Abstract

This research asked what effects, if any, working in the male-dominated forest industry had on femininity and female identity of women who chose to work in the forest industry of Northern British Columbia. In the literature when women are mentioned attention is focused on their relationship to men who are involved within forest industries. By using Feminist Standpoint Theory the participants' stories are added to the discourse of the forest industry. What the findings propose is that the participants experienced an increase in strength - physical, mental and emotional - but they did not feel that their employment had any lasting effect on their femininity and female identity. While the women had many unique experiences interacting with forest industry employment, the same employment patterns are observable while studying male employees in the forest industry, such as the process to entry into the industry and the necessity of proving their capability performing the work. Therefore, aspects of women's employment within the forest industry are much like men's but work "in the bush" is still socially constructed as a masculine realm.
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Abstract

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Femininity is the qualities or characteristics appropriate or unique to women. S. Holland mentions, with regards to problems defining femininity, that, “The difficulties lie primarily in the fact that the term ‘femininity’ is a concept which refers to a set of gendered behaviours and practices, and yet which is fluid and not fixed, and can mean as many different things as there are women” (8). Most cultures define ideals of what behaviours and activities were/are socially acceptable for the participation of women. In Western societies, most aspects of female lives were clearly delineated for a feminine woman, or a proper woman. In order to determine whether a woman was fulfilling her feminine role, appropriateness of clothing, household activities, employment outside of the home, language used, and even conversation topics and interests were considered.

Forest Industry, in this thesis, encompasses the different types of employment held by the participants. This term encompasses not only businesses primarily involved in the industry but also services such as the first aid attendants in camp operations, staff running the various camps and even the fuel trucks that service the businesses in the bush. For the purposes of this thesis, the parameters of the definition are meant to be inclusive to attract as many participants as possible: logging equipment operators, camp workers, logging truck drivers, accountants in mills, mill workers, log scalers, professional forest technicians, bush road builders, logging company owners, bookkeepers, first aid attendants, tree planters, cone pickers, and environment assessors, to name a few. Morley Gunderson provides the following definitions. Occupation “refers to the nature of work performed”, “the basic content of the job.” Industry “refers to the type of economic activity of the establishment in which the individual works” (155). Good jobs are defined as “well paid, and offer good
working conditions, benefits and opportunities for occupational advancement. **Bad jobs** have the opposite characteristics, and perpetuate negative work habits that keep individuals locked in such jobs” (156).

**Gender** is a social status, the legal designation of male or female, and a personal identity. Gender is the range of characteristics attributed to femininity and masculinity. Gender is the performance given by each person of his/her identity. One’s gender intersects with every other category of one’s identity, like race, class, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

**Northern** in human geographical terms shares many characteristics with the definitions of rural and indeed, many Northern areas are rural areas. Characteristics defining northern include a smaller population spread further apart, colder climate, more limited species of plants and animals, and shorter growing season. For the purposes of this thesis, the two terms, rural and Northern, will be referenced interchangeably unless defined differently at the time of usage.

**Rural** is a term that has been used to define areas that are dominated by extensive land use (by, for example, agriculture and forestry) and by large spaces of undeveloped land. Other defining elements include smaller populations spread further apart and lived in by people who develop strong attachments to and respect for the land.
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I offer my appreciation to my son for continuing to believe in and encourage me even when I doubted myself. Your laughter always helped.
Chapter One

Introduction of the Research Topic

My research aimed to study female identity and femininity among women working in the forest industry in Northern British Columbia and to understand their difficulties and experiences as explained through interview sessions. The major goal of the thesis is to develop comprehension of the effects of working in the male-dominated forest industry on female identity and femininity. I also aim to write the experiences of these women into the history of the forest industry of British Columbia and explore how identity formation differs depending on geographical location.

This thesis argues that women provide challenges to stereotypical femininity by working in professions that claim to build the most masculine of men, such as those found in the forest industry. By challenging both the ideal and stereotypical versions of femininity predominant in Western society the participants have expanded acceptable feminine roles in Northern British Columbia by actively proving women are not only capable of but can also excel in employment previously reserved for male employees.

This thesis also argues that women can actively challenge the ideal and stereotypical version of femininity offered even while accepting some traditional beliefs surrounding femininity. The participants clearly understood the different pressures and expectations from society at large to behave in specific ways to be considered 'properly' feminine. These women have contributed to feminism by making inroads for future women to work in male-dominated employment, by proving that gender has nothing to do with capability, and by unceasingly standing their ground against those external pressures trying to turn them away from male-dominated employment.
Traditionally defined in opposition to each other, femininity and masculinity are binary constructs used to delineate which characteristics and behaviours are appropriate to each gender. R.W. Connell points out that people become socialized through media, educational institutions, and personal relations to understand and even conform, to a certain extent, to the traditional expectations required to become recognizably feminine or masculine persons. (34) Femininity has historically included domesticity, physical weakness, emotionality, and beauty.¹ Masculinity, conversely, has included work outside the home, physical strength, rationality and intellect. In recent history, feminist movements have encouraged an expansion of gender ideologies through anti-discriminatory legislation, opening doors to workplaces for either sex to enter, and encouraging both sexes to participate in domestic and public work responsibilities.

Identity formation and “proper” femininity and masculinity develop dependent on a plethora of factors. Familial influence, religious beliefs, economic opportunities, local culture, history, geographical area, employment, sexual orientation and ethnicity are major defining influences in identity formation.² For understanding the effects of male-dominated work on female identity and femininity, I will examine the influences of living in the interior of Northern British Columbia, (NBC), the histories associated with it, the economic opportunities available to women in this area, dominant culture, familial influence and the local culture of the forest industry.

¹ This statement is a combination of ideas presented by numerous authors regarding characteristics that have traditionally been associated with femininity. Authors referenced include Claire M. Renzetti and Daniel J. Curran, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Julie Guard, Monica B. Morris, Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias, Lorna Townsend, Naomi Wolf, Estelle B. Freedman, and Carol Ireson. For specific publications, please refer to Works Cited.

² This statement is a combination of ideas presented by numerous authors concerning influential factors in the formation of identity; the authors include Susan Hanson and Geraldine Pratt, S. Holland, Nancy Holstrom, L.A. Kauffman, Sandra Bartky, and Matthew S. Carroll. The specific publications are listed in Works Cited.
The lives of working-class (blue-collar) women in the interior of NBC rem...

unwritten. Considering that the majority of towns in NBC started as, and many continue to be, single-industry resource-based towns, my focus is on women working in the male-dominated environments of the forest industry. Employment in single-industry resource-based towns is concentrated in the extraction of that resource, leaving few other readily available types of employment. The few other opportunities for paid work have been limited to either service-industry jobs (as cashiers, government agents, tellers, and waitresses) or the nurturing segment (teaching, nursing, child minding and parenting). Considering the period that this thesis covers, 1960s to 2000, those work sectors were not highly developed and many of the jobs associated with those sectors were not well paid or highly respected. With fewer opportunities for well-paid jobs in NBC in any sector and a lack of the lower-paying service sector and pink-collar employment, women may turn to careers not immediately thought to employ women, such as running equipment in the forest industry. However, women may enter male-dominated industries for reasons other than a shortage of service jobs. The opportunity to earn a higher wage, the ability to work outdoors, and growing up with the values of the occupational group can all contribute to a desire to work within the forest industry. These same factors also affect female identity and femininity in the way that the environments in which people live affect the mindset through which identity forms.

The principal goal of my project is to determine any effect caused by employment in male-dominated environments on female identity and femininity. This topic lies in close proximity to my own identity, since I have lived in Prince George, a community historically heavily dependent on forest industries, nearly my whole life. My research question tries to find answers about the identities of women in the industry and NBC: what ‘types of women’
work out in the ‘bush’. When I described my research to others, people responded with such comments as “there are no women in the forest industries” and “women working in those industries are not like real women.” One physician even insisted that if there are any women working in the forest industries they could not be feminine because “it is not like the women are wearing dresses, or walking down a runway,” and “those women are not feminine because they chew, spit and swear.” Clearly, the people making such comments have a very lucid ideal in mind of what types of behaviours and employment are acceptable in order for any women to fit the classification of feminine.

My thesis also asked if women adopted masculine identity traits to ‘fit in’ or ‘be considered one of the guys’ while they worked in male-oriented employment or if they redefined ways to be feminine. Attached to this question is whether women employed in traditional female roles such as cooking, secretarial or janitorial positions within a male-dominated workplace are also adopting masculine identity traits to fit in; or do they perhaps place a stronger emphasis on femininity because they are the only women?

I draw from feminist theory, history and human geography in order to analyze and understand how female identity forms in NBC. All three academic fields have engaged in the discussion of female identity creation and have differing ideology and contributions to more fully understand what influences identity formation. Feminists developed theories to discover and explain how the structure of society portrays certain types of womanhood as ideal. Feminist theorists argue every aspect of society was/is used to control the identities of women because society regards men as naturally superior to women due to physical strength, rationality and involvement in the public realm. Sandra Bartky states,
Most avenues of cultural expression - high culture, pop culture, even to some extent language - are instruments of male supremacy. Women have little control over the cultural apparatus itself and are often entirely absent from its products; to the extent that we are not excluded from it entirely, the images of ourselves we see reflected in the dominant culture are often truncated or demeaning. (35)

Cultural expressions, the ability to express personal beliefs and values in society, have historically been controlled, developed, and presented by men; when women have been included, it has often been in the form of an object, not a fully-fledged human with the ability to contribute to social culture.

Women are constantly measured against the images of womanhood (femininity) that are present through male controlled media, society and social connections. The pressure to conform can be significant and felt worldwide, though elements may vary in different countries and cultures. Feminist theory has shown that men were able to maintain societal values centered on masculine ideals by devaluing women’s knowledge, work and values that do not coincide with their masculine ones. The feminist theories that motivate my inquiry have brought attention to the power imbalances between the genders within society: power imbalances that stem from control over personal identity and definition. The knowledge I gain from these theories is that women are in a position of less power because men have historically defined most aspects of society; therefore, when women are able to self-define, society should be egalitarian, which changes the way men define everything and the way gender construction occurs.

Many academics, such as Hanna Papanek, Maxine Harris, Efrat Tseelson, Allison Weir and Samantha Holland, have written in varying degrees on female and feminine identity but focused on feminine identity in urban or metropolitan areas of Western society.

3 This statement is a combination of ideas presented by Gerda Lerner and Sandra Bartky. Specific publications are found in Works Cited.
The information presented by these academics provides insight into the ways female identities are constructed internally and externally in Western society, but does not quite fit with what I know and have experienced living in NBC. I have not discovered any feminist theory regarding NBC women’s identity in particular, but feminist geographer Jo Little and several others are theorizing female identity in rural locations of Western society.

Through my research, I have discovered that regardless of rural or metropolitan area, women still feel pressured to conform to the female ideal, but my participants still felt feminine even in times when they did not feel they conformed. The interviewees did not blindly try to follow the standards set by the ideal or in the stereotype, but strongly believed in their femininity regardless of their levels of non-conformity. These women picked which aspects of stereotypical or ideal femininity appealed to them but did not let being “feminine” in those terms define their life choices. It is important to note that the participants appreciated being strong women, and working in the forest industries, and believed that living in the area helped facilitate those realities. Living in NBC, especially in forest-industry communities, many women have had to run households while men are working long hours, or staying in camps. When problems arose, women had to deal with the situation -- corralling stray livestock or getting a vehicle unstuck from mud and/or snow -- regardless of whether women were normally the handlers of such situations.

The population, types of employment available, and access to resources such as medical care, government services and cultural amenities loosely define the rural areas of NBC. Prince George is one of the cities in NBC that can provide insight as to any differences in identity formation in urban versus rural locations. Its beginnings were rural, but it has become increasingly urban over the years, which is not usually the case with
single-industry resource towns. A majority of single-industry resource towns in the interior of NBC have become ghost towns as the industry cycled through booms and busts, became more mechanized, and processing changed from small farm and family run mills to large corporate mills that were centrally located. The city of Cassiar, for example, was a company town, built by the asbestos mill owners to accommodate and keep workers. When the mill shut down, it became a ghost town, so much so that the majority of homes and other buildings were sold then transported to their new owners’ locations. Suzanne LeBlanc writes that, “After Cassiar was shut down, the townsite was gated and a caretaker was employed to live there to ensure that people did not trespass and that the few remaining structures remained intact” (187). Even though Cassiar is not a logging mill town, the story told by its development and ultimate demise follows essentially the same plot lines as a town entirely dependent on logging mills. The landscape of NBC is littered with stories of towns like this, two more examples being Sinclair Mills and Eaglet Lake. The stories of these towns are also stories of extraction where the goal was to go in, extract the natural resource while accumulating great financial wealth, then leave.

Women lived in these communities and, mostly through their male relatives, shared in amassing wealth. However, the stories and histories of the forest industry do not include stories of women’s lives, working or social. Ken Bernsohn and Ralph Andrews both give detailed accounts of the forest industry in BC and the amount of money men were able to make throughout the industry’s past. The working-class character of the industry combined with the high wages of employees produced a distinct form of masculinity. Both authors also contribute to the idea of the über-masculine forest worker who worked hard and played harder. There was no shortage of stories of loggers fighting, drinking, and spending both
large amounts of money, and the occasional night in jail. These stories served to create an image that was not inclusive to the idea of women in the industry. Bernsohn mentions a woman mill operator in passing, and the only other mention of women is under the defining title of ‘wives’. Andrews, on the other hand, does mention women in working positions in the forest industries as cooks in various camps and provides the earliest date, 1908, for a woman working in a camp. If omission is any indication, then the majority of the literature on the BC forest industries supports the widespread belief that women were not in the industry while also providing one or two exceptions. It is through this literature that the forest industry has remained defined as a male industry.

Literature on the forest industries continues to be mostly written from a male-focused perspective. When women do write about issues within the forest industries, the male-centered views remain intact due to the dominance of males in the industry. Women in forest-industry towns are often described as being stay-at-home mothers who are completely dependent on and supportive of their male relatives in the industries. When their employment is discussed, it is in terms of traditional female work in either the services sector (as cashiers and waitresses) or the nurturing sector (as teachers and nurses). There is very little discussion of women working in the forest industry, which works to keep the ideology of male dominance within the industry intact. Certain aspects are defined as masculine, such as strength and the ability to handle danger. One male value is that boys turn into men in the woods because it is hard, dangerous and dirty work for which only some men are suitable. This ideology implies that masculine identity forms through the workplace. The common perception is that forest industries employment is strictly the domain of men, as Brian Egan and Susanne Klaussen illustrate:
Indeed, industrial forestry has always been commonly perceived as a male domain, as perhaps the quintessential male occupation: the word “logger” brings forth images of rugged men, axes (or chainsaws) in hand, standing poised on top of massive tree stumps somewhere in the great outdoors. Millworkers are also imagined to be men only. Both types of work require muscle, grit, the ability to handle complex machinery, and courage in the face of danger – characteristics popularly associated with men. (18)

If women were to do the same forest industry work, this would directly challenge that belief. To allow for the possibility for women to work in the forest industries meant that either these particular women were extraordinary or the work was not as difficult as society believed it to be. The literature on the forest industries mentions women working in office, janitorial, or cooking positions but also counts them as uninvolved.

When Patricia Marchak wrote her book Green Gold: The Forest Industry in British Columbia nearly thirty years ago, the only women in production jobs in the industry were in plywood mills. Marchak also provides a table with percentages of women working elsewhere in production4 but gives no mention of women working in the camps, which implies that women’s camp labour is viewed as reproductive in the Marxist sense and therefore becomes invisible. Marchak writes about the importance of women to the forest industry because of the work they do in maintaining the home and family as well as by working in traditional vocations for women within the communities so that men can continue to work in the industries.5 Thus, Marchak contributes to the widespread belief in the masculine nature of forest industry work while also presenting a partial feminist belief in the importance of women’s traditional paid and unpaid vocations. I say partial because Marchak clearly emphasizes the importance of traditional roles for women - homemaker and paid

4 To view the tables, see Patricia Marchak, Green Gold: The Forest Industry in British Columbia, 216.
5 Marchak’s study does include analysis of positions in various types of mills but excludes discussion of women working in traditional vocations within those settings such as clerical, administrative or janitorial positions. This may be due to reports and records not differentiating types of work performed by women in the workplace.
employment for women outside the home - to the forest industry, but does not study both the
traditional (camp cook, office administration) and non-traditional roles (machine operator,
production worker) that women assumed within the forest industry. Nevertheless, the most
important contribution Marchak gives to the history of forest industries, in my opinion, is
that she provides one of very few accounts of women working in various aspects of the forest
industries of British Columbia.

Maureen Reed provides a different view on the identity of women living in the forest
industry towns of British Columbia. Reed looks at women’s support of the forest industry in
BC, specifically Coastal BC, which seems to contradict some persistent views of women as
preservers and protectors of nature. Reed draws attention to how relationships with men
within the forest industries and communities shaped women’s identities and experiences.
Even for women working directly in various jobs in the industries, their relationships with
men in the industry have been studied more than their own experiences of the industry.
Reed’s focus is on exploring women’s experiences with how environmental regulation
changes affect people living and working in forest-dependent communities. Consequently,
because Reed studies how the industry directly affects women’s lives, she also draws
attention to the importance of women’s traditional vocations for the sustainability of the
industry, which cements the idea that women, whether directly or indirectly, are involved in
the forest industry. When we count the importance of what is traditionally viewed as
women’s work, as mentioned by both Marchak and Reed, women have been involved in the
forest industry from the beginning. This involvement would have an impact on how
women’s identities and femininity in these areas developed, but the research has yet to be
done.
There seems to be a considerable gap in the literature regarding Northern female identity and especially female identity in the interior of BC regardless of vocation. There is literature that describes the activities of women in passing, but few studies have focused entirely on women or on analyzing the power relations that develop in their lives. Indeed, there is not much literature on working-class identities of either gender in British Columbia, especially within the forest industries, nor is the literature dealing with aspects of the camps. There is also a scarcity of literature on working-class female identity and/or femininity in BC, NBC and Western society specifically related to industry or male-oriented workplaces of the forest industry.

From the histories of NBC, BC and Canada, I draw out the different ways these societies and cultures developed over time. This allows me to establish an understanding of different pressures present in the formation of female identity and femininity. Theorists have yet to research how the different living environments of Canadian women may have contributed to or even created differing expectations women were supposed to meet. There is nothing in the historical literature that suggests women in different parts of Canada had different ideals to conform to, which paints women of Canada as a homogeneous group and indicates a possible gap in the literature. It is, however, very likely that women in Western society are supposed to conform to the same ideal shaped by varying forces including literature and media images.

The historical development of the communities and cities in NBC was significantly different from the development of the rest of British Columbia and Canada. Histories of single-industry towns describe the women there as having very different experiences than women living in towns and cities with more diversified economies. In 1977 the Northern
B.C. Women’s Task Force On Single Industry Resource Communities released a report that illustrates many frustrations of women living in Kitimat, Fraser Lake and Mackenzie. Jill Stainsby, John Hinde, Adele Perry, R.W. Sandwell, Jean Barman, David del Mar, and Brian Egan and Susanne Klausen all discuss the hardships and disadvantages women face living in single-industry towns and paint a fairly dismal picture with regards to isolation, lack of community facilities, employment opportunities and the types of social activities women are traditionally involved in. These authors describe women’s lives in those towns within the realm of ‘traditional feminine roles’, though they mention some women working in industry. Most authors discussing the forest industry mention, in passing, the few women here and there who find employment in the industry but that was not the focus of their publications.

Female identities and femininity in these communities form within the ideology of ‘traditional’ female roles but also are shaped by the traditional masculine roles that define the occupational group ideology. Although women in NBC are exposed, through the media, to broader messages about femininity and female identity, because Northern societies develop differently, ideals regarding masculinity and femininity are different from those in the rest of the province and country. Therefore, stereotypes may not have the same effect or strength in NBC due to different societal development, climate, environment and culture. The fashion choices and trends viable in the metropolitan areas of Southern BC (SBC) do not always translate into something that can be worn in NBC due to the different climate and lack of places to wear such finery. When one of the markers of proper feminine identity includes presenting a recognizably feminine appearance, femininity must look different by default. For example, in SBC women can wear fashion footwear in winter that does not necessarily need to be insulated for cold weather, but in NBC outdoor footwear needs to be able to
withstand cold temperatures and deep snow. There is a gap in the literature concerning the social development of women’s lives in BC particularly in relation to the differences between development in NBC and SBC. Interviewing women in areas of NBC helps to close the gap of recorded women’s lives in BC.

Analyzing the lives of women in the areas of NBC provides insight on how these societies developed historically, and how women’s identities and femininities developed. Gerda Lerner discusses how society is dominated by a masculine-based value system, and due to that, women’s identities were shaped by male ideals. Leaving women out of history, education and public society all worked to control female identity because women had no choice but to live within the realms men allotted them. When women did appear in history, it was in the form of “women worthies,” extraordinary women portrayed as assuming masculine abilities and discarding feminine ones. Recent scholarship on both British Columbian history and Northern British Columbian history has followed this trend. In a collection edited by Theresa Healy the women written about by various students were extraordinary women living outside the realm of ‘acceptable’ feminine employment. When looking at the relatively few women working in the forest industries, it becomes very difficult not to believe that they are extraordinary women, but what this thesis aims to discover is whether being extraordinary is equivalent to developing different types of female identity and femininity.

Telling the stories of extraordinary women is vital to making sure women are included in the histories of the world. Extraordinary women may be key to proving gender has nothing to do capabilities; however, while these stories provide insight on how these women stepped out of the ordinary female role, they do not analyze the impact most
women's lives had on the society in which they lived. Those stories also depict that women are not all the same: that there are women, as many as we can find, who do not let social definitions stop them from doing whatever they wanted. Karen Routledge provides an example when writing about Phyl Munday, a female mountaineer who hiked back and forth over the boundaries of acceptable gendered behaviour. Routledge discusses how Phyl took on the male sport of climbing while maintaining traditional female roles on climbs by doing the cooking and sewing. Routledge explains that Phyl was an extraordinary woman but did not change the masculine sport of mountaineering and even upheld the belief that women in general should not take up the sport. Routledge points out that Phyl did provide a lasting challenge to the masculinity of mountaineering; thus, her identity was able to influence social change within the society she lived. Routledge provides an example of how a woman can have dual aspects of her identity working at the same time because Phyl was able to take on the masculine role of the mountaineer and the traditional feminine role of maintaining the 'hiking' family on the mountain.

Most of the history available about the towns and communities of NBC portrays women as mothers, wives, and nurturers. Reverend Francis Edwin Runnalls wrote a local history of Prince George that describes events pertinent to the development of Prince George but does not provide any analysis of those events. A history collection edited by David del Mar also supplies a descriptive account of Prince George history without supplying analysis of events. These histories, the first a local history and the second an academic, both provide the necessary background information on how communities and towns in NBC developed socially. Unfortunately, there is only a small amount of history available that provides analysis on how women's lives shaped the NBC societies they lived in.
I will be drawing on geographical theory to understand the importance of place and space in identity formation and the effects on femininity and masculinity in different locations. Human geographers theorize different ways in which place, space, and the way people interact with them help to form their identity. Geographers also theorize about the ways ideas and information were historically distributed, either by jumping from larger cities to larger cities and eventually trickling down into rural areas, or developing from major cities all over the world at the same time then trickling down into rural areas, which could lead to variations in the social developments of different areas. Rural and/or Northern women may be less inclined to follow the societal demands of urban areas because those demands do not practically translate to rural areas; heels and dirt roads do not mix well and there are no fashion runways in the ‘bush’.

Different places and different meanings ascribed to places affect social identities and relationships, especially considering how those meanings change according to social values. Place is significant to female identity not just because of external influence through information but also because of internal attitudes that reflect the atmosphere in which one lives. Doreen Massey theorizes how space and place directly affect social relations and points out that geographical locations matter to how people construct their identity, because people develop emotional attachment to places and associate different behaviours with differing spaces. For specific information regarding NBC, Greg Halseth edited studies analyzing the social structures found within Northern and rural towns. Brian Ilbery states that rural spaces tend to have smaller populations living further apart from each other with relatively little immediate access to retail goods, education, government and medical services (3). While most communities in NBC certainly fit this definition, Prince George does not.
However, due to the time frame this project covers, Prince George was a rural community that became increasingly urban over time through its bust and boom cycles.

