FASHIONING SELVES AND IDENTITIES:
CONTESTED NARRATIVES, DISPUTED SUBJECTS

by

Linda Kathleen Cullum

A Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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Doctor of Philosophy, 2000
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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I examine narratives by working class women and men employed at Job Brothers fish plant, in St. John's, Newfoundland, between 1930 and 1967. The workers produce stories of their experiences in, and competing discourses about, work and their domestic lives. A rich and complex picture is drawn of the material and social organization of women's lives, in the plant and in the communities around them. Multiple physical geographies - of the plant, work, and St. John's - operate as social markers and organizing features in narrators' stories.

Work on fish and blueberry processing is detailed, as are stories of harmony, negotiation, and resistance on the plant floor. I suggest that processing lines and jobs are sites of historically contingent constitutions of workers' identities. Contested stories of the formation of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union in 1948 are explored, and I show how public history of Job's, work and unionization is partial and incomplete. Who was/is authorized to speak, and about what subjects, remain disputed questions.

I demonstrate how the narrators actively fashion their identities through the stories they tell. Through nuanced readings I suggest that while the narrators seek to produce themselves as 'whole' and 'complete' subjects, their accounts display an ongoing production of contested, negotiated, and shifting subject positionings cut by axes of difference - gender, race, class, age, marital status, geographic location. Fragmentary discourses of femininity, masculinity, and class are emergent in narrators' stories, while relations of race are more muted, and embedded and naturalized through what I call...
a "discourse of niceness." I develop the notion of "narrative constellation" to explore dimensions of the constitution of identities, memories and forgetting, and speculate that these are embodied and social acts. I argue that the narrators' stories subvert the possibility of a single interpretation of women's paid work, domestic lives, and unionization.

My work builds on, draws from, and contributes to existing studies of women's paid labour and fish plant work in Newfoundland and Labrador. I contribute new insights about the material and social organization of women's work, production and management techniques. Importantly, through my layered readings of the narratives, history is seen as a fragmentary, dynamic construction, by and of subjects, identities, events and memories, rather than as a coherent, unitary "Truth."
For Miles
1948 - 1996
Who Told Me To Get The Dam Thing Done

For Dad
Who Supported Me

And
For
All My Women Friends Who Never Let Me Down

Thanks
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A work of this scope is never accomplished alone. Rather, it is produced in, and through a complex web of material, social, economic, and emotional conditions. Without the continuous support of friends and colleagues, this dissertation would not have seen the light of day. There are many people who deserve thanks from me.

Most importantly, I wish to acknowledge and thank those women and men who worked at Job Brothers fish plant from 1935 to 1967, and who so generously shared with me their stories and memories. There would be no dissertation without their time, energy and work. As well, Michelle Park and Susan Williams shared their taped conversations with women fish plant workers with me, allowing me a richer and more fluid sense of the active meaning-making present in all our conversations.

Thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Kari Dehli, and committee members, Dr. Barbara Neis and Dr. Ruth Roach Pierson who guided and encouraged me over the several years it took to produce this study. By their example, I learned the importance of meticulous scholarship and sympathetic critique in academic life.

The dedicated workers in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives, the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archives, the Maritime History Archives, the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the City of St. John’s Archives provided me with tremendous assistance. Conversations with them pointed me in interesting directions more often than I can count. Ernie Walsh of the Department of Public Works, Government of Canada contributed historic photographs and conversation about the harbour redevelopment in the 1960s which resulted in the destruction of Southside Road as a residential area, and its development as harbour facilities. These conversations gave me a more vibrant idea of the old Southside Road.

A special thanks to Jessie Chisholm whose interest in, and support for my work
motivated me at the end. Anne and Paul Macleod contributed skilled expertise and fine humour at key moments in the production of the computer generated images in study. Without their very active assistance a poorer product would have emerged from the printer.

Financial support has been essential to the completion of this work. Thanks are due to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Fellowships program, Ontario Graduate Scholarships, and the Institute for Social and Economic Research at Memorial University of Newfoundland for their generous financial assistance.

