude, getting along with other workers, and producing high quality work; all the while remaining humble and modest and refraining from watching the clock.

Another problem for Jennifer is that the pre-probation evaluation doesn’t exist for anyone else. Its creation is a violation of negotiated union rules and, more importantly, a violation of a discourse which assumes good women will be kind, fair and caring toward each other. Both her department head and the office manager are women, but they are not behaving as good women. They are violating the discourse of the sisterhood of women and, in this case, targeting Jennifer. The other employees in the office are not subjected to this violation. This is a response to Jennifer alone and to her performance of good worker. The poor evaluation tells Jennifer she is not valued or respected, and because she has put such effort into being a good woman and a good worker, it feels particularly hurtful to her.

Jennifer tells me that when she receives her final evaluation three months later, she is barely able to recognize the person it describes as the person described in the pre-evaluation. She is now described as creative, innovative, well-educated and well-spoken. Jennifer tells me this leaves her wondering if she’d had a brain or a personality transplant. Her sarcasm highlights her next assertion: that her women supervisors have made a deliberate attempt to break her and then build her back up. Here Jennifer pictures a hierarchy of the powerful tearing down those without power so that workers will surrender to their demands and be transformed into something useful to those with power. According to this discourse, attempts are made to weaken someone, to have them lose
their strength and determination, to get them to yield, to give up. When she refers to being built back up, Jennifer assumes that the reason a person is torn down is to destroy what was and to cause change in order to make something different.

Jennifer positions herself as a tough survivor in the face of adversity, as someone who is strong, someone who uses the rules to stand up for herself and someone who sticks with something she starts and never gives up. She also presents herself as a good hard working employee, one who is caring and giving, who goes above and beyond what is required, one who wants to be a team player, one who is quiet and compliant and an obedient worker. Her department head is positioned as the cold, unreasonable, unpredictable, conniving, suspicious woman with a reputation as someone who works outside the rules. Her office manager is positioned as mean and hurtful and manipulated by others.

Jennifer also told me about the days following her department head’s departure.

It was probably June when we found out my department director was leaving. She said she was having this big garage sale so she had me, and some of the other girls in the office, typing tags for her garage sale because we would do anything just to get her permanently out. I started my holidays July 6th and she phoned me on Tuesday, July 7th and asked if we would be interested in a couple of bikes left over from the garage sale. I said, “That would be great.” I didn’t want her anywhere near my house but she and her husband bought them over. They were two rattletrap old bikes with fenders that had rusted out years before. She said she wanted twenty-five dollars apiece and I wrote the cheque.

I remember looking at them in the garage and thinking, Jennifer, you’re losing your mind. My husband walked into the garage and said, “What the hell are those two bikes doing there?” I said, “She said I had mentioned that I wanted some bikes so she brought them over. I just wanted her out of here so badly I wrote the cheque.”

The day she left I started my vacation. I had been on holidays two days when I ended up in the Psych Unit for three weeks, and she was gone. I should have been feeling a huge sense of relief. I went in and the doctors were great. It was just horrible anxiety and horrible feelings. It was almost like this gigantic damn broke. I honestly couldn’t put my finger on it. I couldn’t tell them what it was. I had never in my life
experienced anything like it. It was like a total breakdown. It’s as if the worst trauma I had ever felt finally ended and I couldn’t believe it was over. We worked with such anxiety every day. We never knew when the axe was going to fall. We never knew when she was going to blow her stack and just turn the whole place upside down. It was so insidious. She undermined your self-esteem and your ability to do your job. Even though she treated you as if you were doing a horrible job, you knew you were doing a good job. There were mixed messages all the time. She would pull you close and include you in private conversations, and push you away and you just didn’t know. You were never on solid ground. We’d functioned at such a peak all the time that it was like someone had sucked the wind out of me.

Jennifer tells me that her department head is having a garage sale. She has some of the staff in the office make price tags for the items. On the day of the garage sale, she calls Jennifer to ask if she would be interested in two bikes that have not sold, and then brings them over. She asks Jennifer for twenty-five dollars for each. Jennifer gives her a cheque for that amount, despite thinking the bikes were in very poor condition and not worth that amount. Jennifer tells me that when her husband sees the bikes he doesn’t understand why she’s made the purchase. Jennifer’s distress is evident as she explains that she paid the amount her department head asked because she wanted her department head to leave so badly.

Jennifer continues by telling me that two days after her department head left, she was admitted to the psychiatric ward for a three week period of treatment due to the trauma she had been experiencing in her workplace. It had ended, but she could not believe it. She tells me that she had worked under a very high level of anxiety and never knew when things might be upset in the workplace as the result of her department head’s anger. She was unable to feel the relief when her department head left. Jennifer tells me that her self-esteem had been undermined, as well as her ability to do her job. Even when she knew she was doing a good job, she was treated as if she were doing a very poor job. She tells me that her department head was unpredictable. She would include Jennifer in
private conversations and then exclude her. Jennifer tells me that her director left before she was fired, but not before Jennifer was a basket case. Jennifer says she felt like someone had sucked the wind out of her. She says she experienced horrible anxiety to the point where a damn broke. She had a total breakdown. When she was in hospital she was unable to tell the doctors what had happened to her to put her in this place, but she knew it was something that she had not previously experienced in her life.

Here, Jennifer subscribes to the discourse of mental illness and individual pathology. According to this discourse, the level of psychological well-being, or the absence of mental disorder, is the ability of an individual to create a balance between life activities and the efforts required to achieve them in order to enjoy life, be productive and contribute to society. According to Jennifer, her valuation of herself was so low that her normal functioning was impaired to the point of being disabled. She was unable to do her job. She was broken and required the help of a professional to recover, and this was her own fault.

The problem for Jennifer is that she is operating in two opposing discourses and is, therefore, in constant conflict with herself. On the one hand, she is operating in the discourse of the “good worker” who is compliant with the wishes of others against her own best interest. She works hard, does as she is told without complaint, allows herself to be directed and redirected, cares about others and goes beyond what is expected to fulfill unreasonable demands. On the other hand, she is operating within the “survivor” discourse. According to this discourse, one must carry on despite hardships or trauma, persevere despite adversity, outlive others and remain functional. Jennifer was the one who would stay the course, the one who would put in the effort and be strong and good
enough to withstand the pressure. She is an independent woman who stands up for herself. She must do both: submit and resist. However, subscribing to two opposing discourses is too much for Jennifer to maintain any longer. The effect is that Jennifer becomes physically, emotionally, and mentally ill and has to be hospitalized.

In the next research text, Jennifer provides an example of a discourse with which she must comply, but that causes her emotional pain.

*The department head ended up being the person that had no one. Did we delight in that? I hope not, because I don’t see myself as that kind of person. But I’ll tell you Wendy, there were times where I said, yeah, you deserve to be out because you pushed people so hard.*

*She had been there for three years and when she decided she was going to go, one of the staff said to me, “What are we going to do? Well, we have to have a potluck for her.” So, we planned this potluck lunch. I said, “It’s a sendoff, guys. We’ll do it up good.” So everybody donated for the gift. I think that was the hardest part. We were doing what we would have done for someone that we cared a lot about and that was the conflict. I hate you so much. You’ve made me do things and say things and be somebody that I am not, just to get through this three year period. Now I have to celebrate with you? This is just so outside what I’m comfortable with. But I organized it. Had I not, I don’t know if it would have happened and then I would have felt guilty for not doing anything, so we went ahead and did it.*

*We had gag gifts. Somebody would put in something and say don’t tell her it’s from me. We had packages of gum. She would sit in her office and crack her gum. Someone put lemons in the gag gifts. Every time she had a glass of water it had to have lemon in it. V. would run up to the cafeteria and bring her a pitcher of water with ice and she would cut lemons in her office. Her office smelled like lemons all the time.*

Jennifer didn’t want to see herself as the kind of person who was happy about her department head being alone. That is not what a good and caring woman would wish upon anyone. However, there were times when she thought her department head deserved just that because she had pushed people so hard. Jennifer tells me that when her department head decided to leave, the staff thought they had to do something for her farewell send off, so they planned a potluck lunch. All the staff donated toward a gift, as
they would have done for any other staff member. They also had gag gifts, but they didn’t want anyone to tell who each gift was from. Jennifer tells me that her department head had made her do and say things and be someone she did not believe she was. Jennifer had suffered through three years with this woman and then had to celebrate her. We see Jennifer’s distress when she tells me she hates her department head. Once again, we see Jennifer’s lack of agency. She is unable to see herself as anything but the subordinate to and victim of a woman who is above her in the hierarchical workplace and, therefore, unable to see other possibilities. The negative feelings Jennifer has for her department head did not align with the discourse of the “good woman” who is kind, sensitive, nurturing, and giving to others, the discourse that Jennifer works so hard at. Nor does this discourse align with the discourse of the good worker who respects her superiors.

Jennifer tells me that even though it made her uncomfortable, she organized the farewell because she wasn’t sure if anyone else would, and then she would have felt guilty for not doing anything. Jennifer feels the distress of taking up two discourses which contradict each other. On the one hand, she belongs to the sisterhood of women who care for each other, so she feels compelled to plan the farewell. However, she is also operating from a discourse which assumes that people should reap what they sow and which positions her department head as responsible for and deserving of her own suffering.

Jennifer tells me that one of her colleagues commented that if the department head cracked her gum one more time she was going to choke her. She also tells me that every time the department head had a glass of water, it had to have lemon in it. The department
head positioned Jennifer and her colleagues as servants when she used the technologies of biopower to commandeer their bodies to serve her. One of the other women in the office would be required to run up to the cafeteria and bring her a pitcher of ice water.

Jennifer’s department head would then cut lemons to put in the water in her office. Her office would often smell of lemons. This was an intrusion on space she shared with others.

Jennifer tells me about the day her department head went to a meeting in another area of the building and then called Jennifer to bring her tea. Here again, the department head positions Jennifer as a servant, and controls her body.

_She had some very odd manners. She was very much about the perception of the power that she had. She would leave and say, “I’ve got a meeting on” whatever floor or “If you need me, you can call me.” The phone would ring about five minutes after the meeting started and she’d say, “I need tea.” You would have to go to the cafeteria, get her tea, carry it to the meeting room, knock on the door and disturb the meeting to carry her tea in. She wouldn’t get up from the table and come and get it from you. She would wait for you to serve it to her and, of course, you’re interrupting a high level meeting. My biggest fear was, I’m going to open that door and spill her tea. I would go in and put her tea down and she would say, “Thank you. You can go,” implying that I should be bowing all the way out. She was just such a piece of work._

Here, Jennifer tells me about the day her department head went to a meeting on another floor. Shortly after the meeting started she called back to the office to say she needed tea. Jennifer went to the cafeteria to get the tea and carried it to the room where her department head was meeting. Once there, she knocked on the door and interrupted the meeting to carry in the tea. Jennifer’s department head did not get up from the table and meet Jennifer at the door to take the tea, but waited for Jennifer to serve her the tea. Jennifer feared she would spill the tea as she served it. Her department head said thank you and told her she could go. Jennifer describes her exit from the room as “bowing all
“the way out.” The problem for Jennifer is being positioned as a servant whose time is not her own. As a servant, her body is not her own. She is at the beck and call of her department head and must comply. Her body is controlled by her department head as she goes for the tea, delivers the tea, and (perhaps metaphorically) backs out of the room. The act of bringing tea positions Jennifer as inferior to the department head. All of her struggles to be a good worker, to be respected and valued and appreciated do not help. Being inferior does not fit with the discourse of “good woman” or the discourse of the sisterhood of women in which Jennifer operates, where women are equals, care about each other, support each other and treat each other with respect. In this and the previous example, Jennifer’s supervisor is not doing “good woman” well. Good women do not have positions of authority over other women and are not powerful. Jennifer’s supervisor uses her position of authority as a technology of biopower when she makes demands of Jennifer and other women in the office to serve her. Both Jennifer and her supervisor are white women, but even when both people are white, race is present. Two of the discursive characteristics of being white are goodness and respectability (Schick, 2000). A discourse of racial inferiority positions non-whites as people who can be subordinated in their bodies to unreasonable demands. In the research texts I have presented, Jennifer is never subordinated by her race, but her gender and her place in the workplace hierarchy subordinate her. Her race leads her to expect she will be respected if she plays by the rules. Jennifer doesn't expect to be disrespected, unappreciated, undervalued or asked to be a servant. She expects more. In the social production of gender and race, Jennifer is entitled to better treatment because she is white, especially when the other people are women.
In the following excerpt, Jennifer tells me about her experience with a counsellor as an outpatient, several months after her department head resigned.

"I ended up doing outpatient therapy for six months. I met a wonderful counsellor there. I’d work mornings and then go to therapy in the afternoon. The counsellor said, “You know, Jennifer, I think it had a huge amount to do with self-esteem and the fact that this woman had an ability to filter out people who suffered in that area. If you had low self-esteem she was somebody who would peg you and then you became that pawn. Then you did what you needed to do to get by. It’s almost like brainwashing or a hostage situation where people are put in positions they wouldn’t otherwise choose for themselves. They are forced to stay in that position, whether it’s a threat of job loss or it’s based on self-esteem. They won’t like me, and if they don’t like me, then how am I going to work here. Some people are just magnets for bullies.”

Jennifer tells me that after she left the hospital, she continued to see a counsellor for another six months. She tells me she worked in the mornings and went to therapy with a “wonderful” counsellor in the afternoon. The counsellor says she thinks Jennifer’s problems had a lot to do with her self-esteem; that her department head had the ability to detect someone who suffered with low self-esteem, and once she had identified them that person would then become her pawn. Her counsellor tells her that when that happens a person will do what they need to do to get by. Jennifer tells me the counsellor said it was almost like brainwashing; the kind of thing that happens when people are taken hostage or put into a position they would not otherwise have chosen for themselves. She says that the counsellor told her people stay in those positions due to threat of job loss or for other reasons, but also because of problems with self-esteem. They believe people won’t like them, and if people don’t like them, they won’t be able to work there. Jennifer says the counsellor told her some people are just magnets for bullies.

Jennifer’s counsellor invoked the discourse of self-esteem or self-worth. According to this discourse, people make appraisal of their own overall competence and worth. This
self-evaluation is said to be an influential predictor of the individual’s life outcomes and is closely related to either their well-being or their personal suffering. Here, the counsellor suggests that it is Jennifer’s low opinion of herself that has resulted in the problems Jennifer is experiencing. When she tells Jennifer that she attracts those who will hurt or bully her, she is holding Jennifer responsible for causing her own suffering. This is a discourse of individual pathology. Also invoked by the counsellor is the discourse of brainwashing; the possibility of systematically changing someone’s attitudes and beliefs. The counsellor implies that Jennifer did not make her own decisions but was influenced by her department head to the point that she was placed in positions she would not have chosen for herself. Jennifer does not understand how what happened between her and her office manager and department head is related to discourse practices and the power relations they produce.

In the following research text, Jennifer tells me how the counsellor explained what she thought had happened, why Jennifer felt the way she did, and what she believed Jennifer’s role in the office had been.

_The counsellor said, “The people who would just put their heads down and do their job, they are the healthy people. They are the ones who just say, I don’t have time for this. I’m just going to do my job and go home at night and not let it bother me."

“You were the last person hired in that department for about a year, Jennifer. You had two things you needed to do. One, you needed to learn the job and two, you needed to create a place for yourself and develop relationships. You had a bully for a boss who encouraged that kind of behaviour in others, so you walked on egg shells the whole time. No one can work in that environment for any length of time and not suffer something. You are one of those personalities who fixes things for people. If something’s broken, they’ll call you to fix it so, you had that role. At the end of it, could you really tell me what your role was?”

_I couldn’t, Wendy. I honestly didn’t know what my role was. But now that I think about it, if there was anxiety in the office, I’d try and cheer people up. If there was sickness, I’d cover their job. If there were two people sick, I covered two jobs._
Whatever was needed to keep the peace. I grew up in that role so that was something I was comfortable with. My role was fixing. My director would stir it up and I’d fix it. I was doing things for somebody that I really didn’t like, but I was afraid not to like her. I was afraid to tell her how angry I was.

Jennifer’s counsellor tells her about how some staff in the office put their heads down and do their jobs. They are the healthy people. They don’t take time to worry about whether or not others like them. They just do their jobs and go home at night. They do not let things at work bother them. Here, the good worker is a healthy worker and the healthy worker is one who keeps her head down, does her job and doesn’t question or cause problems. Jennifer’s counsellor takes up the discourse of the moral virtues of hard work, considered to be a desirable quality. The discourse assumes that workers will do what they are hired to do, when they are supposed to do it and in the manner that it is supposed to be done.

Jennifer tells me that her counsellor explained that because she was the last employee of the current group to be hired, she had to both learn her job and create a place for herself within the group by creating relationships with others in her workplace. Her counsellor says that the department head was a bully who encouraged bullying behaviour in others and that’s why Jennifer always felt like she was walking on egg shells.

Jennifer’s counsellor is operating from a discourse that assumes people are responsible for their own suffering. She positions Jennifer as the one who caused many of her own problems. But she also labels Jennifer’s department head “a bully.” The counsellor tells Jennifer that no one is able to work in that kind of environment without suffering in some way. She tells Jennifer that she is the type of personality who fixes things for others. If something is broken, they will call on Jennifer to fix it. That was her role in the office.

This is the expected pattern of behaviour of someone associated with social status, like a
part played by a performer. Jennifer says she tried to cheer people up if they were anxious. She would cover someone’s job if they were sick. If two people were sick, she’d cover both jobs. Jennifer tells me that she would do whatever it took to keep the peace. Invoked here is the accepted cultural discourse of the woman as peace keeper. It assumes that it is the job of women to fix things, look after others and make everything better. Jennifer’s department head would stir things up in the office and Jennifer would fix them and did so despite not liking her department head. The counsellor invokes a discourse of personal responsibility which assumes that we are each responsible for our own suffering. The problem, according to the counsellor, is Jennifer’s personality and her desire to prevent difficulties by fixing problems and maintaining order and that makes Jennifer responsible for her own suffering. The counsellor has taken up the discourse of the existence of a subconscious, an essential characteristic of being a person. This subconscious mind includes a set of characteristics unique to each person that influences and motivates their thinking, feeling, and behaviour in various situations.

Jennifer tells me that she was afraid not to like her department head or to tell her how angry she really was. Jennifer subscribes to the gendered discourse that it is unacceptable for good women to dislike others or be angry. Jennifer tells me that she grew up with and felt comfortable with this discourse. She had spent a lifetime performing “good” and continued to be invested in a discourse of “good woman” and “good worker” that did not allow her to dislike her boss or tell her boss how she felt about her. According to this discourse, women’s emotional reactions are attributed to personal characteristics; who she is as a person. When women express their anger they are considered to be out of control. They are considered to be unprofessional and needing discipline. Women are expected to
be kinder and more modest than men. Failure to conform to these expectations could evoke negative responses from others which is what Jennifer was afraid of. In the end, it was the subscription to this and similar discourses that caused Jennifer to become ill.

In what follows, Jennifer tells me how she has made sense of what happened to her.

I’m sure that people looked at us and didn’t trust us. My director would come up with all kinds of stories that she had heard as gossip in our office. She had convinced at least one or two people in that office to be her “go to girls,” to be the ones who would repeat the gossip that they heard. She would end up in meetings with information that she probably shouldn’t have had. People believed that it came from us because we gossiped and were back stabbing and fighting. She thought it was funny. I know that she believed that it was true.

She was one of those very odd people that didn’t care what kind of attention she drew to herself. More often it was negative attention. I don’t think she ever did anything in the job that anyone looked up to or said “what an innovative and creative idea that was.” I think she just basically survived, and then when she left we were just like people that were set adrift. Where are you going to go? What are you going to do now? I stuck with my job because I thought I needed to rebuild my reputation. We worked really hard for a really awful person for a very long time.

When three or four of us go out for dinner together, the conversation will just go back there. I walk out feeling the same way I did twenty years ago. It’s that same angst. I thought, wow, that hasn’t healed? I can only compare it to having lived with my husband who had kind of a separate life for twenty-three years. You never knew when someone was going to come and repossess your car or tell you your mortgage payment was six months in arrears. It was that same kind of feeling. When I think back I think they went hand in hand, because while she was behaving that way, he was doing that. I blame him and her for my three week stint in the psych ward. I can definitely blame the mistrust, for putting me in a position where I felt so off balance that I didn’t know where the truth was. I’m sure for the three years that I worked for her, my insides were saying, “Are you a dumb shit or what? Get out of here.” But my outside was saying, “I can’t quit.”