To analyze femininity within the NBC forest industry, I use personal narratives of women living in NBC. The women who participated were previously or currently employed in different sectors of the forest industry. The participant selection criteria for the project included women currently residing in British Columbia who worked in the resource extraction sector of the forest industry between 1900 and 2000. The NBC area in this thesis is defined as the area covered by four of BC’s Forest Regions, Cariboo Region, Skeena Region, Northeast Region and Omineca Region. For the purposes of this thesis, types of employment in the forest industry included any aspect of the forest industry dealing with raw timber. Logging-truck driving and millwork were also included, and legal restrictions on women’s employment (e.g., in licensing) were considered. Women working in clerical, janitorial and cooking positions in the logging camps and trucking companies were also eligible participants because all of these positions are present within the forest industry. According to Matthew S. Carroll, “The major criterion for a man to be defined as a logger is that he be (or have been, in the case of retired loggers) somehow involved in the process of moving logs from the stump to the mill” (67). Even though some of the women who participated in this research would fit this definition of logger, I am specifically not using the term “logger” because I feel the scope of that definition is too narrow. “People working in the forest industry” provides a more inclusive range of employment while still requiring work dealing with raw timber. Carroll continues, explaining that

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6 The Forest Region and Districts Offices map is located in Appendix A.
Anyone is included who builds logging roads or drives log trucks, as well as anyone involved in cutting and moving logs from the stump to landing. Individuals whose primary responsibility is cutting and piling brush and logging debris are not ordinarily considered to be full-fledged loggers. Workers who plant trees after logging is completed, and those who scale (measure) logs at the mill are not logger group members. (67-68)

My use of the forest industry to define the terms of occupation instead of using the term "logger" also ensures the inclusion of women working not only in the woods but also in traditional female occupations such as secretarial or janitorial because not including those positions would have the effect of not valuing work traditionally performed by women and would continue to exclude them from the history of the industry itself.

The different methodologies used for this thesis necessitated understanding the use of oral tradition and personal narratives in the collection of women’s histories. Some argue against the use of personal narratives for the purposes of academic work, claiming that individual bias of the narrator is prevalent, the dominant ideology of the story changes when the individual is at different life stages, and personal narratives are not valid primary sources for research. In contrast, Caroline Daley emphasizes that “What women remember and retell, and how they tell it, tells us much about their individual experiences and their understanding of their cultural place within their community” (344). I argue that personal narratives and interviews are vital to furthering women’s understanding of how society and its traditional networks of identification work on their ability to form their own identities. Sherna Gluck and Daphne Patai use a feminist focus when conducting interviews and are able to articulate issues that can arise when incorporating interviews into research, such as problems with interpretation and representations. By drawing on standpoint feminism, I limit problems with misinterpretation and misrepresentation.
Chapter Layout

This thesis has five chapters. The first chapter introduced the topic, the theoretical position used in the thesis, and background information. How this thesis fits into the growing field of female identity studies was included here, as were any differences and similarities arising between the thesis and the academic field.

The second chapter includes a review of the relevant literature used. I study the history of NBC and BC from 1900 through 2000, with particular attention to the ideals presented through the portrayals of women. I reviewed the history of the BC forest industry. I analyze the different ways feminists have discussed the construction of female identity and whether or not it is possible for there to be a collective identity of women. Human geography provides theories on how identity is created through interaction with society and how society is created by the different identities interacting with it.

The third chapter introduces the methodology used in this thesis. Postmodern theory emphasizes the importance for people to question or employ skepticism regarding information and recorded histories. Postmodern theory denies the existence of a singular truth, therefore encouraging this thesis to present another truth concerning the history of the forest industry in NBC. Postmodern theory calls into question every aspect of society, especially focusing on beliefs and ideologies that are so ingrained that they are taken as true without being analyzed for how they developed or whose interests in society they protect. Feminist Standpoint theory acknowledges differences as fundamental to individual knowledge but suggests that women do share certain social realities. Feminist Standpoint theory acknowledges women’s unique understanding of society, framed through lived
experiences, and encourages women to speak from the space created by those lived experiences. I present my own standpoint within this chapter, followed by how I recruited participants and conducted the interview process. The chapter concludes after introducing the participants.

Chapter Four provides the data collected and analysis of the interviews. The participants discuss many aspects involved with their work in the forest industry. There were several difficulties getting into the industry and once in certain barriers remained, but there was also a degree of mobility experienced by the participants. These women were able to prove their capacity to excel in their fields and even became accustomed to the routine present in the work environment. Tokenism for women in forest industry presented itself in several ways. The participants also discuss topics surrounding cleanliness, domesticity, femininity, sexuality and sexual harassment.

The fifth chapter is the conclusion, which highlights the argument and offers conclusions as to how the information obtained changes the field. This chapter also includes discussion about the challenges faced throughout the thesis process along with suggestions for areas of further study.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Through the literature available, this chapter investigates the dynamics of the forest industry, how it is credited with forming masculine identities, and the formation of an occupational group identity. I review specific aspects of the industry with regards to hiring practices; mobility within the various industries; how, even though the work is difficult and dangerous, there is a large degree of routine to the employee's workdays; how all the workers must prove their ability to handle the work; and the degree of pride that comes from their abilities. This is followed by an examination of femininity in terms of the ideal version and stereotypes available in society, along with the performance of femininity as an appearance, behaviour and identity.

BC Forest Industry History

There is a rich history of the BC forest industries especially in regards to government policy creation and changes as well as environmental concerns and changes. There is considerably less literature available on forest industries in NBC, which is quite surprising given the importance of the industry to the Northern economy. I.K. Barber points out that after 1914 in the province of BC the leading industry was forestry and a large number of towns and cities in the interior of NBC were forest-industry dependent (14, 115). The industries developed before environmental concerns of sustainability; the main focus was to get in, cut as much forest as possible making as much money as possible, and get out. Priscilla Boucher states that,

One of the most powerful stories told within western industrial culture, one of the hardest to challenge, is the myth of material affluence as the source of wealth, well-being, and satisfaction; this myth is reflected and reinforced within the dominant
story of the forest which defends both scientific forest practices and the industry as the source of high paying jobs, materialistic lifestyles, and community affluence. (39)

The promise of fast money encouraged settlement, and the developing railroad and forest industry promised to be economically viable and were crucial to the settlement of NBC. Robert Neil Diaz informs readers that many settlers “set to work clearing the land and using the wood from it to build their homes” (63). Many people also set up family sawmills to process the wood they cleared. People “could make quite a profit by erecting a mill along the route of the rail” (103). The forest industry was vital to the people who settled in NBC. Though much of the sawmilling was done as part of family endeavors, it was not long before logging and sawmilling became bigger enterprises.

In places such as the interior of NBC, the forest became a place where working men’s culture formed, especially considering that there were not many high-paying jobs available in any other sector. Reed states, “There, amid the trees and the technology, male identity was forged, reinforced, despised, and celebrated” (32). Statements like these, emphasizing the masculine nature of the forest industry, can be found in most of the literature available. Living and working in resource-dependent communities enmeshed women in the occupational group of the forestry industry whether women worked in the industry themselves or not. Reed explains that in some of these communities there is a strong belief that women’s employment was not as important as men’s. These types of attitudes translated into sexist attitudes in the workplace and also barriers to obtaining industry work (370). Regardless of how the history of the forest industry has been written to contribute to and maintain the mythology as a masculine pursuit, much of the literature includes references to women working in the industries, even if by accident.
Very little attention has been paid to the employment of women in BC’s forest-dependent communities. However, Ken Drushka, Brian Egan and Susanne Klausen, Tema Frank, Susan Hansen and Geraldine Pratt, Julie Guard, Joan Kotarski, Jo Little, Priscilla Boucher, Betty Griffin and Susan Lockhart, Patricia Marchak, and Maureen Reed have all discussed women, to varying degrees, in the forestry industry. Drushka states that originally the interior of NBC was dominated by “local entrepreneurs and family-owned companies” and women participated in whatever work the family was involved in (7). This suggests that women would have participated in the forest industry in various capacities as well, especially if the family was running a sawmill on their land. Unfortunately, as I discovered and Reed also noted,

Reliable, valid, current, complete, and commensurable data on gender and employment in forestry are not readily available from government agencies or private companies. Company records typically do not distinguish between women in non-traditional jobs (e.g. planers) and those employed in traditional jobs (e.g. secretaries) within the firm. (376)

This may explain why there are virtually no records of women working in the forest industry. If there is no distinction between women working in the planer mill or as secretaries, the assumption could be made that women were only working in vocations normally occupied by women; therefore women would not be included in the narrow definitions of who is considered a ‘logger’ or ‘mill worker.’ Literature that was written looking specifically at women’s experiences with the forest industry has had a tendency to focus on experiences within the forest-based community but not within the actual industry. While these topics are extremely important in discussing and valuing women’s experiences within the community, my focus is on women’s experiences while working in the forest industry.
Despite this, however, through accounts of various authors who have included scattered information about women working and living in the forestry-dependent communities, readers discover that women have held many different jobs within the industries. For example, Ken Drushka writes about the “crew of about twenty women [who]\(^7\) chopped out defects and packed the selected material in boxcars for shipment to match companies across Canada” (82). There were women working in various non-traditional types of employment within the forest industry. Women held a range of jobs including working as truck drivers, scalers, front-end loaders, foresters, forestry technologists, stream restoration workers, camp cooks and workers, box factories, shingle mills, furniture, sash and door operations, plywood operations, pulp and sawmills, whistle punks, personnel and enforcement officers and accountants in the industry. As Reed discovered, one predominantly female job in the forest industry was the picking of seed cones; another type of employment that has historically had higher numbers of women workers is tree planting (100-101). The research shows not only that women are working in various capacities but that there are even female enclaves within the forest industry.

**Getting In**

When people seek new employment, one way people find out about job opportunities is by talking with the people they know. Hanson and Pratt explain that usually job opportunities “flow through gender-biased networks” and therefore women usually learn about employment opportunities through their female social networks, while men hear of job opportunities through male networks (198). The tendency of gender networks is to reinforce the gender division of employment. The forest industry was male-dominated; therefore the

\(^7\) Square brackets added.
people most likely to hear about job opportunities were males. Discussing the period between 1960 and 1970, Marchak explains how the father’s industry was remarkably influential to the son’s first industrial location. “Nearly half the sons of loggers became loggers; a quarter of sawmill workers’ sons entered sawmills; two-fifths of pulpmill workers’ sons entered pulpmills; and there are similarly high proportions for the sons of miners, construction workers, workers in manufacturing and commercial trade”, which are all male-dominated industries (136). Some women may have been able to take advantage of these male employment networks. Susan Hanson and Geraldine Pratt agree, explaining that women working in male-dominated occupations were likely to have received help from men (199), or to have used male connections to get into employment in those occupations, just as men used their networks to obtain jobs in the forestry industry.

Women living within these forest-dependent communities may look to employment within them for many reasons. Hanson and Pratt also mention, “What is judged to be possible and what is actually available as employment depends on the local place. Knowledge of places and opportunities is learned and understood through social relationships” (185). With the majority of paid work in the forest dependent community being done by men, employers themselves may be more reluctant to hire females for reasons such as believing gender stereotypes: that women would not be capable of participating in those types of work; from fear that male workers would complain about having to work with women; that they were taking jobs away from men; and that males needed to work where they could earn a wage sufficient to support their families. There has long been a stereotype that a woman will only work until she marries and starts having children. These sorts of ideologies could be used to prevent women from being hired; as could the belief that once
she does have family responsibilities, if she continues to work it will be harder for her to put in the long hours required. Joan Kotarski discusses how the mills would not hire women because of the belief that “they can’t keep up” (91). These kinds of policies of not hiring women would not be written, or in any kind of hiring practices manual; they would be an unspoken agreement in management.

There are companies that do have written policies for hiring women, but the policies place unrealistic restrictions on which women qualify. Some hiring practices do not seem overtly sexist on the surface, because the restrictions also exclude a large number of males as well. In the report by the Northern British Columbia Women’s Task Force it was noted that, “The guidelines set for men and women are that they be 5’6”, weigh 140 pounds and have two years previous industrial experience” (29). This type of policy makes it seem that a company would have no problem hiring a woman who is 5’8” and weighs 150 pounds, but, as Marchak discovered, “although the major forestry employer expressed willingness to hire women, the report cited cases to substantiate the claim that women were not employed at that company” (215). The point here is that even when companies had policies for hiring women, a majority of them still did not hire women; proof of this statement can be seen in the low numbers of women reported as working in the forest industry. Due to the smaller population base in NBC, many companies, at different times, would find it necessary to hire women, especially if there was a shortage of men available to do the work. Women living in these areas may be interested in the different types of employment that are available specifically because of their location.

Location and space are important in the development of both identity and femininity especially because different social locations and spaces encourage different ways of being.
Hanson and Pratt mention that for women, "Accessibility to different traditionally male occupations conditions the experience of being a woman, and this occurs differently in different places" (18). All the literature about forest-based communities and Northern communities accentuates the different lifestyles and attitudes of the residents. Part of the difference is the relationship and bond they form with their natural surroundings, while some comes from knowing the lifestyle is different from Southern city lifestyles. Robert Bone emphasizes that "by living, working, and playing in a northern environment", the people who reside there "have developed a deep and lasting attachment to their surroundings" (3). There is a common belief that people spend a greater majority of their time in "the bush" when they live in smaller communities because they are surrounded by "the bush" as opposed to big cities where there is little immediate access available. According to K. Bernsohn, "In the north, the typical fly-fisherman works in a sawmill. About three quarters of the families in the north own some form of recreational vehicle: boat, snowmobile, trailer, or four-wheel drive vehicle. This time spent outdoors is another variable that affects the view of the forest" (133). When women live right alongside male relatives and participate in the same outdoors activities, an assumption could be made that they are developing a bond with these natural surroundings as well.

The majority of geographers posit that every space has a history grounded in nature and natural conditions like location and climate that help to make each space unique. Reed notes, that human geography provides recognition that gendered identities, including aspirations and desires, are fully embedded in place and that different identities are shaped through different areas (368). If identities are shaped differently in different regions or
communities, one could anticipate that the ideals and stereotypes normally dictating acceptable behaviours and professions would also be different.

**Barriers/Mobility Once In**

The women who lived in forest-dependent communities and women who entered into forest industry employment faced many difficulties and barriers. Exclusion from the types of work that held higher prestige, for example as supervisors or operators of certain types of machinery; lack of promotion and recognition for the good work that women did; sexual harassment from co-workers; and being paid lower wages than men doing the same work all act as barriers to staying employed. The Aluminum Company of Canada talks about how “women still face barriers to employment and to occupational mobility that are not experienced by men with similar qualifications” (VI). Being excluded from occupational networks and lack of mentors also made these types of work difficult to endure; women had to make sure to play the masculine game at work, to play by “their” rules, to laugh at the sexist jokes and not to be offended by the vulgar language used. Women who were not tough and determined did not last; they either transferred to the female enclaves in the industry such as janitorial or administrative services or left the industry altogether. Women who do stay in the forest industry, according to Priscilla Boucher, are “systematically marginalized” (34). For women in the forest industry, the ‘glass ceiling’ has remained very low; the majority of industry women are excluded from most positions of authority. The positions these women are left in can become very routine.

**Routine of Work/Proving Oneself**

Routine in the forest industry can come in different ways. First there is the routine of the lifestyle, which was exacerbated when the workers and their families were first living in
the towns built by the mill at the mill site. Company towns were developed at a mill site by
the mill owners in order to house and keep workers in remote areas. They usually consisted
of a mill site, a company store, a first-aid station, a clubhouse or bunkhouse for the single
men to live in, company houses for the families to live in, a mess hall that houses the kitchen
and eating area, and the office for the mill. With few to no amenities, people in these towns
were living similar lives to each other, lives that revolved around the mill. Bev Christensen
states:

The more than 800 small lumber mills operating in the area [PG forest district] during
the early 1960s also created a problem for the school district, which had a policy of
providing school wherever there were 10 or more school-age children. To meet the
demand for small schools near sawmills, the district began constructing portable
school buildings which could be moved onto the mill sites. (113)8

With possibly more than 800 little mill towns, daily lives in these towns could look very
similar day after day.

Secondly, routine can come from doing a repetitive task for employment, performing
the task multiple times every workday. “The boredom and alienation of this kind of wage
labour is overcome by interpreting it as a test of masculinity. Workers prove worth as men
by their ability to withstand dirt, noise, danger and boredom. Working conditions are read as
a challenge to masculinity, rather than as an expression of the exploitation of capitalist
relations of production,” (97) as explained by Thomas Dunk. Even with all the hard,
dangerous work in the forest industry, it can still become repetitive, routine and dull. How
workers deal with this besides considering it a test of masculinity is through the social
networks they create in the workplace. Dunk elaborates,

8 Square brackets added in order to define the area Christensen was referencing.
The informal group is also the basis of the joking and bantering that fill up a large portion of the work day. This social aspect of the job is where meaning and satisfaction are to be found, rather than in the work itself. "It’s the people you work with that make a job enjoyable, as long as you got a good bunch of guys to work with that’s all that matters." (8)

Dunk illustrates how important male bonds in the workplace are to making the routine of the work bearable.

The history of the forest industry involves a certain amount of mythology that romanticizes and makes legendary the men who worked within the forests. As previously mentioned, the rural roots of the forest industries of the interior of NBC created the environment where the logging camps and people were isolated from cities and towns. In those logging camps, with work done for the day one of the the limited activities left for workers to do before sleep was to socialize with one another and that is when the storytelling could occur. The stories were all about who did what in the woods, where a man could become legendary due to his skills or even his accidents. Ken Drushka, Jo Little, Brain Egan and Susanne Klausen and many more all discuss the legendary aspects of the forestry industries. In the bunkhouses where the men would lodge for the night is where the storytelling of the logging fraternity would occur. Dunk also stresses, "The celebration of physical strength, practical skill, the willingness to withstand discomfort stoically, and being able to ‘drink like a man’ became important signifiers or regional identity and distinctiveness" (56). Storytelling not only provided the social interaction that fostered a tight knit group of co-workers, but also allowed the workers to confirm their masculinity through retelling of their own and other people’s exploits in the workplace: their ability to handle whichever machine they were on, that they had this massive accident or rolled this machine and survived, and the size of the biggest tree they ever felled or the day they had
their best production. These stories reaffirmed their masculinity, both for themselves and also for others, in terms of what they managed to overcome in the workplace.

The masculine identity of forest workers was partially built on the idea that all forest jobs, from logging to transporting to milling, require hard, dangerous, physically demanding work that took long hours and some of which was located in rowdy logging camps. Reed explains how boys were turned into men in the woods; the sense of danger was paramount to this ideology of the forest industry culture because “it created pride in skills necessary to avert the dangers” and also allowed for the creation of “bonding among” all members of forestry communities (384). Not only were the woods a place for masculinity to be fostered in men but the forest industry communities allowed the attitudes and beliefs about hard work to be passed down from “one generation to another” and helped to “shape the masculine” identity within these communities (Reed, 112). Matthew S. Carroll undertook a study to discover whether members of the forest industry develop what sociologists call occupational identity and community; his focus was on a logging community in Northwestern United States.

Rather than simply being a way to make a living, work in some occupations may become a major focus of the individual’s “on” and “off” duty life... with four components: people who view themselves to be involved in the same sort of work, whose identity is closely linked to that work, who share “values, norms and perspectives” connected to but extending beyond, the work setting and whose networks of social relationships “meld the realms of work and leisure. (25-26) Carroll discovered that members of the forest industry do form an occupational group with subgroups as well. This definition is not intended to mean that people within an occupational group do not have social connections and interests that go beyond the forest industry, but it
does point to how belonging to those industries was involved in defining values and core beliefs.

Brian Egan and Susanne Klausen point out that "women who do have the capacity to see themselves as forest workers perceive the industry to be hostile towards them and, as a result, tend to seek employment in other sectors" (18). For women who do get hired in the various jobs of the forestry industry the difficulties may continue because they need to prove they belong to the occupational group. Women had to prove that they can handle the jobs, which they did by performing their work as well and sometimes better than their male co-workers. The perception that the industry is hostile towards them is likely if the occupational group is not accepting. Carroll also stresses the importance of learning the occupational language, "As part of initiation to his job, the new choker setter is expected to very quickly learn the language of logging" (75). If a worker cannot learn the language and displays too many signs of difference from the occupational group the worker will not be accepted. In order to be accepted into the group, an initiation for any worker, male or female, would include a considerable amount of teasing and/or being the "butt" of a few jokes. Carroll explains,

If he [or she] responds appropriately, he [or she] goes a long way toward acceptance by the crew. If, on the other hand, the individual is not well liked or responds with anger or defensiveness to the initiation process, the experience can become very unpleasant even to the point of driving him [or her] from the crew. (75)

From this description it is easy to understand how the forest industry had the potential to become a hostile working environment for any person, male or female, who does not get accepted by the occupational group. Epstein emphasizes,

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9 Square brackets added. Carroll notes that even though he was told of women loggers, he was unable to find any for his research and, "due to the empirical basis of this study, masculine pronouns are used freely in describing loggers" (90).
Workplaces are relatively closed to people who possess characteristics or beliefs dissimilar to those in the dominant group. Professionals of any field tend towards homogeneity and consciously or unconsciously exercise exclusionary practices which will deter the participation of persons or groups who do not possess the appropriate characteristics. (167 as quoted in Myers, 64)

In male-dominated workplaces, women were naturally not members of the dominant group, but in the case of occupational groups, if acceptance rested on proving ability to handle the workload, banter, and jokes, women may be accepted. However, women and groups of males that do not fit the dominant group may be subject to more of such behaviour, for a greater extent of time, and "normal" teasing may blur into harassment and/or discrimination.

**Tokenism**

Women have been involved in working in the forest industry since it started in NBC, in one capacity or another. The number of women, however, has always been low relative to the number of men. When places such as mills or logging companies hire one woman in a workplace in order to convince anyone who is interested that there are no exclusionary practices in the workplace, this makes the woman a token forest industry worker. Refusal to hire women en masse due to beliefs such as the typical woman's inability to handle the workload reinforces barriers for female employment and sex-typing. Linda Kealey defines sex-typing as "the idea of differences between men and women in muscular strength, skill levels, training, and other areas..." and using those ideas to keep women from entering fields of employment normally male (162). If belief in sex-typing is present, one could speculate that male co-workers regard women as extraordinary and therefore the only women able to work there. But women too may exclude themselves. If women believe the ideologies about their ability to perform the labour required, they would not try to be employed in that workplace. Epstein states, "Women tended to exclude themselves from attempting to enter
organizations simply because they also accepted the prevalent stereotypes of the day about their inability to perform the job and their lack of entitlement to work for the organization” (188, as quoted in Myers, 62). If the reasonable alternative employment available is not male-dominated, women may be more inclined to seek employment there.

The patterns of women’s employment depend on the type of local industries, particularly with the presence or absence of the kinds of industries that provide jobs for women. Regarding the development of British Columbia’s economy, Patricia Connelly and Martha Macdonald, and Maureen Gail Reed all contribute to the literature available. According to Connelly, before the 1960s, almost everyone was involved in primary production ranging from farming to lumbering to fishing to fur trading, depending on the locality within BC, and the majority of the population lived on farms (55). Development of industry in NBC was based mostly on the natural resource sector; therefore the possibility for employment in female-dominated sectors may have been scarce.