Extraordinary personal support and encouragement was dispensed by family and friends. Thanks to my father, Stan, who tried to make sense of my academic life and stories, and supplied timely financial assistance when called upon, and to Jill and Jonathan whose presence in my life help connect my own disparate identities. In those moments when I was certain I could not finish this dissertation, someone always picked me up, dusted me off, and set me back on the path. Joan, Marilyn, Shelley, Linda, Diane, Peter, and Máire in Newfoundland, and Marnina, Janice, Alicia and Jonathan in Toronto all deserve a share of the credit for this work. Any faults in the end product remain mine alone.
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ABBREVIATIONS

CNS  Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John’s, Newfoundland.
CNSA Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John’s, Newfoundland.
CSJA City of St. John’s Archives, City Hall, St. John’s, Newfoundland.
MHA Maritime History Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John’s, Newfoundland.
MUN Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John’s, Newfoundland.
MUNFLA Memorial University Folklore and Language Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John’s, Newfoundland.
PANL Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador, Colonial Building, St. John’s Newfoundland.

TEXTUAL NOTATIONS

... Indicates short pause in speech of narrator.
(pause) Indicates a long pause in narrator’s speech.
.... Indicates omission between two sentences.
[edit] Indicates brief material has been omitted from original narratives.
( ) Curved brackets in transcribed narratives indicates observation of laugh, tone, gesture, cough, and so on.
[ ] Indicates addition of thesis author’s comment in narrator’s text.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTIONS: JOURNEYS THROUGH LANDSCAPES

Once a story is told, it ceases to be a story; it becomes a piece of history, an interpretive device.
Carolyn Steedman, Landscape for a Good Woman

THE PROJECT

At the heart of my research study is a group of working class, unionized women fish plant workers living and working in Newfoundland in the 1940s and 1950s. These women were employed at Job Brothers and Company Limited fresh fish and blueberry processing plant on the Southside Road in St. John’s, and were members of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union (LCSWU), formed in February, 1948. I first became interested in this group of women when documents and records were pointed out to me by an archivist friend, while I was engaged in research for my Master’s degree. The records of the LCSWU had been collected by the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives as part of a collection of other union records - the documents of the male Longshoremen’s Protective Union (LSPU). The women’s records were embedded in, and subsumed by, the records of the men’s organization and achievements. Little attention had been given to the women’s records; I was immediately interested in them for this reason alone. In the beginning, my project was one of “discovering” and “recovering” “information” on women’s lives in Newfoundland and Labrador. Only later did it become an idea for academic inquiry and research.

When I decided to propose this work as my doctoral research, opinions about what constitutes “legitimate” history, valid sociological research and sufficient data to produce a dissertation arose. Friends and strangers alike questioned me closely from a range of positions on my choice of topic. I was asked: why this group of women; who are
they; aren’t they just a little bit too obscure; isn’t it going to be difficult to find anything; why are they important? The notion that there are particular kinds of “history” that are more important (and easier) to delve into underlies these questions. One feminist historian told me outright that there were not enough records to write a “good history” of the group. To this I rather defiantly replied, “it depends what you consider ‘good’ and what you consider ‘history!’ ” In a way, this historian was right: there was little to be found through the conventional modes of conducting labour, or social history, or sociological research on women and unions. Yet there proved to be an excess of fascinating and complex material - people whose lives, work and narratives could not be fitted into analytical categories offered as frameworks by conventional approaches. I felt very challenged by the multi-vocal objections to my study of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union, the more rare supportive and encouraging comments, and the possibilities of something “new.” In many ways, these challenges and my own deep curiosity about the domestic and paid work experiences of these women propelled my research forward.