If I can take it back a little bit. I think that I have always had this insane need to change people. I was raised by two alcoholic parents, so I was fighting all the time. I think from a very young age I thought, this is not going to beat me, and I stayed. It certainly didn’t work with my parents. No matter how angry I got and no matter how devastating their behaviour was, they didn’t change. If I look back on what drove me to stay there, I think I was waiting to see if I could make a difference.

Where’s the fight and flight thing? Why didn’t I say cut your losses and get the hell out of here, because this is not healthy? I did most of my fighting internally. I fought
to stay alive basically. I could talk to people and they would say, “Oh God, we didn’t know it was that bad.” Maybe it wasn’t for everybody else. You could probably talk to my friend because she certainly saw what was going on there. She felt it but I don’t think she felt it the same way. She was much stronger emotionally than I was, but I’m sure she felt it.

The two people that left just said I can’t work for somebody like this and they left. I thought, you’re right and we shouldn’t have to. So why am I still here? To see if I could make her different, if I could make that department different, fix it. I couldn’t and I think that felt like a failure and nobody likes failure but I hadn’t failed as much as she had refused to change.

Jennifer tells me that she is sure that people in other departments did not trust her or her colleagues, because her department head would tell stories about how gossipy they were. Jennifer also tells me her department head had convinced one or two of Jennifer’s colleagues to tell her what they’d heard in the office, so she’d end up at meetings with information she would not otherwise have. Jennifer tells me this led people in other departments to think that Jennifer and her colleagues spread gossip, and that they were backstabbing and fighting with each other. She says her department head thought this was funny. She liked to draw attention to herself, but didn’t do anything innovative or creative and she didn’t care if she received negative attention.

A discourse at work here is that of betrayal (backstabbing); the belief that people can be trusted to act in good faith has been violated. Also at work is the discourse of gossip, when personal or private information about someone is shared. Along with the sharing of facts and views about someone is the possibility of transmitting errors, slight variations on the facts or complete misinformation. Specific groups of people sometimes use this kind of communication to bond together. Both discourses position people who take them up as bad workers and in violation of the discourse of the “good worker.” In Jennifer’s telling, all the women in the office were positioned as bad women and therefore, bad
workers because they were untrustworthy and spread misinformation.

Jennifer tells me that, when the department head left, the office staff were like people who had been set adrift, not knowing where they were going or what they were going to do. Jennifer stuck with her job because, after working very hard for their awful department head for so long, she felt she had to rebuild her reputation. Jennifer tells me that, even now, when she goes out with three or four other staff members, the dinner conversation inevitably returns to those times many years ago. She leaves feeling the same angst she did back then.

Jennifer tells me that she compares her work experience to living with her ex-husband. She never knew when someone was going to come and repossess their car or tell her the mortgage payment was in arrears. Both were happening about the same time, and she didn’t know what the truth was. She tells me she felt mistrust and off balance and blames herself for not leaving that situation. However, Jennifer tells me that she was raised by two alcoholic parents who were fighting all the time. From that experience, she learned that if you left, you were beaten. She wonders why she didn’t just quit and get out of an unhealthy situation, but instead decided she was not going to be beaten. She stayed and kept most of what she was going through to herself. Jennifer was performing “good woman” and “good worker.” She holds herself to higher standards than do others.

At work here is the discourse of failure and the failure is hers if she cannot change other people. This discourse of failure assumes that a path to achieve a particular goal can be set, but if the chosen path has not resulted in the goal being achieved you have failed. This discourse also assumes that trying and failing is better than to never have tried at all. The discourse of quitting is also at work. This discourse assumes someone has
quit when the same path to achieve a particular goal is set, but they gave up along the way before they knew whether or not the path they chose would get them to the goal. This discourse also assumes that the person who set the goal just didn’t have what it takes to follow through. Jennifer has taken up both of these discourses. She did not want to be that person who failed or didn’t follow through. Jennifer tells me that she thought her department head was much stronger emotionally than she was. However, she also tells me that she wonders why she stayed when others had left, and thinks it is because she has a need to change people, even though it never worked with her parents.

No matter how devastating their behaviour was, they never changed. The desire to change the people involved is what drove her to stay there. According to the discourse of change that Jennifer invokes here, it is possible to transform something or someone into something different. Jennifer has taken up the discourse to mean that if she worked hard enough she could change people, particularly her department head, for the better.

Jennifer’s failure within her family was a defining experience for her and she draws upon that as an adult to fuel her to set goals and achieve them. The discourse of trust, also invoked by Jennifer, sets people up to expect something; to expect people to behave in a certain way. Jennifer expected her husband wouldn’t spend money without talking to her first. She expected her husband would pay the bills. She expected her parents to be good parents and not get drunk. She expected that a good worker, which she considered herself to be, would be respected by her boss. When people violated these discourses Jennifer was distressed. This is her chance. Jennifer needs to prove that she is strong.

Jennifer tells me she believes that this is what drove her to stay in the difficult work situation. This became her goal. She was waiting to see if she could make a difference in
her department, to see if she could fix it. She wants to be the hero and change it for everyone. She felt like a failure when she couldn’t and felt disliked because she had failed. In the end, she tells me, she had not failed. She had tried. Her department head had simply refused to change.

Her distress was not the result of personality or personal failure as she suggests. Jennifer was unable to see that her distress was the result of the conflicting discourses by which Jennifer lived. The problem for Jennifer is that she had taken up these discourses, she was conflicted, but a good woman is passive and suffers in silence. This discourse conflicts with the discourse of rational human behaviour, which assumes that one’s goals, values and actions are based in reality, never on one’s perception of reality. For Jennifer, they (her husband, her parents, her boss) should see the errors of their ways; they should do better; however, they didn’t. By staying in an unhealthy workplace and in an unhealthy relationship with a woman boss, Jennifer hoped to make her department head see the errors of her ways and change. Jennifer wanted to fix her department head and her office manager. Her counsellor personalized this as Jennifer’s problem and pathologized Jennifer as the one at fault. She did not acknowledge the discourses at work and the discourses in conflict with one another. These discursive conflicts were the source of Jennifer’s distress, not her personality.

Jennifer wants to be the strong independent woman who figures it out and survives. She is looking for an explanation as to why she has been treated as inferior, when she worked so hard to gain respect. She wants to know why the woman department head and office manager did not treat her as if they were all part of a sisterhood. When she says they “refused to change”, she too is invoking a discourse which assumes that people’s
problems are something they cause themselves and are their own responsibility.

4.4 Hanna

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After reporting that she had been harassed by her male supervisor, D., Hanna was persecuted by the university Vice President, Academic. But Hanna’s past relationship with her office manager interfered when Hanna went to her for help. The following section includes three research texts from Hanna. The first is Hanna speaking of the emotional tone of her workplace and her trouble with a woman, the vice president academic, above her in the workplace hierarchy. The second is Hanna speaking of her trouble with the female officer manager. The third offers examples of biopower operating in Hanna’s workplace.

In the following section of research text, Hanna tells me about the office where she worked and what happened after she spoke out and reported being harassed by the male supervisor in her department.

_It wasn’t an office where people went for coffee or visited very much. I didn’t like the tone of it right from the time I went in. They had cutting jokes, put down humor, that sort of thing was just the norm so I really didn’t warm up to or socialize with any of those people._

_They tended not to help each other. On my first days there I said where do I go to get this copied and they said, “Well, you have to do it yourself” and that was all I got for instruction. That was pretty much typical. And then there was M. who was D’s boss. She was barely civil._
I guess I was incredibly naive to think that harassment might actually be dealt with seriously by an organization, but it was not. All kinds of pressure was brought to bear on me to shut up, move, leave, or pretend it didn’t happen. It was just that sort of isolation. She [the vice president] really didn’t want to have to deal with any of these problems or concerns.

I was trying to bring my work to her and I was also trying to ask her for some kind of resolution to this. I thought, if this isn’t working, maybe I should report elsewhere. The organization wouldn’t hear of it. I didn’t even think the harassment officer was very helpful. She was anything but helpful. She pretended to be neutral but I didn’t feel she was neutral at all. I felt she was representing the university’s interests, both physically and structurally. I was definitely treated as a trouble maker. M., the office manager, was barely civil at best.

So I’d had to write a work plan and report to the vice president every week to discuss it with her and explain to her what I’d done with my time. The real negative experience was with her. Nobody had paid enough attention to me ever so I was completely unused to that approach in any job I’d had. I got the sense from her body language and facial expressions, and sometimes her responses to me that she didn’t believe I was doing anything at all. Sometimes, in our meetings, I would say to her, “Well, what are you going to do with me?” I wondered what the outcome would be after this sexual harassment investigation. Nobody would tell me anything, so I just sort of bumbled along trying to do my work.

Hanna talked about the office in which she worked. She tells me that people in that office didn’t go for coffee together or visit much, and Hanna didn’t like the tone in the office right from the start. She tells me it was normal to hear cutting jokes and put down humor, so she never really warmed up to or socialized with the other staff. Hanna also said the other staff didn’t help each other. An example she told me about was when she asked where she should go to get photocopies made and she was told she’d have to do it herself. She said that type of thing was pretty typical. Hanna goes on to tell me that M., who was the office manager and Hanna’s supervisor D’s boss, was barely civil to her. A discourse of appropriate workplace manners emphasizes the importance of maintaining a level of civility between workplace colleagues. This includes having warm relationships and socializing with colleagues. Good people and good workers visit and have coffee
with each other. Hanna positions her colleagues and the office manager as unfriendly and hurtful to one another. Hanna objects to the lack of civility and collegiality in the office, because it violates the discourse of a good worker which says that workers should be supportive, helpful and behave in a pleasant way toward each other, mind their own business and keep their noses to the grind stone to produce what is desired by the organization.

Hanna tells me she was incredibly naive because she thought that when she reported the harassment by D. it would be taken seriously and dealt with by the organization. It was not. Instead of being supported and taken care of as the victim of the harassment, pressure was brought to bear on Hanna to shut up, move, leave, or pretend it didn’t happen. She tells me M. really didn’t want to have to deal with any of the problems or concerns Hanna was bringing to her, and she didn’t want or know how to ensure a resolution to the harassment investigation. Hanna wondered if she should report to someone else in the organization on her employment equity work, but they would not hear of it. Even the harassment officer, who was to investigate her complaint, wasn’t very helpful. In fact, Hanna said she was anything but helpful. She pretended to be neutral but Hanna tells me she didn’t feel she was neutral at all. According to Hanna, the harassment officer was representing the university’s interests, both physically and structurally, rather than Hanna’s. She treated Hanna as if she was in the wrong. Hanna believed the harassment was wrong. According to a discourse of goodness, good people don’t harass. Good people don’t make fun of others, don’t put each other down and don’t use humour to cover up their behaviour. Organizations in which harassment is happening, and which know about it will put a stop to it and punish those involved.
Hanna had violated the good woman discourse by not being compliant and by being a strong woman who stood up for herself when her male supervisor made advances toward her. According to this discourse, good women are not supposed to be strong and stand up for themselves. Good women know how to take a joke and how to be a good sport. They don’t take offense at what is said or done, and certainly wouldn’t make trouble for others. Hanna was being too serious. The discourse of goodness is gendered in that if a man had complained, he would not have been punished for speaking out. He would have been admired for his courage. Hanna also violated the good worker discourse by making it necessary for her office manager and the human resource department to deal with something they didn’t want to deal with, a staff member being harassed by another staff member. Hanna tells me that no one would tell her anything about the investigation and she was left wondering what the outcome would be. Hanna was persistent as well, asking what was happening with the investigation, what the resolution would be and what was going to happen to her. Hanna presents herself as earnestly seeking resolution from her employer. She did not let it go nor trust that she would be looked after by those in charge within the organization.

Hanna tells me that, after she reported her male supervisor’s sexual harassment, things got much worse for her. Hanna’s vice president is positioned as the one in authority, superior to Hanna and higher in the workplace hierarchy than Hanna. She performs her authority by using Foucauldian surveillance and requiring Hanna to write a work plan and meet with her every week to explain what she is doing on the job. Hanna’s vice president acts to control Hanna’s time and her body. This is biopower at work. Hanna told me this attention from her vice president was unusual in comparison to her
previous work experiences. According to Hanna, when they met, her vice president’s body language, facial expression, and responses were such that Hanna believed her vice president didn’t believe she was doing any work. The surveillance Hanna was subjected to positions Hanna as untrustworthy. Hanna objects to being monitored in this fashion and not being believed or trusted. Demanding that Hanna submit to weekly surveillance, her vice president is positioned as the unreasonable, untrusting, and suspicious one, the disrespectful one, and the demanding one.

In the following research text, Hanna tells me about her office manager.

You asked me to be completely honest so I’ll tell you what I really thought of the office manager. She always scared me. I couldn’t warm up to her. I’m sorry. She seemed to have so little personality, the personality of a plant.

They weren’t professionally educated people. Not stupid, just uneducated. Most of them didn’t have a bachelor’s degree. They were clerks and came with blatant biases. She didn’t seem to have much education. Her writing skills and articulation weren’t great. Before this ever happened, when I had a meeting with her, she wasn’t able to explain. She didn’t have very good grammar or she would sulk in a meeting.

I wondered how she got to the position that she had. The manager handles caretaking and the bookstore, a huge area of responsibility. A lot of people were reporting to her. I just didn’t think she represented herself or the position in a very professional manner. I guess I look for people who can communicate reasonably well. I disliked her and I didn’t have much respect for her. I sort of looked down on her from that point and I regret that because that’s not fair. I made a big conclusion based on very limited information. I think I was insolent. I thought I was superior. I regret feeling that way about her and jumping to that conclusion so early, not only because it may have impacted on her but because it didn’t feel good. It was unfair and wrong and then I treated her badly. It’s not the way to treat people. People know if I don’t like them. I wear it on my sleeve. She might have picked up on that. I think she felt demeaned for a long time. So I think our interchanges were doomed. Then I come to her for help and of course I’m in a moment of weakness. It’s too late then.

Hanna tells me that she is afraid of her office manager and, because of her personality, Hanna could never develop a warm relationship with her. She tells me that her office manager and other staff in the department were not stupid people but they were
uneducated. Her office manager had poor grammar, writing skills, and articulation. She
tells me it was this lack of education that resulted in their biases. Hanna also tells me she
is unsure as to how her office manager had been able to get the position she had when she
did not behave in a professional manner. The position carried with it considerable
responsibility for a variety of areas and this woman had a lot of people reporting to her.
In the telling of this description, Hanna invokes a discourse of education as necessary and
beneficial. According to this discourse, education involves an ease and skill in writing
down one’s thoughts with clarity and precision and a certain manner of speaking.
Uneducated people have none of this and are, therefore, lower in the workplace hierarchy
and the social order than those with education. They have undesirable biases, are
incapable, and less deserving of certain jobs. People with education are superior in the
social order and more deserving of positions higher in the workplace hierarchy. The
more education one has, the more deserving they are, and the higher up in the hierarchy
they should be. Hanna’s office manager is positioned as an uneducated and therefore, an
unprofessional woman void of a personality to which others would warm. Here, Hanna
invokes the discourse of the good woman, who should have an upbeat and outgoing
personality. According to this discourse, this kind of personality involves the ability to
engage others in conversation and to talk freely with others. These abilities are essential
to a good woman and make a good manager. Hanna admits to me that she did not like or
respect her office manager. She looked down on her, but told me that she knows doing so
was unfair. Hanna had invoked a discourse of worth which assumes that some people are
worth more than others. Those who are worth more are free to judge those worth less.
She regretted jumping to conclusions and then treating her office manager badly. Hanna
had violated the discourse of the caring good woman who was fair and would never treat others badly. Hanna tells me she wondered if her office manager had picked up on this, and thought that had interfered with their relationship. Then, when Hanna was harassed by D., Hanna had gone to her for help, but the relationship was already too damaged.

In the last excerpt from Hanna, she tells me about her experiences when she would wear a shawl to the meetings with her vice president.

_I always wore shawls because I was cold. When I had meetings with the vice president, I always wore one. I never knew she wore shawls, but she wore a different a shawl over every suit. She looked very nice. She made a point of making a joke that I wore shawls. I don’t know if she thought I was copying her or mocking her or stealing her thunder. It was the strangest interchange. She would ask me, “Why are you wearing that shawl?” I thought, what do you mean, why do I wear that shawl? What are you saying? I’m cold. I always wear a shawl._

_The subtext is, “What the hell difference does it make to you?” What kind of professional question is that? I expected her to put me at ease. Instead, she seemed to say things which would further disarm me. I was left wondering, what the hell was that about? I wanted to say to her, if a man came in, what would you begin the conversation with? Why is what I’m wearing relevant? It was scary. I was very intimidated by her, because she didn’t make sense. Why would you start a conversation like that? What’s wrong with you? Don’t you realize that I’m uncomfortable here and you only made me more uncomfortable? Perhaps it was your motive. I wish I would have said it out loud because I think then she might have sat up and taken notice. I really do. I would never speak to a person in authority that way. I don’t care if I hated her guts._

Here Hanna talks about always wearing a shawl when meeting with her vice president. She tells me that she always wore shawls because she was cold, but she didn’t know that her vice president also wore shawls. According to Hanna, the vice president wore a different one over every suit and she looked very nice. She made a point of asking Hanna why she wore one, or would make a joke about Hanna wearing it. Hanna tells me she was unsure if her vice president thought she was copying her, mocking her or stealing her thunder, but Hanna found the exchanges with her to be strange. Here Hanna objects
to being treated with disrespect. The vice president positions Hanna as ridiculous and foolish, but Hanna presents herself as the innocent one, the reasonable one, the one trying her best, the one who is hard done by and the one who has been wronged. Again, this is biopower at work. Because the discourse of workplace hierarchy dictates that the vice president is superior to Hanna in the hierarchy, she has the right to question Hanna about what she is wearing. This is a gendered strategy that subjugates Hanna as a woman. (The vice president could not have commented on a male worker’s clothing.) Elsewhere in my transcripts, Hanna told me she became physically ill with stomach problems because of these experiences and had to take a leave of absence. Eventually, she left the position and took a job in another department.

Hanna tells me she wondered why she asked about the shawl and what difference it made to her vice president whether she wore one or not. Hanna wondered whether the vice president questioning her was a professional thing to do and how it was relevant to their conversation, which was meant to be about Hanna’s work. Hanna’s vice president is positioned as the one who is ridiculing, being unprofessional. She was not taking Hanna’s work for equity seriously and was not respecting it as she should. Discussing how to get more minorities into university positions was not concrete or rational enough for the vice president. Hanna had violated the discursive framework and assumptions which positioned her employers as good liberals. Good liberals can't be guilty of inequity. However, for Hanna, establishing equity was serious work. Hanna was trying to do a real job, so she objects to it not being recognized. By doing this work, Hanna positions herself as righteous, as a good worker and a good woman. She’s the equity person and working for equity should be respected.
Hanna tells me she expected the vice president to put her at ease during these meetings but, instead, the vice president said things that made her uncomfortable. She tells me that she wanted to tell her vice president that this is not the way to start a conversation, but she found the vice president scary and was intimidated by her. Hanna wondered if her vice president realized that she was making Hanna uncomfortable. She adds that this could have been her motive. Hanna discloses the conflict in discourses she has embraced. Hanna tells me she wishes she had said something about it to her vice president, because she might then have taken more notice of her; however, she also tells me she would never speak to a person in authority that way, even if she hated her guts. The need to speak out in order to get justice and be noticed, but also keeping quiet to be a good woman, doesn’t get you anywhere. It is wrong for a good worker to speak out against those in authority. Here Hanna invokes the discourse of authority instilled in workplace hierarchy. Her vice president was higher up in the hierarchy, has the power and authority to make decisions about Hanna or to do something to her. For those in a higher position, it is safe to be unfriendly toward and to demean women of whom you do not approve. Hanna wants to be seen as hard working, capable, and competent. Instead, her vice president asked what Hanna was producing, asked her to explained it and tell what she was doing. Hanna was expected to be concrete. The discourse that Hanna's supervisor violated is the sisterhood of women; women stick together, they support each other; they don't put each other in awkward situations.