**Domesticity**

There is little literature available regarding women’s lives in NBC or BC, and what there is focuses mostly on the domestic roles and duties that women perform. In more recent years there has been an increase in authors’ taking women into consideration and writing them into the history of the province. Still, in terms of the area this thesis is concerned with, women’s recorded contributions have generally been relegated to private spheres of reproduction and consumption. Kerry Kilden states that “because it is usually the husband’s work that brought them to the town, women’s lives are seen as being structured around their husband’s jobs” (127). Due to the higher domesticity of women in these smaller forestry-
industry-based towns, the women have a tendency to be more “dependent on their husbands to an unusual degree for economic and psychological support” (127). According to histories of the area, women’s roles were largely reproductive and nurturing in the communities. Women’s roles within these forestry towns were reproductive (being in charge of raising the children in the home), consumptive (taking care of buying the goods for the household), and only marginally productive (being a reserve labour force when needed, when the industry was in a boom part of the cycle and needed workers quickly). The typical expectation for female employment in these resource-based towns and communities is that women will perform the nurturing within the home. Women who do work outside of the home will normally be engaged in activities that are based on the same types of duties performed within the home, such as waitressing, and nursing, to name a few, except for the select few who will work in the forest industry when needed.

Though the histories of women working have not been well recorded and the assumptions were that women tended to hold jobs that were unskilled and low-paying, women have participated in whatever work happened in the family. Cathy Converse, among many others, describes how work done by women outside of the home was generally an extension of the work women performed within the household. Women worked as “domestics, servants, teachers, nurses, stenographers, garment makers, telephone operators, waitresses, fish-plant workers, candy makers, cooks and shop assistants” (35). When a woman does look for paid employment outside of the home, work in female-dominated occupations is a rational choice because it involves fewer hours, less danger, is usually located closer to home, and is work based on skills that women should either already have or

10 This is a combination of ideas presented by Reed, Egan and Klausen. Refer to Works Cited for specific publications.
would be particularly suited to. These types of work conditions allow women to be 
employed and also participate in motherhood. Many still perceive the role of motherhood as 
the cornerstone of adult femininity. Rosemary Gillespie states that “the notion of 
motherhood as constitutive of feminine gender identity, of women’s social role, and as 
desirable and fulfilling for all women remains entrenched in industrial, urban, and rural 
societies” (122). Domesticity and the domestic role play a large part in female identity and 
femininity.

Female Identity and Femininity

Femininity is a subjective concept that refers to a set of gendered behaviours and 
practices, which is fluid and not fixed and can mean as many different things as there are 
women. The appropriate performance of gender is enforced by standards everyone seems to 
be aware of. Fiona Gill points out that, “normality stands for continuity, the unexceptional 
and the unthreatening. It also represents something which works for particular groups and 
communities, meaning that the abnormal represents the strange, threatening and uncertain” 
(par. 2.1). Femininity and masculinity are not natural expressions of self; they are socially 
constructed scripts that persons of each sex are supposed to follow.

Femininity and masculinity are an ideology. For Marchak, “Ideology may be defined 
as a set of beliefs widely shared which provide apparently adequate explanations for the 
social experiences of individuals to persuade them of the legitimacy of the social 
arrangements” (269). It is through this ideology that femininity and masculinity take on the 
form of being something akin to an ‘essence’, something that a person should just naturally 
have, not something that has to be worked on. One of the problems with this idea of
femininity and masculinity is one of the same problems that arise from stereotyping: that people become defined by these things that cannot ever give a complete picture of all of the characteristics each person embodies. Hilde Lindemann Nelson states that it is a mistake when anyone speculates that there is "an essence of woman because women are never only women, but also" mothers, sisters, workers, academics, activists and inhabitants of particular societies in time and location (29). Whenever society defines women through stereotypes or even 'essences', that then becomes the new yardstick to measure women against and find them lacking.

Stereotypes associated with femininity include how a woman should look, dress, behave, and even present herself. These stereotypes have a great deal to do with sexual appeal and male dominance. Damaging as it may be to people in society, stereotyping is rampant. People who believe in the stereotypes and try to conform to those boundaries but find they are unable to may consider themselves to be faulty or flawed; this failure will be believed to reside in themselves instead of with the stereotype. Renee Engeln-Maddox and Sandra Bartky both present the idea of internalization and how it refers to the extent to which any individual consciously adopts what is socially defined and aims to produce as close an approximation of these ideals as possible. Bartky states,

Stereotyping is morally reprehensible as well as psychologically oppressive on two counts, at least. First, it can hardly be expected that those who hold a set of stereotyped beliefs about the sort of person I am will understand my needs or even respect my rights. Second, suppose that I, the object of some stereotype, believe in it myself – for why should I not believe what everyone else believes? I may then find it difficult to achieve what existentialists call an authentic choice of self, or what some psychologists have regarded as a state of self-actualization. (24)

This definition allows for all the different levels of participation in conforming to the stereotypical and ideal versions of femininity by women. There are women who try very
hard to accomplish the feminine ideals, while other women have no interest in fulfilling any of the ideals, and various women pick and choose which ideals they want to emulate and in which ways they want to participate.

Some women strive to meet the ideals of femininity and female identity in every way, and this may be because women are aware of the benefits to being deemed properly feminine. Kristen Dellinger and Christine L. Williams, Renee Engeln-Maddox, Kim Johnson and Sharron J. Lennon, Lisa R. Rubin, Carol J. Nemeroff and Nancy Felipe Russo, Gwendolyn S O’Neal, and S. Holland all speak of the varying degrees to which women knowingly participate in conforming to the feminine ideals. Past researchers have implied that women blindly follow the standards laid before them culturally; Dellinger and Williams point out the importance for researchers recognize that a majority of women are “knowledgeable agents” faced by a society in which they are mostly excluded from power (152). Renee Engeln-Maddox recognizes while there is substantial “evidence that many women are striving to meet a beauty ideal presented in the media, there is also evidence women often recognize the ideal for what it is – unrealistic and largely unattainable for most women. Many women are able to critique these images of the ideal” and have found their own ways to express femininity even though there is a lack of social power associated with appearances which do not conform to the rules (259). When people observe current media representations, it is apparent the current idealized female in society is white, thin, attractive, follows current beauty trends in regards to her clothing and make-up application and also appears fragile/frail, denoting the potential for physical weakness. Rubin, Nemeroff and Russo point out that “thinness and attractiveness relate to being listened to more and being viewed as competent, likeable and dateable” (35).
There is an unspoken expectation in Western culture that women are to conform to what is considered heterosexual attractiveness and femininity. Women display their levels of conformity through their appearance, and this appearance is designed to promote their sexual availability to men and the male gaze. Renee Engeln-Maddox, Sandra Bartky and E. Tseelon and numerous others all discuss how in the current body stereotype for women thinness is emphasized. However, Renee Engeln-Maddox emphasizes how being slender is not enough; women must also have or appear to have “flawless skin, well styled hair, and attractive facial features” (258). Kristen Dellinger and Christine L. Williams have produced an analysis of women’s use of makeup in the workplace and illustrate how women act as “knowledgeable agents” within institutional constraints. Dellinger and Williams emphasize how women are experts in societal expectations but also that women knowingly participate in ways that will help to further their positions in the workplace and life goals (152). The reason that participating in these stereotypical image rites can further a woman’s position in the workplace or life in general is because it will show degrees of conformity to those in power, men.

The images of women in society focus on appearance and encourage females of all ages to focus on their own appearance in order to try and comply with those idealized images. Bartky discusses how adornment of the body was a primitive way for people to announce their own appreciation for themselves. But I believe the ideology behind current bodily adornment has twisted into a way to prove one’s worth to society by conforming to the ideals presented through images of women that are found everywhere. Sandra Bartky explores this further:
the persistent need she has to make herself attractive, to fix her hair and put on lipstick – is it the false need of a chauvinized woman, encouraged since infancy to identify her human value with her attractiveness in the eyes of men, or does it express a basic need to affirm a wholesome love for one’s body by adorning it, a behaviour common in primitive societies, allowed us but denied men in our own still puritan culture? (18)

The need some women have to follow these rituals comes from an external source that has been made to seem natural. Vickie Rutledge Shields and Dawn Heinecken state that “fulfilling the potential of ideal femininity involves a constant focusing on the body as the site of improvement and as the object of judgment” (89). Women who have internalized the ideals presented socially focus their attention on their bodies because that is their purpose for the world at large, to be attractive and sexually appealing for the male gaze. Women’s levels of conformity are judged by the male gaze. Just as the definitions are controlled by male-dominated society, so too are the evaluations. Femininity is not just about presenting the proper appearance to the social world but also about following certain ideals about behaviour.

N. Wolf reminds us that “the beauty myth is always actually prescribing behaviour and not appearance” (13-14). When women focus their attention on their appearance, they are less likely to have time to focus on other matters such as the social inequality women still face worldwide. Denise Riley asserts, “Socialist feminism has always tended to claim that women are socially produced in the sense of being conditioned and that femininity is an effect” (2). Women have been trained, by those images in society, by teachers, family and friends, to understand what types of behaviour and appearance they are expected to emulate in order to be considered ‘properly’ feminine.
Susan L. Williams studied the effects of gender when girls in two different communities had differential access to sports. What she discovered was that when these types of activities are open to everyone, regardless of gender, gender itself becomes “more subtle” because “more alternatives to stereotypical gender conventions are available” (39-40). So when social constraints are not using a person’s gender to restrict what resources are available for them to use, gender itself is less of a restriction. The gender roles will remain intact but ultimately will be less restrictive because the focus becomes less about which gender is performing a task and more about whether a person is performing a task well. Unfortunately, the majority of society currently does not offer equal opportunity for persons of female gender, whose purposes are still defined mostly through how well their appearances and behaviours meet the prevalent stereotypes and ideals.

Objectifications/Sexual Harassment

The sexual objectification of women can be found in the images of women that are present everywhere, and have served to provide definitions of femininity, and therefore, to define women’s entire being as a body. Sandra Bartky defines sexual objectification as having occurred “when a woman’s sexual parts or functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her” (35). Lisa Adkins explains how women are still valued through their bodies, which makes them less valuable than any other human expected to possess a mind and personality. In normal realms of female work, attractiveness “expecting and dealing with forms of sexual objectification from men customers and men co-workers” is a large part of the job (145). Adkins also stresses that, by “responding to sexual innuendos and men’s advances, by smiling, looking flattered and entering” into conversation with men, women are
providing a type of sexual service to men (158). Numerous researchers discuss the different types of sexual objectification and sexual harassment that women face in the workplace.

Sexual harassment at work takes many different forms such as sexist jokes and vulgar language and is part of the initiation of any individual who enters male-dominated working environments. Jennifer Penny explains how women “put up with frequent and degrading sexual comments and innuendo, derogatory sexual graffiti, or porn photos plastering the washrooms and lunchrooms.” (15) While sexual harassment can occur in any workplace, some theorists posit that for women entering male-dominated workplaces, sexual harassment is more likely to occur. Claire M. Renzetti and Daniel J. Curran mention that “Some observers claim that [sexual harassment] is especially pervasive in male-dominated jobs to which women are new hires, since it may serve as a means for male workers to assert dominance and control over women who otherwise would be their equals.” (190) Men in these workplaces may resort to disguising their sexual harassment in the form of jokes they tell either directly to the female co-workers, or merely when they are within earshot. Michele Landsberg points out that,

Because they hate to seem shrill, or humourless, or bad sports, women will uneasily co-operate with any number of demeaning feminine role requirements, ranging from polite laughter at anti-female jokes to getting the coffee for a roomful of male colleagues at work, something that would never be asked of a man in the same position unless there were no female available. (7)

Disguising sexual harassment as ‘jokes’ not only makes light of the seriousness of the matter but also puts the blame onto the women for not having enough of a sense of humour to understand how these comments are funny. As previously mentioned, an initiation to join the occupational group in the forest industries would involve being the “butt” of some jokes,

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11 Square brackets added for clarity, the original quote says “it” referencing sexual harassment.
and practical jokes and failure to respond in the ‘appropriate’ way would result in a miserable workplace. Negotiating femininity in male-dominated workplaces can be tricky. Kate Gillen discusses how working women have “to negotiate an image that suggested competence while avoiding masculinity, and which preserved femininity while avoiding overt sexual signaling” (78).

Conclusion

This chapter investigated the dynamics of the forest industry: how it helps forge the masculine identities of its workers and an occupational group identity. This chapter reviewed aspects of the industry regarding hiring practices, the amount of mobility employees have once employed within forest industry, the degree of routine present in the workday, and the importance of workers’ proving their ability to handle the workload with pride. There was also a discussion of literature that reviewed characteristics specific to female identity and femininity in the creation of female employment and the domestic role within the home and family. This was followed by an examination of femininity in terms of the ideal and stereotypical version available in society, along with the way women perform femininity as an appearance, behavior and identity. Arguments were presented of how sexual harassment and objectification are prevalent in any type of women’s employment whether in traditional vocations or not. The next chapter will move into a discussion of the underlying theories of this thesis, discuss the importance of oral history and interviewing, and review the guiding principle of saturation for academic purposes. Chapter Three will also describe the process of recruiting participants and the interview process, introduce the participants to readers, and finally, discuss research limitations.
Chapter 3
Methodologies

Discussions of femininity involve a large variety of ideologies, can contain differing and diametrically opposing views, and can be completely contradictory at any given time. As the previous chapters and following case study show, discussing female identity and femininity brings a multitude of social, political and personal dynamics to light as gender identities intersect with every aspect of social life. The sensitivity around gender dialogue makes the application of methodological frameworks that much more important. This research pulls from multiple methodologies and follows the theories of Postmodernism and Feminist Standpoint theory. Along with the methodological layout, this chapter will also describe the methods of research, theoretical developments with regard to using personal narratives and interviewing, the sample of participants, how they were recruited, and an explanation of the interview process. It follows the basic criteria that developed through the debate of the academic use of interviews and oral history as a means of ensuring that those excluded from the dominant stories participate in the historical understanding of events. Research limitations are discussed after the introduction of the participants and conclude the chapter.

Postmodern Theory

Postmodern theory emphasizes and embraces difference. Postmodern theory asks the reader and theorist to question beliefs that everything is continuous and can be defined in linear fashion. Gail Cuthbert Brandt, S. Holland, Gerda Lerner, Richard Peet, Carolyn Sachs, Sandra Bartky and Maureen Gail Reed all contribute to the discussion of postmodern theory. Postmodern theory rejects the linear, supposedly all-encompassing history that has
been written. This history is rejected because it fails to recognize that there are specific social and cultural factors that kept certain people out of written history. Postmodernism recognizes that there are many alternative histories to the one accepted and written into academia and therefore history could not be linear. S. Holland suggests that postmodern arguments state that gender identity is more “fluid” than stagnant “and that sex/gender distinction” is flawed “because biological differences are not significant in themselves”; they are only significant if society portrays them as such (9). Postmodernist theory therefore would argue against the viability of any type of binary way of thinking and understanding the world. The modern Western world developed its social structure on many binary constructs where the first term is always preferred and privileged over the second term: man/woman, reason/emotion, and public/private. Before the postmodern period these types of binary thinking were considered the natural order of things, but social changes brought these assumptions into view and allowed the possibility of analysis of these views and alternatives to them. Generalizations and universality that have previously defined history, society, women and ethnic groups cannot be taken as valid. The differences are as important as the similarities and there can be more than one truth about any given situation. Postmodern theory is important to this thesis because it recognizes that gender is not a natural human quality, but it is created and re-created in everyday interactions. Postmodernism opens academic space for marginalized groups’ truths to exist beside non-marginalized truths without privileging one truth over the other.

Postmodern theory is also important for this thesis because it teaches that identity is never static but is always fluctuating, and importantly that some aspects of identity are formed under duress from the pressures of social constraints. Bartky explains that “the
disciplines and practices within which our identities are constructed are multifarious and often contradictory" (25). This reiterates that identities can hold many different parts and can include opposing aspects: for example, women who believe they possess feminine qualities even though they work in masculine industries and have adopted some of the more masculine traits associated with those industries. Women are able to simultaneously challenge some aspects of stereotypical or ideal femininity while embracing the overall concept even when they may believe many of the stereotypical or ideal aspects to be negative. Postmodern theories also posit that all knowledge is historically situated and at best only able to provide partial truths about the situation. Richard Peet believes that “postmodern [theory]\(^ {12} \) considers reason to be an historical and regional form of thought rather than a universal potential” (73). According to postmodernism then, the knowledge developed in the interior of NBC forestry industries and communities and lifestyles would be different from knowledge in the rest of BC and Canada.

Specific NBC knowledge, lifestyles, even femininity and masculinity would also be different from area to area, depending on the social and physical environment of each area. Postmodern discourse argues that meaning is socially constructed through different power relations in society. In contrast to believing the written account that universalizes man’s history, postmodernism cherishes difference and different ways of knowing and being. For Carolyn Sachs, “postmodernism is defined as philosophical skepticism, the deconstruction of ideas concerning truth, knowledge, power, self, and language that have characterized Western thinking since the Enlightenment” (18). Postmodernism encourages the study of difference over the idea of generalizations and universal knowledge that has historically only

\(^ {12} \) Square brackets added.
involved the ideas of upper-class, privileged, white men. Postmodern theory uses
deconstruction to dislodge the "truths" presented to society and bring to light what has been
kept hidden from the official records of society and therefore removed from knowledge and
language of patriarchal society. This may seem like an inappropriate statement for a theory
that denies the existence of truth, but my understanding is that while postmodernism denies
the existence of any kind of all-encompassing, universal truth, it does allow for, and perhaps
even encourages the possibility for an infinite number of truths available in any
circumstance.

As mentioned above, one of the tools of postmodern analysis is deconstruction.
Deconstruction means to study something very closely to discover the parts that are taken to
be so obvious that it goes without saying and then analyze it to discover how it developed,
whose interests it protects, and its validity. Peter Barry explains that the theory developed by
Jacques Derrida was to take apart and closely examine language used to determine not only
the meanings of the words used but also to understand the meanings in the unspoken ways
language is being used (70-71). Feminist appropriation of deconstruction theory works to
understand the concepts, ideas, and knowledge regarding women's roles in society and their
very nature. The ways in which women have been defined, discussed and restricted needs to
be thoroughly examined. Roberta Hamilton points out that "feminists have been drawn to
the theories of post-structuralism and deconstructionism and have turned them into powerful
ways of examining how language creates, sustains, and constrains our sense of who we are
and... how language, by its volatility and flexibility, may open up spaces for challenges to
dominant discourses" (3). The importance in this postmodern use of deconstruction lies, for
the purposes of this thesis, in the fact that women as a group have been defined by others;
when those definitions are deconstructed, what is left is what women may actually self-identify with as opposed to all those ideals that have defined who women are supposed to be. This is not to suggest that if women were able to define their identity by their own terms that this new identity would be more real than the identity provided by society, just that if there were no pre-conceived ideals of what defines women or men, the subordination of one way of being in favour of the other would have the potential to dissolve.

These definitions have been taken as truisms and have tried to categorize all women in the same group while ignoring the individual experiences that contribute to and shape each woman’s personal identity. The definitions also operate under the assumption that women lead essentially the same lives regardless of geography, culture, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexuality, and class. A postmodern approach allows for the focus on individual experience as a way to understand differing truths and realities. Everyone experiences the same event in a different way because her/his bias has been formed through the specific lens of lived experience. Liz Bondi states, “The essence of experience, therefore, resides not in its authenticity but in its ability to inform our ideas and actions” (95). Female identity definitions must be deconstructed and reconstructed in order to discover and undermine what dominant social definitions are in place. I have used deconstruction in a limited way in this thesis; however, as I state in my conclusion, there is much potential in a deconstruction of forest industry language and metaphor.

Postmodern theory is about trying to understand the ways in which society has developed and examining social definitions in order to discover where challenges to these can be made. Judith Butler informed readers,
That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender’s performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality. (141)

These social performances take place during all of our social interactions. Feminists adopted the term “gender” to use as a analytical tool for discovering all the ways in which masculine and feminine definitions are socially created. The theoretical background for the use of gender is to gain the ability to provide new definitions to masculinity and femininity because the theories are inadequate for explaining why the inequalities between women and men are so persistent. The study of women’s lives needed a theory to move from describing women’s lived experiences to explaining the reasons for the differences in women’s lives and also the inequalities they face.

Postmodern theories emphasize how unstable, fluid, and fragmentary identities are, especially since identity is a key element of subjective reality where each person’s knowledge comes to be socially established as their own fluctuating and changing truths and realities. Jo Little sees the possibilities stemming from gender and deconstruction as providing “an opportunity for the deconstruction of gender categories and a focus on the notion of gender identity in an acknowledgement of the differing ways in which people experience and perform their gender identities” (35).

**Feminist Standpoint Theory**

Feminist standpoint theory speculates that because all women have shared experiences, such as subordination to men, the assumption they will be responsible for childcare, or having fewer options available for types of employment, these experiences provide women with ways of interacting and understanding the world that are different from
male points of view. Liz Bondi, Nancy C. M. Hartsock, Carolyn Sachs, Sandra Bartky, R. W. Connell, and S. Holland are among the theorists who have added to the discussion of women’s ways of knowing and how they differ from men’s ways of knowing. This different way of knowing has been described by many as a kind of “double vision” because oppressed people need to both understand themselves and the oppressors. The research for this thesis uses standpoint theory because the knowledge of the forest industries as it has been written is from the perspective of the dominant culture, the male worker. By using the perspectives and knowledge of women in the forestry industries this thesis hopes to contribute more significantly to the field by providing a yet unrecorded perspective. Due to the nature of this double vision, the views of the participants are extremely important to the research because they are the only people in this unique position of understanding. Carolyn Sachs notes that “controversy remains concerning what exactly compose the everyday life experiences that provide women with different ways of viewing the world” (13). Women’s standpoint comes directly from the social experiences of their lives, from the divisions of labour, the inability to define themselves, and their basic subordination to men in all areas.

Postmodernism, through its focus on individual knowledge, could make arguments that there is no universal way of knowing, but what standpoint acknowledges is that while differences are fundamental to individual knowledge, women do share certain social realities, such as the subordination of women and the way women have been defined. The idea of individual knowledge and truths seems at odds with the idea that women share certain social realities. What is meant by this is that women can understand or empathize with certain social realities like the subordination of women by society as a whole because they have experienced their own versions of subordination, not that because someone is a woman she
has "pure" knowledge or can truly understand someone else's experience. There is still not a possibility of a singular truth because no one can have the same experience as anyone else.

Certain ways of knowing have been, and continue to be, privileged over other ways of knowing: male over female, academic over non-academic, and researcher over participant. The problem is that none of the ways of knowing should be considered more truthful than any other ways of knowing. Added to this is that it is an impossibility to obtain objective knowledge, for all knowledge is subjective because those who conceive and present it do so from their own specific historical, geographical, and cultural contexts. Instead of trying to claim that the knowledge being presented is objective, one should instead situate oneself in the research by providing the lens through which this knowledge was obtained.

I want to be explicit about my relationship to those who participated in my research. I was similar to them in the manner that I was raised within the occupational culture of the forestry industries; they may have seen me as having a partial understanding of the culture. I was familiar with the terms and had a basic understanding of what the machinery looked like and did, the lifestyle, the boom and bust cycles. There were also many differences between myself and the participants, which along with the similarities helped enlighten and enhance the interviews and the research findings.

Though I never worked in the forest industry I had many non-working experiences within it; recognized, from an early age, female involvement in numerous capacities; and had hoped to become directly involved myself. Growing up in a family where several members worked in the various forest industries meant that we were all affected by the forest industry either directly or indirectly. My fascination with the machinery, the language, even the
lifestyle was cultivated at an early age because it was part of my lived reality. My uncles, grandfathers, grandmother, aunt, cousins, and father all worked in varying capacities in the forest industry. Camp life meant a large number of males in my family were in a logging camp for weeks at a time; when they came home that time was spent in big gatherings where the adults told stories of other workers in the bush along with stories of their own adventures. The longest time periods spent with my father during my childhood were during spring break-up, which seemed to be the only time he was ever home for more than a week. This time would be filled with all sorts of different men coming over and spending hours at the kitchen table exchanging industry stories.