From the beginning, my interest in this group of women was framed by their formation of, and participation in, the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union. I took up their stories/narratives in this light, not as inherently interesting life stories apart from their experience in work and unionization. My attention to the women’s unionization efforts was initially influenced and shaped by my reading of sociology and women’s history, applied to Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador, and current in the 1980s and 1990s.¹ I looked to some of these works as models for my own. In this way I

¹ See for example Anger et al, 1986; Porter and Pottle, 1986; Porter et al, 1990; Porter 1993; Parr, 1990; Sangster, 1995; White, 1993; Sugiman, 1997. Footnotes are used in this study in two ways. First, to direct the reader to additional sources of interest to the discussion and second, to provide a richer sense of the linkages between ideas contained here. These off-shoots are connected to the discussion but
began my inquiry from an already formed place and series of questions that were being addressed in conventional sociology and women's labour history. Sociologist Paul Atkinson (1992) describes this process as one of becoming "academically socialized," into the "substance," "form and style" of textual production. Indeed, my fieldwork following from this initial socialization process was also shaped by the models I admired. What "can be written about," and in what ways, shapes how we conceptualize our research, "the field" and the texts we produce (Atkinson: 1992:4-6).

I initially conceived of "the field" in my study as one of the drama of unionization battles and the consequences for women workers of their participation. This fell in line with conventional and feminist labour history as I saw it, where the story was framed by the importance of unionization for workers, families and, in particular, for women. This impetus formed the initial nucleus of my thesis research, one in which women's valorous struggles would be seen. A plus was that the dramatic tension and story-line would be gripping, engaging and a "sexy" topic for my thesis. In the early stages of my work, this romanticized notion of women, work and unionization focused my eyes and ears in a particular way: I looked for spirited stories of meetings, discussions, arguments and conflict. Instead, I found a different kind of contestation and contradiction facing me in the women's narratives, for they did not tell their stories in the ways I had anticipated, with emphasis on the union in their lives. Indeed, the women often met me with challenges about the appropriateness of my questions/concerns in this study. They told me directly that their lives were full and busy, that they did not remember the union because too much time had passed, many other memories had supplanted ones of the union formation, or that their families and other moments in their lives were clearer generally are not central to the focus.
(and more important) in their minds than the union.

Other challenges raised issues I had not conceived of as questionable prior to this study. The narratives offered to me often did not have a beginning, middle or end structure that we usually look for as the accepted pattern of a "narrative"; a narrative piece, begun early in the conversation would be re-traced in an entirely different context in a later moment of conversation. Concepts and words like "before" and "after" lost their meaning as ordering devices in the telling of narratives and subsequently, in my listening and reading of them. I struggled to "make sense" of the narrators' words as I heard them, and then read them in transcript form.

As I worked my way through the collection, analysis and writing stages of this study, my questions changed, the linkages and leaps of understanding altered. Like a fine knitter, I attempted to pick up, one by one, the multitude of coloured strands which I began to see, hear and read. These colours were of my own making, hues and tones that another viewer or listener might name differently, or, indeed, might relegate to the scrap bin, seeing them of no use in the pattern being formed. I have tried to keep constant in front of me the idea that I am constructing this pattern, on these pages; it does not simply exist in the colours, waiting for me to "discover" it, or allow it to emerge.

Through this work, I have come to a different reading and understanding of individual stories, one which opens up new questions for me about the organization of narratives, the sociality of memories, and the production of public histories. I have come to believe that as a researcher, I don't just "find" and record "the truth" as it lies waiting for me "out there" and "contained within" people's stories. Rather, my work is more than simply reporting and reproducing on the printed page "what people told me" when I asked questions, or even when I did not.
I was looking for a different way of understanding more about the paid work and
domestic lives of women in and through their (and my) everyday talk. This includes the
“material reality” of their lives, work and families as well as the discursive production
of their experiences. I hoped to be able to read the multiple and confusing relations
produced in intersecting axes of difference and subject positionings - race, class, age,
marital status, gender and so on. Because I was asking about an earlier time, the social
construction of memory became a pressing concern and accounted for much of my
puzzlement. How are memories produced and constructed? What makes something
memorable? These questions have a profound effect on how we understand “history” and
the politics of its production and transmission.

Throughout this work, I have attempted to problematize my own participation
and shifting identity positionings. These narratives are not the production of single
individuals but are produced in social relationships with others in their world. There
are always unequal relations of power when a researcher sets out to “collect” materials
from subjects. My experience of this work is that power is not a constant one-way flow
here, but rather, is constantly in flux, shifting about the room, amongst the participants
in the conversation. At no time did I feel unequivocally “in charge.” Quite the contrary, I
often felt the subject and object of study by others in these conversations.