In both of the previous research texts, Hanna invokes the discourse of professionalism (a subdiscourse of the good worker), a style of behavior in the workplace which includes being trustworthy, respectful, competent, considerate, courteous,
responsible, dependable, cooperative, committed, a good time manager, and able to communicate clearly. This discourse implies that a person’s values and attitudes are exhibited in their behaviour, and it contains a standard of expectations for recognizing and abiding by certain boundaries in relationships, communication, self-disclosure, and confidentiality. It also embraces the ability to balance work and family, and to take the personal and emotional out of the workplace. Hanna objects to the discourse of professionalism in the workplace not being respected. According to this discourse, professionals are to be trusted to do the work they are hired to do, without the need for close oversight. The assumption that Hanna's supervisor violated is that professionals have autonomy, their work is not questioned, they deserve a certain amount of respect; they've earned it.

4.5 Ellen

<table>
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<th>Work/workplace</th>
<th>Race, class, age, ethnicity</th>
<th>Social context (at the time of these experiences)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Government department that has to do with child welfare.</td>
<td>• White</td>
<td>• Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Middleclass</td>
<td>• One foster child living at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 40's</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After returning to the department in which she had previously worked, Ellen was ignored and ostracized by the other women in the office. The following section includes four research texts from Ellen. In the first three, Ellen is speaking of the ways in which the other women in the office ignored, excluded, and isolated her. The fourth is Ellen speaking about the amount of work done by the other women in the office.

In the following section of research text, Ellen tells me about her interactions with co-workers and what happened when she and her office mate had a disagreement about
the placement of their desks after moving into a new office space.

When we were moving offices I said to K. my office mate, “I would like to have this space when we move” because I knew that she would be going and I would be the one staying there permanently. So the day of the big move we were waiting for the movers to come and no one was doing anything so I said, “Why don’t we get some of the furniture wiped down so we won’t have to worry about doing that when we get to the new office.” I saw it as a window of opportunity. When you’ve got the time and no one was doing anything. Well, the rest of the group decided that they were going to go for coffee and just wait for the movers. I don’t like to do that. I like to keep busy. I don’t like sitting around but if that’s what they want to do and if the supervisor says that that’s fine well I don’t care. I’m not going to judge them.

So once we got started actually moving stuff up I thought well this is a perfect opportunity. While all the furniture is out I’m going to start washing the walls because we don’t have anybody who’s going to come in and wash the walls in my new office. To me it’s no big deal.

My supervisor wasn’t there that day but she’s got a lot of allergies so I thought you know what, that would be nice so I did my supervisor’s office. I helped my assistant supervisor as well and then there was an extra room that I also did as well, so with my own I did four rooms.

It’s a bit of an exaggeration but I felt like there’s so much sick time used. Well, there is absolutely a lot of sick time that’s used up in that unit or at least there was at the time. If people do have allergies or if they would have asked me to help them, well absolutely I would have, but I’m also not going to go and do other people’s work when they are sitting and having coffee and I’m working my butt off to get stuff cleaned up.

So I get my stuff all cleaned up and I move my desk to where I want it and K., my office mate, comes in and says, “No, that’s my desk.” I said, “No, the plans say that I’m going to be moving into this desk.” So we had an exchange of words and then I went and talked to my assistant supervisor and asked for the plans they had drawn up. The assistant supervisor agreed that I had that desk I should stay where I wanted to be. I thought it made sense because I was the one who was going to be staying and K. would be leaving.

I kind of got the cold shoulder from the group. I thought K. may have gone back to the group and complained about me and said I was this terrible person for taking her desk or for taking her spot, but I don’t know. For probably a period of about two weeks I would smile at my friend T. in the hallway when I was passing her and she wouldn’t say hello to me. Maybe she didn’t hear me say hello, but I did try and acknowledge her passing in the hallways. But she wouldn’t say anything.

No one talked to me for at least a week. K., my office mate, didn’t quite apologize
but she tried to explain that she was under a lot of stress with having to leave her position. I said, “I don’t know what to say because the plans were that my desk was going to go here.” There were a couple of times when K. was writing a report that she could very well have turned around and said “What do you think about this?” but instead she went over to T. and asked her.

I was involved in an incident with T., another employee who is friends with that little group, about a month after our office move. The supervisor stepped in and basically gave both of us a bit of a hard pill to swallow. She said, “Get things worked out.” Her words could have been interpreted as harsh. We basically ended the discussion and T. stormed out. For a week or two no one would acknowledge me in the hall. Then S., the new staff member who I had tried to help as much as possible, got caught up in that group as well. It wasn’t every day but it was enough that I felt the cold shoulder quite a bit. For example, we had two conferences that we went to each year. Everybody arranged to drive together and didn’t ask me.

In this excerpt, Ellen tells me about the day of the move to their new offices when she suggested that they wipe down some of the furniture while they were waiting for the movers. Her colleagues decided to go for coffee. Ellen tells me that she prefers to keep busy and not sit around, so she stayed back. She saw it as a good opportunity and tells me she didn’t care that her colleagues did not. She says she did not judge them. Here, Ellen subscribes to the discourse of industriousness (a subdiscourse of the good worker) in which hard work, diligence, skill, conscientiousness and production are admired and those who do not display these qualities are viewed as lazy, unmotivated, lacking ambition, and therefore untrustworthy and incompetent. Although she told me she didn’t care, Ellen also told me that her colleagues chose to go for coffee while she remained in the office to wipe down the furniture. Ellen’s disapproval of her colleagues is evident. She positions herself as a good and a hard worker, while she positions her colleagues as idle and good for nothing.

She says she started by washing all the walls in her new office. She tells me that her supervisor was not there the day of the move, but Ellen knew she had a lot of allergies
and thought it would be nice if she did her office as well. She also washed down a spare
room and helped her assistant supervisor as well. Ellen tells me it was not a big deal to
her. By cleaning her own office and the office of several of her colleagues, by going
above and beyond in supporting and giving of her time and energy for the benefit of the
other women in her office, Ellen is performing good woman. The discourse of cleanliness
(a subdiscourse of the good woman) assumes that one’s cleanliness is a reflection of one’s
personal character and personality. It assumes that someone who is clean pays more
attention to detail, is organized and has a good work ethic and is self-confident. These are
the qualities of a good worker. In telling me it was not a big deal, Ellen is positioned as
not just clean and good, but as naturally good.

Ellen tells me that she felt there was a lot of sick time used in that unit. If people had
allergies or if they had asked, she would have helped them too. However, she tells me
that she was not going to do other people’s work and work her butt off to get everything
cleaned up when they were sitting having coffee. Here she is judging. Ellen
demonstrates distress and resentment when she says she is not going to work her butt off.
She positions herself as superior to her colleagues and, therefore, more deserving of their
respect and attention.

Ellen talked about having a disagreement with her office mate about which desk they
each would have. Ellen tells me that after everything was cleaned up she moved her desk
to the spot in the office that she wanted. Her office mate K. wanted the same spot, so
Ellen tells me she asked her assistant supervisor. Ellen said the assistant supervisor
agreed with her, so Ellen got to have the desk she wanted. She says it made sense to her
because her office mate K. would be leaving and she was staying.
Ellen performs good woman and good worker when she stays back from coffee and washes down her own office, her supervisor’s office, a spare room and helps her assistant supervisor with her office. She performs the good Christian woman and she performs whiteness through her cleanliness (Schick, 2000). She is positioned as the good one, the virtuous one, the respectable one. Ellen’s colleagues, on the other hand, were in her judgment performing lazy when they went for coffee rather than stay and work. They were good enough workers, and were not going to comply with Ellen’s vision of good worker. They resisted Ellen’s view of what should be done and what kind of worker they should be.

Ellen tells me that following the disagreement with her office mate about where each of their desks would be placed in the new office, the other staff in the office didn’t speak to her. Ellen’s office mate gave her an explanation for behaving the way she had; however, she continued to leave the office to talk with another staff member when she had questions about a report, rather than talking with Ellen about it. She told me about a time when, for a period of about two weeks, she would greet another colleague in the hallway and her colleague would not respond.

Ellen talked about some of the difficulties and stressful things that were going on at this time in her life. She explained that her foster daughter was stealing and lying. Ellen also talked about a time when she and a colleague had been involved in a disagreement during which her supervisor told them they needed to work out their differences. Ellen admitted that her supervisor’s words could have been interpreted as harsh and, in fact, the other woman involved in the incident had walked out of the discussion. Afterward, her colleague did not acknowledge her in the hallway for several weeks. Ellen also described
how her colleagues arranged to drive to a conference together, but did not ask Ellen to join them. The gendered discourse of good woman assumes that women are friends and members of the same sisterhood. This discourse constructs the problem that is to be solved as Ellen’s co-workers needing to realize the error of their ways and include her in the sisterhood. They are positioned as cold, mean, uncaring women who hurt Ellen with their unwillingness to include her. Her colleagues violate the discourse of the good woman when they exclude her.

Ellen told me her supervisor did not always handle situations like these appropriately. Ellen knew there had been difficulties finding staff, but she made the decision to leave the department because of the stress she was experiencing. Ellen objects to being excluded from the group. She is positioned as the outcast, the one being ignored, but she positions herself as the innocent one who was stressed and unhappy.

In the next research text, Ellen provides more examples of how her colleagues excluded her.

*It was constantly the cold shoulder. I would acknowledge T. in the hallway and, to give her the benefit of the doubt, seventy percent of the time she would acknowledge me. If you want to look at the positive, that was a bit better than never. I used to be friends with T. After I came back from my holidays in August until my last day on November 6th I saw T. on a number of occasions taking other staff out for lunch. They probably went out for lunch at least three times a week. T. went for lunch with everybody, absolutely everybody in the office except for me. Never once. There was another girl, L. that was there too and she was the one that asked me one time if I wanted to go for lunch. I’ll give them the benefit of the doubt, maybe it was twice. As far as worker level, I was the only one that wasn’t asked. T. may be jealous of the relationship between K. and I. I don’t know.*

*No one else got the cold shoulder and that was the other thing. I don’t know what I did between August and the time I left. I have no idea. We would meet Thursday mornings at 8:30. I could hear them walking down the hall “meeting, meeting” and walk right by my office. At night they would say, “Bye, see you. Have a good weekend” and nothing to me. I think the newer staff just kind of got caught up in all of that negative stuff.*
Ellen talked about constantly “getting the cold shoulder”, a cold emotional response. She gives the example of acknowledging T., another employee, in the hallway and being acknowledged by her about seventy percent of the time, which she tells me is better than never. Ellen tells me she used to be friends with T. but, from the time she returned from holidays in August until she left in November, T. took Ellen’s colleagues out for lunch at least three times a week and never once asked Ellen. She tells me that a new staff member asked her to join them for lunch once, possibly twice if she gives them the benefit of the doubt. She was the only one at the worker level who wasn’t asked. She tells me she doesn’t know, but wonders if T. is jealous of her relationship with K.

Ellen tells me that no one else got the cold shoulder. Another example Ellen talked about was when the staff would walk down the hallway to meetings on Thursday mornings at 8:30 and they would say “meeting, meeting” but would walk by her office. She also tells me that they did something similar at night before they went home when they would say goodbye and tell each other to have a good weekend, but they wouldn’t say anything to her. Ellen tells me that the newer staff got caught up in all the negative stuff.

Ellen objects to being ignored and isolated and excluded from the group of women in the office. One woman being excluded does not fit with the discourse of the sisterhood among women. According to this discourse of sisterhood, there is a solidarity among women based on their shared circumstances, experiences, and concerns. The sisterhood discourse assumes that women will stick together, care about each other and defend each other. Ellen knows the sisterhood exists in the office and she wants to be part of it, to be included as one of them. She performs good woman by not being angry or mean to her
colleagues when they do not include her. She accepts it and keeps quiet. She doesn’t make a fuss. Ellen is positioned as the innocent one and the one being hurt by the isolation. She is the righteous and generous one for giving her colleagues the benefit of the doubt. She is the good woman. Her colleagues are positioned as the bad women, the cruel and mean ones, the hurtful ones, the negative, bitter, angry and jealous ones.

Ellen also told me about the last weeks she worked in the department and her efforts to have an opportunity to talk with her colleagues about a respectful workplace.

Before I left the position, I announced that I got the job as the Assistant. In our unit meeting two weeks before the actual date I was finished, we discussed when we were supposed to all go for my going away lunch. There were two other times when we had going away lunches for other people. When we were deciding on other people’s lunches, if I wasn’t going to be able to make it, I would tell them right at that time. If I had to work half way through lunch to make up time, I made sure that I was there for at least half of it. When we were planning for my lunch, several people were thinking that they might have to leave early because they were going out of town and the road conditions were poor. The supervisor, K. said, “Well, why don’t we have lunch from 11:45 to 12:45 and then you guys can get going.” You also have to understand they were going to leave at around 1 o’clock and get there about 3 o’clock but the conference didn’t start until the next day.

On the Monday before my going away lunch, I got an e-mail from T. asking, “Did you want to reschedule your going away lunch because a number of appointments have popped up with a number of the staff and there’s not going to be very many people there.” I e-mailed back and said, “No, whoever makes it, makes it.” I’m sorry but in this department, nothing pops up. I worked there long enough to know that it’s not that busy that you can’t reschedule. It’s not that there would be a crisis over lunch time. I just didn’t buy it. So I e-mailed K. in the morning and asked how many people were coming. We had reserved the separate room at the restaurant right across the street so I said, “Okay, but let’s not do the separate room, let’s just do a booth.”

Then it was my last day at work and my going away party. In our unit, at the time, there was T., T., K., T., and S. and the Supervisor, K. and then there’s myself. Out of the seven people, two people plus the Supervisor, a total of three people showed up. K. and T., the ones that were going to be traveling, came for not even fifteen minutes and then left. It was the hottest day on record. It was a 73 year high? I think they said all week, it’s going to be a warm week. I was really disappointed that K., my supervisor didn’t say guys this is not the way you treat people. She’s in that role and it’s disappointing that she just doesn’t have those skills. She could have
handled things a little bit better, especially since I consider her a friend, but that’ll pass. I still consider her a friend.

Ellen talked about her going away lunch. She tells me that, before she left, T. got the job as the assistant and she discussed going for lunch at a meeting. Ellen tells me about two previous lunches for staff who were leaving and that if she was unable to attend those she would tell them right away. If she had to work half way through lunch to make up time, she would make sure she was there for at least half the lunch. Ellen tells me that when they were planning for her lunch, several people said the road conditions were poor and they might have to leave early because they were going out of town. She tells me that K. told them they could start the lunch early so they could leave early. Ellen also tells me that these staff members were going to leave at around 1 o’clock and get to their destination about 3 o’clock, but the conference they were going to didn’t start until the next day.

Here, Ellen invokes to the gendered discourse of “good woman.” There’s a right way to do “good woman” and Ellen knows how to do it right. She positions herself as the one who is considerate of others; the one who puts herself out for others. Part of the discourse of good woman is that if you cannot put others first, you must have an acceptable explanation for not doing so. Ellen’s colleagues did not have a good enough reason. If Ellen’s colleagues had been men, she would not have had the same expectations for them. She may not have even expected them to come for lunch, but because her colleagues are women they are expected to behave as good women.

Ellen tells me about the things that were happening behind the scenes. On the Monday before her going away lunch, she got an e-mail from T. asking if she wanted to reschedule because very few people were able to attend because they were busy. Ellen
said she told T. she didn’t want to cancel. She tells me that nothing pops up in their unit that can’t be rescheduled and there would not be a crisis over lunch time. Ellen tells me she suggested that they just use a booth rather than the separate room they had reserved. Ellen subscribes to the discourse that assumes it is unacceptable for good women to show their anger. According to this discourse, a women’s emotional reaction is related to her personal characteristics. If Ellen were to express her anger toward her colleagues, she would be considered to be out of control and unprofessional. Women are expected to be kind. Failure to conform to these expectations could arouse a negative response and would mean Ellen was not performing “good woman.” Instead, Ellen accommodates the smaller number by suggesting they take a booth rather than a separate room.

Ellen talked about her last day of work when the time came for her going away lunch. She tells me that, out of the seven people in their unit, two people plus the Supervisor showed up. K. and T. who were traveling out of town, came to the lunch for about fifteen minutes and then left. Ellen tells me it was the hottest day on record in 73 years and they knew that all week. Ellen tells me she was really disappointed that K., her supervisor whom she considered to be her friend, didn’t tell the staff that is not the way you treat people. Ellen’s distress is evident when she tells me she is disappointed with her supervisor. The problem for Ellen is that her supervisor has violated the discourse of workplace hierarchy when she fails to reprimand the other employees. Her role as the supervisor is to keep subordinates in line. There is a right way to do supervision and K. was not doing it right; she was not performing supervisor right; however, the discourse of “good woman” and “good friend” did not allow Ellen to dislike her boss or tell her boss how she felt about how she had handled the situation. The discourses of good woman
and good friend which assume equality among women in reciprocal relationships are in
conflict with the discourse of workplace hierarchy which assumes that some women will
be subordinate to other women higher in the hierarchy.

Once again, Ellen wants to be included in the sisterhood of women in the office. She
is objecting to being excluded by her colleagues, but she continues to perform “good
woman” by not being angry or mean to her colleagues when they do not include her or
attend her farewell lunch. Ellen positions herself as the one who is being hurt, but in the
face of such hurt, Ellen continues to perform “good woman.” Her colleagues have
repeatedly violated the discourse of inclusion and the collective workplace where
everyone is treated with equal respect. Ellen used the discourse to position them as the
bad women, the cruel and mean ones, the hurtful ones and the ones who are dishonest.

Ellen also told me about the other women in her department.

_I just felt isolated when I would go for coffee, not having any friends in the unit.
Occasionally, they did talk to me but I would say in the average week it was acts of
omission, isolation. I tried to go for coffee as much as I could but there were times
when I said no, I have to stay back and work because I wasn’t getting anything done.
I’m a fairly responsible person. If I’m doing something personal at 8:30 in the
morning and it takes me ten minutes or if I’ve spent a few more minutes on a
personal call, I’m not going to go for a coffee break. I kind of balance it out.

They wanted people to get caught up in that negativity and I won’t do it. I won’t. I
don’t think that they are happy with themselves and I don’t think that they are happy
with their jobs. I think that I try to be a very positive person and I do know my stuff.
I am a very hard worker and I don’t think, in that department, that they work very
hard for the most part. There are some that work hard. I’m not going to say that
there’s not but they’re just really not happy with themselves and their work and
where they are in life. I believe the reason it was me was because I didn’t get caught
up in that. I think that had to play into it.

I think T’s a bit threatened. That’s another reason that I really wanted to go to the
other department as assistant. The atmosphere there is so positive. Everybody
works so hard and I appreciate people who work hard. I try to tolerate people who
are lazy but I’ve worked hard for everything that I have so it’s hard for me. A staff
person should be looking after the child’s best interest and putting in 100% of their
time making sure that this child’s needs are met. I’ve seen how detrimental the final result can be to the child, where they land up, and our society too.

Ellen talked about feeling isolated when she went for coffee because she didn’t have any friends in the unit. She tells me she tried to go for coffee as much as she could but, at times, she would decide to stay back and work. Ellen tells me she is a fairly responsible person and if she takes ten minutes doing something personal at 8:30 in the morning or spends time on a personal call, she won’t go for coffee in order to balance that. She performs good worker.

Ellen tells me that her colleagues wanted everyone to get caught up in negativity but she wouldn’t. She goes on to say her colleagues were not happy with themselves, their work or where they are in life. She describes herself as a very positive person who knows what she’s doing and is a very hard worker. She tells me that most of her colleagues don’t work very hard. Ellen tells me she was isolated because she wouldn’t get caught up in the negativity.

Ellen says she wanted to go to another department as assistant supervisor, where the atmosphere was more positive and everyone works hard. Ellen tells me she tolerates people who are lazy but appreciates people who work hard. She has worked hard for everything so she finds it difficult when others do not. Ellen tells me a staff person should be putting in 100% of their time looking after the child’s best interests and making sure that their needs are met, because she has seen how detrimental the final result can be to the child and society when that does not happen.

Ellen uses the discourse of the good worker and the good woman to position herself as the responsible one, the conscientious one, the committed one; the one who works hard; the one who is knowledgeable; and the one who is balanced and able to resist
negativity. She positions herself as the one who is tolerant; she is fair and objective
toward those who hold opinions and have practices of which she disapproves. Ellen
positions her colleagues, on the other hand, as lazy and not hard working, but unable to
see the error of their ways as Ellen does. They are also positioned as unhappy with
themselves, their work and their lives and caught up in negativity. When Ellen is unable
to change the opinions and work practices of her colleagues, Ellen moves to another
department.