When I expressed an interest in running machinery for employment, the people I knew made enough dissuasive comments -- 'you don't want to be like those women out there', for example -- that I did not go through with it. No one in my family or circle wanted me working out in the bush. Considering that many people in my family were/are in the various fields of the forest industry, their reactions to my interest in joining the forest industry were surprising, because they understood better than many how much income could be earned in one summer, more than enough to pay for my education each year. This denial of my entry into the industry due to their persuasive arguments left me with a variety of questions. My questions pertained to what it was like to work in any of the industries, especially if you are female; whether or not working in those industries was too difficult for women physically; and what values were expressed when stating that the forest industry is not for women. Was it that women were not treated the same as men in the industry? The storytelling aspect of the industry first introduced me to logging vernacular and made me eager to know more about the forest industries. But while I grew up hearing the male stories,
I did not have the opportunity to hear any stories directly from women until much later.

**Oral History and Interviewing**

Considering that storytelling is a major element in the culture of forest industries and that I needed to generate original data for my thesis, oral accounts and interviewing willing participants have created the source of my data. Oral history has been used by feminist researchers as a way to uncover those histories of women that have remained hidden from literature. Interviewing as a means to obtain data is a way to perform feminist research methods. An important aspect of interviewing is making sure that proper saturation of the topic is reached with the study group size.

Oral history and interviewing are vitally important to researching any topic that has not been the focus of major academic undertaking. Certain topics and groups in society have thus far escaped academic interest. Rural and/or northern areas, because of the smaller population and being quite removed from any decision-making power within the provinces and country, have remained under-researched. As a group, women have escaped notice until relatively recent years. Oral history and interviewing are also important for trying to understand the sense of place that first-hand accounts can provide. Jean Barman, Joanna Bomat and Hanna Dianmond, C. Daley, Gerda Lerner, and Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman all speak to the importance of oral history and interviewing for establishing a more accurate picture of social life. Joanna Bornat and Hanna Dianmond believe that “personal testimony now has a central place in the creation of knowledge across numerous disciplines and that the popularity and influence of the biographical has never been greater” (34). As discussed above, postmodernist theory stresses that there is no single meaning to
reality and no single truth. Therefore, meanings are historically situated and constructed through language. There is no better way to discover the meanings of femininity in male-dominated working environments than through oral history and interviewing the women within those environments when no literature on the subject is available.

The experiences of women are gendered. Therefore the content of their oral histories will also be gendered, as were the histories that had previously been written. The most important aspect of postmodernism and standpoint theory is not only that there are a variety of experiences and ways to understand the world, but also that those varieties are recognized without imposing the idea of normalcy because normalcy implies universality.

Interviewing and Saturation

One must keep in mind while conducting interviews that the work is to bring participants’ perspectives, lives, and definitions into the academic canon. K. Anderson and D.C. Jack, Katherine Borland, Stephen Caunce, Marie-Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet, Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce and Laura Johnson, Emily Honing, Joseph H. Michalski, and L. Shopes have all discussed at length the importance of ensuring that the participants are allowed to speak for themselves and that the work done in the interviewing and interpreting process does not in turn oppress their definitions and perspectives again. K. Anderson and D.C. Jack explain that,

The expression of women's unique experience as women is often muted, particularly in any situation where women's interests and experiences are at variance with those of men. A women's discussion of her life may combine two separate, often conflicting, perspectives: one framed in concepts and values that reflect men's dominant position in the culture, and one informed by the more immediate realities of a woman's personal experience. (11)
This is especially true in the historical telling of the forestry industries in BC. The history of forestry practices in BC has glorified the masculinity of men, emphasizing that the work was so hard, dirty, dangerous and isolated that only the stoutest of men could possibly undertake it.

Thus it is important during the interview process that the participant feels comfortable exploring the topics researchers are pursuing. Comfort can be expected when the research values the information the participants provide, when the participants are able to explore their feelings and behaviours, and when they are encouraged to explain what they mean in their own terms regardless of how those concepts have been previously defined. On the other hand, Katherine Borland reminds researchers that it is important to represent their “work in a way that grants the speaking woman interpretive respect without relinquishing our responsibility to provide our own interpretation of her experience” (64). The researcher must find balance between letting the participant’s words speak for themselves and using secondary materials to interpret those words and try and place them within the academic field.

When conducting interviews, researchers also need to know how many interviews they should be conducting in order to achieve the highest level of variation on the subject at hand. Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce, and Laura Johnson conducted a research study in order to determine the number of interviews needed for sample continuity. Their research concluded that six to eight interviews would render accurate information or saturation, when no new information is being provided regardless of how many more interviews take place. According to their study “when and how saturation is reached depends on several things: (1) the number and complexity of data, (2) investigator experience and fatigue, and (3) the
number of analysts reviewing the data” (77). For this thesis the data from nine interviews have been compiled and I believe that saturation was reached within those interviews. I feel the women who participated in this study represent a variety of different employment sectors within the forest industries and contribute to the histories of those industries. Even though many of the participants performed different types of work, their individual responses were very similar and even coincide with some aspects of case studies done by other researchers. Carroll’s study of the occupational groups of loggers and how new workers enter the group matched responses given by the participants about proving themselves and being accepted by their co-workers. The respondents in this study were similar in defining themselves as feminine while knowing they reject aspects of traditional femininity. This leads me to believe that these experiences are not entirely specific to NBC, but could share commonalities with other geographical locations and also with women entering other male-dominated fields. All together I conducted thirteen interviews and after the first nine interviews no new information was being provided by the participants. Even though two of the first nine interviews withdrew, the additional four interviews did not generate any new data.

The Recruitment of Interviewees

For the research of this thesis I took a very broad view when I was searching for participants. On the poster I placed in various locations, I requested any women who were working or had worked in the forestry industry in NBC; for possible occupations I listed work in logging or logging camps, on logging equipment or driving a logging truck, and mill workers or women working in offices within mills. The posters were placed in locations such as the marshalling point where mill workers are picked up by the mill buses; on bulletin
boards in mills; on bulletin boards at truck stops; on bulletin boards at community centres; on fences during logger sports events; in malls; and at senior centres, grocery stores, and local businesses. I contacted everyone I know within the industries to spread the word to anyone interested and I asked the women I know personally who work within the industries if they would like to participate. Altogether I was in contact with fifteen women to participate in the research, though only nine continued their participation through to the end of the thesis.

Three of the women I knew personally agreed to participate (with one, our schedules remained conflicted and the interview did not take place). Six women heard about the project through word of mouth (all six women were interviewed, but two withdrew). Two participants were contacted by family/friends who had seen the posters and thought they would be interested (one interview did take place, while conflicting schedules prevented the second from occurring). Four women responded to the posters directly, though one did not believe she would have time for the interview (three interviews were conducted but one participant withdrew after the interview).

During initial contact, which happened via phone, email or in person, I informed the potential participants of my project intentions to ensure there was no deception as to what their participation would involve. There was a pre-interview meeting in order to reiterate what the project and their participation involved and to obtain signatures on the consent forms. Some of the participants wanted to proceed with the interview at that point. For others a time and place were arranged for the interview. The consent form was explained in full detail to each participant including different options concerning anonymity and confidentiality. Given the personal nature of the information provided by the participants, each participant had the choice to participate anonymously; only some chose this option.
Options offered for maintaining confidentiality included omitting names, using only initials and changing or omitting specific identifiers such as the company name and which years the participant was employed there. Names of people, places and even specific companies mentioned by the participants were omitted. While anonymity is important, some participants did not want their identity to be anonymous; those participants waived anonymity but were informed that should they change their minds the option was still available until the last edit of the project. In the end, anonymity was granted to participants through the use of fabricated initials, as is discussed further in Chapter Four.

The Interview Process

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format in order to spend more time with the participants and facilitate an open interviewer/interviewee relationship. They were asked standard background questions such as their names, where they live/lived, and their ages at the time. All nine of the interview questions [Appendix B] were extremely open-ended in order to ensure discussion; there were subject prompts because the project aims at gaining an understanding about personal interpretation.

Before beginning the first interview with each participant, the interviewee signed the oral interview/transcript release form and each participant received her own copy. Any restrictions placed on the use of the interviews were written on the release form. During the interviewing process I used an audio digital recording device and note-taking. Before any subsequent interviews, the previous material was reviewed by listening to the recordings on my computer (though it was not stored there), transferring the recording to disc, and erasing it from the audio digital device. Listening to the previous interviews allowed me to hear any
gaps in the information and provided insight for different questions and prompts to more thoroughly understand what the participants were explaining. Listening to the interviews alerted me to any definitions needed from the participants with regards to language they used and any discrepancies in the material. Discrepancies in the material can be an indication that the woman is dealing with conflicting ideas and views about a given subject.

There was only one participant with whom more than one interview occurred to cover all of the questions and material. At the beginning of the subsequent interview the participant was asked if she wished to continue with the interviewing and recording process and was reminded of her right to withdraw from the project at any time. If, at any time during the pre-interview, interviewing or transcribing process, or at any time before the thesis has been successfully defended, the participants no longer wished to participate in the project, they were offered the choice to withdraw all the information collected or to end their participation at that point but permit any specified amount of the previously collected information to be used in the project. If the participant wished to withdraw all the information or only parts, she would be given all copies of said information; none of the participants chose this option.

Once the interviewing process was complete and all the interviews transcribed, each participant received a transcribed copy of her own interview to review in order to ensure the information was accurate and each woman was comfortable with the information there. The women had the right to and were encouraged to edit out any parts of the transcript they were not comfortable being used and to add any missed information or other information they felt was relevant to the study. Participants had final control over what information they were willing to contribute to this project and returned the edited interviews to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided. Three of the participants opted out of the study at
this point; two did not return the interviews, and one I lost contact with. All of the transcripts and discs were kept by me and will remain in a secure location for a twelve-month period following the successful defence of the thesis (June 2013), after which they will be returned to the interviewees or destroyed by me, depending on the wishes of each interviewee. A copy of the final thesis will be given to each of the participants.

The Participants

As discussed earlier, in my selection of participants my goal was to be as inclusive as possible in order to get a large number of respondents. Had there been an overwhelming number of people wanting to participate in my research, I would have, at that point, considered narrowing my definition of forest industries. That the participants self-identify as currently or previously being employed within forest industries was vital. Another reason for being so inclusive is to count types of work that are involved directly with forest industries but have not been counted historically through official sources/agencies like Statistics Canada, local histories or even personal memoirs of working in the industries. The fact that these participants self-identify as working in the forest industries and the pride they feel in this employment role play important defining roles in both the participants' identities and femininity. Due to the virtual invisibility of women working in forest industries in the literature available, allowing my research to be as inclusive as possible challenges the ideology that forest industries are strictly a male domain. Though arguments may be made that professional foresters or tree planting are not a part of forest industries because they are not directly involved in getting the wood out of the forests and processing it for profit, without the work performed by both professional foresters or tree planting and numerous
other positions, the types of work normally defined as forest industries such as logging or mill work would not happen.

For the purposes of this thesis the employment time span of the participants covers 1960 to 2000. Two participants started forest industry employment in the sixties. There were also two participants that started in the seventies and the eighties. Three participants started their employment in the nineties. The longest length of employment covered forty years, while the shortest time span was equivalent to approximately one year of employment. Out of the nine participants, only three remain employed in forest industry work at the time of our last communication.

All the types of forest industries these women have worked in are vital to extraction. Collectively the participants have covered numerous different types of forest-industries employment and have worked in Cariboo Region, Skeena Region, Northeast Region and Omineca Region, according to the boundaries set by the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations [Appendix A]. The different positions varied greatly and more than one participant worked certain types of forest industry positions. Three participants worked in clean-up positions in mills. Four participants were tree planters during their forest industry careers. Two participants cooked in forest industry camps. Two women ran a processor in the bush. Four participants operated skidder/Cat machines. Two participants received forklift operating tickets and operated forklifts. Two participants worked as 7-0-4 persons, which is a checker making sure the trees are being planted and spaced correctly. Two employees were employed doing block layout. Three employees worked as log scalers.
There were also several positions within the forest industry that only one of the participants was employed doing. These positions include: fire suppression, cantor machine operation, hand falling or bucking, operating the trimmer in a mill, first aid attendance, managing the rental and bunkhouses and lumber sales for a company town, hoe operation, production and clerking, herbicide application, researching the effects of glyphosate (the chemical in Roundup) on vegetation and seedlings, grading lumber, running the packing plant, mill work, Human Resources management, filing in the office, driving logging truck, running a grapple skidder, quad saw operation, working utility in the machine room at a mill, being transportation foreman, being a timekeeper, boom lift operation, running the cut-off saw, hiring for shutdowns, tree spacing with power saws, scissor lift operation, running a Laturno loader, completing environmental assessments, running road graders, weed whacking, working in a planer mill, working as a contractor for the Ministry of Forests doing silviculture surveys, working as an accountant, Beaver machine operation, cone picking, being a log yard foreman, payroll processing, managing accounts receivable and payable, office management, stand tending, timber cruising, stream classification (which sets the parameters of how close logging can be done to streams), pruning, and girdling weed trees, which strips the bark off around the stem of the tree to kill it without using pesticides or herbicides so that desirable trees planted will have the best possible growing conditions.

All of the participants were aware of other women working in the forest industry. The participants reported seeing other women working in forestry service; as forest technicians; in professional forestry; as forestry students; for the ministry of environment; in hydrology; as highway persons on the civil engineering side of things; in offices as administrators and office workers; in human resources; as bookkeepers, company owners,
supervisors, machinery owners, bull cooks, camp cooks, and camp workers; in silviculture, vegetation tending, cone picking, and tree planting; bucking the limbs of felled trees with a chainsaw; as log scalers; in quality control, cut-off saw operation, and bark-saw operation; operating button-tops and forklifts; as paper wrappers; as janitors; in bleach plant as clean-up and labour; piling lumber; working in the packaging plant; as sawmill workers and running mill machinery; as planer mill workers and running planer machinery; and as truck drivers.

Research Limitations

There is extensive literature available regarding BC and the logging industry, but there is very little examining the forest industry in NBC. While many aspects of logging and the forest industry of both North and South BC are similar, such as the equipment used or the regulations that must be followed, there are also large differences between coastal and inland wood harvesting. In some of the literature available I was able to find information mentioning women involved in the forest industries, but those mentions were mostly in passing and were not specifically looking at the work women were performing. Of the sparse literature available, aside from a few studies that look only at the Northern Interior, the majority focused on the southern forest industry though they indicate studying logging in BC. Literature that was written looking specifically at women’s experiences with the forest industry focuses on the experiences within the forest-based community but not within the actual industry. Although these topics are extremely important at discussing and valuing women’s experiences within the community, my focus is on women’s experiences within the occupational community at work.
There were some limitations with the recruitment of participants for this study; though ethnic background was not a determining factor in the recruitment process, none of the participants identified themselves as belonging to First Nations groups, or other ethnic minorities. While I was quite thrilled with the number of women who chose to participate, and the data provided by the interviewees reached saturation on our discussion topics, there was an abundance of information provided that did not fit within the scope of the study. The storytelling aspect of the forest industries fell beyond the scope of this thesis. In the following case study the data presented by the participants will be discussed.

Conclusion

Developing an understanding of femininity involves interacting with a variety of differing ideologies and opposing and sometimes contradictory outlooks. Discussing female identity and femininity conveys a myriad of social, political and personal dynamics to light because gender identities intersect every aspect of social life. The selection and application of methodological frameworks are extremely important considering the sensitivity that surrounds gender discussions. The methodologies used for this thesis include the theories of Postmodernism and Feminist Standpoint. While the case study does not follow either one of these theories exactly, when combined, the theories are vital to furthering the understanding of female identity and femininity. This chapter also discussed the importance of theoretical developments concerning the use of personal narratives and interviewing for academic study and as a means to ensure members previously excluded from the dominant story of history can now be included. The participants were also introduced; along with an explanation how they were recruited and the interview process itself. The limitations of this research were also discussed. The following chapter will provide the analysis and participants' responses
to the interview questions. After carefully reviewing the interviews, I looked for common themes within the transcripts and identified seven that were shared among all of the interviewees. Therefore, I have organized the next chapter in accordance with those themes. 

The case study is divided into seven main threads of conversation: getting in, mobility, routine of work and proving oneself, cleanliness and domesticity, tokenism, femininity, and sexuality.
Chapter Four

Analysis and Participants’ Responses

When considering how the female identity and femininity of women were affected by working in the male-dominated forestry industry of the interior of NBC, new data needed to be generated as existing literature and studies did not address these types of topics. The following case study articulates these contexts through the individual experiences and ideologies of nine women who self-identify as having worked or are currently working in various forest industries. The experiences provided throughout this chapter build on the theories in Chapter Two and further fill the gap in information regarding female identity and femininity in NBC.

While the main purpose of my thesis was to discover what effects, if any, working in the male-dominated forest industry had on the participants’ femininity, I realize femininity cannot be dealt with in isolation. Femininity is always experienced relative or in relation to the social times. With regards to interviewees' female identity and femininity and the forest industry, seven threads of conversation emerge. The first three topics specifically deal with working in the forest industries. The process of getting into the different forest industry had certain challenges for these female workers, but also followed similar patterns of male employees’ entering the industry. All of the interviewees experienced degrees of mobility, moving into and out of different positions once they were able to gain their initial industry position. While discussing working in the forest industry, participants pointed out both the routine of the work they were doing and the importance of proving, not only to themselves, but also to their coworkers, that they could adeptly handle the jobs. The next four threads of
interview conversation bring in the ideology surrounding female identity and femininity more specifically in relation to working in the forest industries. The participants explained the different ways they had to reconcile *domesticity and cleanliness* with their work roles. *Tokenism* due to gender was both experienced and participated in to varying degrees by the interviewees. All of these women discussed *femininity* in terms of how they defined their own and how they dealt with it in the workplaces. With female identity and femininity come instances of *objectification and even sexual harassment* in the workplace. This chapter will present and analyze what the participants said in relation to these seven topics.

**Getting In**

While the reasons participants cited for entering different areas of forest industry work varied, there was discussion around different aspects of actually getting employment in the industries. Females seeking entry into forest industry employment in many cases found that there were difficulties getting hired. A difficulty to gaining employment was that in many cases employers were not willing to take a chance on female employees. Another difficulty mentioned by the participants in terms of even looking to the forest industry for potential employment was that to their knowledge there were no female role models or mentors in the industries. Obstacles to entrance into forest industry included that the industry seems to present itself as almost a different world due to its male-dominated nature. These women did point out that living in areas with an abundance of resource-driven employment helped facilitate gaining employment in the forest industry. Many of the participants noted that having family connections was helpful to gain entry to employment in various forest industries. The pay grade offered by forest industry was cited as a definite incentive for seeking employment there.
There are several reasons why the forest industry in the interior of NBC has remained male-dominated even though technological changes and mechanization mean that most of the original physically demanding and dangerous aspects are no longer present. New dangers, however, are now present due to the mechanization of forest industry processes. AM\textsuperscript{13} gives one reason that may explain the phenomenon: “Like I was saying, personally most of it, number one with the women is that no one will take a chance on them is the way I look at it, no one will take a chance on them so therefore they don’t get the experience and if they do have any it’s because they worked there, as a labourer or whatever the case may be” (Oct 2, 2008). AM suggests that women were hired on only as labourers and are able to get industry experience in that way, but without that people were not willing to hire women because they were unwilling to take a chance on someone either lacking in experience or someone that may present as being different from the dominant work group. Therefore, the industry remains male-dominated by default; males are hired because they have experience or because it is believed that they have had experiences that will help them to be good employees in these working environments.

Another reason why employers may not be willing to take a chance on hiring women could come from concern that females would not be able to adhere to the brotherhood-type relationship that has developed between the male employees. GT’s thoughts on the camaraderie among her co-workers give insight into how there may be outside circumstances that reinforce these male-dominated environments.

\textsuperscript{13} Some participants requested anonymity while others did not; in order to ensure the protection of the anonymous participants, I use initials instead of names. For the participants who requested anonymity the initials are fabricated, while the other participants’ initials are accurate. I give no indication as to which participants are which in order to protect anonymity for those who requested it.
Yeah, well let’s see, camaraderie, well you knew the guys you were working with all the time. There was a lot of camaraderie among the men. Quite often they went to school together, were related to one another, had worked together in other crews in the past so they had a history of working together. (Oct 16, 2008)

GT draws attention to the length of time over which some social relationships within the workplace have been fostered. While keeping in line with the ideology of male bonds in the workplace, it is important to also point out that if a workplace has historically been male-dominated both the employer and the employees may have no previous experience working with women.

While talking about employment being male-oriented, PW points out that for many women working with men is not something new or uncommon: “It was good, I think the thing, I had no problem working with men, I’ve always worked with men, that wasn’t an issue, it was a little different for a lot of those men to work with women” (July 3, 2009). This idea of men being unaccustomed to working with women was further enhanced by a description given by GT:

I was trying to think about some of the reactions of men. They were not used to having women out working in the bush at all, there would be the odd time when they would see this machine working in the bush they would just assume that it was my boss, that it would be him, so they would come up to the skidder, I would stop and open the door and it was almost like a force would hit them. They would stagger back when they realized it was a woman sitting in the cab and I would just kill myself laughing over the reactions [laughs]. They say, ‘well, what are you doing here?’ [laughs] then they’d get over it. (Oct 16, 2008)

GT emphasizes the idea that male workers in the forest industries do not expect to have women working out there with them and can experience shock when it happens. While employers may not be willing to change the status quo in the forest industry by taking chances and hiring women, this also contributes to the lack of women working in the same
industries, meaning there were no women role models or mentors for women new to the workplaces.

Women starting out in the forest industry may have felt that they had stepped into a completely male workplace because of the scarcity of role models or mentors. GT states that while feminism maintained that women could work in any field that was not always the reality, "They were saying that in the seventies, but you didn't see any women in the mechanics shop, you didn't see any women driving trucks, you didn't see women in these non-conventional jobs. So there weren't any mentors, no role models for you to follow, and you really felt like you were breaking trail" (Oct 16, 2008). Due to many employers' unwillingness to hire women and a serious lack of women in forest industries, there must be something appealing in order to entice any women to join this workforce.

Reasons related to why these women wanted to work in the forest industry include having an appreciation for the forest. Several of the participants included a well-used saying out in the bush that "people spend thousands of dollars every year to experience this view and wilderness and forest workers play in it every day":

I know people spend thousands and thousands of dollars to come here and to this area just to have a short holiday and I live here. And I see wildlife all the time and have fabulous views and sometimes I have to stop and sit and really appreciate what I've got rather than thinking about what I don't have or what I miss from my previous life from when I lived in the city. (GT, Oct 16, 2008)

This shows a real respect for the land that GT both works and lives in. For JO this was not just a saying but the reality of her workdays and also the reason why she keeps working in the forest industry:

I get to look at the most beautiful scenery, like it's unreal. Up on top a mountain, I mean, yes we're cutting it but right now it's all dead anyways so that kind of, it's got
to go, it’s either that or it’s going to burn and that’s what we primarily log right now is bug kill. I don’t know, you’re just out and away and every once in a while you get this moment and it’s just like one of those beautiful moments and you’re like, oh, that’s why I do this. (July 10, 2009)

The appreciation and respect these workers have for the forest seems to be cultivated through living in an area that is so dominated by both the forests and forest industries. The three main ideas the women presented about the area were with regards to the physical aspects of the working environment: working positions and opportunities available to them due to living in the area; whether they would have access to their positions in the industry without having lived in the northern part of British Columbia; and the opportunity for adventure and exploration.

When discussing the working positions and opportunities available to them due to living in the area, these interviewees mention the family connections that helped them secure their employment. Local women with family connections may be seen differently within the industry, or have more of an ‘in’ and credibility than a woman from a large city with a different or no relationship to the forests. “Insider” women are somewhat familiar with the industry already: the long hours, the types of work being done and the occupational language. Women, or men for that matter, who come from somewhere else or through a trades program, may not necessarily have the same advantage towards gaining employment in the forest industry as a familial connection affords. The following quote states that anyone, regardless of gender, needs a family connection to get employed in forest industries, at least certain ones. Mills, for example, have been harder to get into without family connections unless the industry is booming.