INTRODUCTIONS

Women’s stories are central to this study. Our conversations together informed
and helped shape the questions I began to ask of myself and the research. As I moved
through the landscape of St. John’s, searching for women who had worked at Job
Brothers fish plant in the 1940s and 1950s, it struck me that where the women were
born and raised, where they entered the workforce from, was important in the social and
economic geography of St. John's. Fort Amherst, the Southside Road, Shea Heights or The Brow, as it is still sometimes derisively called, and downtown St. John's, on the north side of the harbour, have unique histories, people, and living conditions (Figure 1).

Those few women who travelled daily from Queen's Wharf on the north side of St. John's to the south side fish plant in the Job Brothers company boat, the BLUE WAKE might be said to have "come over" from another community entirely (Janes TS92: 33). In many of the women's (and some men's) stories, the physical geography of the town becomes a social marker - of material conditions, of relationships, of class position - of life possibilities. Importantly, I often felt these markers myself, felt as if I was entering worlds I had not known existed, meeting people whose experiences were vastly different from mine. As I write this thesis into being, I still feel vaguely like a naive interloper, or a voyeur, looking on these "other" worlds from the outside.

Atkinson (1992) observes that the further into the research process ones goes, "the thinner becomes the methodological and practical advice that is available" (4). This was certainly my own experience. In a bid to make clear my own process, I provide details on locating and contacting narrators, and on my thinking processes throughout this thesis. I spoke with the women and men I introduce here between Fall 1994 and Spring 1996. As with many historically based studies involving women, it was difficult to locate the members of the now-defunct Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union. It was harder still to persuade the women that their "stories" were of value, that these stories should and could be told and that I was interested in hearing them.

I began contacting women in the fall of 1994. A great deal of background reading of the archival records preceded my telephone conversations with the LCSWU women. In particular, I struggled hard to locate Jessie Earle Thomas, the first president of the
LCSWU in 1948, and the vice-president from 1949 to 1952. I thought it was important to speak with Jessie because she was the first president of the union and because she is a woman of colour who lived in a community remarkable even today for its ethnic homogeneity and its whiteness. On the thinnest of threads I searched the highly detailed, and not always reliable, Polk’s and McAlpine’s City Directories for St. John’s from the first decade of the 1900s through to the 1960s, looking for a trace of her family. This search took several ten hour days. In the end, I simply called the last person listed as living at the St. John’s home address of Jessie’s older brother. With incredible luck, I reached two of Jessie’s nieces, who met with me and provided Jessie’s last known address in California. Several long distance calls later, I was able to speak with Jessie Earle Thomas, then sixty-seven years old.

My initial conversation with Jessie was brief and rather stilted. She did not seem surprised that I had located her, despite the length of time she had lived outside of Newfoundland. Although recovering from a series of strokes and recurring illness, Jessie kindly talked to me about her life in St. John’s and at Job Brothers. We talked for short periods on three occasions between Fall 1994 and Fall 1995. As we spoke during that year, and it became more apparent to her that I knew a number of details of her family life, she asked me to try to locate two of her childhood friends, send her some of the newspaper articles about her father from the 1960s, and to let her read a two page article I had written about her for a local women’s center newsletter. I was not able to find her old friends, but did manage to send her the other material. Buoyed by my successful detective work and encouraged by Jessie’s generosity and information, I plunged forward to contact other members of the LCSWU.

First, I called the one local woman I knew had worked at Job’s - Daisy Hiscock Tucker. She lives at Fort Amherst, on the southside of the Narrows entrance to St. John’s
In 1992, Daisy had spoken about her work at Job's to another researcher, Michelle Park, so I hoped that she would be willing to talk with me about Job's and the LCSWU. Feeling a lot of uncertainty and discomfort, I telephoned Daisy. She was willing to talk to me.