The problem for Ellen is that her co-workers have violated the discourse of the good
worker. They do not work as hard as Ellen does, or as hard as she wants them to. She
invokes the binaries of good worker and bad worker, and she is the good worker. The
situation becomes very black and white for her. You are either one or the other. Ellen’s
co-workers have violated the discourse of the good worker according to which you put
100% effort into your work and, if you use work time for something personal, you make
up the time.

Ellen’s colleagues also violate the discourse of good woman. They have ignored her
at lunch, they have ignored her at coffee time, they have ignored her for meetings and
they have ignored her at the end of the day. A good woman would not hurt another
woman. A good woman works hard and gives of herself to others. She puts others ahead
of herself. Ellen wants to be seen as a good worker and a good woman. She positions the
other women in her office as violators of these discourses. But Ellen herself violates
“good woman” by refusing to put other women before herself, by refusing to be a loyal
member of the sisterhood (she judges others) and by making them look bad when she
doesn’t go for coffee but instead washes the walls.
Bonnie talks about her experiences as executive director in two separate workplaces.

One experience involves difficulties making changes with a group of employees. The other, involves the difficulties with one employee. The following section includes five research texts from Bonnie. The first and second texts are Bonnie talking about trying to determine what work one employee did, and what happened after she took a secondment to another department. The third is Bonnie talking about being investigated and having to leave the department. The fourth is Bonnie talking about trying to make changes with a group of staff. The last is Bonnie talking about her experiences with other women.

In the following research text, Bonnie tells me about trying to determine what one of her employees was doing at work.

*S. and J. were both quite welcoming and looking forward to doing some work. Really, I’m a fairly pragmatic person and very concrete. I like to have a plan about what we’re doing. When we laid out our plan, I think that J., who was an advisor on policy, may have felt that there wasn’t a role for her.*

*I had asked J. what she did and if she could show me the files she was working on. What actually is your job here? It would be normal practice for an executive director to ask these types of things, but she wasn’t able to really define her job. It wasn’t clear to me what she was doing and she couldn’t produce files she’d worked on. This was someone in a senior level position who was probably making sixty to seventy thousand dollars a year.*

*I was expected to work with all of the departments, to work with all of the women’s community and to work with people to develop an action plan for women. We were very clear about that, but I couldn’t get my head around what it was J. was going to*
do and how she was going to contribute. We would have a lot of discussions. I found it difficult, at times, to follow a policy analyst’s train of thought. It’s a very abstract way of thinking. Maybe it’s just because that’s not the way I think.

Bonnie talks about S. and J. being welcoming when she first arrived in the department, and she says they were looking forward to doing some work. Bonnie describes herself as a very concrete and pragmatic person. She tells me she liked to have a plan and, when they laid out the plan, J., may have felt that there wasn’t a role for her as a policy analyst.

Bonnie said she asked J. what she did and if she could show Bonnie the files she was working on. She says it would be a normal practice for an executive director to ask a staff person to display their work. Here, Bonnie performs her superior place in the workplace hierarchy through the use of technologies of Foucauldian surveillance. She does not reciprocate by offering to share her own work progress with J. In this way she is saying, I can see what you do but because I’m the boss, you can’t see what I do. You don’t have the same rights and privileges that I have. Bonnie positions herself as the reasonable one, the righteous one, the one whose surveillance of J. is justified by virtue of her higher position in the workplace hierarchy. J., on the other hand, is positioned as someone who is to be controlled, and not to be trusted.

Bonnie tells me J. was unable to define what she was doing or to produce the files she was working on. According to Bonnie, because J. was in a senior level position and was probably making sixty to seventy thousand dollars a year, she should have been able to produce the files. Bonnie invokes a discourse which assumes that a quantity of something can be purchased for a specific sum of money; in this case, that a dollar value can be placed on someone’s work. Bonnie was asking J. to prove that she is deserving
and that she deserved what she was being paid, by showing Bonnie the work she was producing. The problem for Bonnie is that J. did not conform to what is required in her place as subservient to Bonnie in the workplace hierarchy. When J. does not comply with Bonnie’s request to produce her work, she violates the discourse of the good and obedient employee. Bonnie positions herself as the superior and rational one; the one with responsibilities. She has the knowledge and knows what’s best. J., on the other hand, is positioned as unworthy and undeserving.

Bonnie tells me she was expected to work with all of the departments as well as the women’s community to develop an action plan for women. She was unable to figure out what it was J. was doing and how she was going to contribute to this goal. J. works as a policy analyst. Bonnie goes on to tell me that when she had discussions with J. she found it difficult to follow J.’s train of thought. She said that a policy analyst’s way of thinking was very abstract and not the way Bonnie thinks. Bonnie objects to J’s work being creative rather than something material and tangible. This is not amenable to Bonnie’s view that work ought to be rational, linear, practical, and concrete.

Bonnie told me more about taking her position as the executive director and the emerging conflict with J.

*I came in as the executive director. J. had been there longer than me but I didn’t feel tension. I would meet with other senior management. I had support from so many of them. The executive director of the branch where J. had been working previously was one of the people who said, “If you ever figure out what she’s doing, let me know.” I was never quite sure how people like that stay in jobs, and fairly high paying jobs too. It’s a bit of a bother to me. She had no actual performance plan and could just be very vague about it. In hindsight, I could maybe have written one up. Anyway, I couldn’t figure out what this woman was doing and she didn’t want to tell me what she was doing. So, I kept thinking, I’m missing something. It must be me. I’m sure she’s doing something. I’m sure there will be value in this but be damned if I can figure out what it is.*
J. said it was really important we be involved with the provincial group and she could be on the committee that would travel to Ontario every three or four months. She had done that before. Well, that would be good but what would she be getting out of that and why would she go and not me since I’m the executive director and I’m the representative of our department?

So, I started to think about what I would say to J. Maybe there’s something else she’d rather do since she doesn’t seem to want to do some of the things I’d asked. One thing we wanted to do was to develop a network of aboriginal women in the north and I asked if she would do that. It would mean she’d have to go up north and start to bring aboriginal women together and, depending on what we discovered, we might develop some policy and be able to give that policy direction to other departments. She wasn’t keen on that because that’s pretty concrete and it’s not abstract enough. She would just say, “That really wouldn’t interest me.” She didn’t like to do the things I wanted her to do.

So a senior policy analyst position came up in another department and she was quite interested in going there, so she took a secondment. I approved it readily. I recruited for the position and hired a person who, after three days, came and said, “What is it that I am supposed to be doing because I can’t find anything in that office that tells me anything.” I said, “Well, we’re starting from scratch.”

So that was my experience with that person. She was gone for about a year. Then she decided that she wasn’t coming back because she saw that the new person that I had hired was doing things that probably would fall into her lap and they weren’t things that she wanted to do. There’s an expression in government. They’re called “policy wonks,” people who are conceptual but very abstract. It’s very difficult to determine what they are trying to do. I knew what I had to do. I had to work with women’s groups and the government to develop a plan.

Bonnie tells me that even though J. was already in the job when she was hired as the executive director, she didn’t feel any tension. She met with and got support from others in senior management. Bonnie talked about the executive director of the department where J. had previously worked asking Bonnie to let her know if she ever figured out what J. was doing. Bonnie’s distress is evident when she tells me she was bothered when she was unable to figure out how people like J. stay in fairly high paying jobs. “A bit of a bother” may be anger. Here J. is positioned as the one not performing for the money she receives, as not being deserving enough, as not earning her pay. Bonnie goes on to tell
me that J. did not have a performance plan when Bonnie arrived and Bonnie hadn’t written one for her. Although Bonnie tells me that she was at first sure J. was doing something and that it would be valuable, she was unable to figure out what that was and J. didn’t want to tell her. Bonnie said she thought she was missing something. Bonnie wants J. to comply with doing what she wants. She wanted J. to be able to explain the work she did in a linear rational way, but J. didn’t or couldn’t. The discourse of workplace hierarchy and “executive director” had been violated. This discourse assumes that there is a system of ranking of employees in the workplace. Those at the top of the ranking have a special advantage, rights and privileges granted to them based on this ranking. Those at the bottom of the ranking are excluded from these advantages, rights and privileges. It also means that one person has administrative or managerial authority over others in an organization and has the power to put plans into effect. It assumes that this person is chosen to control or govern the affairs of the organization, to lead and direct others in doing the work of the organization. One is born a leader, rather than being made a leader. Certain skills and knowledge that are learned by a leader are influenced by personal attributes or traits such as beliefs, values, ethics, and character. Bonnie wants J. to accept the direction given to her. By doing so, J. would be saying she recognizes Bonnie, who does not value leadership in her employee, as the leader. She would be saying she recognizes that Bonnie has the necessary qualities to be a leader. By not doing so, J. is violating the discourse of the good submissive employee who ought to follow Bonnie’s leadership and direction.

Bonnie talks about J. saying it was really important that someone from their department be involved with the provincial group and that she could be on the committee
that would travel to Ontario every few months, as she had done in the past. Bonnie tells me she wondered what J. would be getting out of that and why she would go rather than Bonnie, since Bonnie represented the department as the executive director. The discourse violated by J. is the workplace hierarchy, which assumes that as the person ranked above others and the person in charge in the organization, the executive director is privileged. Travel for and at the expense of the organization is just one of the privileges for those with higher ranking. Bonnie wants the privilege due her as executive director respected. She wants her place as superior in the workplace hierarchy recognized. She objects to the workplace hierarchy not being respected and J. trying to take part in privileges that are not due someone at her ranking.

Bonnie talks about how she started to think about what she would say to J. She considers suggesting that there may be something else J. would rather do, since she doesn’t seem to want to do what Bonnie asks her to do. One of the things Bonnie suggested to J. was the development of a network of aboriginal women in the north. This would require J. to go up north and bring aboriginal women together. They might be able to develop policy, based on what was discovered, that could provide direction to other departments. Here Bonnie subscribes to the discourse of truth about reality as externally existing rather than socially constructed and, therefore, being knowable and discoverable. Aboriginal women are subordinated by being the knowable ones, the object of the investigation. Bonnie tells me that J. was not interested in taking that on because that was concrete and not abstract enough. She didn’t like to do the things Bonnie wanted her to do. Here, J. is positioned as the one who is not good enough; disobedient and uncooperative and the one whose way of working is inferior.
Bonnie tells me that when a senior policy analyst position came up in another department, Bonnie approved J’s secondment. Bonnie then hired a person who, within three days, asked Bonnie what she was supposed to be doing because she was unable to find anything in the office that would tell her. In telling what J.’s replacement says to her, Bonnie positions J. as the unproductive and useless one, the one not worth keeping.

After a year at the other department, J. decided that she would not be returning to Bonnie’s department. Bonnie tells me this was because J. saw that her replacement was doing things that she would have to do if she returned, and they were not things she wanted to do. Bonnie goes on to tell me about an expression in government. She said that people who are conceptual and very abstract are called “policy wonks.” In Bonnie’s case, J. is not acceptable to Bonnie. She is unable to determine what J. is doing and objects to J. having information she does not have and possibly being better at something than she is. Bonnie performs the one who knows by calling J. a derogatory name, a “wonk.” J. has violated the discourse of rationality, that of linear, organisable, certain, clear and rational work, as a “policy wonk.” She is trying to be creative and innovative, so her work is not yet at a place where it could be described or viewed (or understood) as rational and practical.

Later, Bonnie told me about her male department director and about leaving her position as executive director in the department.

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11 ‘Wonk’ is a derogatory name given to someone who is intelligent and studious; someone who is preoccupied with details and procedures and an expert in a specialized field, often something no one else really cares about. A “wonk” likes to debate with others and enjoys pontificating, but others may end up feeling incompetent around them. A “wonk” is socially incompetent and not always well liked. In fact, others may find them annoying. While they are not necessarily appreciated by people in power, they are respected for their knowledge and seen as necessary.

(http://www.policywonk.com)
My director was a man and he was not supportive of the work at our office. He really didn’t even care about our work. He said to me one time, “You know that the files you work on aren’t on the top one hundred over at the head office.” It was very discouraging for me to hear that.

His niece and J. were very good friends. J. was not happy that she had to leave our office. She didn’t have to produce anything and then went to a place where she probably was expected to produce something.

I don’t know this absolutely for sure but when I left the department, when I gave them my resignation, I also signed an agreement with them and received a severance package. Within a week after that, I was told that there had been an investigation of my management style by my director. He had apparently hired a lawyer to do a secret investigation. I wasn’t ever aware of it but a colleague of mind found out about it and told me.

For three years I had passed all of my evaluations and they were exemplary. There were never any concerns brought forward to me. There was never any mention about my performance. They have acknowledged that there was a report requested by my director that specified what he wanted to find out about was my management style. The lawyer did interview people but there was nothing in the report. What they said basically is that there wasn’t anything there to bring forward. So this should be very scary for public servants in general and I suppose women in particular. If they are picked on, a secret report can be done on them without you ever knowing. They can use that to get rid of you if they want to.

Bonnie tells me that her department director was male and he did not value or support the work done by her office on behalf of women. She goes on to tell me that he told her the files she worked on were not in the top one hundred at the head office.

Bonnie tells me she was discouraged when she heard this. Her distress at not being considered important and at the work of her department not being considered valuable by the department head is evident. Her department head is positioned as the unsupportive, uncaring and discouraging one. Bonnie has been positioned as insignificant, inconsequential, and as irrelevant as the work she and others in her department were doing.

Bonnie tells me that J., the woman who left their office, was good friends with the
department director’s niece and that J. was not happy that she had to leave their office. According to Bonnie, this was because J. didn’t have to produce any work in their office, but was probably expected to do so in the department to which she was seconded. By raising the relationship between J. and the director’s niece, Bonnie is invoking the discourse of nepotism, the partiality granted to family and relatives regardless of their merit. J. is positioned as unqualified, undeserving and benefiting from favoritism. Bonnie is positioned as the righteous one. The problem for J. was that she was under Bonnie’s surveillance and her work was not respected by Bonnie. She was unable to do her work as she saw fit, without Bonnie’s surveillance.

Bonnie said that when she herself left the department, she signed an agreement and received a severance package. Then, within a week of leaving, Bonnie said a colleague of hers found out and, in turn, told Bonnie that her department director had hired a lawyer to do a secret investigation of Bonnie’s management style. Bonnie had been put under surveillance. Bonnie objects to this. She tells me she had passed all of her work evaluations for the previous three years. They had been exemplary and without any complaints about her performance. Bonnie also says that the investigation report confirmed what Bonnie had been told; the department head, someone higher in the hierarchy than Bonnie, wanted to find out about Bonnie’s management style, and that the investigation had been requested by him. She tells me that the lawyer who conducted the investigation interviewed people, but found nothing to put in the report. Bonnie warns me that public servants and particularly women should be very frightened by this. She suggests that a report can be written about someone without them knowing, and it can be used to get rid of them. Bonnie is unaware of the conflicting discourses to which she
subscribes. On the one hand, she subscribes to the discourse of workplace hierarchy and all that goes with it, including the appropriateness of the surveillance of employees lower in the hierarchy. On the other, she also subscribes to the conflicting discourse of the additional rights and privileges afforded to those higher in the hierarchy which should shield her from surveillance. As an executive director at the highest management position Bonnie objects that she is not exempt from the same surveillance that is applied to those lower in the hierarchy.

In the telling, Bonnie positions herself as an exemplary employee whose work has been scrutinized by others but whose performance has been highly rated, above the normal standard and beyond reproach. Bonnie is also positioned as the victim, wronged by the department director. Here, Bonnie is positioned as the “sacrificial lamb.” Her management style is discounted through the investigation her director initiated, done for the common good to protect staff from Bonnie as an executive director and manager. Ultimately, Bonnie is vindicated when the investigator can find nothing negative to put into the report. Bonnie positions herself as a hero when she warns others of their possible fate and the hazards of having a secret investigation and report done.

The problem for Bonnie is that she, and her style of managing employees, was being questioned. In the end, Bonnie lost her job because she was not “nice” to her employee J., as if she were resisting equality in the workplace. Her management style was not feminine and womanly enough. The discourse of leadership is in conflict with the discourse of “good woman”, the kind and caring woman who does not hurt others. The discourse is gendered in that if Bonnie had been a man, she would not have been expected to be unfailingly “nice” to an employee and accept that this employee was not producing
the kind of work the executive director was expecting. Pressuring the employee, in fact
demanding that the employee do better, would have been acceptable in a male director.
But Bonnie violated the discourse of femininity. She did not perform feminine well. She
was bossy and demanding in asking J. to provide evidence of her work. She never backed
down and was confrontational in repeatedly asking for the work to be explained.
Bonnie also told me about some of the disagreements she had with staff about
reducing the waiting list at the agency where she was executive director.

*The agency wasn’t set up really well. The counselling unit didn’t have a supervisor
at that time. I supervised all twenty plus staff. That was quite insane because I had
other responsibility. We changed that structure and got a supervisor in the
counselling unit. That helped out a lot. When we were able to have one person work
as the supervisor there was always somebody there for them.*

*I didn’t really have a harassment experience with P. I would say that it wasn’t just
P. It was all the counsellors. It was all around more organizational effectiveness for
a counselling agency. As an executive director, I was at the highest management
position and when you are trying to make change, some people don’t like that you
have to make decisions. That’s basically what it was. So, there wasn’t any
harassment. I think it was just people not liking change.*

*Our agency isn’t a long term counselling facility. It’s brief therapy or solution
focused or something more along that line. There was an expectation that they
would complete a minimum of three to five counselling sessions a day. They were
booking a couple or three or four if they wanted. If we have a waiting list of six
months and they’re only seeing three people in a day something’s not right. I
wondered how we could make a change. I said, “Well, why don’t you book five
appointments.” They were quite concerned and up in arms that I would say book five
appointments because they’d be very busy, but we had a cancellation rate of twenty-
eight percent. That meant that likely one or two people aren’t going to show up
anyway.*

*They wanted counselling meetings every week or every two weeks. At that time we
were up to five staff; two part-time and three full-time. They’d all meet at the
counselling meetings and a couple of them were okay with my suggestion. We would
talk about the length of time for counselling too, one hour, two hours, three hours.
And we would talk about the length of time that they kept a client on their caseload.*

*Their input is valuable and we want to talk about it but we’re not going to talk about
this for more than two months, then we’re making a decision. If we can come to*
some agreement fine but, if they can’t, I will make the decision. A solution might have been to look at their caseload, determine if they are keeping some of these clients on a little bit long and close some.

We tried to accommodate some clients of P’s because she didn’t want to give up clients that she had for a very very long time. When I would talk about what she was doing with these clients, what was happening, what progress there was, she was pretty vague. She might write some notes but she’d have clients for two or three years and saw them pretty frequently. It would be once every week or once every couple of weeks. It got to be more of a friendship relationship. It was more like having coffee with your friend, which is nice but that’s not the business that we were in. It was taking somebody else’s spot.

How can we operate our office, get rid of this waiting list and meet the needs of our clients. Eventually I said, “Well, we have to get rid of the waiting list. We’re closing it down. We’re not taking anybody else on the wait list. I’m telling the people out in the community so they’ll know that they can phone but we’re not taking people on the wait list.” I wanted people picked up from the wait list. We included some of the administrative staff to help with the logistics of that. It picked up better and they started booking five appointments. It took a while. Change takes time but we eventually moved toward that.

Bonnie talks about the counselling agency not being set up well and says that she had to supervise all the staff, even though she had other responsibilities, until she hired a counselling supervisor. She says this allowed someone to always be available to the counsellors. Bonnie is positioned as hard working, innocent and righteous as she looks out for the best interest of the other employees. Here Bonnie subscribes to the discourse of supervision, another technology of Foucauldian surveillance. This discourse assumes a need for employees’ work to be supervised by another person. The supervisor is concerned with overseeing, orchestrating and controlling the work and actions of a small group of other employees who cannot be trusted to do their job. The supervisor is trusted and has the power and authority to give instructions to subordinates and to enforce rules and restrictions. The supervisor is also responsible for ensuring that subordinates produce at an acceptable level of quality and cost to the organization.
Bonnie tells me that there was no harassment involved with P., a particular employee, but more a difficulty with the entire group of counsellors around changes Bonnie wanted to make for greater organizational effectiveness. Here Bonnie subscribes to a discourse of being able to measure or determine the effectiveness of an organization in achieving its intended outcomes. For a non-government/non-profit organization such as the one Bonnie worked for, the discourse of organizational effectiveness includes knowing whether the money donated to the organization is being used effectively in accomplishing its goals, as well as minimizing overhead, fundraising and administrative costs. Has the input of money and staff time, which in turn produce activities and outputs such as service delivery, led to an impact such as improved benefits to health? Bonnie tells me that some of the staff disagreed with her making decisions and changing things within the agency. When Bonnie says that she, as executive director, is at the highest management position she subscribes to the discourse of workplace hierarchy. She is the one who is to set the expectations for staff.