It was family members were hired. So, somebody that you were related to had to work in the mill, although that wasn’t actually put on the resumes, it wasn’t
acknowledged as an actual rule, but the mill did follow that outline and my father works there, my uncle works there, two of my aunts have worked there over the years and that’s how I got into the mill. (CG, June 24, 2009)

CG points out how unspoken, unwritten policies had a significant role in the hiring practices at the mill where she worked. Several women, though they did not have a family connection in terms of nepotism had similar opportunity to enter forest employment through connection to the family’s social circle: “Well our neighbour was a trucking supervisor and he said he was going to have some openings for summer employment as guys taking off on holidays and whatnot, he just needed somebody to fill in for temporary, so he suggested that I get my class 1” (GT, Oct 16, 2008). These different affiliations to the forest industry helped lead to employment opportunities. There were also different ways in which the women were introduced to the industry by their families:

No, it wasn’t a big deal, I was raised here and I was always involved. My father, my family were always involved with the lumber industry as such so no, I mean as a kid I saw women that drove truck out of here so it wasn’t something unusual for me to do. Yeah, it was pretty common ground, there was always women in the industry when I was a kid. (PW, July 3, 2009)

Even though to people outside the forest industry community it seemed as though there were no women in different positions within the forest industry, growing up in the area PW saw women working in the various sectors. Seeing the forest industry as a place where women worked at an early age could cultivate an understanding that this type of work was open to women, that women also were employed in these kinds of jobs.

The participants gave verbal clues referencing how living in the area affects the ability for women to be involved in these positions and whether or not they would have been able to gain access to work in the positions. There was mention of programs that some were able to access that may have only been offered in certain areas of either BC or even possibly
Canada because for a program to be offered as training for future employment, there has to be a demand for workers with those skills.

I started, what I had gone to do was go and get funding to take a firefighting course and I was on assistance at the time and they wouldn't give the assistance to me right away to take the course because of all the paperwork involved but they were putting on a forestry crew persons course. It was sponsored by the Women's Resource Centre and I ended up being on this work experience forestry crew person course. And basically we were doing tree spacing with power saws for about six months, then they had us do some tree planting. I did that for about two weeks. I did a fire suppression course through there and have been working in the bush ever since. (EW, Sept 21, 2008)

References to these types of programs imply there are circumstances unique to the area that facilitated women's relationships with the forest industries. AM stated that she would not be involved in the forest industry had she not lived here: “Oh, if I was still living back there, if I hadn't moved out here forty years ago, I don't think I would have been involved in... I might have been involved in Human Resources, the same type of position, but I never would have been involved in sawmills and such” (AM, Oct 2, 2008). Similar sentiments are echoed in statements such as, “It was the available job at the time and I liked being outdoors. There were other jobs too but I preferred tree planting to cooking in a camp or something like that, much preferred” (DB, July, 1 2009). One could posit that if DB lived in an area where these types of employment were not available, she may not have considered any of those types of employment.

This sense of the area itself influencing these women's involvement with the forest industries is closely linked to statements and suggestions with regards to the forest industry's occupational lifestyle and language. For some of the participants the ability to explore in the bush or to have an adventure was important: “I guess I just kind of loved being out there and I loved it. I had a boss one time who said if you see a new road, he said, 'you go find out
where it goes.’ Well, that’s just right up my alley. I loved that, I still, I take the grandkids and I go for a drive and things” (SP, July 3, 2009). The women showed appreciation for and enjoyment of being out in the bush, “And it’s, like I used to work like a mad person to get enough time to take off so I could go stomp around in the bush. And now I get to do that every single day. So, before I was just bitchy and miserable and now it’s so much better” (NA, June 18, 2009). The ideas the women had with regards to the working environment could also be directly related to women’s declarations of being “an outdoors person,” which is discussed in greater detail in the section on femininity.

Coupled with their appreciation and respect for the forest, another aspect of the forest industry all the participants found appealing was the rate of pay that they were offered. One prevailing myth that originally drew large numbers of workers into NBC forest industry was that they could get rich quickly and then get out. Participants cited the pay rate as an influencing factor for them to become involved in the forest industry. An occupational component of the forest industry was a high pay grade because the work was hard and dangerous. Work typically performed by women has lower pay rates even when women are performing the same work as men in the workforce. The tendency is for women to be paid less. The majority of the women interviewed, however, made no mention of being paid any differently than the men they were working with. But for AM, one of the women interviewed who had also worked within the office setting at mills, there was definitely mention of being paid differently than men working in the same position. “That’s the other thing, in the Human Resources, I had a Human Resources degree, and I would probably make somewhere in the vicinity of between 65 and 75 thousand dollars a year and I know of men that, that stepped into the same position that I was in and started, started at 85 to 90”
(Sept 22, 2008). AM even went so far as to ask a supervisor to explain the reasoning behind the pay difference. “And I would sit there and look at the plant manager and I would say how can you do this? He’d say, well what do you mean? Here I am sitting here with the same degree and you’re paying me 20 thousand less a year than you’re paying him” (Sept 22, 2008). AM did not give any indication that she ever received a satisfactory answer to her question or that she ever did receive equal pay.

For GT the opportunity to make the wage being offered was one that she would not refuse: “The wage that my boss was offering me was three times, easily three times what I was able to get with my degree. And I thought, okay, I can swallow my degree for now [laughs]. I’m going to work and try and see if I could make some income” (Oct 16, 2008).

PW had plans for the money she would earn and looked for work that would provide a wage to fulfill those plans. “I wanted to travel so I wanted a job that made good money, so I applied and there was just a few women at that time starting in that industry and nobody wanted to do the labour jobs, the cleanup jobs, so that’s how I got on” (July 3, 2009).

Even though many working people consider high-paying jobs to be good employment, SP contradicts this by talking about her most unpleasant job also being her best-paid position, “I think scaling was my least nice job, but it was probably the one I made the most money at, and so that was a good reason for me working when you have five kids and things you... money is an issue too I would think. But it was just because of the winter conditions and it’s just a tougher job” (July 3, 2009). This exemplifies the idea surrounding the historic justification for men’s jobs being higher paid. Jobs that aren’t ‘nice’, that are harder and pay more, are jobs that people don’t want to do for a living. Work traditionally considered women’s work is also considered ‘nice’ because the working conditions are
typically thought of as less demanding physically. For EW the pay itself and outdoors
environment were incentive;

I'd say it was both, the money and being out there. I enjoy the work, instead of
working at the mill and breathing in all those chemicals and crap, be out there and
have all the fresh air that you wanted, along with the bugs and everything else, more
bug dope, that's all. I'd say the money is a big factor because at that time, for me,
being unskilled basically for education, right, a hundred-and-fifty-dollar [a day]¹⁴ job
you couldn't get in town right. The most you'd get would be like a five-dollar-an-
hour job because that was the going rate that they were paying at the time, so for the
ten days in and the four days out it was worthwhile. (Sept 21, 2008)

EW presented the idea that pay for these jobs was related to working conditions and even
proximity to home. For the participants, getting into the industry posed some difficulty
because there were employers not willing to hire people without experience, and there
seemed to be no real role models or mentors to guide them through the processes of getting
into the forest industry. But living in areas where the forest industry is predominant,
cultivating an appreciation for the forests, and having family connections allowed these
women to navigate the male-dominated forest industry and earn a wage from the industry far
above the wages paid to women in most female-dominated sectors.

**Mobility Once In**

In the previous section the participants identified barriers that would help contribute
to the small number of women working in various aspects of the forest industry. Some of the
barriers come from social organization; others from interests and aptitudes, and some from
outside sources. Still, in the process of interviewing the participants mentioned being able to
move into various positions with fluidity or relative ease once in the industry; barriers to
employment thus became more permeable. For EW that fluidity is described best when

¹⁴ Square brackets added to clarify that EW was discussing a job that paid with a day-rate.
talking about being given the opportunity to operate different types of machinery: “When I hopped on the D5 Skid Cat, I always kind of wanted to run one but they always had operators, but they didn’t have an operator. Two co-workers said, hey hop on there and give us a hand, so I did, I didn’t mind that. I had a blast” (Sept 21, 2008). In this circumstance just being present and available provided EW with opportunities to try different types of work and learn additional skills. Though GT describes the opportunity to run different machines out in the bush, there are some mechanical/operational barriers to switching machines. GT, normally a Grapple Skidder operator, says,

I tried Cat operating, but to me all the controls seemed to be backwards and I had a lot of difficulty. With the Skidder you have a steering wheel and a gas pedal, you push it down when you want to go and with a Cat it’s a decelerator, so you push your foot down to slow down and it just seemed backwards. I just couldn’t seem to get my head around it. (Oct 16, 2008)

So even though GT did not prefer the operation of a Cat she had no problems trying out different types of machines. JO also describes transitioning through various positions with an ease that stems from being out in the bush and having the ability and willingness to do whatever was needed to get the job done:

A lot of road building for logging companies, that’s kind of how I went from silviculture and I got into the more, road building aspect of it, so I was staying in the forestry camp and helping build their roads, running equipment or helping the surveyor or whatever and that sort of just transferred over into running grader for logging companies on logging roads and staying in camps and doing all that. (July 10, 2009)

While each of the women worked in more than one type of position, there is also overlap as to the types of work done by the women. One participant worked in a mill in a clean-up position, on slash burning crews with prescribed burning, fire fighting and cleaning up the blocks afterwards, driving machinery, and more. “No, I was bucking, conventional logging, I was bucking in the landing, so I had my power saw and I was the first aid attendant” (EW,
Another woman worked for several different mills and lumber businesses; she held various office and administrative positions such as timekeeper, production person, production records clerk, office manager (which included looking after rental houses and the bunkhouses,) and selling lumber directly to clients.

More than one interviewee held a Class One licence, but GT started out driving a logging truck after getting her Class One licence and then moved into running different types of machinery, which included trying the operation of a Skid Cat; but she stayed on as a grapple skidder operator. NA suggests that it was relatively easy for her to get started in the forest industry due to an upswing in the market, “They were just hiring like crazy so they wanted anybody with experience and, and when you first get hired at a mill you’re on clean-up anyways and I’m sure you’ve noticed after talking to other women and so you’re just put on clean-up and if you want a better job you decide if you want to get your first aid ticket or a grading ticket” (NA, June 18, 2009).

CG was also put in a clean-up position when she first started in the mill. CG talks about how some of the work from the previous shift was not being completed and how she would do that work as well as her own.

Which includes two and a half hours up on a dryer, which is extremely hot work and is only expected to be done for one person for two and a half hours and they weren’t doing the second dryer on the other side which meant that I was doing four and a half to five hours up on these hot dryers vacuuming the vents, and that’s a lot of work for anybody [laughs] and I’m a physically fit woman, whatever, person, yes. (CG, June 24, 2009)

DB worked doing a variety of tasks including cone picking and tree planting and even block layout: “Yes, well I didn’t do timber cruising but I guess we did laying out a block for planting an area. You’d go out and go around the block and put it down and stuff, something
like that, definitely outdoors” (DB, July 1, 2009). PW was put in a clean-up position in the mill as well as other positions including running the packaging plant and describes working at the planer mill:

The planer mill I worked in had no heat, it would get to be thirty-five, forty below, you still had to go to work; you had to try and keep the machinery going and when it got to thirty below then the frost would start coming out of the cement, it was a cement floor. We worked at the end in the packaging plant. Our toilet, the women’s toilet was always frozen and in those days they didn’t have microwaves or very nice lunchrooms... it was pretty basic. (July 3, 2009)

SP lived and cooked in a logging camp before she started tree planting but very quickly moved into other areas, including supervisory positions, and doing her own contract work:

“And that would be a variety of any types of jobs, from hiring our own tree planters to doing manual weed whacking to doing silvicultural surveys to doing log scaling, like it was just a contract that we did for years” (SP, July 3, 2009). For JO working in the forest industry started at a young age, which she did:

Off and on for about a year, and then I took a bit of a break and went down to the island and I did some silviculture work down there, it’s more, not like the tree planting aspect, it was like pruning, which is sawing branches off in a planted forest, up to certain heights so they can grow better and then like girdling and all that stuff, to get rid of alder in all the good stands so it doesn’t have quite as much weight and then after that I came back up here and got into running equipment on forestry roads and working in camps and all of that and then I got into the actual processing side of it. (JO, July 10, 2009)

Though all of the women worked in more than one forest industry position, some of those positions had two common attributes: that the work was often routine once learned, and that in order to remain working in the forest industries, the employees needed to be able to prove they could handle the work.
Routine of Work/Proving Oneself

With regards to the different types of work these women were involved in there was mention about how the work was very routine. As previously discussed in Chapter Two it has often been typical for women’s work to be repetitive and menial, which was part of the argument put forward for the attached low wages. Work reserved for men was supposed to stimulate and challenge the brain; considering these are the types of arguments made to justify female exclusion from male work, it was interesting to hear the dangerous, hard, think-on-your-toes jobs in the forest industry being described as routine. EW talks about how there can be routine regardless of where a person works, “You get in a routine and you get up, you have your breakfast, you go to work, come back in, have your supper, your shower, relax, go to bed. Then you get up and do it all over again” (Sept 21, 2008). This routine could be describing any field of employment whether referring to male-dominated or female-dominated types.

For PW the routine of the work was similar to the repetitive nature of factory work: “It’s a... it’s like a factory. It’s a line of work and the lumber comes in and the lumber goes out and your board feet and you’re trying to make more board feet everyday and they’re pushing to get that lumber out and you’re part of that assembly line and you need to do your work” (July 3, 2009). GT concurs that working in various forest industry positions can seem very much like factory work in the way that it can become very repetitive in nature: “That’s one huge drawback of the job, is that okay, you get into a routine and then it becomes almost, oh god I’ve got to do this again for the millionth time. But you just have to get into a mindset, like almost put your mind on hold, and automatically go through everything” (Oct
Regardless of being in a mill or in the bush the routine of work could become very tiring.

All of the women interviewed had something to say with regards to being able to prove that they could do the work. First, the participants discussed being able to prove that they could do the job. But even before they could prove their ability to handle the work, they had to meet their co-workers. JO mentions that it can be difficult to guess how the crew is going to handle a woman's being "out there":

But running grader and running processor there was not that... not... it was like a fleeting thought but it still was more showing up on the first day at the card lock with all the guys or showing up on the site for my very first day and training on the machines. And the first actual until you get your machine all figured out... it is... it's like what are people going to think of this... what are my... what is my crew going to think, not so much my parents because they're a logging family and they don't care, but... (July 10, 2009)

GT elaborates on this idea, "Before then I could feel that I was being stared at all the time. They were watching every move that I was making just to see how I was handling things" (Oct 16, 2008). EW points out,

There's always that initial awkwardness the first couple of days until they kind of get the drift that you can do the job, but there's always that little tentativeness at the beginning, where you think okay, what have I gotten myself into. But, usually you'll always have that little bit of resistance. (Sept 21, 2008)

EW describes how co-workers are watching her until they decide that she can handle the work. Writing of men, Nancy Quam-Wickham states that, "Out of the social recognition of skill emerged a group identity defined by shared experiences, common values, and the solidarity brought about as men labored in distinctive industries" (139). Attached to the idea of proving oneself in the workplace is the understanding that once one has been able to prove that one can handle the work one will be accepted by one's co-workers as part of the team.
Women, however, may prove their ability to handle the workload but find that some of their co-workers may never fully accept them as part of the team. GT illustrates, “But with women, there’s that little bit of extra edge, you’re a girl, you still have to get over that as well as proving your competency so I think there’s still a bit of that there now” (Oct 16, 2008). For CG, not only did she feel that she was not accepted but those feelings were enough for her to refuse future employment due to the possible repercussions from her co-workers:

Yes, I proved myself and it took a lot of emotional and physical work to do though because it was more enjoyable to do the hard physical work than it was to listen to anything the guys had to say by that point. I didn’t feel welcomed, I didn’t feel that the guys, I was very concerned that if I’d said yes and stayed I would have got a backlash from the men that I was working with. With them going, ‘what gives you the right to stay here and work here, you’re a summer student, go back to school where you belong! (June 24, 2009)

JO talks about how the working environment is difficult at first because of that ‘extra edge’ and how something a woman does in the workplace is not necessarily going to be treated in the same manner as when a man does a similar or the same thing:

And so you kind of get into that competitive thing, trying to prove yourself all the time and then after a while you kind of morph into the, knowing that you can do it and not pushing yourself so hard but you always know that people are looking at you, waiting for you to fuck up, for one [laughs], always waiting for you to fuck up. And even if it’s a screw up that is like something that someone else does, because you’re doing it, it’s like a gender thing. If you screw up and you have tits it’s a really big screw up as opposed to some doorknob that’s smoking a joint and smashes up a piece of machinery, that’s almost not as bad as you doing something minor. But because you’re a woman it’s a little more, ‘oh there, told you, see, she’s done it now’. (July 10, 2009)

For those co-workers looking for reasons to justify why women should not be doing forest industry work, an accident allowed the perfect opportunity to provide ‘proof’ women cannot handle the job, even if male co-workers had more serious incidents. AM talks about fitting in and being accepted in relation of having to earn the respect of the co-workers as opposed
to being respected just for being present. AM gives the example of: “And that’s where these women fall flat, they tend to neglect, and not only women do this, men do as well, they tend to neglect the fact that you have to earn the respect of your crew before they will respect you and you don’t go in and just start, I call it waving your arms and that kind of thing” (Sept 22, 2008). The women AM refers to thought they would automatically be respected because they were in a position of authority, but that was not the case. Being able to prove that they could handle the workload of various positions in the forest industry and being accepted by their co-workers led the women to have a certain degree of pride in their own abilities.

According to Quam-Wickham, writing of Western American extractive industries, “Skill was the critical element in this process through which workers asserted their masculinity” (136). While femininity has generally not been defined in terms of skills developed by forest industry workers, masculinity has. Though some women are particularly proud they have mastered ‘masculine’ skills, others neither consider these skills as masculine nor could they understand any reason why women could not work in these positions. Through the different interviews, participants often gave the impression of pride in the different capabilities of various women within the industries and also pride in their own physical and emotional strength, the ability to handle whatever they’re thrown into and not take any ‘crap’.

What these women said about their own abilities included being able to do the job just as well as, if not better than, any of the men they work with:

A lot of the guys were kind of looking at you like if you didn’t pull your weight, you’d know about it. Basically they’d call you a whuss or whatever, or they’d tell you to go home. If you were willing to work as hard as they were to do the job then a
EW points out that male co-workers could be quite welcoming to any worker that was willing to get the job done. AM was particularly proud of her ability to run all types of equipment, especially considering it was not always a requirement of the positions she was working in and because many of the skills she picked up were the result of workers’ wanting to teach her as a thank you for helping them out and as a way to show that she was accepted and appreciated by her co-workers.

Okay, it’s a big machine that goes in and takes the whole load of logs off the truck, kay. So I have a ticket to run, to operate one of those machines. I can run a 966, I can drive truck ‘cause I have a class 1 licence. And I can run the skidder but I can also be cut-off saw operator, barkers operator, quad-saw operator, beaver operator, canter operator, trimmer operator. (AM, Oct 2, 2008)

Many interviewees mentioned the different skills that they developed in forest industries.

When it came to discussions around the capabilities of other women in the forest industry, participants mentioned how they believed the majority of the women “out there” could do the job just as well as the men,

So anytime we would go to the auctions I would start looking for cracks, like, okay, this machine isn’t really all that bad or this machine has been really used, abused a lot in the bush. You can see the different wear and tear, you get different eyes looking at machinery and seeing, being able to see flaws and things, being able to gauge how well they were maintained, how well they’ve been looked after, what kind of an operator had them before. (GT, Oct 16, 2008)

One of the capabilities developed by machine operators was learning to see the state of repair or disrepair of those machines. This ability to see flaws or potential hazards or where the machine will need a repair next comes from knowing and understanding how the machine works and also where the normal stresses or faults in a machine can be found. Many of the participants believe that women are better at certain types of work in the forest industry than
the men are and there also seems to be a common belief that women are more gentle on the equipment they run than men because the equipment needs less repairs: “We liked having a new truck to drive every spring and I think the women were more careful with it than the men, but we’d like to have a new truck to drive and we would be, yeah really careful with it, the women that I worked with” (SP, July 3, 2009). Women were careful with the equipment they were entrusted to use. Once they proved their abilities to properly handle the equipment there was an expectation to be left alone to get the work done.

When the women mention not tolerating or taking any “crap” from co-workers or even, to a certain extent, the employer, this stems from the idea that they were physically able to do the job so they should not have to put up with comments about not being able to handle any aspect of their positions. Part of this pride comes from being physically able to master so-called ‘masculine’ skills. For CG the physical component of the work was enjoyable, “I enjoyed the physical aspect of it. I liked the fact that I was getting an awesome workout, I was moving around lots, whether I was sweeping or hosing the floors. The job was very invigorating physically” (June 24, 2009). PW enjoyed her new physical ability: “I can go back on that question, did my work have an effect on me, I was strong. I was in really good shape and I was really strong, so that I guess it did have an effect on me, in that sense, yes” (July 3, 2009). SP believed that even though not all women are as strong as all men there was no physical requirement for men to be doing the job instead of women, “Yes, I don’t know, any of the jobs I did I think could be done by men or women, I don’t see why they couldn’t be done be men or women, maybe physically we weren’t as strong but we could pack one box of trees, like we could” (July 3, 2009).
As EW points out, part of the job was to be able to pull your own weight verbally as well. "There will always be guys that are like what the hell are you doing here, you should be in a kitchen or at home if you can’t hack it or whatever, so you give it right back to them, I can handle the job as well as you can, maybe better [laughs]" (Sept 21, 2008). The ability to verbally spar with male co-workers can be viewed as symbolic of the emotional strength that was also needed in the workplace. The women pointed to their ability to not put up with any ‘crap’ by letting me know about instances in which the men were creating a difficult environment and they would not allow themselves to be walked on emotionally: “If [women]15 were in any way trying to keep the peace all the time I think that they would be emotionally trampled in a work environment like that” (CG, June 24, 2009). Another component of not putting up with any ‘crap’ is the idea that once a worker has proven she can handle the job then she is basically left alone, not watched by co-workers or the boss, JO explains, “I don’t really have to answer to anybody as long as my... if I do my job properly I get left alone” (July 10, 2009). Being left alone to do the job once they have proven their ability is an expectation also held by male co-workers. While it is common that developing new skills and proving one’s own work ethic created a great degree of pride, a certain amount of pride is also fostered by an ability to maintain the performance of certain feminine roles. An interesting component that repeatedly came up during the course of the interviews was cleanliness in regards to co-workers and the working environment.

Cleanliness and Domesticity

Cleanliness is associated with femininity as a performance both concerning appearance and in terms of the types of activities that are socially acceptable for females to

15 Square brackets added to clarify CG was speaking about women.
participate in. There are certain activities and appearances that any women must perform in order to be deemed ‘properly feminine’. Women are supposed to be physically clean in appearance and manner of dress, and in terms of activities, to participate in keeping their environment, whether that is the home or workplace, clean and themselves clean whilst doing this work. Male-dominated workplaces, especially in any resource extractive industries, have historically been dirty workplaces. Construction, oil and gas, mining and forest-industries work are a few examples where both the work and the workers are unclean. When women work in any of these industries, because the nature of the work is dirty, their performance of femininity with regards to maintaining a properly feminine appearance is not a practical option. Regardless of which gender is doing whatever work, most people will dress in a manner appropriate for the work being performed.

In terms of appearance, GT wonders if dressing appropriately for the type of work she needs to do has any effect on her sense of femininity,

Or do I become less feminine, I become less feminine as far as dress is concerned, you just have to dress practically for the situation, if you’re going to be greasy all day I’m not going to wear something fancy out there. So as far as my appearance, from a distance I probably do look like a man. Simply because of all the gear you have to wear to try and keep warm or to protect you from whatever you are doing. (Oct 16, 2008)

GT accepts that she may appear to be less feminine in certain situations but that does not seem to have any lasting effect on her personal sense of femininity. EW does not believe that dressing in certain ways should have any lasting effect, “Oh, when I’m covered with mud and I’m tired [laughs], I don’t know, it’s part of the job right. I don’t know if it really makes you feel unfeminine, I never really thought about it that way. It’s just another day at work, if you get covered with dirt, you get covered with dirt, I mean” (Sept 21, 2008). Still,
cleanliness can be a means of defining socially acceptable female activities. Not only is a female supposed to be clean in appearance but also in her daily activities.