On a fine Fall day I set out in a borrowed car to search for Daisy's house. I had only been to Fort Amherst on a few social occasions, to see the old lighthouse at the end of the road, or to climb the Southside Hills which mark that side of the harbour. Many generations of local people have gone to the top of the Hills to swim, picnic, or pick berries. The Fort Amherst area has been used for military defence purposes, complete with gun batteries, since the 1600s and the lighthouse had been in use since the early 1800s. Further into the harbour, along the road from the lighthouse, permanent settlement of fishers and their families began in the mid-1800s. Maps and photographs of the late 19th century show houses, stages, wharves and fish flakes in active use there. Families fished grounds just outside the Narrows using open trap boats, catching cod. Young women learned about processing fish in the family unit, working alongside their siblings and mothers to split the cod fish, wash it, salt it and sun dry it to produce salt fish which would then be sold to merchant enterprises like Job Brothers for shipment to Portugal, Spain or the Caribbean.

When inshore fishing declined as an economic activity in Fort Amherst, men took jobs in longshore work and at Job's fish plant. Women too, worked at Job's processing fish. Some started work at eleven or thirteen years of age, bringing their pay home to their families and receiving a small allowance in return. Some women crossed over the

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2 An excellent collection of the stories of Fort Amherst can be found in *Fort Amherst: St. John's Nearest Outport* by Rosalind Power. The author was born and raised in Southside East, renamed Fort Amherst after WW II. Women occasionally referred to this area as South Battery, a name dating back to the 1600s.
harbour to work in town at Harvey’s cold storage plant processing fish and blueberries, or at Purity Factories making cookies and biscuits. Often they walked the two or three miles down the road from Fort Amherst to Job’s (or Long) Bridge at the west end of the harbour and across to their workplaces.

The road narrows once you pass the 1960s re-developed harbour area bounded by a Coast Guard station, fish landing areas, oil supply companies, and a power house. Where homes had stood since the early 1900s, there is a new small boat basin, a product of the 1990s. Homes re-appear as you enter Fort Amherst. One home is a converted one-room school building; others are two-storeys high with bridges (porches) built to capture the fine view of the harbour to the west and the Narrows and the open sea (and fog) to the east. Fort Amherst still feels like a small outport community with houses built close together on the narrow road. I parked the car in a widening of the road and set off to Daisy’s house which she shares with some of her adult children and their young children.

Daisy welcomed me in, offering tea and a comfortable chair in the living room. She was sixty-eight years old, and led an active life, involved in community politics and family activities. She showed me handiwork she was completing for a Christmas craft sale. Later as we sat in her kitchen with our tea, we talked about our shared interest in crafts and history of the area, of the drowning death of her grandson by the lighthouse only a few years before, the loss of her husband Les in the late 1980s. Les had also worked in Job’s fish plant, and was a member of the LSPU. Most of Daisy’s working life had been spent in one factory or another - first at Job’s, then at Purity Factories, owned by Browning-Harvey, on the other side of the harbour, and finally back at Job’s.

Daisy worked at Job’s fish plant on and off from 1942 to the 1960s packing fish, cleaning and packing blueberries, making cartons for fish packing, and cleaning up the
processing line at the day's end. She laughed frequently during our conversation, especially when she told about the jokes played on workers at Job's plant. Daisy suggested that I talk to her cousin, Alice Hunt Kittinger, who had also worked at Job's in the 1940s.

Alice was not hard to find. She lived with her niece and family in a house on Pleasant Street, on the north side of the harbour. Daisy had instructed me to "let the phone ring," and after many rings, Alice answered in a quiet voice. She, too, had talked previously with another researcher about her work at Job's. When we had chatted for several minutes about my work, Alice told me to come over on a specific day. She also instructed me to ring the doorbell and wait. I made the walk from my place to Alice's home in about 30 minutes on a mild November day. I rang; I waited. Gradually, I became aware of a soft voice calling out to me from inside the house. I rang again and the voice called out again, telling me to come in. When I reached the second floor landing I could see why Alice had not come down to the door - she was a tiny woman, with severe arthritis which gave her much pain and made the long staircase hard to negotiate.