Bonnie argues that the agency was not meant to provide long term counselling. It was meant to provide brief or solution focused therapy. She tells me that there was an expectation that each counsellor would complete a minimum of three to five counselling sessions per day, but they had been booking fewer. Bonnie also tells me about the waiting list at the agency, her concern about people waiting when the staff were only seeing two or three people a day and that she had suggested that they see five people a day. She tells me that the staff were concerned that if they did so they would be very busy, but she thought that, with a cancellation rate of twenty-eight percent, one or two of those people would not show up anyway. Bonnie is positioned as the reasonable one who
knows best and is justified in the changes she wants to make. Once again, she performs
her place in the workplace hierarchy through the Foucauldian surveillance of other staff.
She is the one who determines the work to be done and assesses how well the work is
being done. The staff are positioned as unproductive, lazy, unwilling to accept change
and resistant to Bonnie’s expectations to work harder. She is the boss so, while she can
see what they do and judge whether they are working hard enough, they cannot see what
she does or how hard she works. They do not have the same rights and privileges Bonnie
is given.

There were five staff (two part-time and three full-time) who would meet with
Bonnie. They wanted to meet on a regular basis to discuss these changes. They would
discuss the length of time per counselling session and the length of time someone would
be kept as a client. She tells me that several staff members were okay with her
suggestions. She said she wanted to talk with staff about these concerns and valued their
input; however, she goes on to tell me that she was not prepared to continue to talk about
this for more than two months without a decision being made. If they were unable to
agree as a group, she would make the decision. Bonnie tells me that she thought a
solution might have been for staff to look at their caseload, to see if they were keeping
some of these clients on their caseloads too long, and then close some cases. Here,
Bonnie invokes two conflicting discourses; the discourse of the leader making the
decisions and the discourse of making decisions by consensus. The discourse of the
leader making decisions assumes that one person will apply their knowledge and skills
and influence others in order to accomplish a decision. This discourse is mainly
concerned with the decision being made. The discourse of consensus assumes a group
decision making process and seeks widespread agreement among group members and a degree of group solidarity in sentiments and beliefs. This discourse is as much concerned with the process of reaching the decision by consensus as with the decision itself. Despite saying she values what her staff had to say and wanting to listen, in the end it is the decision itself that is most important for Bonnie, not the process or involving staff in the decision. She met frequently to hear their opinions and talked with them at length; however, in the end, Bonnie performs herself as the decision maker. She is the one who decides how long the discussion about something will be and she is the one who will decide the final outcome.

Bonnie tells me that she tried to accommodate one particular staff member, P., who did not want to give up clients that she had worked with for a very long time, some every week or two for two or three years. Again, Bonnie performs her place in the workplace hierarchy through Foucauldian surveillance. She tells me that she questioned P. specifically about what she was doing with her counselling clients, what was happening, and what progress was being made, but P. was vague with her answer. Bonnie tells me that P. and her clients had more of a friendship relationship, more like having coffee with a friend rather than counselling, and this took someone else’s spot for counselling. Bonnie is performing “the one who knows best” when she questions what P. is doing with her clients and what progress she’s made with them. Bonnie tells me she asked how they could operate as an agency, eliminate the waiting list and meet the needs of clients. Eventually she told staff she wanted them to stop accepting names on the waiting list and to start seeing those people already on the list. The administrative staff would help arrange this and she would let people in the community know. Bonnie tells me that it
took some time, but staff did eventually see more people each day. She positions herself as going above and beyond to accommodate staff, as well as having the best interests of clients in mind. She is also positioned as the one who knows best how counselling should be done. The staff member, P. is positioned as wasting time, not doing counselling properly and being a friend instead of a counsellor.

Bonnie also spoke to me about leaving her department, her replacement and working with other women.

About six or eight months after I was gone from the department, they hired a woman who had minimal experience in the area of executive directors or senior management, but she was an aboriginal woman. So maybe they wanted an aboriginal woman in the position and they were just trying to figure out how to do that. It just beats me. I don’t know. I really don’t care though. I have moved on. If anything I would have felt harassed. You know, when you were talking about harassment, I was probably more harassed by my director who was a man than any other woman.

If I ever saw J., I wouldn’t have any conversation with her at all other than hello or I would just pass by her. That was just because of the theories I have. The strongest one is that she was probably involved somehow in the investigation.

Any struggle was only in terms of an employee-employer relationship and there are always struggles with that, some more so than others. I think it’s authority. I think it’s power of positions. As an executive director of an organization you can hire the person and you can fire the person. Right? So I think that probably contributed to it and then I was trying to make some change in the organization and I think that challenge around change contributed. It’s just difficult for some people to go through that. It’s not easy for them. So, those are my thoughts about that, but I have no residual feelings. I have had lots and lots of positive experiences. I tend to try to focus more on those than on the couple of negative ones. I’ve had lots of positive experiences working with other women. I really like working with women. I’m really not even sure what the hell may have happened anyway.

Bonnie tells me that, after she left her position as executive director of the government department, the woman hired to replace her was aboriginal and had little executive or senior management experience. She suggests that the reason she was let go may have been because they wanted to hire an aboriginal woman. Here, the woman who
Bonnie is positioned as unqualified and undeserving of the position of executive director and only hired because she is aboriginal. Race matters, but it isn’t supposed to. Bonnie is performing whiteness. Her whiteness leads her to expect to be treated with high regard. Bonnie doesn’t expect to be disrespected or unappreciated. Bonnie has been subordinated in the past by her gender and her place in the workplace hierarchy, but she has never been subordinated by her race. Bonnie does not acknowledge the woman’s disadvantaged position as an aboriginal person.

Bonnie also tells me she didn’t care about what happened because she had moved on. She tells me that she was harassed more by her male director than by any women she had worked with. However, Bonnie tells me that she would likely pass by J. if she ran into her and would not talk to her, because she believed J. had something to do with her being investigated. In the telling, Bonnie’s distress about having to leave her position is evident even though she says she “didn’t care”. The discourse of reward with additional rights and privileges for achieving a high position in the workplace hierarchy has been violated.

Bonnie went on to tell me that she thought the struggles she had with staff when she was the executive director of an agency were because of employer-employee relationships in which employees disputed her authority and power. Bonnie is positioned as justly higher in the workplace hierarchy, able to make decisions about who will be hired and who will be fired. Bonnie invokes the binary of employer and employee and the discourse of superior and subordinate within the hierarchy. She also told me the struggle was because she was trying to make change in the organization and some of the staff had some difficulty with change. The employees were positioned as unwilling to accept their role as lower in the hierarchy within the workplace, and unwilling to accept
change. For Bonnie, the problem is with some of the staff, their personality or personal failures in being able to accept change, or their position in the hierarchy. They were unable to accept the imbalance of power in their relationship with Bonnie. They were resisting a discourse of employee compliance, and respect for the authority of someone higher up in the hierarchy.

Bonnie tells that she has no residual feelings and that she has had many positive experiences working with women, so she was not going to focus on the negative ones. Despite Bonnie’s denial, her continued distress is evident when she says she isn’t really even sure “what the hell” happened. She has taken up the discourse of the benevolent woman boss who cares about women. She positions herself as righteous, on the side of women and belonging to the sisterhood of women. She has worked hard and followed the expectations of the organization. Yet she finds herself out of her job. She is unaware of the conflicting discourses to which she and others have subscribed.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have identified the discourses and subdiscourses invoked by each participant in her interview transcript. A number of the discourses I identified were cited by only one woman. However, several discourses were common to all the participants. The first is the discourse of the good woman. This discourse assumes that a good woman establishes reciprocity and mutuality in relationships with other women. It also assumes that a good woman has certain essential characteristics such as kindness, loyalty and trustworthiness, is submissive yet hardworking. Another is the discourse of the good worker. According to this discourse, a good worker is subordinate and obedient, hardworking, trustworthy, and does what is expected. A third discourse common to all
participants is the discourse of workplace hierarchy. This discourse assumes a hierarchy is necessary in an efficient workplace. It also assumes that those higher in the hierarchy have authority over those lower in the hierarchy, that they know what’s best for and should lead those lower in the hierarchy and that they deserve additional rewards and privileges for doing so.

In what follows, I will list the discourses and the discursive assumptions invoked by each participant in turn, so that the reader can see the similarities and differences among participants. These are the discourses identified in Allison’s transcript:

- **The Good Woman.**
  - The good woman is equal to other women, is in reciprocal mutual relationships with other women; there is equality among women.
  - The good woman is caring, loyal and part of a sisterhood; in egalitarian female friendships.
  - The good woman is kind, reasonable, trusting and trustworthy.
  - The good woman submits.
- **The Good Worker.**
  - The good worker holds efficiency and service as workplace ideals.
  - The good worker holds teamwork and cooperation as workplace ideals.
  - A good worker should not and cannot go it alone.
- **White superiority/black inferiority.**
  - A white woman can expect to be treated well.
  - Control of another’s space and time marks dominance and entitlement.
  - White superiority includes the discursive assumption that race has no effect on what happens in the workplace.
- **Individual pathology.**
  - Skill deficit and faulty personality are responsible for bullying.
  - Excessive consumption of alcohol is a disease that explains behaviour and runs in families.
- **Workplace hierarchy**
  - Those higher in the hierarchy have authority.
    - Those higher in the hierarchy know what’s best for others.
  - Those lower in the hierarchy must follow the rules.
- **Individuals must defend themselves against attack.**
  - One must defend oneself when attacked.
  - Criticism is a personal attack.

For Allison, the discourse of the good woman, which assumes equality among
women, is in conflict with the discourse of workplace hierarchy which assumes that those higher up in the hierarchy will have authority over those subordinate to them. Allison’s supervisor is a woman Allison assumes will be loyal to the sisterhood and in a reciprocal relationship with other women. The subdiscourse of the good woman assuming equality among women conflicts with the assumption that the good woman submits. Allison assumes mutuality and reciprocity in her relationship with her supervisor and suffers when her supervisor treats her as a subordinate. This also conflicts with the discourse of white superiority and racial inferiority in which white women like Allison can expect to be treated well.

The following is a summary of the discourses identified in Jennifer’s transcript:

- **The Good Worker**
  - The good worker is cooperative.
  - The good worker remains subordinate, takes direction, submits, does not resist.
  - The good worker has moral worth.
  - The good worker puts in extra hours and is hardworking.
  - The good worker is trustworthy and dependable.
  - The good worker is a healthy worker; she has no problems with self-esteem.
  - The good worker is rational.
  - The good worker has a good work ethic.
    - She sees the benefits of hard work.
    - She believes hard work builds character.
  - If someone isn’t a good worker, they are a bad worker.
- **Individuals have inherent freedoms.**
  - Lunch time is private time.
- **Individuals must defend themselves against attack.**
  - Criticism is a personal attack.
  - The response to stress is fight or flight.
- **The Good Woman.**
  - The good woman is caring, fair, and kind.
  - The good woman is effective; able to change others, responsible for changing others.
  - The good woman is a peace keeper.
  - The good woman belongs to the sisterhood of women.
The good woman is trusting (of her parents, of her husband, of her boss).
The good woman can be trusted to act in good faith.
The good woman is a good worker.
The good woman submits and does not resist.
The good woman never shows anger.
The good woman would never betray a trust she has been given.

- Workplace Hierarchy.
  - Those higher in the hierarchy are superior while those lower in the hierarchy are subordinate.
  - Those higher in the hierarchy have power while those lower in the hierarchy are powerless.
  - Those higher in the hierarchy demand compliance from those lower in the hierarchy; noncompliance is unacceptable.
  - Those lower in the hierarchy are servants of those higher in the hierarchy.

- White superiority/Racial inferiority.
  - A white woman will be treated well.

- Individual pathology.
  - Mental illness is responsible for bad behaviour.
  - An individual’s thoughts can be controlled by others; brainwashed.
  - Individuals are responsible for the bad behaviour of others.
  - Low self-esteem causes someone to be bullied.
  - Those who survive are survivors; those who don’t are victims.
  - You get what you ask for; you get what you deserve.
  - What happens to a woman is her own fault; you are responsible for your own suffering.

- Power is something you have or don’t have.
  - An imbalance of power is created when power is not distributed equally.
  - Power is used by one person to dominate others.

- Personal or private information is not to be shared.
  - Only facts, not misinformation (gossip), should be shared.

- Change is possible.
  - If you try hard enough, it is possible to transform something or someone into something else.

- Failure and quitting.
  - Failure is choosing a goal but not achieving it.
  - Trying and failing is better than not trying at all.
  - Quitting is giving up before knowing if the goal can be reached.
  - Quitting is not having what it takes to achieve a goal.

For Jennifer, the discourse of the good woman as the passive one who suffers in silence conflicts with the discourse of the strong independent woman who not only survives, but should be able to change others. The subdiscourses of the ability and
The responsibility of the good woman to change others also conflicts with the subdiscourse of the good woman who submits and does not resist. The assumption that the good woman can change others also conflicts with the discourse of the workplace hierarchy which assumes that those positioned lower in the hierarchy are powerless, and must comply with the demands of those higher in the hierarchy. The powerless subordinates are there to serve those higher in the hierarchy. The discourse of workplace hierarchy in turn conflicts with the discourse of individual pathology which assumes that individuals, whether in positions of power or powerless, are responsible for their own misfortune as well as for the bad behaviour of others. Workers are both at the mercy of others, and responsible for their own problems.

The following is a summary of the discourses identified in Hanna’s transcript:

- **The Good Worker.**
  - The good worker uses appropriate manners.
  - The good worker is obedient, does what is expected of her and no more.
  - The good worker does not require anything of the workplace (not justice or respect).
  - The good worker gets the job done.
- **The Good Woman**
  - The good woman is submissive and keeps quiet.
  - The good woman is perky; has an upbeat, outgoing personality.
  - The good woman is innocent, reasonable, and hardworking.
  - The good woman belongs to the sisterhood of women.
  - The good woman does not speak out or expect to be heard.
- **Workplace hierarchy.**
  - Professionals have autonomy in the workplace.
    - Professionals are competent, responsible, cooperative and committed.
  - Ridicule keeps people in their places (cutting jokes, put down humour).
  - Education is necessary and an indication of a person’s worth within the workplace hierarchy.
  - Those higher in the hierarchy have authority over those lower in the hierarchy.
  - Behaviour reveals a person’s values and attitudes, and the place she deserves in the hierarchy.
• Equity in the workplace.
  o The good workplace is just and fair. It does not harass.
  o There is equity for all in the good workplace.
  o There are appropriate manners for the good workplace.
  o There is civility in the good workplace.

For Hanna, the discourse of the good woman, which assumes that women will be submissive and quiet, and not speak out or expect to be heard, is in conflict with the good woman subdiscourse which assumes that women will be perky, upbeat and outgoing. The discourse of workplace hierarchy, which assumes that some people are above others in the hierarchy and that ridicule can be used to keep people in their place, is in conflict with the discourse of the good worker, which assumes that women will use appropriate manners in the workplace. This discourse, which accepts the use of ridicule, is also in conflict with the discourse of the good woman as kind. The discourse of workplace hierarchy is also in conflict with the discourse of equity for all which assumes that the good workplace will be just and fair and that there will be civility. Hanna suffers when she expects equality and a civil workplace, but is punished with ridicule for not keeping to her lower place in the hierarchy.

The following is a summary of the discourses identified in Ellen’s transcript:

• The Good Worker.
  o The good worker is hardworking, conscientious about time and cleanliness.
  o The good worker is industrious (never idle), responsible.
  o The good worker is satisfied, positive.

• The Good Woman.
  o The good woman is generous, selfless, self-sacrificing, accepting of others, inclusive, warm.
  o The good woman is part of a sisterhood; friends with other women.
  o The good woman is clean and white.
  o The good woman is mindful of the effect of her actions on others.
  o The good woman is not selfish or judgmental.
  o The good woman does not display emotions. To do so would reveal her
personal character.
  o The good woman is never angry.

• Workplace hierarchy.
  o Those higher in the hierarchy know best; their job is to lead those lower in the hierarchy.

For Ellen, the subdiscourses within the discourse of the good worker, which create an expectation that the good worker will be hard working, conscientious, clean, industrious, responsible, satisfied and positive are in conflict with other subdiscourses of the good woman, which assume that women will be accepting of other women, non-judgmental and mindful of the effects of their actions on others. This good woman discourse, assuming that a woman should not judge other women, is also in conflict with the discourse of workplace hierarchy which assumes that those lower in the hierarchy are there to be judged. Ellen sees herself as a good woman and a good worker, but she judges other women as inferior to herself. Her co-workers punish her for violating a discourse which creates the good woman as non-judgmental.

The following is a summary of the discourses identified in Bonnie’s transcript:

• The Good Worker.
  o The good worker is concrete, practical and rational; her work can be measured.
  o The good worker’s salary is tied to the amount and type of work she produces.
  o The good worker is subservient, compliant and controllable.
  o The good worker follows directions and the leadership of those higher up in the hierarchy.
  o The good worker is able to talk things over with others and reach consensus.
  o The good worker is not intellectual or creative.
  o The good worker is not a professional who has autonomy.
  o The good worker does not use nepotism to her advantage.

• Workplace hierarchy.
  o The hierarchy makes an organization “effective” (in achieving intended outcomes; and reaching intended goals).
  o Those higher in the hierarchy have more rights and deserve more
privileges than those lower in the hierarchy.

- Those higher in the hierarchy know best; they lead those lower in the hierarchy.
- Those higher in the hierarchy supervise the work of those subordinate to them in the hierarchy.
- Those higher in the hierarchy are just and fair.
- A quantity of value can be placed on work performed. Those higher in the hierarchy choose whether or not to value the work of those lower in the hierarchy and what value to place on that work.
- Those higher in the hierarchy are responsible for getting the job done.
- Those higher in the hierarchy make the final decisions and set the expectations.
- Those higher in the hierarchy are responsible for getting those below them in the hierarchy to produce work.
- Those higher in the hierarchy are superior to those lower in the hierarchy.
- Those higher in the hierarchy can be benevolent superiors to those subordinate to them in the hierarchy.
- Those higher in the hierarchy have the right to do surveillance of those lower in the hierarchy.
- Those lower in the hierarchy need to be supervised.
- Those lower in the hierarchy need surveillance and must submit to and accept surveillance by those higher in the hierarchy.
- There is no such thing as harassment in the workplace.

- White superiority/racial inferiority.
  - Race has no effect in the workplace.
  - White people can expect the best.
  - White people know what’s best for non-whites.
  - Non-whites need the help of whites.
  - White people can be benevolent to non-whites.

- The workplace is a meritocracy.
  - Your value to the organization is in what you do; how much you produce.
  - There is equality for all.

- Gender has no effect in the workplace.
  - Women leaders can operate in the same ways men do.

- The Good Woman.
  - The good woman is feminine, “nice”, kind, caring.
  - The good woman does not hurt other people’s feelings.
  - The good woman is not confrontational.
  - The good woman does not exercise power and authority over other women.

In Bonnie’s world, the discourses of the good woman, which assume that women do not exercise power and authority over other women, are in conflict with the subdiscourses
of workplace hierarchy, which assume that the hierarchy is necessary, that those higher in the hierarchy know best and make final decisions, that those higher need to supervise and surveil those lower in the hierarchy to ensure they produce the work of the organization, and that those higher have more rights and privileges than those lower in the hierarchy. In Bonnie’s case, the boss is a woman who is assumed to be a friend, an equal and part of the sisterhood, but expects subordinates to submit. This discourse of workplace hierarchy, which assumes those higher in the hierarchy make the decisions, is also in conflict with the discourse of the good worker, which assumes the good worker’s ability and willingness to make decisions by consensus. The subdiscourse of meritocracy, which assumes equal opportunity for all, is in conflict with the subdiscourse of hierarchy which assumes that someone’s value is based on their work production. As well, the subdiscourses of white superiority assume that race has no effect in the workplace, and this conflicts with the assumption that white people can expect the best, know what’s best for non-whites, and be benevolently helpful to non-whites who could not manage on their own.