One social definition of feminine activities revolves around the notion that women are in charge of maintaining clean households and many of the socially accepted forms of employment for women had to do with cleaning in the workplaces whether as cleaning ladies or maintaining clean workplaces. Cleanliness is definitely a part of some of the participants’ definitions of femininity based on how frequently they refer to men’s being dirty, especially in regards to the washrooms, and the way men show up to work. They revealed awareness that the male workplace was, even historically, a dirty environment and typical female workplaces are clean and involved in cleaning. From the references provided by these women, consciously or not, they associate cleanliness with femininity and dirtiness with masculinity. GT talks about how her employers believed that having a woman in the workplace affected the cleanliness of male employees,

I wouldn’t say so but I know my supervisor, the trucking supervisor and my boss when skidding said so, they noticed it with the men, like all of the sudden the swearing is reduced. The guys show up a little bit cleaner and neater they’re not quite as gross and coarse. I thought they were gross and coarse [laughs] but according to them they were much less so [laughs]. (Oct 16, 2008)

According to GT, women were not the only ones in her workplace who associate cleanliness with the presence of a woman. In fact, it seems that employers may consider this a positive influence that women could have in the workplace, that having a woman present not only made the men clean up their appearance but also speak in a “cleaner” manner.

The participants made several references to the language being used in the workplace and how that type of language would not be considered appropriate outside of the worksite. NA illustrates, “If I was in a different environment and I heard someone speaking like that, I
would probably take greater offence because there’s a time and place for that kind of language and in the mill I guess it’s okay” (June 18, 2009). With the discussion of swearing in the workplace it became clear that the participants also view foul language as part of masculine pursuits. GT noted that “Perhaps you might swear a bit more, occasionally it will come out at inappropriate times [laughs]” (Oct 16, 2008). AM maintained a no swearing regime for herself and even tried to dissuade other women from swearing in the workplace. “Yes their language became very harsh, and I know I used to take a lot of the girls to task about it [laughs]” (AM, Oct 2, 2008). However, other participants found themselves adopting the relaxed attitude towards cursing in the workplace and even participated in it due to a natural tendency to match language and because it was part of the vernacular of the occupational group. As JO points out, “I swore like a trucker, I’m still pretty bad but at least it’s not every third word, and I didn’t wear makeup. Even now I have a hard time being in groups of women because I don’t know how to talk to them because I’ve been with men all the time” (July 10, 2009). While participating in the same manner of speech as the occupational group shows a certain degree of belonging to that group, it could cause problems associating with other groups and society at large especially considering that swearing is not something expected from a ‘properly feminine’ woman.

In order for a woman to be deemed feminine by Western society at large, there are certain roles she must perform. These roles include activities women usually perform in the domicile, such as keeping it clean, and performing nurturing tasks such as feeding the family and taking care of children. Types of employment that are referred to as typical female jobs include many positions where cleanliness was a priority, such as nursing, restaurant work and child care. According to Cathy Converse, “Women working in the paid labour force, for
the first half of the century, tended to hold jobs that were unskilled and low paying. They were domestic servants, teachers, nurses, stenographers, garment makers, telephone operators, waitresses, fish-plant workers, candy makers, cooks and shop assistants” (35). I will note that while Converse lists all of these types of employment as unskilled, I would consider several to be skilled labour. It is possible historically these types of work were all considered unskilled because they were female-dominated. Regardless of that fact, however, this study’s participants were made aware by family members that there were certain types of employment deemed appropriate for women to pursue.

Definition of femininity, I know my mother would prefer if I was a teacher, if I was a nurse, if I was all these traditional, kind-of female things. But I don’t think I’d ever gone that route, like I’m more likely to think if this particular thing interests me then I’m going to go for it regardless of what society happens to think about it. So I think that’s really freed me into doing different things, like coming out North, like trying out truck driving, like trying out machinery operating, those are things that I was not brought up to think that I could do or would be doing. Yeah, I guess I’ve always thought of myself as more of a, as more of a neutral figure rather than as masculine or feminine. (GT, Oct 16, 2008)

Growing up CG was made very aware of what types of employment her parents believed were appropriate for females and males,

Yes, office jobs, women were meant to do office jobs, were meant to take blood... nurses. And men weren’t supposed to be nurses even though there are a lot of them out there as nurses now very successfully and yeah, the mills were for the men. My dad was devastated when my brother didn’t take the opportunity to go into the mill in his late teens to early twenties and was shocked when I did do it, so the attitude of a mill worker, which is what my father is, and that’s what you see in the mills is that that’s where their boys are supposed to go. (CG, June 24, 2009)

Domesticity can also be linked to femininity through the female role within the home. Related to both the idea of femininity adornment and the role in the home is the idea that women are the ones that decorate and maintain the home. For JO,
Not having a home was by choice but it also left me ungrounded. I had no base to call my own, no walls to paint, no house to decorate. These two things combined really started to drive a wedge between me and other women. I could not relate to them and they could not relate to me. When in social gatherings it was like I was an alien – the women would not know what to do with me and I didn’t even know how to speak their language. I didn’t even understand their humour. (July 10, 2009)

Not being able to participate in certain female-oriented activities, such as maintaining a household, left JO feeling disconnected from other women and possibly even from her own female sensibilities.

The women talked about how they felt pressures to conform to proper femininity and domesticity in relation to the female role in sustaining the home and raising children. In the group of participants four of the women were unmarried while five were married and only three of the nine participants had children. Pressures came not only from the social expectations interviewees were well versed in but also from their parents’ views on what their roles in the families and with children should include. The participants’ discussions about working in the forest industries suggest that there is a conflict between parenting and working the long hours away from home that this type of employment requires. Their views on having or not having children contributed to how they explained their own femininity and their ability to perform the domestic role,

My lifestyle that I was living and the work I was doing, just no, not for me. I see a lot of guys that they kick themselves in the butt that they weren’t around while their kids were growing up ‘cause they were always in the bush working. And just, I never really had any desire to have any kids. I got lots of friends that have kids and I can hand the babies back and that’s even better [laughs]. (EW, Sept 21, 2008)

The employees spend the majority of their time out in the bush even when they are not doing camp work; therefore they are unable to spend a lot of time with their families. Proper performance of femininity in Western culture includes assuming the role of mother; there are circumstances within forest industry employment that make it seem natural for women to
exclude themselves from entering these workplaces. Circumstances such as the long hours worked daily, the danger in the workplace, and for camp jobs, the long periods of time away from home could all dissuade women from entering forest industry employment.

However, if she has any plans of raising a family, then it is not a friendly career choice. There are very long hours, often in remote areas, long commutes and an unforgiving work schedule that makes it extremely difficult or impossible to be a mom and work in the bush at the same time. That is where I think a lot of women who have an interest in logging become bookkeepers, which means they can work their family life around their job, usually in partnership with their spouse. (GT, Oct 16, 2008).

GT explains the difficulties of being an active parent and working in the forest, but she also points out that there are types of forest industry work that women would still be able to participate in. Though the main focus is on femininity it is impossible to talk about femininity and female roles without also talking about masculinity and male roles.

Masculine identity formation is partially tied to types of employment that require men to be away from their homes for long periods of time in many cases and CG talked directly about this,

Yes, a conventional type of masculinity, I was talking about men first, which is ironic because I automatically, in my mind put them first for some reason there. But, I feel that the scripted version of man is the ‘breadwinner’ still, they’re still expected to do the hard labour, bring in more money and be expected to put out all those hours away from home. Where women are still expected to do supplementary work to the income of a household and are mainly involved in taking care of the household, inside. (June 24, 2009)

Thus men miss a lot of the child rearing due to working obligations, and women get to stay home, or closer to home, and participate more in the child rearing; femininity is tied to types of employment that facilitate this and also uphold social ideas about roles of femininity and masculinity. When forest-industry workers are working in camp jobs they spend even less time with their families. While JO was growing up it seemed to her that her father was only
a part-time parent: “Like my Dad was a logger and Mom and Dad might as well have been
divorced, I had a weekend Dad because he was in camp for years. I’d see this guy who’d
come home on weekends and try and be a Dad, it’s like, ‘who are you man?’” (July 10,
2009). Camp life by its very nature provides a semi-home away from home where workers
spend the majority of their time. When women are working positions with the industries
where they get to stay in a camp, they can experience an escape from the standard domestic
role.

Being a woman living and working out of a forestry camp provides a unique
opportunity to experience a different type of domestic living. Living away from home
certainly had daunting aspects but there were also unexpected perks. For study participants,

No, you’re away from, you’re away from your family, you’re away from your own
routine, although the food was always superb, like when, oh man, the cooks just
always went out of their way, it was just fabulous cooking, and that was the part
where I really felt spoiled, you’d come in and it’s just a wonderful meal for at the end
of the day and it was ready and piping hot. And if you had any requests the cooks
would usually try and accommodate you too. But some of the guys were picky, man
they would [laughs], they would complain about the food and I don’t know, I really
don’t know what they had to complain about. Yeah, the food was probably about the
best part of it, but the bunkhouses themselves, they were clean, they were adequate,
but pretty basic fair and they would have separate women’s quarters and men’s
quarters. (GT, Oct 16, 2008)

GT shows a real appreciation for the food service she experienced in camps. While staying
in camps for work, women can escape performing their ‘normal’ domestic duties. One could
speculate that GT’s enjoyment comes from being able to appreciate the time and effort
exerted in the preparation of the food whereas a male may not have ever performed those
duties at home and have no prior knowledge of the work required. DB also liked being able
to escape performing domestic duties while she was staying in a logging camp: “It was great
[laughs]. That’s all you had to do, you didn’t have to cook [laughing]. I could never figure
out why men would come and complain because they didn’t have to do anything, I mean, I thought it was great. You know, your meals, they even fixed your bed” (July 1, 2009). The ability to only perform one’s employment work and have no other duties or work to complete once ‘home’ from work would extinguish the ‘double day’ that the majority of women experience as part of their performance of ‘proper’ femininity.

In terms of cleanliness and domesticity, the information provided by the participants points out that working in the forest industry has facilitated a degree of freedom from the roles and behaviours expected of a feminine woman as defined by Western society. With regards to other women’s abilities in the industry, participants also noticed male attitudes that implied women should not be in those workplaces. In some circumstances, participants even seemed to subscribe to those same ideas that may perpetuate tokenism of women in the forest industry. So while these women are proud of their own abilities to do the job, they also think that the industry is not female-friendly or that the majority of women would not be able to do these jobs.

Tokenism

Tokenism in this thesis is being used in reference to both hiring one woman in a male-dominated working environment as a way to show that there are no discriminatory hiring practices and to attitudes present in the workplace. Tokenism can also indicate a belief that aside from the occasional exceptional female, women in general do not have the ability to perform work in these workplaces. In respect to elements of tokenism that exist in the forest industry, the women discussed attitudes of some male co-workers, ideas held by the interviewees about other women in the workplaces that seem to contribute to ideas of
tokenism, and actual circumstances that lend themselves to ideas of tokenism of women in the forest industry.

While only one woman actually mentions the word “token” in the interviews, all of the participants allude to attitudes that come from some male co-workers with regards to women being “out there”, which expressed ideas about tokenism. These attitudes include certain male co-workers\(^\text{16}\) who believed women should not be filling positions in the bush. AM points out that supervisors will often say they have no problems with women working in any positions, but that might not be the reality of the situation: “But, even right today, like right today our plant managers and that like to say that their opinions have changed, they’re only saying that for somebody else’s benefit, as far as I’m concerned” (Oct 2, 2008). AM also talks about how there was some willingness by some men to accept women working in the forest industry only if working in certain positions was also included as attributing to ideas of tokenism, “Most of the plant managers are in an age bracket where they prefer the guys doing these jobs. There’s very few upper plant managers that are willing or will accept ladies to do sawmill supervisor or plant supervisor, or anything like that” (Oct 2, 2008).

With regards to female tokenism in the forest industry, participants also pointed out that there were men that had no problems with women in any of the positions in the forest industry: “So, then I knew that I was, then I knew that I was accepted, as long as you’re keeping up to the same work level as the guys then it’s not a problem” (GT, Oct 16, 2008). This statement also ties back to the importance of proving capabilities in the forest industry.

\(^\text{16}\) I would like to stress that neither the participants nor I believe or want to suggest that all males, or even the majority, in a male-dominated workplace would entertain these types of beliefs about female workers.
Some of the participants presented information in their interviews that suggested that they may also share some attitudes about women in the workplace that contribute to tokenism, such as beliefs that most women would not be able to do this work: “I, cause a few girls were like, ‘well you can do that, if you can do it I could do it,’ and I’m like, ‘I know your personality so, no honey, no.’ I think it would have to be a very rare person that I would meet that I would recommend it to” (JO, July 10, 2009). JO clearly believes that these types of employment can only be performed by certain exceptional women, but with the last sentence implies that there are also men who would not be able to handle it. Many of the participants pointed out that there seemed to be an underlying belief that certain positions were easily done by women but other positions were not female-friendly. Several of the participants adhered to those beliefs as well: “In some cases I’ve been on jobs, like firefighting and that, where the work was too strenuous for the odd girl, but other than that most of them were just as gung-ho as the guys if not more” (EW, Sept 21, 2008).

These actual circumstances of the job requirements in the forest industry may help to foster ideas of tokenism including that there are not a lot of women out there in comparison to the number of men in the industry. “You know I take that back, it was unconventional but that was the early seventies and there weren’t that many women working in that industry. But they were starting, of course that I knew of, there’d been women working in that industry for many, many years” (PW, July 3, 2009). The idea that there is not much opportunity for career advancement for women in the various forest industries may also contribute to token numbers of women in the industry regardless of whether or not the lack of advancement is gender-related. “At the mill? There was nowhere to go. There’s nowhere to go, you’re just a bunch of cattle and you can’t. I mean the highest-paying job was grading and I did that job
for three years" (NA, June 18, 2009). An additional reason for tokenism in the various forest industries is that there are not many employers willing to hire women for these positions, "It would really, really depend on the male supervisor. If they were open to it then I think it worked, but if they were not open to it there would be absolutely no way that they would consider women working there" (GT, Oct 16, 2008). Some of the reasons tokenism exists within the forest industry stem from the ideals and stereotypes that characterize femininity.

**Femininity**

As outlined in the first chapter, this study seeks to reveal whether female identity and femininity are affected by working in the male-dominated forestry industry. In doing so, the study examines how participants relate to social ideals of femininity and how they negotiate their identity in the workplace. The fluidity of femininity comes from ‘feminine’ qualities and characteristics being defined through a variety of different eras, social settings and cultural backgrounds, which makes any factors considered appropriate or unique to women completely variable. Through the interview process it became clear participants subscribed to at least two differing definitions of femininity that were not necessarily complementary. The first definition seemed to originate along the lines of stereotypical representations of what was deemed to be proper and socially acceptable female behaviours and characteristics of the past, such as the way women are expected to look and the types of employment and activities that were deemed acceptable. The second definition originated when the women tried to explain how, even though they might not fit the first definition they gave, they still believed that their characteristics and behaviours fell within the range of femininity. The participants possessed a thorough understanding of and even believed in some of the
stereotypical ideologies around femininity and masculinity, but contested others; this indicates the complexity of gender.

Several women shared specific moments when they were forced, though not necessarily deliberately or by anyone in particular, into acknowledging their gendered bodies. The commencement of her menstruation cycle was enough to remind JO of her gendered body, "Period. Ah the fun of it all: Not the more glamorous side of being a girl in industry, but one aspect that brings your feminine side crashing to the forefront" (July 10, 2009). CG experienced an incident in which a co-worker was able to emphasize not only her female body but also a primary function of the female social role:

And I came back and was very mad that he’d given me a broken machine and told him so and one of the other guys said, ‘Yeah, what if she was pregnant!’ And I hadn’t even thought about that sort of angle on it, I was just thinking, you gave me a broken machine. So I was very, all of a sudden I was very aware of gosh what if I was pregnant and then I was like, well I’m not pregnant, of course I’m not pregnant, I’m not trying to get pregnant or anything, and it struck me as bizarre in the moment. Obviously they were focused not on my individual safety, but gender-specific safety. (June 24, 2009)

This incident emphasizes the idea that there are certain expectations of the female gendered body, in this particular case the expectation that the female body needs to be protected because of the important role it should fulfill through pregnancy. Sandra Bartky provides an example of how one of the social functions of the female body is that it is, at all times, on display and that the image of the female form does not necessarily belong to the female.

It was a fine spring day, and with an utter lack of self-consciousness, I am bouncing down the street. Suddenly I hear men’s voices. Catcalls and whistles fill the air. These noises are clearly sexual in intent and they are meant for me; they come from across the street. I freeze. ... The body which only a moment before I inhabited with such ease now floods my consciousness. I have been made into an object. While it is true that for these men I am nothing but, let us say, a “nice piece of ass,” there is more involved in this encounter than their mere fragmented perception of me. They could, after all, have enjoyed me in silence. Blissfully unaware, breasts bouncing,
eyes on the birds in the trees, I could have passed by without having been turned to stone. But I must be made to know that I am a “nice piece of ass”: I must be made to see myself as they see me. There is an element of compulsion in this encounter, in this being made-to-be-aware of one’s own flesh; like being made to apologize, it is humiliating. (27)

These types of incidents serve to remind women not only that they must always act in specific ways deemed appropriate by the particular society in which they live but also that to act outside of the prescribed social norms is to invite judgment on their gendered bodies.

In relation to the moments where the women were made very aware of their gendered bodies, interviewees stated that they mostly just felt neutral:

I don’t know, I guess in a way I’ve thought about this over the years and I don’t. When I’m on the skidder I actually think of myself as something that’s neutral, I really don’t think of myself as masculine, I really don’t think of myself as feminine, I just think of myself as someone that doesn’t have, I’m just a worker, I’m an operator, I’m someone who works on this machine. (GT, Oct 16, 2008)

GT’s focus is not that she is a woman doing these activities but that she is doing these activities. NA pointed out that it was not just that the women felt neutral in terms of gender but that the people they worked with mostly were not concentrating on gender either:

I’m not sure how other people would perceive it, right. To me it was just, that was the way it was. It was, I never thought of it as being different and, like I mean I wore a ball hat all the time so, and when I was at work with my hard hat I wore a welding hat because I didn’t want my hair to get tangled up. And that’s just the way it was, like I didn’t, I didn’t try to classify it as anything. (June 18, 2009)

Not only did most of the women feel either neutral or feminine no matter what they were doing but CG also brought up the idea that other people could not affect one’s personal sense of femininity,

For me feminine means that I’m comfortable in my skin, I’m a woman doing what I’m doing right now. And at no point could they make me feel unfeminine. Inferior is how I would place it. I’ve been made felt inferior, which I suppose you could say is stripping me of a piece of my femininity because of, as a female I feel I’m always,
should always feel empowered and they definitely made me feel that I wasn’t
empowered. (June 24, 2009)

Empowered can be defined as having some power or authority in society. Historically power
and authority were not associated with women. CG’s feeling that she should always feel
empowered draws attention to the contradiction between beliefs that because women are
considered equals in society they should always be empowered and the reality that women,
even though legislatively equals, often do not have much power or authority in society. As
previously discussed in Chapter 2, while women have gained power and authority through
the feminist movements social restrictions on what is deemed to be appropriate feminine
appearance have actually increased.

Attached to ideas of the gendered body with regards to femininity, and perhaps the
most easily recognizable component of femininity, is the ideal of the adorned female body.
For the first few years of her employment in forest industries JO made sure not to participate
in the socially acceptable activity of female adornment: “Yes. For years and years, it’s only
been in that last three years that I’ve actually started wearing makeup and jewelry, like and I
love it, it’s just so much fun” (July 10, 2009). Female adornment includes the application of
makeup and jewelry in order to ensure that the appearance is feminine. “The work... I didn’t
dress up at all. I didn’t wear makeup during the week and I wore coveralls a lot, so yeah I
didn’t wear nice clothes except for on the weekend. So yeah, I did feel very unfeminine”
(NA, June 18, 2009). Feminine appearance can also include the need to wear nice clothing
as a way of confirming feminine status and maintaining the standards demanded by being on
display for the male gaze. Dressing for the job she needed to perform, PW points out that:

Well, I looked pretty unfeminine at the end of the day. I always had toenail polish
and lipstick, and stuff, but yeah. I mean I had a very nice wardrobe for the weekends
because I didn’t let it make me feel unfeminine, that’s why, but I mean, my clothes were greasy and dirty, I worked in the packaging plant. But I probably had nicer clothes then than I do now because I made sure that that never happened. (July 3, 2009)

Taken together, these women are pointing out that even though they may not be the ones in control of the stereotypes that define femininity and whether or not they comply at all times; there is still a certain level of enjoyment that they take in participating in the adornment and appearance parts of femininity.

Femininity is stereotypically thought of with regards to behaviour and appearance. The women talked about how their appearances, with regards to makeup, clothing hairstyles and being clean, are often related to ideas about femininity and also about how they sometimes felt unfeminine because of their appearance at work, “I mean I didn’t put on lipstick and fingernail polish to go to work, or wear high heels” (DB, July 1, 2009). PW talks about how she is able to keep work and home life separate, “I’ve always had no problems getting down and getting dirty but I always know at the end of the day when I go home, have my shower, that I put my makeup on and whatever” (July 3, 2009). JO was able to finally embrace dressing in a more feminine manner after trying to maintain an androgynous appearance at work for many years,

Then there was a gradual shift in my time off to dress slightly more feminine and want to, for the first time, look and act like a woman – this lead to a rebellious phase of sorts. I began to wear shirts that were a little tighter with sassy sayings on them – put my hair in pigtails and blow really big bubbles. (July 10, 2009)

For JO, finally dressing in a feminine way in the workplace was an act of rebellion.

Previously dressing in an androgynous manner at work was a way for JO to not only try deflect attention away from her gender, but also as a means of minimizing obvious differences between herself and her co-workers, to blend into the group. This rebellious
stage for JO may have come from being in the industry and with her crew long enough that she no longer felt that being recognized as a feminine woman would have negative connotations for her in the workplace. EW believes that women are no longer defined solely by their appearances because society has opened the doors for women to work in different situations,

But I think the way that our society is now, and how women are doing such a variety of different things it isn’t all about the make-up, the hairdo and the clothes. Now you’ve got to be versatile, you’ve got to be able to think on your feet and handle what’s coming at you. You can’t just run and hide and go help me, help me, help me. (Sept 21, 2008)

EW relates feminine appearances not solely to the hair, make-up, and clothes, but also to a woman’s thinking, acting and being able to handle situations by herself. When I first talked to women about femininity many, myself included, knew what it was but found it difficult to describe or define. When I presented them with the idea that a definition of femininity may be as simple as anything and everything related to being female, the participants presented their own ideas about what that might mean. Regardless of my presenting a different idea on the definition of femininity, the participants’ own opinions were offered not only in direct response to the question but also came through while they were talking about related items. Many believed that anybody can do whatever they set their mind to do and that gender doesn’t have to restrict that: “Yes and that’s feminine is being feminine, I always thought that you can do anything you want if you set your mind to it, don’t let there be any restrictions because of your gender” (EW, Sept 21, 2008). It seems interviewees believed that being women should make everything they do feminine and that their knowledge of the machines, the parts and even the repair process should not compromise their femininity.
Still the participants talked about being tomboys or about being people who like to be outdoors. Many of the women stated that they were tomboys growing up and that they even adopted that role when they first entered the workplace and that it may have something to do with their entering the forest industry. The participants professed to be “outdoors types:”

“Yes, and I liked outside work, I didn’t want to be a secretary so I thought why take up typing. I wasn’t interested in that and I wanted to have a job that made good money that was outside, it was physical and that’s how I started working in the planer” (PW, July 3, 2009).