All five participants subscribe to the discourse of the good woman which constructs women as nice, kind, caring, warm, innocent, reasonable, generous, selfless and self-sacrificing, inclusive and accepting of others. Four of the women, Allison, Jennifer, Hanna and Ellen, invoke the subdiscourse of good women as friends in reciprocal and mutual relationships with other women, as equals, as egalitarian members of a sisterhood. Bonnie does not. The subdiscourse of the good woman invoked by Bonnie is that women do not hurt each other, are not confrontational and do not exercise power and authority. Allison and Jennifer invoke the subdiscourse of women as trusting and trustworthy.
Jennifer and Ellen invoke the subdiscourse of women never expressing anger.

All five participants invoke the discourse of the good worker as efficient and conscientious with a good work ethic, as one who serves, is industrious and responsible, works hard and puts in extra hours. Their value is based on the amount and type of work produced. While Allison subscribes to the subdiscourse of the good worker as working cooperatively as a member of a team, Jennifer, Hanna and Bonnie subscribe to the subdiscourse of the good worker as subordinate, subservient, obedient, submissive, following directions, doing what is expected and not resisting. Bonnie was the only woman who subscribed to a subdiscourse which assumes that the good worker is not intellectual or creative and does not have autonomy.

All of the participants subscribe to the discourse of workplace hierarchy; however, they differ on several of the subdiscourses. Bonnie invokes this discourse more than the other participants. The subdiscourses invoked by all the participants assume that those higher in the hierarchy are superior to and have authority over those lower in the hierarchy. Those higher in the hierarchy are the leaders who know best, set the expectations for others and make the final decisions. They supervise, surveil and demand compliance of those lower in the hierarchy. Allison and Jennifer are the only two participants who subscribe to the discourse of individual pathology as an explanation for the negative ways women treat each other in the workplace. Nevertheless, the subdiscourse to which Allison subscribes, assumes skill deficits and faulty personality are to blame, while Jennifer subscribes to the subdiscourse of mental illness and low self-esteem being at fault.

These discourses both create and reflect assumptions about how the world works.
They account for the phenomenon of woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace, and shed light on how subject identities are constituted, the power relations at work in the workplace, the interests they serve and the ideological assumptions they support and disrupt. Each woman’s subjectivity, who she believes herself to be and what she assumes to be true about the world, is constructed by the discourses about good women to which she subscribes and which she resists. Although the discourse of the good woman, and its opposing discourse of the bad woman, may appear on the surface to be categories that exclude each other as opposites, they are two sides of what is creating women. They are binary opposites that work to produce women. Similarly, the discourse of the good worker and the bad worker is a binary that teaches women they can only be one or the other. These discourses disrespect women, limit the subject positions made available to women and ensure that those made available to women disadvantage them. Women do not choose another discourse. They seem unaware of the effect the discourse has on them. Once a woman has subscribed to a discourse, her agency, her ability to make choices, is limited because other discourses are not considered nor are the ideological assumptions they support disrupted. Power relations at work in the workplace are embedded in and enacted through discourse. These power relations are a collection of actions which, when exercised over free subjects, produce various possibilities. They can induce someone to do as they are told and to follow directions or people can react and resist being produced in a certain way.

The technologies of power produce differences between women which are used to categorize women. The women do not think or speak outside the discourses available to them. The women accept their place in the hierarchy. They accept the naming of the
phenomenon of woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace and do not question it. The interests of those higher in the hierarchy are preserved. Ideological assumptions, those beliefs that serve as the basis for discourses, go unquestioned and are used as justifications for the actions of those they serve. These ideologies include the alleged superiority of whites and racial inferiority used to justify racism, the alleged pathology of women used to explain social relations, and the ideology of gender differences used to oppress women.

In the next chapter I look at these discourses in relation to the literature on bullying in the workplace reviewed in chapter one and in relation to Foucault’s theories, and explain how these concepts are connected with each of the participants.
CHAPTER FIVE

PERFORMING TECHNOLOGIES OF POWER

My objective...has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. [Biopower] is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.

(Foucault, 1982, p. 208-212)

5.1 Introduction

My research task has been to use feminist poststructural theory to understand why bullying of women by other women in the workplace has rarely been the focus of research, and to trouble the notion that the behaviours typically categorized as workplace bullying are the result of an individual pathology, skills deficit, or a personality flaw in the abuser or the target. Poststructuralism has given me a different language and a new set of conceptual tools with which to see my data in ways that would not have been possible before. I want to use this language and the tools of poststructuralism to describe and analyze the humanist discursive practices women interact with, that shape them and their understanding of the world and make these discourses so desirable.

In this chapter I take a closer look at language and look beyond language to understand the work performed by discourse. By analyzing the discourses of the language of the women I interviewed, I illuminate and trouble their assumptions about themselves and others and the way the world works. Through the use of Foucauldian discourse analysis and the recognition of discursive structures of biopower, hierarchy and surveillance that produce gender and power, and the binaries and metaphors that shape
and limit women’s everyday lives, I analyze the forces at work in the construction of the subjectivities of the women in my study, the power relations they produce and reproduce, and where women enact resistance. I examine the normalized subject positions made available to women so that we can begin to see possibilities for generating change.

Knowing the limitations of this work, and recognizing my own commitments to humanist beliefs in progress, I still do this with the hope that my research will encourage change in the way women think about themselves, others and the world.

5.2 Biopower

As discussed in Chapter 2, according to Foucault (1978), biopower is a technology of power, a way of managing and controlling people. Through numerous and diverse techniques, power is given access to the body and subjugation is achieved. Power is produced through control of the body and the performance of the body in particular ways. Technologies of biopower, invisible to the observer, are the link between the individual and social structures. The technologies of biopower are at work on women within the workplace.

For example, in the research text, Allison’s supervisor controls Allison’s body when she questions her about how often she goes into her office without permission. She prevents Allison having access to her office when she asks Allison to return the key. Allison’s supervisor has her wait outside her office before entering until the supervisor acknowledges her.

Once inside the office, Allison’s supervisor directs Allison to sit. Allison resists by refusing to sit. Allison’s supervisor also controls Allison’s body by controlling her work space when she repeatedly instructs Allison to remove some artificial bugs from her
computer until Allison throws them out. Allison’s supervisor puts a bell on the desk so that patrons coming into the office can summon Allison. By changing Allison’s work space from private to public, she removes Allison’s control and gives others access to Allison’s body. Allison’s supervisor also calls her to come into her office so that she can speak to Allison. Once her supervisor demands that she immediately stop work and return to her desk without finishing what she was working on. We see the effect on Allison’s body when she tells me that she would often go home at night and have four or five drinks of alcohol without eating.

Jennifer’s research text also contains examples of how Jennifer’s office manager and department head controlled her body to subjugate her. She tells me that her department head would go to a meeting, then call Jennifer to pick up tea in the cafeteria and deliver it to her in another area of the building. Once Jennifer had delivered the tea, trying not to disturb the meeting, her department head would dismiss Jennifer. Jennifer’s time and body were not her own. She was positioned as a servant at the beck and call of her department head, as one who must comply.

Jennifer also told me about the day her department head strongly advised her to take a job in the department that had recently been vacated. Jennifer did not want to, and worried so much that she would lose her current job if she didn’t take it that she became physically ill and missed a day of work. Jennifer was positioned as one without agency in this situation, which did not present her with other ways to act. Jennifer also told me about the day that her office manager called her into her office and told her she should not go to a farewell lunch for one of her colleagues who was leaving. Jennifer resisted this attempt to control her body and went anyway, but when she returned, her office manager
walked away and slammed her office door without speaking to Jennifer. Eventually, Jennifer was admitted to the psychiatric ward for treatment.

Hanna’s research text also contained examples of biopower. Her vice president ridiculed her about wearing a shawl. Her report of being sexually harassed by a male supervisor was not taken seriously, and Hanna was left waiting and wondering about the results of the investigation. Hanna was required to file a weekly “work plan” and discuss it in a meeting with a supervisor. Hanna eventually became physically ill with stomach problems and had to take a leave of absence.

As a result of these technologies of biopower, two of the women who participated in my research (Jennifer and Hanna) became ill. Allison turned to alcohol consumption. All of them eventually left their jobs. Their time, their space, their bodies were controlled. In contrast, in Chapter 1, I outlined the previous research that overwhelmingly places responsibility for illness, alcoholism or job loss and the like on the faulty personality, personal inadequacies or psychopathology of women.

In what follows, hierarchy and surveillance are explained as two examples of technologies of biopower at work in the workplace.

5.2.1 Hierarchy as a technology of biopower. Foucault (1975) wrote about the use of ‘procedures of partitioning and verticality’, the “individualizing pyramid” (p. 220). He was referring to the concept of hierarchy through which individuals are classified according to social, economic or professional standing, allowing for “the subordination of one group of people by another ….. [to] ensure the inequity of position of the different partners” (p. 223). Hockley (1996) talked about women’s silence about their workplace experiences being the result of the gendered workplace hierarchy that is constructed by
power relations between men and women that discourage dissent. She (2002) also suggested the complicity of women through their acceptance of male-defined structures in the workplace that accommodate violence. Liefoghe (2003) suggested that explanations must go beyond individual psychopathology to organizational practices. However, he did not question the discursive construction of hierarchy within the workplace and saw language only as a means of measuring and describing underlying personal issues. Lee (1998) focused on the hierarchy of oppression that is created when research into workplace bullying and harassment excludes men and positions women as more oppressed than men. She suggested that women’s experiences would be taken more seriously if men’s experiences of oppression were studied as well. I disagree with this perspective. Historically, the vast majority of research in this or any other area has focused on men. Women’s experiences have been excluded and discounted. From a feminist perspective, making women visible and taking women and their experiences seriously is important in order to understand social phenomena.

From Foucault’s perspective, discourse constructs and preserves the hierarchies of the workplace. These discourses are evident in the research texts of each of my participants. Examining the discourses women speak makes visible the discursive construction of workplace hierarchies for deconstruction. For example, Allison’s supervisor’s spaces, her office and her private mail box, are markers of her dominance in the hierarchy and her entitlement as the supervisor. Allison tells me about her supervisor denying access to her office space and taking the key to her office away from Allison. Allison’s supervisor also accuses her of opening a letter, resealing it and placing it in her mail box. Allison also tells me that her supervisor uses authority by saying that she is the
decision maker. She directs Allison to sit when she enters her office and to stop work and return to her desk when she is cataloguing books with other staff. All this action positions Allison as subordinate, as lower in the workplace hierarchy.

In another example, the workplace hierarchy is preserved when Jennifer tells me about being directed by her office manager not to go for lunch with colleagues. The discourse of probationary evaluations also preserves the workplace hierarchy, subordinating Jennifer to her office manager and department head in the hierarchy.

Women often accept hierarchy as just and inevitable. When Hanna tells me she would never talk to an authority figure in a negative way even if she hated her, she subscribes to a discourse that preserves the authority in the workplace hierarchy. Hanna also talked about the superiority of educated professionals in the workplace and how they are more deserving of positions higher in the workplace hierarchy than those who are less educated. The discourse of uneducated staff being less deserving and, therefore, appropriately placed lower in the hierarchy and social order is evident. Those who are worth more are free to judge those worth less. Another example of discourse that preserves the workplace hierarchy occurs when Hanna talks about her vice president questioning her about her work, requiring her to set up a work plan and report to her once a week for a work plan review.

Hierarchy can fail the women who believe in it. Ellen talks about her supervisor failing to reprimand other employees for their negative behaviour toward Ellen. According to Ellen, protecting her is the responsibility of someone in her supervisor’s position in the hierarchy.

Bonnie believed in hierarchy, but knew other women disputed her own position as
their superior. Bonnie talked about her position as executive director being the highest management position in the workplace hierarchy. She was the one who had administrative and managerial authority over others in the organization, the one who led and directed others in doing the work of the organization, and the one who set expectations for other staff and evaluated whether they were meeting the organization’s goals. She told me about the privileges, such as traveling at the expense of the organization, that those higher in the hierarchy can expect, and that those lower in the hierarchy do not receive. Bonnie also told me that many of the problems she experienced at the non-governmental agency where she was the executive director were because of employer-employee relationships in which employees disputed her authority and power. She tells me that, as executive director, she was justly positioned as higher in the workplace hierarchy and entitled to make decisions about who would be hired and who would be fired.

All of these discourses keep a woman, and her body, in her place in the workplace hierarchy as either superior or subordinate, and keep women focused on personal responsibility, personalities or psychopathology as explanations for their own suffering. Each of the women who participated in my research accepted much of the discourse of hierarchy without question and seemed unaware of other ways of organizing the workplace. Those women who resisted the discourse of hierarchy and worked at shifting power will be discussed later in this chapter.

5.2.2 Surveillance as a technology of biopower. Surveillance, according to Foucault (1980b) is a rather ‘superb formula’: power exercised continuously and with minimal cost because all that is needed is to be continually observed, and each individual
then learns to observe himself. As Foucault stated surveillance is, “an inspecting gaze, a
gaze which each individual under its weight will end up interiorising to the point that he
is his own overseer, each individual thus experiencing this surveillance over and against
himself” (Foucault, p. 155). There are several different kinds and forms of surveillance at
work in the workplace and evident in my research texts.

Allison, for example, tells me that her supervisor questions her about her plans for an
upcoming professional development day and why she has chosen a particular workshop.
The supervisor suggests that there may be another workshop Allison could attend instead.
She then asks Allison to retrieve her workshop application form so she can have a look at
it and make a copy. Allison, knowing a co-worker has not had to do this, feels the power
of the supervisor’s gaze. Allison provides another example of her supervisor’s
surveillance of her. She said her supervisor saw her talking to another woman in the
office. She then called Allison into her office and asked Allison why she had been
talking to the woman. Again, Allison experiences being watched.

Jennifer tells me that she is convinced that some of her colleagues are part of her
department head’s surveillance, because the department head often ends up at meetings
with information that she would not otherwise have. In Jennifer’s case, one of her
colleagues is part of the union’s surveillance of workers, when she reports to the union
representative that Jennifer’s department head has offered her a position which has not
yet been posted. Jennifer also tells me that her office manager participates in surveillance
when she writes a pre-probation evaluation report about Jennifer. Jennifer says she has
received and accepted these types of evaluations in the past.

Hanna tells me about the surveillance she was under when she was required to
participate in a performance review, to write a work plan, and to meet with her vice
president every week to explain what she was doing on the job. Hanna too had endured
surveillance in the past in the form of performance reviews.

Bonnie’s surveillance of staff was evident when she told me about asking repeatedly
to see the files of one particular staff member and about the practice of writing
performance plans for employees lower in the hierarchy. She also told me about hiring a
supervisor to oversee the work and actions of a small group of employees to ensure that
the work was being done at an acceptable level of quality and quantity at the non-
government organization where she was executive director. Bonnie also questioned one
specific staff member about what she was doing with her clients, what was happening,
and what progress was being made. For Bonnie, this kind of surveillance would be a
normal practice for someone at a higher position in the workplace hierarchy, and those
lower in the hierarchy would expect to be asked to display their work. But the
surveillance of Bonnie herself is evident when she tells me about an investigation of her
management style, and a subsequent report about Bonnie that had been undertaken by her
department head.

The surveillance of subjects organizes them as untrustworthy and, in some cases, as
not only the watched, but also the watchers. While the women accepted the practice of
surveillance, they did not enjoy it. Bonnie, in particular, had difficulty with the practice
being used on her. This kind of surveillance was meant for those lower in the hierarchy,
but as an executive director at the highest management positions, she should have been
exempt. In the following section, I will examine how the subjectivity of the women who
participated in my research and their subject positionings were affected by biopower,
hierarchy, and surveillance in the workplace.

5.3. Subjectivity and Subject Positioning.

Subjectivity, that sense of ourselves which we construct in interaction with discourse, and the process of subject positioning, whereby the subject is assigned to a category and takes up that positioning as its own, have already been discussed in Chapter 2. My focus here is to examine my research texts to reveal how the subjectivity of each woman who participated in my research is produced as woman, as worker, and as supervisor, and to examine the subject positionings made available to and taken up by these women. As Davies (2000) pointed out, once a woman has taken up a particular position as her own, she will inevitably see the world from that point of view and participate in the relevant discursive practices. Usually, women have grown up without a sense of being able to choose their subject positions or achieve agency. Nevertheless, each woman is not produced as a unitary subject, but as an interconnection of contradictory subjectivities, constantly in process and changed by the discourses that produce her. Each woman is the site of conflicting forms of subjectivities (Walkerdine, 1990). When each woman assumes a particular subject position that supports her self-interest, she satisfies her desires and feels good; however, she has the potential to resist a subject position with which she is uncomfortable (Weedon, 1987). The subject positionings made available to women are interactively produced, as women take up or resist the subject positions offered to them.

I will begin my discussion with Allison. Allison is a white woman in a subordinate position to a black woman. The cultural discourse of white superiority and black inferiority would make the positioning of a white person below a black person in the
social hierarchy unusual. Allison attempts to produce herself as a good woman who is caring, kind, and thoughtful. She puts herself out for others and seeks to belong to an equitable and mutually reciprocal sisterhood of women who have solidarity based on shared conditions, experiences and concerns. She positions herself as the righteous one.

But Allison’s desire for sisterhood is in conflict with the discourse of white supremacy and the conditions, experiences and concerns of a black woman. Allison expects a bond between them which would unite them in a sisterly relationship, but this is not reciprocated by her supervisor. When Allison’s supervisor places a bell on her desk, Allison is positioned as a servant who must answer to the bell. Allison is positioned as one who is questioned and must defend her decisions. Allison is positioned as the beleaguered one, the one who is hurt and hard done by, the victim. But Allison, a white woman, does not expect to be subordinated to a black woman. Allison and her supervisor are both positioned within cultural tropes as having a faulty personality, personal inadequacies or some psychopathology. Allison is positioned as the one who drinks too much, while her supervisor is positioned as unnatural, as a powerful black woman.

Jennifer works at producing herself as a good woman who is kind, nurturing, caring and giving toward others. When others position her as inferior, Jennifer remains a good woman by positioning herself as passive, a woman who suffers in silence, who stays the course and never gives up, and who goes above and beyond to fix things when they go wrong. She produces herself as sensitive to the needs of others, as a peace keeper, as someone who cheers others up, as someone who doesn’t show her anger even when she doesn’t like someone.

But Jennifer also sees herself as a strong independent woman and a tough survivor
who has faced adversity and will stand up for herself. These multiple subjectivities are often in conflict with the subject positions offered to Jennifer in the workplace. She is positioned as a compliant servant, inferior to and respectful of the department head, one who is expected to serve the department head. She resists by positioning herself as one who is competent and capable, one who takes initiative, as conscientious, a team player and hardworking one who goes above and beyond what is expected without complaint.

The subject position of compliant worker is in conflict with the subject position of someone who stands up to her office manager and department head without crumbling. Her office manager and department head position Jennifer as one who is not valued or respected, who does not acknowledge the work hours of the department, who makes others look bad by arriving early and doing extra work. Jennifer is positioned as a magnet for bullies (by her counsellor), and as a failure and unable to change others (by herself). She produces herself as a good woman who is modest but fair, as not powerful, as a member of the sisterhood of women who defend each other, who treat each other with respect as equals, and support and care about each other. Jennifer positions the department head and office manager as bad women who have positions of authority over other women and violate the discourse of the sisterhood of women.

Hanna creates herself as a good worker who is responsible and dependable, a good time manager who can be trusted to keep her nose to the grind stone and do the work she was hired to do while being respectful, and behaving in a pleasant, civil, and courteous way toward others. She sees herself as a professional who is well-educated, competent, superior in the social order and more deserving of respect and of positions higher in the workplace hierarchy, able to balance work and family and take the personal and
emotional out of the workplace. She produces herself as able to communicate clearly, having autonomy, deserving of respect and of not having her work questioned. Hanna produces herself as a good woman who is strong and stands up for herself but doesn’t make trouble for others.

Her vice president, on the other hand, is produced in Hanna’s transcript as unsupportive and untrustworthy, unable to engage others in conversation and talk freely with others, and as putting others in awkward situations. Her manager is produced as uneducated, unprofessional and incapable with poor grammar, poor writing skills and poor articulation, and deserving of being lower in the social order than those with education. Hanna’s colleagues are produced as unproductive and unsupportive.

Hanna takes up the subject position of the one who is righteous, the one who belongs to a sisterhood of women who stick up for and support other women and would never treat each other badly. This is in conflict with the subject position she is offered as the one who can’t take a joke or be a good sport, the one who takes offense to what is said or done. Hanna takes up the righteous subject positioning of the innocent and reasonable one who is trying to do her best but has been wronged by the vice president and office manager. She is the one who is hard done by. The subject positionings Hanna is offered by her department manager and vice president are very different. They position Hanna as the one who is ridiculous and foolish. Her vice president is thereby positioned as superior and powerful.

Ellen presents herself as the good worker who is skilled and knows what she’s doing, is diligent, conscientious, organized and productive, has a good work ethic, and appreciates people who work hard but tolerates people who are lazy. She also sees
herself as someone who is positive and does not get caught up on the negativity of her colleagues. Ellen also produces herself as a good woman who is nice, kind, helpful, supportive, considerate of others, and giving of her time and energy for the benefit of other women. She presents herself as a good woman who does not show anger, is not mean, does not show dislike for her boss or tell her boss how she feels. When Ellen told me about her colleagues going for coffee but that she didn’t like to just sit around, she produced her colleagues as bad workers who are lazy, unmotivated, lacking ambition, idle, good for nothing and less deserving. She portrayed them as incompetent, dishonest and untrustworthy and as caught up in negativity and unhappy with themselves, their work, and their lives. Her colleagues are also produced as bad women who are cold, mean, and uncaring.

Ellen takes up the subject positions of the naturally good and responsible one, the conscientious and virtuous one, the committed one; the one who works hard; the one who is knowledgeable, the one who is balanced and able to resist negativity, the innocent one, the one who is tolerant; the one who puts herself out for others. Ellen produces herself as the one being hurt. Ellen’s colleagues are positioned as the cruel, mean and hurtful ones, the negative ones, the bitter, the dishonest ones, the angry and jealous ones.

Bonnie presents herself as the good boss who is a leader and makes the decisions, is benevolent and goes above and beyond to accommodate staff while keeping the best interest of clients in mind, and belonging to the sisterhood of women. She produces herself as the good worker who is concrete and pragmatic, and who contributes to the goals of the organization and represents the organization well. She speaks of herself as a rational, linear, practical and concrete thinker. Her employee J. she produces as abstract,
unable to produce and show her work to others, unable to define what she is doing, unqualified and not performing well enough for the money she receives, as disobedient, uncooperative, undeserving and as benefiting from nepotism.

Bonnie positions herself as the righteous one, the superior one, the rational and reasonable one, the one with responsibilities, the knowledgeable one, the one who surveils, and the one who knows best and is justified in making changes. When Bonnie tells me that people like the employee J. are referred to as “policy wonks”, she positions her as the abstract thinker, the lazy and unproductive one, the one who is wasting time, the one whose way of working is inferior, the useless, insignificant, and irrelevant one, the one whose work is irrelevant, the undeserving and unworthy one, the one not worth keeping. When Bonnie tells me about the staff at the non-governmental agency struggling with her authority and says that some people have difficulty with change, she positions them as the ones who are unwilling to accept change, the ones resistant to expectations of working harder. One particular staff member is positioned as the one not doing counselling properly, the one who is a friend to her clients instead of a counsellor.

Bonnie speaks of herself as an exemplary employee, the innocent one, the victim, the one whose performance has been highly rated, above the normal standard and beyond reproach, the one wronged, the one whose work has been scrutinized by others, the hero who warns other women of the hazard and possibility of having their work surveilled. Her department head is positioned as the unsupportive one, the uncaring one and the discouraging one.

McCarthy and Barker (2000) argue that distress, fear and anger in the workplace have led to the naming of bullying and to the characterizing of bullies as ‘evil’ incarnate.
McCarthy (2003) suggests a desire to take up a victim identity and scapegoate the other as the evil doer. However, he does not explain why humanist discourse is so desirable and how it is involved in the production of these social problems. With a very few exceptions, the research on bullying ignores the effects of discourse.

Coming from a liberal feminist perspective, Brunner and Costello (2003) suggest that women have certain ‘traits’ that make them kinder, gentler, more expressive, communal and nurturing than men and that the problem is that these traits are devalued while those of men are seen as the norm and the standard to be met. Their lack of suggestions as to how the ‘traits’ happen leaves one assuming that they are the result of individual personality flaws. Their suggested solution is training and education, ‘zero tolerance’ policies and anti-bullying legislation, none of which acknowledge the experiences of women or give them a voice. Nicarthy, Gottleib, and Goffman (1993) suggest that women should monitor and change the way they think about themselves and assertively confront abuse. However, they do not provide answers for women on how they might begin to do this or why certain ways of thinking are so desirable and difficult to change.

Hockley (2000) says that there is a societal expectation that nurses will have a caring nature and that when nurses are promoted to senior management positions they will remain caring; however, caring is not seen as a valued quality. She too does not give suggestions as to how one acquires this caring nature except to come by it “naturally.”

Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, and Wilkes (2004) explore the language used by people in the workplace to define and describe bullying. They suggest that language is a powerful tool with the potential to create and maintain stereotypical images and beliefs about the targets of bullying as weak, unassertive victims who cannot or will not help
themselves and, therefore, are deserving of what happens to them. For them, language is outside the responsibility of the organization.

But from a feminist poststructural perspective, each woman’s subjectivity is constructed or resisted through her interactions with others and the world, and she takes up or resists those subject positionings made available to her. By making visible the discursive threads through which each woman’s experience of herself as a woman is constructed, by gaining a sense of the subjectivities each woman constructs and understanding the choices of subject positions taken up or resisted, agency and responding differently become possible.

5.4 Resistance and Shifting Power.

As discussed in Chapter 2, according to Foucault (1980), power is not the domination of one individual over others or the domination of one group or class over others. Nor can power be held by or possessed by someone. Power is not submitted to. Power is not only a repressive force. It is a productive force as well. Power circulates, with each of us either undergoing power or exercising power. Power should be understood as being exercised only over free subjects, by structuring the possibility within power relations to act upon another, and the other to be acted upon as allowing herself to be acted upon or to resist being acted upon.

In the research texts from several of the women, there is evidence of the circulation or shifting of power, of the women being acted upon, acting upon the other, and of resistance. This perspective differs from a liberal feminist perspective. For example, Nicarthy, Gottleib and Goffman (1993) suggest that power can be held and that women need to take responsibility for the abuse they suffer because they have given their power
away. They also construct women as victims and argue that women are more vulnerable and oppressed and are not in a position to resist in the workplace because they are more frequently at or near the bottom of the hierarchy.

But in Allison’s research text, we see the power continuously shifting between Allison and her supervisor. Allison is acted upon when her supervisor questions her about why she is placing boxes in her office when she’s away, how she got in and who else she lets in. Allison allows herself to be acted upon on this occasion. Allison is acted upon again when her supervisor calls her into her office. She allows herself to be acted upon by going to her supervisor’s office and initially waiting at the door to be acknowledged before entering. Allison is also acted upon when her supervisor instructs her to sit and Allison sits. On another occasion, Allison resists being acted upon by her supervisor when her supervisor repeatedly instructs her to sit upon entering the office. Allison refuses and insists that she will be the one who will make the decision about whether to sit or not when a chair is offered to her. Allison is acted upon again when the department head calls her and her supervisor in for a discussion. She is told that her supervisor has accused her of making a racial slur. Allison resists being positioned as racist by denying the accusation. When the department head suggests that she and her supervisor remain in her office to work out their differences, Allison resists being acted upon and leaves. On another occasion, Allison’s supervisor acts upon Allison when she tells Allison to stop what she is doing and return to her desk. Initially, Allison resists by telling her supervisor that she only has a few more books to finish cataloguing, but then she appears to allow herself to be acted upon when her supervisor tells her to return to her desk immediately and Allison leaves the area. However, she resists by going to the
washroom rather than to her desk, as her supervisor had instructed. Allison’s supervisor acts upon Allison again when she tells Allison to remove the artificial bugs from her computer. Allison initially resists by ignoring the instruction. Eventually, when the supervisor repeats the instruction, Allison allows herself to be acted upon and throws the bugs away. Again, Allison’s supervisor acts upon Allison when she places a bell on Allison’s desk so that patrons will be able to summon Allison. Initially, Allison allows herself to be acted upon in this way; however, she eventually resists by throwing the bell in the garbage. Allison is acted upon when she is questioned by her supervisor about which workshop she is planning to attend on an upcoming professional development day, and told to retrieve the leave form she has already submitted so that her supervisor can review it. Allison allows herself to be acted upon by retrieving the form. However, when she inquires as to whether her supervisor has questioned her colleague in the same way and asked her to retrieve her form, and is advised that her supervisor did not ask this of her colleague, Allison acts upon her supervisor by questioning her as to why she has treated her colleague differently than she has treated her. On another occasion, Allison is acted upon by her supervisor in front of another staff member when she is questioned about the choice of books she has used in a book display, and told that she does not have the authority to make these decisions. Allison resists being acted upon first by speaking to her colleague about what happened. Allison’s supervisor acts upon her by asking her why she is speaking to her colleague. She then acts upon her supervisor when she questions her as to why she had not said anything to her when she had first looked at the display, rather than waiting to do it when another staff member complained about the display. In the last example from Allison’s research text, Allison’s supervisor acts upon
her by questioning her about an opened and resealed letter that was placed in her mailbox. Initially, Allison allows herself to be acted upon. However, when Allison witnesses the supervisor speaking differently to the woman who had actually opened the letter, Allison acts upon her supervisor by confronting her about why she has not treated the other woman in the same way that she has treated Allison. Whenever Allison resists being positioned in a certain way she claims power for herself, and the power relations of hierarchy shift.

Jennifer’s research text also provides evidence of power shifting between Jennifer, the office manager and the department head. In the first example, Jennifer is acted upon by the office manager when she calls Jennifer to her office and tells her she has been evaluated. Initially Jennifer allows herself to be acted upon. She then resists by asking for evidence of several negative scores she has received. She acts upon the office manager and department head by writing a rebuttal letter addressing each point, requesting that a copy of the letter be placed in her personnel file, telling the union representative that she had been subjected to a pre-evaluation and by placing a copy of the letter on the desks of her office manager and department head. Despite this, the personnel file Jennifer speaks about is an example of Foucault’s totalization, discussed in Chapter 2, which captures Jennifer and fixes her in time. Information from this file can be used to make decisions about Jennifer in the future, even if the information is no longer relevant. She resists being acted upon when her office manager tells her she probably should not have written some things she had and offers to remove them, and Jennifer tells her not to change a thing or she won’t sign it. On another occasion, Jennifer allows herself to be acted upon when her department head calls and requests that tea be
brought to her at a meeting in another part of the building and Jennifer complies. However, when Jennifer’s office manager tells her not to go to a farewell lunch for a colleague who is leaving, Jennifer does not allow herself to be acted upon, ignores the instruction and goes for lunch anyway.

There is also evidence of power shifting and circulating between Bonnie, her employees and her department head. Bonnie acts upon her employee J. when she repeatedly asks J. what she was doing and requests the files she has been working on. J. resists by not complying with Bonnie’s repeated requests to show her the files. J. does not allow Bonnie to act on her any longer when she moves to another department. In another example, Bonnie acts upon employees when she hires a supervisor to supervise their work. When Bonnie is dissatisfied with the level of work production by staff, she acts upon them again by meeting with them and asking them to increase their production. The staff resist by not changing what they are doing and increasing their workload. Bonnie eventually acts upon them by making a decision about shutting down the waiting list until they reduce it. The staff allow themselves to be acted upon, and their workload is increased. The power shifts again when Bonnie is acted upon by her department head. He initiates an investigation of Bonnie’s management style and eventually asks for her resignation. Bonnie does not resist the investigation because she is unaware it is happening. She allows herself to be acted upon when she “resigns” and leaves her position as executive director.

Charmaine Hockley (2002) draws attention to the hierarchical nature of power relations that discourage dissent. She also suggests the complicity of women through their acceptance of male-defined structures in the workplace that accommodate violence.
Hockley’s approach frames the problem as women’s personal inadequacies or personal failings and does not acknowledge the constitutive nature of discourse and how agency is enacted. Although McCarthy (2003) approaches this subject from a structuralist perspective, he seems to allude to power circulating when he talks about experiencing bullying and behaving in a bullying manner being evenly distributed in the human condition.

All of the women in these examples acted upon others, allowed themselves to be acted upon, or resisted. In the next section, I will make visible the binaries and metaphors that contribute to producing subjectivities, subject positions and power relations.

5.5 Other Useful Concepts

5.5.1 Binaries. As discussed in Chapter 2, a binary opposition is a pair of related but mutually exclusive concepts that are defined by contrasting them against one another. Hockley (2000) critiques a liberal feminist perspective that focuses on patriarchal reliance on the binaries that portray men as violent perpetrators and women as victims who are incapable of violence. According to poststructuralism, the first of the two opposites in a binary is usually privileged over the second. It is assigned normalcy. Binaries are evident in the research texts for all of the women participants. Allison subscribed to a good woman/bad woman binary. A “good woman” is friends with and participates in egalitarian relationships with other women. The opposing half of the binary, “bad woman” exerts authority over other women. Jennifer too invokes the good woman/bad woman binary. In Jennifer’s case, a “good woman” is kind, sensitive, fair, nurturing and caring, and giving toward others. The opposing half of the binary is a “bad woman”, a woman who has feelings of hatred toward others. Hanna invokes the binaries of
professional/unprofessional people. The professional is formally educated and therefore superior in the social order and more deserving of positions higher in the workplace hierarchy. An unprofessional is uneducated and therefore has poor grammar, writing skills and articulation and is less capable. They also have undesirable biases and should, therefore, be lower in the workplace hierarchy. Ellen subscribed to the good worker/bad worker binary. The “good worker” is a skilled worker who is diligent, conscientious, works hard and is productive. The opposing side of the binary is a “bad worker”, someone who is lazy, unmotivated and lacking ambition, untrustworthy and incompetent. In discourse, no woman possesses qualities from both sides of the binary. No worker possesses qualities from both sides. One can only be one or the other.

Bonnie too subscribed to a number of binaries. She too subscribed to the good worker/bad worker binary. In Bonnie’s case, the good worker is an exemplary employee who has a plan, is practical and pragmatic and thinks in a concrete way. The good worker works in a rational and linear fashion contributing to the organization’s goals. The good worker is also submissive and follows directions from the leadership of the organization. She is willing to have her work scrutinized by others. The opposing half of the binary, the bad worker, thinks and works in an abstract way. She is unable or unwilling to either define what it is she is doing or to produce it for scrutiny. She is unqualified and not performing well enough and, therefore, does not deserve the pay she receives. The bad worker is also uncooperative and even disobedient. She wastes time and is there only because she is benefiting from favoritism. In addition, Bonnie subscribed to the good boss/bad boss binary. The good boss knows best, is a leader and represents the organization. The good boss is hardworking and able to make decisions. The good boss
is also benevolent and works to accommodate staff while continuing to have the interests of the client in mind. The good female boss is also on the side of women and belongs to the sisterhood of women. The opposing half of the binary is the bad boss, the boss who is unsupportive, uncaring and discourages staff.

5.5.2 Metaphors. As discussed in Chapter 2, metaphors are an integral part of the conceptual system of humanism and contribute to our understanding of everyday life; so much so that we have come to think of metaphoric comparisons as common sense. The workplace hierarchy is an example of how certain cultural values (like valuing some people more than others) are coherent and reasonable within the metaphorical structure of the most basic concepts in the culture (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For instance, some cultural values are coherent within our up-down spatialization metaphors (e.g. more is better is coherent with more is up and good is up). When applying this concept to the workplace context, higher positions in the hierarchy are better. More education is better and may help you achieve a position higher up. There are many examples of these in my research texts. For example, Allison tells me her supervisor “had a tendency to talk down to me.” Hanna, tells me that her vice president “probably fought her way up herself.” Ellen talks about colleagues being “at the worker level” or having “the most seniority in the unit.” Bonnie tells me that she is “at the highest management position.” The women in these examples used the hierarchy metaphor to talk about the positioning of themselves and others within the organization. Higher value was given to those higher up in the hierarchy.

If we look only at the hierarchy of human beings in an abstract way without considering its effects on people, it is tempting to see it as working nicely and, for many,
hierarchy seems like common sense. Many would say that the work of the organization would never get done without this kind of hierarchy of human beings. However, I would suggest that in order for such a hierarchy to exist, many assumptions must be made and viewed as truth. For instance, assumptions must be made about the ability to know other human beings in order to label and assign each person to a level within the hierarchy. These assumptions and the decisions which follow from them are often based on a gender binary. Assumptions are made about the worth and value of a person in order to position them within the hierarchy. Because binaries are associated with hierarchies, some people are seen as more deserving than others. One’s perceived worth is then translated into the giving and receiving of privileges believed to be justified by worth. Such privileges may include wages and benefits, conveniently located paid parking, and larger windowed offices. Assumptions are also made in the giving of labels and titles and the person is assumed to be the label they have been assigned.

Personification is a specific type of ontological metaphor in which non-human physical entities are described in terms of human motivation, characteristics and activities. This process is not limited to any one particular human characteristic. A specific human characteristic chosen for expression through the metaphor is shaped by a very specific way of thinking about that thing. This gives us a very specific way of acting toward it. When talking about reporting to someone else, Hanna said that “the organization wouldn’t hear of it” and that “It’s very hard to ask an organization to look at itself.” Here the organization is personified and thought about as a person. In this case the organization is a person who does not listen to the needs of others and is unable to reflect on its behaviour. When Hanna talked about her struggle to get support after
reporting her male supervisor, she said, “Human Resources isn’t about helping the employees.” The human resource department of an organization is a person who has the best interest of the institution (not its employee) at heart. Hockley (1996) suggests that organizations remain masculine in their nature and structure and the male culture of the organization will, therefore, be encouraged and bullying will be perpetrated.

Keep in mind that personification metaphors are a way of viewing non-human objects or entities as human. The research texts for this study include a new, not previously identified, ontological metaphor that reverses personification by comparing a group of human beings to animals. In this metaphor, women were understood in terms of the motivations, goals, characteristics and activities of various animals, as non-human. The following are examples from my interview data in which women were thought of as dogs that need training, that make noises, do tricks and can be bred. Jennifer tells me her department head “groomed these women” in the office. She also described her department head as “a different breed” and asked, “Who spawned that?” Allison tells me that her supervisor was “barking up the wrong tree.” When she talked about her supervisor instructing her to sit down, she said “I don’t sit, roll over or play dead.”

Metaphors were also used to imply the notion of being unthinking and easily led, describing women as creatures with little if any ability to think or reason. Ellen described her colleagues as engaging in “nitpicky back biting stuff” and “Biting the back of each other.” Jennifer said her department head “got her nails out and just went after them” and “They pick you part.” When Hanna talked about the women she worked with she said, “It was sort of dog eat dog, but worse.” Not only were women in these examples thought of as dogs, but as dogs that attack and bite from behind or use their nails (claws) to defeat
their prey, eat their prey and pull the bodies of their prey apart. The woman as animal metaphor constructs women as bestial, as cunning, untrustworthy and dangerous, suggesting that women are naturally unworthy of being treated equitably with men and that women are not rational thinking human beings. This metaphor feeds the notion that the essential quality and character of women makes them capable of certain activities and incapable of certain others. The language both reveals and creates misogyny.

I would argue that the woman as animal metaphor and the use of the binary pair of human/nonhuman, which privileges humans over non-humans, and the binary pair of male/female, provide justification for controlling women and diminishing or negating what women have to say. Constructing women as animals also feeds the notion that women should not trust one another; that they should watch their backs because other women will try to eliminate them in order to survive, thus promoting a sense of mistrust and competition among women.

5.6 Summary

The previous research has characterized bullying in the workplace and in schools as the result of an individual personality flaw, skill deficit or psychopathology. This engages us in blaming the victim, turns attention away from the discursive structures that explain how bullying happens, and influences what remedies are perceived as appropriate and necessary.

Foucauldian discourse analysis, grounded in feminist poststructural theories of language as the place where realities are created and maintained, reveals how the social world is constructed. Foucauldian discourse analysis does not reveal a single Truth. However, it does allow women whose own subjectivities have been influenced by
humanism, to understand more about how they have come to be the people they are, more about the power relations they produce and reproduce, to better understand what has happened to them in the workplace, and to choose among possibilities for change.