From a young age AM showed more interest in outdoor activities:

I am more like, instead of playing with girly dolls and stuff like this, my interest was the tractor out there or the horse. So from an early age I was more interested in what was going on outside then I was staying in the house playing with dolls and so I think from that, and like I know as a kid growing up my father was a heavy duty mechanic and he used to weld and so that sort of things and I would be more at home in grease up to my elbows then I would be sitting in the house chatting with other girls or whatever. (Sept 22, 2008)

When women make statements about what they view as negative aspects of typical femininity, it brings a few points up for consideration. First, they are clearly aware of what the standards around femininity are; also, they are distancing themselves from feminine qualities that they deem to be negative, or that they do not agree with. They are, however, also trying to explain how they still consider themselves to be feminine even though they may not fit the stereotypes.

For EW there are parts of female adornment with negative connotations. “But femininity, I don’t know, I think the stereotypical femininity is the lady that’s all dressed up to the nines and is afraid of dirt or she’s got a tear in her nylons or something and it’s a big
deal, I think those days are kind of gone, maybe in some places they’re not, and [women]'s still think that way” (Sept 21, 2008). The implication here is that a woman who is solely focused on her appearance does not have a place in modern times.

**Sexuality**

A large part of passing as a properly feminine woman is having one’s appearance assessed by oneself, other women and men. In present Western society women are always on display in ways that men are not; part of femininity is appearing to be sexually available for men. Femininity and sexuality are virtually inseparable because part of being feminine is to entice sexual attention from men. Sexuality can be thought of as the unspoken expression of being open or receptive to sexual conduct. According to Bartky, “Sexual objectification occurs when a women’s sexual parts or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her” (35). Everywhere we look images of truncated women as sex objects can be found, on billboards, in magazines, and advertising. Female sexuality is not just a part of femininity through bodily functions or due to issues involving sexual harassment. Sexuality has also been used to both define and restrict behaviours; the way a woman dresses has been used to define her sexuality, and even used as evidence to prove promiscuity in the court of law. Women know that female bodies are always on display and that display tends to show small, fragile, sexualized female bodies. Every aspect of women’s physicality is supposed to be small, weak and fragile, while the images portraying men emphasize strength, muscles and sheer size. If a woman is strong and muscular it may be deemed that she is not a ‘real woman’ for the same reasons that it is argued that women cannot perform the hard physical

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17 Square brackets added to clarify EW was discussing women.
tasks required in male-dominated industries: “real women” are not strong enough to handle situations for themselves, needing men for those things and also to protect them.

Women have an uncanny knack of knowing how people expect them to appear in any given situation. Bartky illustrates, “It is also the reflection in woman’s consciousness of the fact that she is under surveillance in ways that he is not, that whatever else she may become, she is importantly a body designed to please or excite” (80). With regards to sexuality the participants talked about women’s use of female sexuality to further their forest industry careers, anatomy-specific incidents when ‘jokes’ were made about women’s bodies, events in which there was overt sexual harassment, other women’s being sexually harassed, how participants tried to de-sexualize themselves, the separate areas within the workplace environments for women and men, and the possibility of sexual exposure in the work environment.

Women are knowledgeable agents with regards to knowing they are on display. Some women will even use their supposed sexual availability or ‘wiles’ to gain resources for themselves. Women know that being viewed as ‘pretty’ or ‘sexy’ has tangible advantages; more attention is afforded to them, and they are assumed to be more interesting and even in some cases more intelligent. While all of the participants did not directly enter into discussing sexuality, there were, inevitably, moments when it came up. With regards to female sexuality participants noted that even in male-dominated industries some women were able to get certain positions by looking and acting certain ways.

Well I told one plant manager, he was going on and on about this young lady and I said to him, ‘well, what part of her face did you look at?’ [laughs] He looked at me, ‘I should have known better,’ he said. [laughs] Because it, the way she came across and
that way she dressed and stuff like that, any man would be an idiot not to think ‘oh wow’ [laughs]. (AM, Oct 2, 2008)

This shows how even women believe that sexuality can be used as a commodity in the workplace. PW describes an incident where a woman at her workplace was being treated differently by co-workers possibly because she was dressed in a more feminine manner,

When the mill first started hiring young women, there was a girl that came in to work on the... she came to pile lumber and she was in her cute little top and, I mean she had her boots and everything she had to have, and oh the guys. I mean, they were out there trying to help her pile the lumber, they were doing their job and her job and it was all great. (PW, July 3, 2009)

The suggestion here is that men were helping the new hire because she appeared properly feminine, in terms of dress and assumed sexual availability. Ultimately, as discussed previously, she would have to be able to prove she could handle the workload herself if she wanted to continue to be employed there and be accepted as a forest industry-worker. While perceived sexual availability is a defining feature of femininity, and has a measurable presence in female-dominated workplaces, entering into relationships other than friendships in any workplace is perilous. JO points to possible problems related to sexual relationships in the workplace:

You can’t screw people at work because then you become the slut, which there are those out there and there is that role and I hate those women because they make it way harder for everybody else. I, I just like that one cook that was screwing everybody, I was like whatever cause she’s sixty [laughs] so I was like, you go ahead. You do your thing, I’ll put in ear plugs [laughs]. But, the younger women, like especially like first aid attendants or the ones that do sleep with a lot of the guys, I really, I would really love to take them out and give them a beating because they have no idea what damage they do for the rest of us. Because then the next girl that comes along to that crew instantly steps into the shoes of a tramp and that’s a hard thing to step away from once those guys have that mindset that that girl is there for their entertainment, not only does she do a job but she also does another job. (July 10, 2009)
JO brings up many aspects of sexuality that warrant further discussion. Having sexual relationships in the workplace can be damaging in more than one way and for more than just the people directly involved. Having a sexual relationship in the workplace can change how other women in the workplace will be treated because it opens the door for the possible expectation that all the women could be potential sexual partners. Female sexuality already displays women as being available sexually, and many women have fought against that ideology in the workplace because otherwise they would not be taken seriously, which stems from women only being able to be either a body or a mind.

Though JO is adamant that young women in the workplace refrain from sexual relationships at work, she tolerates, and even encourages an older woman to form them. Therefore, the older woman must not have the ability to set a precedent like younger women could. This may be explained by looking at the way female sexuality is defined socially. In images of sexual objectification the women are young; until very recently in the fashion industry, most women do not model into their thirties and many of the new models are under legal age of adulthood. Because the ideal images present in society define what is sexually appealing, the sexual commodification of women has an expiry date. As women age there is also the social expectation that they are no longer sexually available in ways that young, unattached females are. While this older woman may be unmarried, the expectation of sexual availability is no longer there according to ideals and stereotypes of female sexuality.

Another issue raised by these stories is that the women in the stories are being, at least, partially blamed for the behaviours of their co-workers. Regardless of how a woman looks, dresses, or behaves sexual harassment of women does not originate within the woman being harassed. A viewpoint seems to be getting internalized, the view that if women
somehow send any kind of signal a man could choose to perceive as sexual, and they deserve the sexual harassment that ensues. This, in turn suggests if the women wanted to avoid any kind of sexual harassment, they should police their behaviours accordingly. If viewpoints like this are prevalent within the workplace it is likely that any woman would face varying levels of sexual harassment.

All of the participants referred to sexual and gender harassment taking place in their workplaces. Some harassment was directed specifically at the participants and some was witnessed by participants but directed towards other women in the workplace. In some of the workplaces, observations were made by male co-workers about female anatomy in the form of ‘jokes’. In reference to these types of ‘jokes’ CG described, “The amount of times that my breasts got looked at and I had to start wearing coveralls to cover them on a regular basis and even then, I’m a fairly busty woman so a lot of attention was put on them... a lot of jokes were made towards them, ‘do you carry your water in those?’ cause it’s a hot environment there [laughs]” (June 24, 2009). Sexual harassment can often be disguised in the form of ‘jokes’ and women are constantly being asked where their sense of humour is as a way for the person telling the joke to disguise the sexual harassment. Humour is used in many situations as a way to detract and defuse the seriousness of what is being discussed. Women, to show they do have a sense of humour, have even laughed at some of those ‘jokes’ as a means of showing they fit into the workplace. Men can use ‘jokes’ to avoid any ramifications from the nature of their comments being construed as sexual harassment, and also as a way to test women and their willingness to play by the ‘rules’ the men set in the workplace or prove why women should not be present.
Most places of business have strict policies on sexual harassment. Where CG worked there was a sexual harassment policy in place, and she talks about that policy:

No, that was a gender issue in the mill, because they do really promote high standards on harassment, be it gender specific or not, harassment between workers and sexual harassment obviously. Basically when summer students are about to be hired, I’ve been told by the other men that I was working with, that they are told to take down all their pornography that they have in their lockers so that they may not open the door and accidentally show a naked woman hanging on their locker door, calendars, screen savers, there’s a lot of computers in there, but there was still a lot of those visible and out. (June 24, 2009)

This policy where the men have to remove their pornography from the workplace seems to imply that sexual images of women in the workplace will only be construed as sexual harassment if there are women present to be offended by it. This, coupled with the fact that even once the pornography was ‘removed’ much was still visible, implies that while there was some kind of policy on the books, it was not strictly adhered to or enforced. Women working in this environment would have to choose if that was something that they were willing to ignore.

One way to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace without getting anyone else involved is to let people know immediately if their behaviour is inappropriate. PW elaborates, “And so you need to really have your ground rules down, I mean, nobody pinched my butt or slapped my butt or said anything to me that I didn’t like said” (July 3, 2009).

Sexual harassment was also brought up by participants in relations to themselves and in describing the situation other women experienced. PW describes how, “One girl working there that she got into some problems because there was a guy that was always making passes at her or whatever and she kind of let him, not let him make passes but it kind of got more aggressive and more aggressive where she actually had to file a complaint” (July 3,
The idea that unchecked behaviours can become more and more aggressive is also elaborated by CG considering the more mild ‘jokes’ she had already experienced and then the following incident,

And one time I was up on, there’s an elevator that you use to clean, and I was up there with another man and the elevator was a little bit bouncy and he turned around to the guys that were down below us and emphasized how my breasts were bouncing with his hands when he thought I couldn’t see him. I was a little bit like, okay, you guys have gone too far, so when I was walking along the side I kind of pulled him aside and said to him, ‘I have excellent peripheral vision.’ And he’s kind of like, ‘well what do you mean?’ So I showed him with my hands what he had done and he became very embarrassed and said sorry to me and laughed about it and went on. (June 24, 2009)

Here even though the ‘jokes’ seemed to be evolving the male co-worker still treated the incident as if it had only been a joke. Though she had previously allowed other ‘jokes’ to slide and had not drawn attention to either their inappropriateness or her discomfort with them, here she took the opportunity to draw a line.

It is sometimes difficult to pin-point exactly when a ‘joke’ becomes something more serious. Unfortunately for JO the two incidents she describes were very serious:

I did wake up one night to find a guy standing over me in my room. He was very drunk. Luckily, he was a good natured fellow because he was physically huge. I basically said, “Dude, what the fuck are you doing. Get the bloody hell out”, which thankfully he did. I started locking my doors after that. I don’t know if we talked about this or not. I used to drink with my crews. Nothing unusual about that – still do on occasion. I had the unfortunate experience of being “date raped” by a fellow crew member that I had worked with for years and had felt very safe with. (July 10, 2009)

Though JO was the only participant that specifically mentioned incidents of this nature involving her and co-workers, it is not unreasonable to expect that similar incidents did occur for other women in the forest industries, though not necessarily with the other participants of this research. Women have incorporated many different styles to help them deal with sexual
harassment; they laugh along with the ‘jokes’, set ground rules, report harassment and even try to de-sexualize themselves. These women were proud of their ability to talk to the men in the same way that the men were talking to them as JO explains, “Like the biggest pig I ever met, and I’ve met a lot of pigs but the biggest pig and so you had to be tough, you had to be smart and have witty comebacks that were like almost mean, if you said them to anybody else it would be mean but there, they appreciated that” (July 10, 2009). JO brings up an important point, that some men, especially in certain workplaces, speak in a way that may both seem to be and actually be misogynistic. JO does go on to explain that, in her opinion, the ways some of her male co-workers talk, while apparently disrespectful to women, are actually more akin to something like an accent or vernacular specific to an area,

But once you learn how to speak their language and learn that, honestly, they’re not actually being mean when they say that stuff, they’re really not, most of the time, like there are some people that are truly, you know, being disgusting pigs or being truly racist or being harsh against women. But you have to learn to speak their language and so you do find yourself biting your tongue a lot. (July 10, 2009)

Considering the forest industry does have occupational language, it could be that this manner of speaking is part of the vernacular of the industry. DB suggests that the ways that some of the men talk was more teasing, “They never ridiculed, well I mean they would kid or something, but, I mean, it was like anything” (July 1, 2009). Collectively, what the participants seem to be saying is that most men are just joking around and that as women in “their” workplace, entering “their” domain, women should just play along to a certain extent. As already pointed out by CG, there are also times where the men may have crossed lines of appropriateness, and would need to be informed that type of behaviour will not be tolerated. PW elaborates, “And as long as you did your job, you didn’t put up with anything and you never had anybody say to you what you didn’t want said to you, you were okay” (July 3,
2009). These two techniques of dealing with the language used by some of the co-workers in the workplace - playing along with it or putting a stop to it - seem to contradict each other.

Choosing which way to deal with the situations probably depends on what each individual woman is most comfortable with and whether she is willing to have a confrontation with male co-workers, especially if it will affect how accepted she will be by her co-workers. Many of the women tried to de-sexualize themselves in order to avoid any kind of sexual attention from their co-workers, which including not flirting or trying to ensure that no men in the workplace "got the wrong idea". CG gives an example where she took steps to deflect sexual attention, "And those ones that were good friends started to relax a lot more around me and would start to make jokes. Jokes about say, maybe you should wear those jeans again 'cause your ass looks great in those jeans, so I never wore those jeans again [laughs]" (June 24, 2009). For GT limiting her interactions with male co-workers after work was done for the day was a way to signal that she had no interest in their possible sexual attention,

Although in a way, it felt, yeah, it just felt friendlier talking to women than to men, I guess there would always be the opportunity if the guys thought you were interested in them, you may be looking for something else, and I thought, no I'm not, I'm not going to put myself in that position, and I would definitely hang out with the women more to give them the idea that no, that's not why I'm out here, there was always that risk. (GT, Oct 16, 2008).

GT points out that women may have more in common or similar experiences to discuss; and forging female friendships in the workplace may be safer if one wants to avoid giving men the wrong idea. JO describes how important it was to her to avoid bringing sexuality into her working environment,

I did not dress like a woman, did not wear makeup, did not flirt in any way, even if you're having an, 'I feel sexy today' day. Didn't make eye contact on those days
because you cannot be like a real woman so to speak and express your sexuality in a safe way because then it changes the dynamic completely. (July 10, 2009)

JO captures the idea of how it could be unsafe to bring sexuality to the forefront in the workplace.

In many of the working environments there were separate gendered spaces either in the washrooms or women’s quarters in the camps where the women should have been able to avoid male contact. GT describes how some of the men were not fully aware of the existence of female spaces in the camps, “It was always funny, if a guy walked into the women’s quarters by mistake he might see some underthings hanging up and drying on the shower things, and think, ‘oh, okay this is not, [laughs] I’m not supposed to be here.’” (Oct 16, 2008). The bathrooms in the mills apparently were not entirely separate spaces:

I actually did have separate bathrooms, I never used the same bathrooms as the men, I had keys for them, but the forklift shack, we called it, where the forklift drivers went for their lunch, there were separate bathrooms in there and apparently the guys had a key to the women’s bathroom because it was a great nap spot. So every once and a while when I would go to go to the bathroom there would be a man lying on the floor in there [laughs]. So I would go to a different female bathroom, there were two others. (CG, June 24, 2009)

When the participants were working out in the bush regardless of whether they were staying in a camp most companies do not bring in any kind of portable toilet services because they were not required to until January 2005.¹⁸ In these circumstances there would be no bathrooms and privacy would be a luxury. The absence of washrooms in the workplace could pose a problem related to sexuality due to the very nature of going to the washroom. The potential for accidentally exposing oneself to coworkers especially when working in close proximity is explained further by JO:

¹⁸This rule is stated in G4.85(2) of the OHS Regulations found at www.worksafebc.com
Going to the washroom also poses a problem as well in this instance. I have had to hold it to the point of exploding before or time the skidders and the trucks so I could find a small window of time where I could be unobserved. I have actually gotten frostbite on my butt when I had to hurry and hide in -30 degree temps. Not fun. Mostly the guys are good and if they look over and realize what I’m doing will look away but a few of the truckers won’t. Dirty! (July 10, 2009)

Even when JO took specific measures to avoid accidentally exposing herself she could not guarantee the behaviours of all her co-workers would be respectful. There were other incidents relayed by interviewees which are directly related to the idea of sexuality through exposure. SP talks about a different kind of possible exposure in her workplace,

When my crew would go skinny dipping they would be very nice to me, like I wouldn’t go, I’d sit up in the crummy [the work truck used to drive the crews to and from the worksite]19 but I’d stop and wait for them to go on the way home because everybody was hot and sweaty. But the guys would come up, and I remember that, come up and say, ‘we’ll stay up here if you want to go and just dip in’. And I’d say no, by that time I was anxious to get home. (July 3, 2009)

Here, it seems that SP’s co-workers were trying to make sure she had a chance to cool down for the trip home as well; but however noble their intentions, whether consciously aware or not, that situation had the potential to be extremely unsafe for SP.

Summary

My participants’ discussion around difficulties gaining entry into the forest industry echoed the experiences of men in many regards but there were additional obstacles faced by the women due specifically to their gender and unwillingness by some employers to hire women. Once the interviewees gained entry in forest industry employment they, like their male co-workers, had the ability to move within the industry, in and out of different types of jobs, but unlike some of their male counterparts, faced exclusions from management positions. There was a surprising revelation about how routine the workday is in the forest

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19 Square brackets added to explain terminology used.
industry that I was not expecting. The sense of pride that stems from mastering new skills is common to any worker regardless of gender. My participants definitely felt pride, especially considering that the skills they had mastered were considered too difficult for even the majority of men. Even though the participants excelled during the performance of their forest industry work, there are aspects of these types of employment that are unappealing. Forest-industry work does not seem to facilitate that work/home balance that many people seek through employment. One participant with a family found types of forest-industry employment that actually worked well with raising a family, but the other participants do not believe that most of the employment in the industry worked well with raising a family for women or men.

Participants who worked in a camp for weeks at a time found an unexpected perk of being able to escape the ‘double day’ numerous women face and enjoyed having someone else cook and clean their living space. The working environment, due to its very nature, was very dirty, which led to the discovery that the participants associate men with dirtiness. Tokenism was something both felt by and participated in by some of the interviewees. Many of the employers wanted to be seem as equal-opportunity employers but only to the extent of hiring a few women. The belief that most women would not be able to be successfully employed in the forest industry was adhered to by a few participants while others do not believe the working environment is healthy for any worker. Even though these women knew they may not look feminine at work or be employed in female-dominated work, they felt their femininity was intact. There were aspects of femininity that they saw as being negative, and they did not agree with all of the ideals and stereotypes associated with femininity, but still felt feminine. Sexual harassment in these workplaces was experienced quite frequently,
mostly in the form of jokes, displays of porn, misogynist language, and unwanted advances, but there were also incidents of sexual assault and rape.

Conclusion

New data needed to be generated when considering how female identity and femininity were affected by working in the male-dominated forest industry of NBC, as existing literature and studies did not address these topics. The preceding case study examined the individual experiences and ideas of nine women who self-identify as having worked or currently working in various positions within the forest industry. The experiences discussed by the participants work to fill the gap in information regarding female identity and femininity in NBC and the history of women employed in the forest industry. Femininity is always experienced in relation to social times. From the case study provided, the interviewees' female identity and femininity intersected with different aspects of the forest industry of NBC and seven main threads of conversation emerged. There were three themes specifically related to the forest industry environment: first the women had to get into the industry; once in the participants experienced degrees of mobility but also some barriers to certain positions, and once established as forest industry workers, they pointed out that the work was routine and they were able to prove to themselves and co-workers their ability to adroitly handle the jobs. The following four threads of dialogue include ideology surrounding female identity and femininity specifically in regards to working in the forest industry. Participants discussed different ways they had to reconcile domesticity and cleanliness with their work roles. There was consideration of the varying degrees of
tokenism both experienced and participated in. The interviewees considered femininity with regards to how they defined their own and how they were able to reconcile that within the male-dominated workspaces. Sexuality, especially in terms of objectification and sexual harassment, was the final thread of conversation involving female identity and femininity. The following chapter provides conclusions, discusses the challenges experienced during the course of this research, and recommends areas for future study regarding both the forest industry and femininity and female identity.
Chapter 5

Conclusions

This research has studied female identity and femininity among women working in the forest industries in Northern British Columbia through the experiences and difficulties women face in these male-dominated workplaces. Through a review of forest industry literature it became clear that virtually all the women that had worked in the industry before the interviewees were erased from the history. Women are mentioned, but they are few and far between, in passing reference as an acknowledgement of their presence but rarely of their work. Through the process of doing this research and writing this thesis, the experiences and stories of the participants will become part of the written history of the forest industries of British Columbia. Within the framework of my study I have considered the relationships between femininity as an ideal or stereotype and femininity as a lived experience, revealing ways in which Western cultural ideals construct and manipulate the images of women to prescribe acceptable performances of gender appearances and behaviours.

The case study demonstrates both the barriers faced associated with a male-dominated field and cultural barriers faced by women within the role of femininity. Within this study the participants demonstrated complete understanding of the different pressures and expectations forced on them to behave to specific standards measured by society at large. Though the participants may not consider themselves to be feminists or involved in feminist movements, they have contributed to feminism by making inroads for the women following them into male-dominated employment and by proving that women are as capable as anyone to do the work there. These women have become the mentors and role models that were absent when they entered the forest industry. They performed this advancement by
persistently standing their ground against external pressures. These participants have challenged the ideal and stereotypical version of femininity offered by, for example, dressing the way they needed to in order to perform their work even if they still subscribed to some traditional beliefs surrounding femininity. They challenged stereotypical femininity by working in professions that claim to build the most masculine of men. By doing so they have expanding their own understandings of acceptable femininity roles by proving to themselves and others that gender has little to do with capability.

In reference to gaining an understanding of women’s experiences through working in the forest industries I had seven key findings in the topics of Getting In, Mobility Once In, Routine of Work, Cleanliness and Domesticity, Tokenism, Femininity, and Sexuality. In many ways the participants followed the same process as males entering the industry. Family connections either by family members directly or by the family’s social circle were involved in obtaining employment. The literature available argues that people normally hear about jobs through gender lines; men hear about jobs from men and women hear from other women. However, the interviewees learned about employment opportunities through male family members and friends. In many cases having these connections helped to secure employment. Living in areas dominated by the forest industries also encouraged women to participate in the industry because there was access to forest industry training programs available and observing other women employed in the industry helped foster the ability for the participants to pursue forest industry work as well.

The women experienced some barriers to forest industry employment. Barriers include women’s taking themselves out of the game before even trying because the industry does not appear inviting to them. The forest industry has remained male-dominated for several
reasons. Attitudes of owners/managers who do not want women in the workplace will usually keep women from being hired. Ideas developed from stereotypical representation of the capabilities of women also contribute to keeping them out of the workplace, for example ideas about their commitment levels to their work should they want to start a family, and their ability to handle physically demanding labour. Other employers are not willing to hire women because they do not believe that women have the skills needed to perform the work and do not want to take the chance on hiring them and letting them develop the skills; males are hired because they either have past experience or the employer believes they have had past experiences that would make them good employees. Some employers just cannot visualize women as forest industry workers and because of that are not willing to take a chance on them.

There is also a fear that women entering the workplace would not be able to adhere to the brotherhood-type relationship that has developed between male employees. While women work with men all the time, it could be an entirely new experience for some men to work with women. Because the working environment was male-dominated, there were virtually no women role models or mentors for women entering the workplace to aspire to, but these participants were still motivated to do forest work. The reasons given by the participants for entering the industry include an appreciation and respect for the forest, the opportunity for adventure and exploration, and the pay grade, reasons also cited by men in the industry.