In the last chapter, I will conclude this dissertation by summarizing my findings regarding my four research questions: (1) What discourses are available to account for the phenomenon of woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace?; (2) How are subject identities constituted through woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace?; (3) What are the power relations at work in the workplace and whose interests do they serve?; (4) What ideological assumptions are disrupted and/or confirmed by a feminist poststructural analysis of woman-on-woman bullying?
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The task of generating feminist storylines that have the power to disrupt and displace the old is extraordinarily complex.

(Davies, 2000, p.79)

The women who participated in this research can remember in vivid detail, even years after the events, their experiences of workplace bullying, what was done to them and how they felt and, despite moving on with their lives, each one has suffered, in one way or another, as a result. Many women are unlikely, I would argue, to voice their thoughts about their experiences with other women in the workplace, in part because the humanist discourses of bullying as individual pathology are so pervasive as to be considered common sense. Using feminist poststructural theory and discourse analysis to conceptualize what happened to these women, and how it happened, will not only help us illuminate the phenomenon of bullying in the workplace, it will help us understand more about other conflict and violence.

According to feminist poststructuralism, it is language in the form of conflicting discourses which constitutes us and enables us to think, speak and experience the world. This dissertation has used feminist poststructural theory and Foucauldian discourse analysis to look at why bullying of women by other women in the workplace has rarely been the focus of research; to problematize the conceptualization of behaviours typically classified as workplace bullying as the result of individual personality flaws, skill deficits,

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12 I do not use the word “understand”, to convey the recognition of a truth that already exists and is waiting to be discovered. I use the word “understand” from a poststructural perspective, to refer to recognizing and giving voice to many meanings that are constantly shifting.
or psychopathology in the abuser or the target; and to trouble the individualization of a serious social problem which has resulted in victim blaming and the focus of our attention being turned away from the consequences of gender and race. I have analyzed the discourses of the language of women to understand the work performed by discourse and the complex configurations of power/knowledge and power relations facing women in the workplace; and also to illuminate the discursive assumptions women take up to construct beliefs about themselves, others and the way the world works. This chapter will reiterate what is revealed in my research with the hope that through the recognition of discursive structures that produce gender and power and shape and limit women’s everyday lives, and through the identification of the forces at work in the construction of the subject positions made available to women by virtue of their gender and race, women can become aware of the humanist discursive practices that shape them and their understanding of the world, and that make these discourses so desirable.

6.1 Discourses Available to Women.

“Woman” is not an essentialist category. Our experiences as women are not due to our innate characteristics or natural qualities. Women are not “naturally” evil, inclined to solidarity with other women, defenceless, kind, caring, sweet, generous, selfless, or feminine. A woman’s subjectivity, her ‘identity’, is performative, not an expression of what she is, but something that she achieves in doing, speaking and writing. Women’s subjectivities are produced through numerous competing and contradictory discourses that “constitute the ‘nature’ of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern” (Davies, 2000, p. 43) and through the limited and disadvantaged subject positions made available to women. A woman’s subjectivities are
not fixed or coherent, but are always in flux, being constituted and reconstituted (Davies, 2003) depending on whether she takes up or resists what is offered to her. The ‘choice’ of whether or not to subscribe to a discourse or take up a subject position, is as Davies (2000) writes, “understood to spring from and confirm that very identity, [and] the discursive practices through which identity, personal choice, and inner and outer selves are made thinkable, achievable” (p. 32). Those inner qualities we have come to know as desires, constructed in accordance with the gendered and racial categories to which she has been assigned and which move with each discourse, are also taken up by a woman as part of her inner core. Through this research, several conflicting discourses have been identified which account for the phenomenon of woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace.

Women in this study are produced as women through discourses that circulate through socially constructed power relations. These discourses are organized and made possible through the construction of the category “woman” in wider society. The discourse of “good woman” offers subject positions to women which allow them to see themselves as kind, caring, and warm, as a friend in reciprocal and mutual relationships with other women, as an equal, non-confrontational, not hurtful of others, not exercising power and authority, as trusting and trustworthy, as virtuous. Good women remain passive, suffer in silence, and never express anger. The discourse of the “good worker” offers subject positions to women which allow them to see themselves as efficient and conscientious with a good work ethic, industrious and responsible, hardworking, valued for the amount and type of work they produce, working cooperatively, serving others, subordinate, subservient, obedient, submissive, following directions, doing what is
expected without resistance. Good workers are not intellectual or creative or autonomous. All these subject positions can be taken up by women and become part of what they believe themselves to be. Another discourse that can be subscribed to by women is that of workplace hierarchy which assumes that those higher in the hierarchy are superior to and have authority over those lower in the hierarchy, that those higher in the hierarchy are the leaders who know best, who set the expectations for others and who make the final decisions. Those higher in the hierarchy supervise, surveil, and demand compliance by those lower in the hierarchy. Women can also take up the discourse of individual pathology which assumes women’s skill deficits and faulty personalities, mental illness and low self-esteem are to blame for the way women treat each other in the workplace.

The shifting nature of these discourses is evidence of their on-going social construction. The fluidity of discourses is itself troubling as women try to maintain the sense of a coherent self in the midst of how that identity that may be constructed and understood in her particular environment. For instance, the “good woman” as passive and suffering in silence conflicts with the discourse of the strong independent woman who not only survives, but is able to change others. The “good woman” who is able to and has the responsibility to change others also conflicts with the subdiscourse of the good woman who is submissive, who does not resist. The assumption that the “good woman” is subordinate and submissive is in conflict with the “good woman” who will be loyal to the sisterhood with equality among women. This in turn is in conflict with the discourse of hierarchy when a woman is the boss who expects subordinates to submit. The discourse of “good woman” who is responsible for changing others conflicts with the discourse of
workplace hierarchy, which assumes that those positioned lower in the hierarchy are powerless, subordinate, in service to those higher in the hierarchy, and must comply with the demands of those higher in the hierarchy. The subdiscourse of white superiority which assumes that race has no effect in the workplace and that racialized others suffer because of their own inferiority, assumes that white people can expect the best, know what’s best for non-whites, and should be benevolent and helpful to non-whites who could not manage on their own.

The discourse of the “good worker” which assumes the ability and willingness to make decisions by consensus is in conflict with the discourse of workplace hierarchy, which assumes those higher in the hierarchy make the decisions. The discourse of workplace hierarchy is supported by a discourse of individual pathology that assumes that individuals, whether in positions of power or powerless, are responsible for their own misfortune as well as for the bad behaviour of others. The discourse of workplace hierarchy, which assumes the appropriateness of the surveillance of employees lower in the hierarchy, conflicts with the discourse of additional rights and privileges afforded to those higher in the hierarchy, which should shield them from surveillance. The subdiscourse of meritocracy, which assumes equal opportunity for all, is in conflict with the subdiscourse of hierarchy which assumes that someone’s value is based on their educational level.

6.2 Subject Positions and Identity Construction.

People monitor themselves according to their interpretation of cultural tropes. The discourse of the “good woman” in mutual and equitable relationships is in conflict with the discourses of white superiority and racial inferiority in which white women can
expect to be treated well and better. White patriarchy, belief in psychopathology, and surveillance become normative and normalizing forces when hierarchy and modern management techniques are accepted as the natural order of things. Each woman’s subjectivity, who she believes herself to be, and what she assumes to be true about the world, is constituted through woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace by the discourses and binaries of good woman/bad woman, good worker/bad worker, and workplace hierarchy. Discourses of women’s inferiority, their personality flaws, skill deficits, and psychopathology circulate widely. The women in my research did not speak outside the discourses available to them. They accepted their places in the hierarchy. They accepted the naming of the phenomenon of woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace and did not question it. As Davies (2000) reminds us, a woman may experience anger and a sense of powerlessness at those making judgments about her life and positioning her as voiceless, as one who has no way of being heard outside the discursive categories dictated by the dominant [workplace] discourse. Alternative discourses are difficult for women to take up because they have been taught to read the expectations of others, regardless of how conflicting and contradictory the expectations may be. The ideological assumptions a discourse supports are difficult to disrupt as are the disadvantaged subject positions made available to women. As well, there is a high price to pay for getting one’s gender assignment wrong. Women who act outside the normative construction of “woman” in highly structured workplace situations will only be taken up as bad women.

Even though a woman may think about and want to become an agentic person who makes rational choices and resists, disrupting discourses is complex and difficult.
Making such choices has nothing to do with rationality. They have been discursively produced. A woman is likely to be in conflict with herself and with others and at risk of losing rewards received for compliance. A woman’s own subjectivity, what she believes about herself, is contradictory and one discourse does not dissolve with the taking up of another. We see this in Bonnie. She sees herself as a feminist, a woman who stands up for equality and the rights of women, yet she is also part of a workplace hierarchy, expecting those below her in the hierarchy to follow her direction and abide by her decisions. If Bonnie does one, she is contradicting the other and thereby contradicting herself and who she believes herself to be.

A woman’s own desires can prevent her from resisting the discourse or making a different choice. For example, Allison desires an egalitarian and reciprocal relationship with her supervisor. Jennifer desires recognition as a valuable employee. Hanna desires being seen as capable and competent. Ellen desires membership in the office sisterhood. Bonnie desires compliance from her employee and the privilege of her higher position in the hierarchy.

Compliance is also a matter of survival for many women. The discourses about the nature of women are so common place, accepted by so many people, that they are seen as common sense. A woman who dares to disrupt these is liable to be punished or viewed with contempt and distain. Even if women want to refuse certain subject positions, they are rewarded with acceptance and approval for taking up the discourses and remaining in their assigned categories. The message is clear: in order to survive, a proper woman will be submissive.
6.3 Power Relations and the Interests They Serve.

Power is not concentrated in one place or with one person in the workplace, but circulates everywhere. It is both productive and repressive and provides the conditions of possibility (Foucault, 1980) for shaping women’s behaviour. Women’s experiences as women in the workplace are shaped by various forms of power relations constructed in discourse. Power relations can be equal or unbalanced, when one woman acts upon another and the other woman is acted upon or allows herself to be acted upon. Either way, it is in this relation of power that the possibilities for women in the workplace exist.

The power relations at work in the workplace can induce women to do as they are told and follow directions. When a subject position supports a woman’s self-interests, satisfies her desires and helps her feel good, then her subjectivity contributes to the maintenance of the hierarchy of power relations. When women have subscribed to a dominant discourse they do not have access to power until and unless they take up another discourse. However, women can resist when the fit is uncomfortable, and then a woman can be produced in a different way. For example, Allison resisted being positioned as subservient when she refused to sit when instructed by her supervisor to do so, and again when she asks her supervisor why she had not mentioned her concerns about the book display when she first saw it. Jennifer resisted being positioned as a compliant servant who is inferior to her department head when she positioned herself as a competent and capable employee trained in multiple jobs.

Power is enacted on the body (Foucault, 1978). Power, through the use of various technologies, produces subjectivity and can be used to control and subjugate. The technologies of power produce differences between women which are used to categorize
women and serve the interests of those higher in the hierarchy. As demonstrated by my research, technologies of power (biopower and surveillance) are at work on women’s lives in the workplace. They preserve the workplace hierarchy and produce illness in women. Woman on woman bullying in the workplace cannot be understood without addressing these ongoing technologies of biopower.

6.4 Ideological Assumptions Disrupted /or Confirmed.

The ideological assumptions disrupted by a feminist poststructural analysis of woman-on-woman bullying include the alleged pathology of women used to explain social relations, the ideology of gender differences and a gender binary used to oppress women, and the ideology of the superiority of whites used to justify racism.

How does a woman resist what she and everyone around her has come to believe is true and normal? She is likely to be fearful of the personal consequences she would experience by activating another conflicting discourse. Questioning, challenging, disagreeing, being in conflict, and rebelling have all been pathologized and are not characteristic of the good woman or the good worker, and are very uncomfortable actions for women who see themselves as good. As a feminist working within an educational organization, I offer my research, stemming from questions raised by my own personal experience. It has inspired these new questions:

1. What would happen if the normatively fixed categories of woman and worker were disrupted?

2. What would happen if women’s subject identities were disrupted?

3. What would it be like for women to escape historical conditions and think differently about themselves, others and the world?
4. What would it be like for women if different spaces were created in which women could undertake other performances, other thinking, other relations of power?

5. What would it mean for women to have different possibilities, to refuse what they have been created as, to contest the dominant discourses, to try different practices, to use different language?

Using the theories of Michel Foucault, I have tried to reveal and analyze the discourses which constitute workplace bullying. The strength of Foucauldian discourse analysis is that it shows us that suffering and social relations are socially produced. The possible weakness of this method is that it may illuminate the discourses but may not do enough to convey the depth of or mitigate women’s suffering. But poststructuralism has given me a different language and a new set of conceptual tools with which to see my data in ways that would not have been possible before. Understanding how woman-on-woman bullying in the workplace has been constructed, and how this construction has influenced perceptions of what remedies are appropriate and necessary, will, I hope, suggest a new perspective that will encourage women to think differently about themselves, others and the world, and help to generate possibilities for change.

Finally, I am reminded that “we are each both the weaver and the web, the ones who tie the knots, and who are tied” (Davies, 2003, p. 202).
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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF
REGINA
OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES
MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 14, 2009

TO: Wendy Shaw
271 Rogers Road
Regina, SK S4S 7C5

FROM: Dr. David Elliott
Acting Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: "Bullying" Among Women in the Workplace: A Discourse Analysis (7350809)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

☑ 1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F), ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. **Do not submit a new application.** Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. **Do not submit a new application.** Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.

Dr. David Elliott

cc: Dr. Meredith Cherland – Faculty of Education

**supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of Research Services (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 109) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca**
APPENDIX B
INITIAL SCREENING GUIDE and RECORDING SHEET
(With Participant Information)

1. What is your current employment status?
   - □ unemployed
   - □ student
   - □ employed part-time
   - □ employed full-time
   - □ non-salaried (e.g. homemaker, stay-at-home mom/dad etc.)

2. Do you currently or have you worked with other women?
   - □ Yes □ No

3. Do you or have you ever felt that other women in your workplace treated you badly?
   - □ Yes □ No
   If so, explain

4. Do you currently or have you ever had a woman supervisor or manager?
   - □ Yes □ No
   If no, thank participant and discontinue interview

5. Are you currently or have you ever been in a supervisory or management role?
   - □ Yes □ No
   If yes, explain
6. Do you currently or have you ever supervised women employees?
   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

7. Additional comments?

8. Are you willing to participate in a confidential research study?
   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Contact Information:
Name: ____________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________
Phone Number: ________________(h) ________________(w) ________________(cell)
E-mail address: _____________________________________________________
APPENDIX C
RESEARCHER’S CHECKLIST (with SCRIPT)
(For Initial Interview)

☐ Greet (and introduce myself as necessary) and thank woman for agreeing to participate in the research.

☐ Review the plan for this session

   I want to keep this session quite informal. We can take a break at any time so just let me know if you need anything. I expect this session to take about one and a half to two hours so we should be finished by ________________.

☐ Review the purpose of the research

   I also want to go over the purpose of the research. I am conducting this study as part of my PhD in Education. I want to gather information on your perspectives about women’s relationships with other women in the workplace and, in particular, women’s negative experiences with other women in the workplace. The data I gather will become part of my doctoral dissertation and will be available through the University of Regina, Faculty of Graduate Studies.

☐ Participant feedback

   My research is based on an egalitarian feminist theoretical perspective. As such, not only your story but your input will be very important. From time to time, during data analysis and writing of the dissertation, I may ask for you feedback. Would you be comfortable with that?

☐ Explain audio taping

   I am planning to record our session today so that I don’t miss any of the discussion or the information you share. The only people who will have access to these tapes will be me and my supervisor at the University of Regina. The tapes will be securely stored until the completion of my PhD and the mandatory waiting period determined by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board. They will then be destroyed.

☐ Turn on tape recorder
☐ Provide volunteer with two copies of the Participant Information and Informed Consent Form

I would like to go over the Participant Information and Informed Consent Form now. Please take a few minutes to read this over.

☐ Have volunteer sign and date form

Do you have any questions about anything? If not, I’ll ask you to sign and date both copies of the form. Keep one copy for your own records and I’ll take the second copy.

☐ Pass out Community Counselling Resources sheet

I also want to give you this list of some of the community counselling resources that are available to you if you feel the need.

☐ Proceed with interview

So let’s get started. I would like to start with some basic information about you as a participant in the research (follow Initial Screening Guide and Recording Sheet). Proceed with the interview.

☐ When finished, conclude and thank volunteer again for agreeing to participate in the research

Do you have any final comments or thoughts you would like to share?

I want to thank you again for agreeing to participate in this research and sharing your thoughts and experiences with me.

☐ Inform volunteer about follow-up interview

I would like to give you a couple of weeks to reflect on what we have talked about today and then, if you are comfortable with it, I would like to contact you by telephone and give you an opportunity to share any thoughts you have had.
APPENDIX D

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title: “Bullying” Among Women in the Workplace: A Discourse Analysis

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research study is to examine the social forces that work to construct negative experiences among women in the workplace. The research is being conducted in partial completion of a PhD in Education.

Lead Researcher: Wendy Shaw. I may be contacted at 779-1391 or by e-mail at pwshaw@accesscomm.ca

Participation: It is important for you to know that your participation in this research study is voluntary and you may choose not to participate at any time without penalty.

Withdrawal from the Study: Participation in the study by individuals is voluntary; participants may withdraw at any time.

Role of Participants: Volunteers will be asked to participate in at least one interview in which they will be asked to answer questions about their personal thoughts and experiences with other women in the workplace. Each interview is expected to be 1-2 hours in duration.

Confidentiality of the Data: Your personal identity and any information you provide will be held strictly confidential by the researcher, with the exception of the limitations listed below.

Legal Limitations of Confidentiality: All information is considered confidential except:

- If written permission to release information is provided, information will be released as directed,
- In order to prevent a suicide or homicide, the researcher will do whatever necessary, including contacting the police and/or the suspected victim in any case where there is reason to fear for someone’s physical safety,
- When the researcher suspects or has knowledge of child physical, sexual or emotional abuse, such abuse will be reported as required by law,
- When the courts subpoena the researcher for the purpose of providing evidence, the same will be provided as ordered, and,
- When information about research results and recommendations are disclosed for publication or other research purposes, the personal identity or any other information which may be used to identify a participant will not be disclosed unless written permission to release such information is provided by a participant.
Potential Risk and Discomfort: Discomfort may be experienced as a result of participating in the study because of the personal nature of the issues discussed. Any participant who experiences discomfort can access counselling resources through an employee and family assistance program available to them through their place of employment or in the community. A list of accessible community counselling resources will be provided to participants. This list is not exhaustive.

Potential Benefits: There will be no compensation for your participation in this study. The potential benefits for participants of the study and others lie in the possibility for learning more about women’s relationships with one another in the workplace.

Questions: This project was approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. If research subjects have any questions or concerns about the procedures and goals of the research or their rights or treatment as subjects, they may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at 585-4775 or by e-mail at research.ethics@uregina.ca or Dr. Meredith Cherland, PhD supervisor at 585-4611 or by e-mail at Meredith.cherland@uregina.ca.

Tape Recording: Audio taping of the interviews will be undertaken for use by the researcher in analyzing the results. Only the researcher and the candidate’s research supervisor will have access to such audiotapes. Following the completion of the PhD and the mandatory waiting period of three years, information gathered will be destroyed. In the meantime, it will be locked in a secure storage place.

Informed Consent: Individuals must consent before participating in the study. If you have read and understand the above and consent to participate in the study, please sign both copies of this Consent Form, keeping one for your own records. Your signature will be taken as your consent to participate.

____________________  ____________________  ________________
Name (printed)  Signature  Date

Thank you for your participation.
Family Service Regina 757-6675
2020 Halifax St.
Regina, SK
  • Counselling, family education (parenting) and personal growth workshops
  • Fee for service (sliding scale)

Catholic Family Service 525-0521
449 Broad Street North
Regina, SK
  • Family and individual counselling, family life education (parenting)
  • Fee for service (sliding scale)

Regina Medical Health Clinic 766-7800
2110 Hamilton St.
Regina, SK
  • Individual counselling
  • No fee for service

Regina Women’s Community Centre 522-2777
250 1939 8th Avenue,
Regina, SK
  • Individual and group counselling
  • No fee for service