I discovered that once in there seemed to be a lot of mobility or relative ease moving from position to position or trying out different types of machinery. Sometimes women were given the opportunity to try operating a different machine because they happened to be available at the time; one participant was taught how to operate a large variety of machinery
by co-workers as a sign of appreciation for the help she had provided for them previously. But there was also somewhat of a glass ceiling; the participants mentioned that supervisory positions were, for the most part, off limits, unofficially of course. But this would be the same for the majority of male workers as well. Interviewees describe the work as very repetitive or routine, which was surprising because one of the things used to determine whether work should be male or female was that male work was invigorating and women’s work repetitive.

In many instances the women were treated similarly in the workplace to any new employee; first they had to prove they could do the job, which would earn them the respect and acceptance of their co-workers. The participants all discussed the importance of proving their ability to handle the work and how initially they were being watched closely for proof of their abilities. Once the women were able to prove their capabilities, the majority of their co-workers would accept them as members of the team. It was noted that some of the co-workers may never be fully accepting of a female in their working environment and that while all new workers had to prove their ability for women they may have to continually prove their abilities for a longer timeframe. The women also pointed out that making a mistake or having an accident was somehow viewed as a bigger mistake or worse accident because it was a woman that did it even though worse mistakes made by male co-workers were treated as insignificant.

By proving that they could handle the workload and being accepted by the majority of their co-workers the participants enjoyed mastering what has been defined as masculine skills, and even noted that there was no reason for the jobs in the forest industry to be gender specific; they believed that the majority of the positions could be performed well by either
gender. The interviewees were also proud of their ability to verbally spar with some co-workers. For the co-workers that wanted women to go back to the home and kitchen, participants would let them know they could perform their job just as well if not better. One way the women knew they had proved themselves to their employer and co-workers was that the constant watching would cease and they would be left alone to do their work.

I found that cleanliness and domesticity are associated with both the ideals and the stereotypes regarding properly feminine women. Acceptable roles for women to fulfill in order to deem properly 'feminine' by Western society include activities women perform in the home, such as keeping it clean and performing the nurturing tasks such as feeding the family and taking care of children. Employment typically reserved for women usually occurs in a clean environment and the work being performed does not result in the worker becoming soiled, whereas a large number of the resource industries men work in are very dirty workplaces and the workers become dirty during the course of their workday. In terms of appearance for the women in these forest industry positions, they realize the need to dress for the work they are performing and because it is dirty work, often involving oils and grease, dress in clothing that can withstand that level of dirt. The participants do not consider it out of the ordinary to dress this way. Cleanliness is definitely a part of some participants' definitions of femininity based on the frequency of them referring to male co-workers' being dirty. But in this case dirty is not just referring to clothing but also to the working environment and even the language men use.

The women also informed me that working in the forest industry was not compatible with having and raising children. Though many believed there were positions within the industry that were more family friendly and many women become the company bookkeepers, or
office positions due to this. There were positions with degrees of flexibility, like being able to start and end the workday earlier to get an event, which were family-friendly as long as the work was completed. For participants who worked at jobs that involved staying in a camp there was a unique opportunity to experience a different type of domestic living. Camp life had the unexpected perks of removing the double day many working women face. When working out of a camp the participants only had to go to work; all the meals were prepared for the workers, the rooms cleaned, and the beds were even made for them.

I established that tokenism was present in the forest industry. While some employers say they have no problems hiring women, participants felt that employers were only saying such things for the benefits of being perceived as equal-opportunity employers because the reality was that women were still not being hired. Many employers still refused to hire women though but are able to make it appear to be for reasons not related to gender, such as having a hiring policy that restricts hiring to only people with prior experience or certain physical qualities. There were also employers and co-workers that would only let female workers perform certain positions because they still preferred men to perform that work, or because they felt it was too dangerous or difficult for women, or because they did not believe that women would be capable. Some women, because they were never fully accepted by their co-workers, moved into positions within the industry that would be considered traditional female vocations, such as janitorial work or administration and office work. The participants also seemed to at least partially share the view that most women could not work in the forest industries or that women should only be in some of the positions available because the work was too strenuous or dangerous for women to perform. This is at odds with another
viewpoint the women had, that there was not a logical reason why the jobs in the forest industry could not be performed by either gender.

The literature available discussing women's relationships with ideal femininity roles follows two main threads; one explains how and why women conform to the presented ideals while the other maintains that women are not blindly following these standards but are challenging them. I discovered that the participants indicated holding two differing definitions of femininity that were not necessarily complementary. The first mirrors stereotypical representations of femininity and female identity, such as the way women are expected to look, act and the types of employment that were gender appropriate. The second definition came from explaining that even though the participants might not fully fit the stereotype or ideal they still felt feminine, which is a good indicator of the complexity of gender or the performance of femininity. The participants mostly did not think of their gender while performing their work and actually would consider themselves to be neutral, but there were incidents when they were forced back into awareness of their gendered bodies, either because a co-worker brought their attention to it or circumstances had. The participants felt that for the most part their male counterparts were not focused on gender either, once the women had proven themselves.

All of the participants relayed ideas about how female identity and femininity involved body adornment, which is perhaps the most easily recognizable component of femininity. Adornment encompasses modes of dress, wearing jewelry, and applying makeup. The participants felt dressing appropriately for the work they were performing was more important than dressing in a feminine manner, plus there is also a requirement to wear certain safety gear and for the employees working outdoors there was also the necessity of dressing
for the weather conditions. But the women did not believe that dressing in this way had any effect on their sense of femininity. Jewelry and makeup were also minimally present in the workplace; again the participants felt this was not part of the job and that their femininity was not affected by it. The participants all continued to wear feminine clothing, makeup and jewelry outside of the workplace when it suited them.

All the participants took measures to reduce or avoid sexual attention in the workplace. Participants also believed that there were some women in the workplace who used their sexuality or female wiles to advance their careers. Concern was expressed about women who have sexual relationships with co-workers, because it can be damaging to the way all women are perceived in the workplace. Participants feared that some men might think that the women out there are not just to perform forest industry work but also to perform sexual work. It is important to note that in the mill setting, two participants mentioned how women that made sexual harassment complaints were relocated to different mills. The relocation of the women and not the male harassers suggests that management, not unlike the participants, are at least partially holding women responsible for the harassment faced in the workplace. The idea that women must behave in ways not to illicit sexual attention perpetuates women being blamed for the behaviours of men, instead of educating men that it is inappropriate to behave in such a manner towards a woman regardless of how she is dressed or behaving.

No matter how capable a woman was some male co-workers would never be fully accepting of women or other groups of people observed to be different. Sexual harassment and objectification made this clear. All of the participants referred to sexual and gender harassment in the workplaces. Some harassment was directed specifically at the participants and some was directed towards other women. The most common form of harassment
presented itself in the form of teasing and ‘jokes’ to try and disguise the violation of human rights. Sometimes, laying out ground rules was not enough and serious or even criminal incidents did occur.

The information and examples provided through the case study were related to the theoretical discussion in ways that addressed many of the questions and goals formed at the beginning of this research. What I realize now, in retrospect, is that my belief in a stereotype that I failed to recognize as a stereotype is really where the motivation for my research began. The stereotype was that Northern women are a different type of women who did not fit the ideal version of femininity offered by Western society. I believed that people in the North are different and harder because the lifestyle is portrayed as more difficult, and the women are less restricted by gender roles out of the necessity of needing to handle situations on their own because men were often away working. Rosemary Neering pontificates, “They are a different breed of women who often made their lives out beyond the cities. Adventuresome and rebellious, they strayed outside the permitted and undertook the unexpected” (9-10). The argument made here is that to choose to live outside cities takes a different type of person in the first place. Women who have lived in forest based and/or Northern communities will also be ‘a different breed of women.’ I have heard this stereotype many times and never thought to question it or thought of it being a stereotype. And to GT, this stereotype was a reality she experienced.

That’s one thing that I found out about women in this area, that was one thing that really impressed me, my first impression of women that I met around NBC, was that they were very, very strong women. And it took me a while to realize why that was, and I think it’s because their men always had to go away and work so they were in charge of the farm, they were in charge of the household, they were in charge of the kids by themselves for weeks at a time and when you have that kind of responsibility you have to be tough. Since then I’ve found some women who are just as ditsy and crazy as the ones on the
coast, in urban areas [laughs] who are fashion hounds and whatnot and real girly girls, but for the most part women up here are much more, are much stronger, much more independent, and I think in a lot of ways a lot smarter because they're self-reliant and I respect those qualities in women who can do that and I've become very good friends with all of them, a lot of them around here. (Oct 16, 2008)

What this tells me is that while some women in the North may behave in certain ways that could be considered different from the stereotypical feminine behaviour, other aspects are the unchanged. But while I continue to like the idea that Northern women and men are considered different or tougher because they live in a climate that can be taxing, I also recognize that women living in the South are different or tougher in other ways and for other geographically, historical and social ways. Everyone wants to be extraordinary, so when there is a stereotype available that paints people in ways they consider positive it becomes less likely they would view it as a stereotype and more likely to be taken as a truth.

Along with the belief in this stereotype I believed there was a distinct essence of Northern-ness and a Northerner could pick out Northern qualities, such as the flannel shirt or Sorels. But by the conclusion of this study I find myself believing there is not an essence of Northern-ness and that by trying to find and define this essence I could have easily fallen into the same trap of stereotyping and setting ideals for people in the North. Originally what subconsciously motivated my research was my belief that if I could ‘prove’ or show that Northern women did not succumb to the stereotypes defining womanhood and femininity it would provide an argument for Northern BC being more egalitarian in terms of gendered power divisions, which would provide the basis for a new model of society that would actually promote equality. I had secretly hoped that women in NBC had created an entirely new form of feminine identity, or that with taking on parts of masculine identity they had created a hybrid version, but what I discovered matches more with the theoretical
understanding that gender is not a system of opposites but more a sliding scale that allows for variation to every ideal. Thus, grand delusions of a feminist manifesto had to be shelved as it rested on far too many assumptions developed out of unquestioned stereotypes and biases.

Originally why I turned to women in the forest industries was because I was raised in a large family full of strong women: strong emotionally, physically and mentally. Because my family was involved in the forest industry I suspected that some of that strength came from that involvement. Considering most of the women in my family were not employed in the industry, I speculated that there would be a substantial effect on femininity for the women who did work in the industry.

The women in this study adopted an identity that incorporates both feminine and masculine qualities as defined through stereotypes. Many of the participants denied parts of femininity that they found outdated and unattractive, like being afraid to get your hands dirty or to participate in difficult, dangerous work. This does not mean that those aspects of femininity did not inform and influence their lives as forest-industry workers. In fact, my participants seemed even more aware of the aspects they resisted. This thesis asked what effects, if any, working in the male-dominated forest industry had on femininity and female identity. For the participants the biggest change was that they were stronger and for all but one, their language involved more swearing than it had previously. These women were stronger physically due to the intense work they were performing; many even commented on how much they enjoyed their new stronger physique and the physical component of their employment. Interviewees also seemed stronger mentally through their ability to not only learn all the variety of positions they worked at in the forest industry, but also their ability to excel in mastering these supposed “masculine” skills. The participants wielded emotional
strength that came from working in an environment that was not always welcoming, standing their ground verbally with co-workers trying to convince them to leave, and not letting the views of the outside world change their desires or their femininity.

My participants were/are successful forest industry workers. They made it, they know of other women who were successful, and they believe that there is no reason why women cannot be triumphant forest industry workers; but they mostly would not recommend other women to work in the industry and even sometimes would not recommend the work to men either. Jo helps to illustrate,

I think it would be a very rare person that I would meet that I would recommend it to. It’s not the running of the machine that is hard, but it’s everything else that goes with it. And you have to be kind of crazy, you can’t be scared driving to work, you’ve got to get to work so you’re pinning it down icy roads, dusty roads, zero visibility, dodging things, you’ve got to be kind of crazy, you’ve got to be a workaholic, you’ve got to have the thickest skin, you’ve got to have a good sense of humour and you’ve got to want it. And honestly, people look at the pay, people think, ‘I’m a chick, I can do that too.’ Well, I don’t know, can you? I doubt it. Like there’s a lot of girls, they might say they want to but whether they can actually hack it in the long run, I don’t know. I wouldn’t, it’s a shitty lifestyle, yeah. (July 10, 2009)

Here JO is clear that it would be a rare “person”, and looking at the quote as a whole one could assume she does mean woman or man. There are several reasons why the participants would not recommend forest industry work. The dangerous aspects of the work along with the strenuous hours and amount of time spent away from family and friends would all qualify as deterrents. There was a time when I considered working in the industry myself, especially for the pay grade that was available, but I had an awareness of what those occupations consisted of, of the danger and hard physical labour, of the attitudes some males in the industry held about female workers, and the need to develop thick skin and a ‘masculine’ sense of humour. Had my parents discouraged my entering the field but encouraged my
brother to enter it, the probability of my securing forest industry employment would have been inevitable. The fact they did not want either of us to enter the industry, was the most persuasive argument against it because it allowed me to believe it was for reasons other than my gender. There is no one I currently know in the forest industry who recommends other people joining it as a career. The reasons they do not it that it is becoming harder to make the high wages that were once so enticing, it is harder to support a family, at least year round, and the industry was in a down cycle. From the optimistic forest industry workers I am in contact with, they say an upswing is starting slowly, but only time will tell for sure.

Challenges

The two biggest challenges at the onset of my research were trying to find women in the forest-industry literature and trying to get my schedule to mesh with those of potential and actual participants. Other challenges include my own delusional understanding of the ease with which interviews are transcribed, but by the last one I was getting substantially better at it. Redefining some of the terms of my research posed some difficulty; originally I had envisioned my research spanning the time frame of 1930 to the present day, but the participants actually covered the time span from 1960 to the present day. Originally, partially due to the time frames changing, I was defining the communities as rural because of the population density in the 1930s and knowledge that much of the sawmilling was first done by families on their farmlands. Looking instead at the communities in terms of resources did not limit my study to any span of time and was more sensible considering that the industries being studied were resource industries.
Future Studies

There are still considerable gaps in the research of forest industries that I hope future researchers and studies will address. Studies looking at the treatment, respect and reputation that forest industry workers have in society as well as how the workers perceive themselves to be regarded by society as a whole would be valuable especially in consideration of how the media represent conflicts between environmentalists and resource-based employees.

As mentioned earlier, none of the participants for my research identified themselves as belonging to any First Nations group or any other ethnic minorities. The literature available did not identify or address these groups for the most part either. Some of the participants did give mention of members from these groups and other ethnicities being present where they were employed, whether male or female. Future studies should investigate ethnic variation among forest-industry women and men. Additional studies of women and their experiences in all resource-based employment and male-dominated employment would be a great undertaking, as would asking whether women working in any male-dominated industry believe they are making changes to it for future women. Even though the literature available references the industry to be extremely masculine, I found only one study, Quam-Wickham’s, that actually did study the creation of masculine identity in Western extractive industries or that interviewed men in reference to it. Critical studies of masculinity in the forest industry, other male-dominated industries and other resource-based industries are therefore needed just as are further studies of femininity.

Certain subdivisions within the forest industry did not respond to my recruitment process and it would be prudent to research the experiences of people working in those fields
as well, for example government workers and registered forest technicians. I wish I had more time, resources and space to explore the male storytelling aspect of the industry with my participants. Their stories would be extremely beneficial to the history of the industry, for it is built as much on actual events as the retelling of those events. Deconstruction of the language and metaphors of the forest industries would also be an area of future study I am personally interested in for the future and would strongly recommend. Studies that include both genders would also be valuable because people are never masculine and feminine in isolation; it is the interaction between the two that influences binary definitions of gender. It would be interesting to find out how women’s entering ‘their’ employment domain affected men’s masculine identity. Another vital area of study would be accidents, injuries and deaths within the forest industry. References made by my participants also indicate a problem with addictions and the use of drugs and alcohol in the forest industry, which would be another potential area for study.

I hope these previously mentioned studies are taken up because women and ethnic minority groups are marginalized not only within the industries but also outside the industries. The attitudes that marginalize women in the forest-dependent communities are also present among those who have studied the industries and by the people who make policy changes, which contribute to and can even reproduce the gender ordering of those communities.
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Fig. 1. Forest Region and District Offices Map, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, (British Columbia, 2011) 13, May 2013
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Appendix B

Interview Questions/Prompts

Note: Because the project aims at gaining an understanding about personal interpretation, the questions will be open-ended in order to ensure discussion and subject prompts may also be used. The following questions and prompts will serve as guidelines for the interviews.

1. Background information: What is your name? Where do you currently live? When did you live in Northern British Columbia? Were you born and raised there? Where did you attend elementary and secondary school? Do you have any post-secondary education? Are you married? Do you have children? When did you work in Northern British Columbia? Where did you work?

2. Can you describe how you came to be working at _________? (Prompts: How did you enter into that field of employment? Did you think that field was a regular occupation for women? Were you trained for that employment before you entered it? Vocational training?)

3. Why did you choose to work there? (Prompts: Was it the type of job you wanted? Was it ever a concern your employment choice was/was not a conventional employment/workplace choice? Did you ever wonder 'what will people/my parents/ my friends think? Were conventional roles of males and females in mind when you were picking your employment? Do you think people do take it into consideration when they apply for a job?)

4. Was the place where you were employed a mostly male environment? Could you tell me what that was like? (Prompts: Were there other women in that working environment? Did those women hold similar positions to yours? What other types of positions were open to women in that environment? Were some positions ‘off limits’ to women?)

5. What was it like to work in a mostly male environment? (Prompts: Did you feel that you ‘fit in’? Were you treated just like everyone else? Were you ever treated differently because you are a woman? Do you feel that being a woman made a difference in the workplace? Did you ever feel that you should not be there?)

6. Did your work ever make you feel unfeminine? (Prompts: Do you think there is a conventional [normal/standard] type of femininity/masculinity? What do you think creates these types? [Political motivation, pressures from both familial and friend
7. Does how feminine you feel change in different places? (Prompts: According to different situations, like at a baby shower vs. at a sporting event? Are there different ways you experience and/or display femininity depending on where you are? What type of situation you are in? Home? Restaurants? Job? In different social settings, with friends, strangers, co-workers? Where do you feel most feminine? Did you dress differently to enhance how feminine you felt in different situations/places?)

8. Did your job have any effect on your life outside the workplace? (Prompts: What type of role did you fill outside the workplace? In the family? Do you think it matters if the role is unconventional? Does it matter to you? Do you think it mattered to the people you worked with? Do you think it mattered to your family or the people you knew? Was there pressure to stay/leave the job coming from outside forces? Hyper-feminine when not at work or completely unfeminine?)

9. If you consider your choice to be unconventional, could you talk about why you think it is? Do you consider the position to be conventional for women or men? Why and why not? (Prompts: How would you define conventional and unconventional roles for women and men? Do you think they are changing? Necessary?)
MEMORANDUM

To: Kathryn Doucette
CC: Jacquiee Hollor
From: Greg Hafseth, Acting Chair
Research Ethics Board
Date: July 21, 2008
Re: E2008.0706.127
Rural Feminine Identity in Northern BC from 1930 to 2000

Thank you for submitting the above-noted research proposal and requested amendments to the Research Ethics Board. Your proposal has been approved.

We are pleased to issue approval for the above named study for a period of 12 months from the date of this letter. Continuation beyond that date will require further review and renewal of REB approval. Any changes or amendments to the protocol or consent form must be approved by the Research Ethics Board.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Greg Hafseth
Appendix D

Oral Interview/Transcript Release Form

Researcher: Kathryn Doucette
C/O Gender Studies Program
University Way, Prince George, B.C. V2N 4Z9
Email: doucette@unbc.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Jacqueline Holler
UNBC at: University Way
Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9
Email: holler@unbc.ca

Oral Interview/Transcript Release Form

Date of Interview: ______________________

Title of Project: Rural Feminine Identity In Northern British Columbia From 1930 To Present Day

I (print) ____________________________ hereby consent to the recording and preservation of interviews of myself by Kathryn Doucette working under the supervision of Dr. Jacqueline Holler, Associate Professor, at the University of Northern British Columbia.

I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time and that corresponding information will be withdrawn and destroyed as well. I understand that I have the right to place restrictions upon the use of this material as detailed below. Any complaints about this project may be directed to the Office of Research at UNBC, 960-5820 or by email: reb@unbc.ca

I understand that I have the option of participating in this project anonymously; my preference for participation is indicated below. I understand that the potential benefits of this project include the preservation of my experiences and knowledge about the different ways in which female identity and femininity are affected by employment in male-dominated environments and will also contribute to the history of women and Northern BC. I understand that the personal information collected through the interview process will be published in the Thesis of the researcher and through the thesis will be available for future researchers though they will not have access to the electronic or transcribed interviews. I understand that should I chose to participate anonymously there is still the remote possibility that someone may be able to use the information to discover my identity even though necessary precautions have been made. I understand that I will be referred to appropriate resources should I experience emotional pain brought about through the interviewing process.
about past experiences. The only persons who will have access to the interviews will be the researcher, Kathryn Doucette, and the supervisor Dr. Jacqueline Holler.

I understand that I will receive a copy of the transcribed interviews before the project is completed. I understand that I have the right to remove any information contained in the transcribed interviews that I do not wish to be used in the project. I understand that all of the information collected through the interviewing process, whether used or not, will be held in strict confidence. I understand that a copy of the Master's Thesis will be given to me once it has been defended. I understand that the electronic and transcribed interviews will be stored for one year after the defense of the thesis in a locked filing cabinet at the residence/office of the researcher. At the end of that year, the information will then be returned to me or destroyed by the researcher. Should I have any questions I will contact the researcher, Kathryn Doucette, directly by the information provided at the top of this page. In case the researcher cannot answer those questions, I can contact the Supervisor, Dr. Holler also by the information given at the top of this page.

I hereby waive any claim against UNBC and its agents with respect to the use of this information, provided it is used in accordance with this agreement. I do this freely and with full knowledge of the legal consequences of this consent.

Signed: (interviewee)_____________________________________
Date:_____________________

I hereby give my further consent to the use of my name, and/or details about my life that directly or indirectly reveal my identity.

Signed: (interviewee)_____________________________________
Date:_____________________
Address:_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________ Phone
No:_____________________

I hereby wish to express my desire for anonymity in this project.
Signed: (interviewee)______________________
Date:___________________________

Any Restrictions/Conditions: None:_______or:
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

At the end of the year of storage I would like the information to: be returned to me:_______ or:

Destroyed by the researcher:__________________.
Appendix E

Informed Consent

Your participation has been requested as part of a thesis project that is trying to determine any effect of employment in male-dominated working environments on female identity. The project is focusing on working environments attached to the logging industry because of the prevalence of the forestry industry on Northern British Columbia. The participants will be chosen due to their employment in the industrial sector of the forestry industry between 1930 and 2000.

Kathryn Doucette, a Gender Studies graduate student will be conducting the research through a series of interviews. The interviews will be semi-structured in order to facilitate conversation and allowing the participants to talk at great length on experiences that they feel were significant.

Do you understand that you have been asked to participate in a research study?

Yes___No____

Have you read and received a copy of the attached oral interview/transcript release form?

Yes___No____

Do you understand that the research interviews will be recorded?

Yes___No____

Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in participating in the study?

Yes___No____

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?

Yes___No____

Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw
from the study at any time?
Yes___ No___

You understand that you do not have to give a reason for withdrawing?
Yes___ No___

Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?
Yes___ No___

Do you understand who will have access to the information you provide?
Yes___ No___

Do you understand who will store the information, how the information
will be stored, for how long and what will happen to the information when
that time period has ended?
Yes___ No___

This study was explained to me
by_____________________________________________

I agree to take part in this study:
_______________________________________ Date:____________________
Signature of Research Participant

_______________________________________
Printed Name of Research Participant

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and
voluntarily agrees to participate.
Signature of Researcher

Date: ______________________