During our conversation, Alice asked me to make tea and once to check on a noise downstairs. It was simply too difficult, and painful, for her to do these things for herself. She spoke about her belief that her arthritis was caused by the cold of Job Brothers plant work. Her cat frequently wandered in and out of the small living room where we sat, and as I transcribed our conversation later I heard the cat's voice blending with ours.

Alice was born on Southside Road, just down from Job's fish plant. Her father, brother and other friends from the Road worked at Job's. This proved to be an oft-repeated pattern; many of the women narrators had family and friendship ties within Job's plant. Alice started work around Job's in 1940, when she was eleven years old,
cutting out cod tongues for a few cents a pound just outside the plant. They were not employed by Job's, just picking up a bit of cash. Job's had no use for the tongues, considered a fine meal in Newfoundland, so lots of young children earned money by this work. They would sell the tongues door-to-door or to a local store for a few cents. In the mid-1940s, Alice went to work full-time inside Job's plant, cleaning and packing blueberries, trimming and wrapping fish and making cartons for fish packing. Alice left Job Brothers in the early 1950s, when many of her friends left for other work or married and moved away. Alice, herself, went on to marriage, several years in the United States, other different work (and other unions), leaving fish processing behind.

Rosalind Wareham Power was writing a local historical account of Fort Amherst when I read a profile of her in the local newspaper. As an informal contact, she provided me with a number of names of women who worked at Job's in the 1940s and 1950s, many of whom were from Fort Amherst and Southside Road. These included Bertha Bussey Wareham who began work at Job's at eleven years of age, Ruth Fowler Janes who worked with Job's for only a few months packing fish and cleaning blueberries when she was seventeen, and Bertha Chipman King, who worked on the fish processing line for about five years and then in the canteen at Job's for another five years. Irene Sears Bambrick also went to work at Job's in the early 1950s, at the age of seventeen, joining her sister Shirley in the workplace. Madeleine O'Reilly Janes worked on the fish processing line as well, beginning when she was eighteen years old. Most of these women gave me leads to other women workers and provided me with engaging, if brief, accounts of their lives and work at Job's.

Joan Wareham Donegani is Rosalind Power's sister. She works in Montreal, Quebec where she has lived for many years with her husband Mike. Rosalind called me one day to suggest that I telephone Joan. She had told Joan of my study and thought that
FIGURE 2: Job Brothers packing line, circa 1950.
Joan would be a good source of information. Joan started summer work at Job Brothers when she was thirteen or fourteen, and remained there from 1945 to 1950. Her father was a fisherman, and the family needed her financial contribution to the household income, so she stayed on after the summer work at Job Brothers. She remembers being included by Job's management in a group of women called “the Battery Girls,” most of whom lived in the Fort Amherst area, who were expected to stay behind at the end of a shift to clean up the fish processing area of the plant. I visited her in Montreal in 1995, spending several hours talking about Newfoundland and work at Job’s, and looking at family photographs. Some months later, Joan located a black and white photograph of women working on Job’s fish packing conveyor belt taken around 1950 and sent me a copy. In the photo, women stand in coloured uniforms, white headbands and hairnets, wrapping and packaging fish fillets moving past them on the conveyor belt. Pans of fillets rest beside their hands, “Hubay” labelled cartons are in front of them, and, for the most part, the women appear to concentrate on their work. Only one woman turns her head to look toward the camera; Joan suggested that this was Ruth Fowler Janes, who worked for a short time in the plant (Figure 2).

In a local newspaper account from 1948 of the LCSWU formation, Susie King Scott’s name was listed as a member of the first executive. Daisy Hiscock suggested I look for her under her daughter’s married name, as Susie was living with them in another part of the city. At eighty-five, Susie King Scott had spent much of her working life at Job Brothers Southside plant. She too, was born and raised on Southside Road, further to the east from Alice, toward Fort Amherst. We met at the home of Susie’s daughter, Virginia, in a suburb of St. John’s, and sat around the kitchen table drinking tea as we talked. Ginny was part of the conversation too, speaking of her memories of Job’s and of carrying lunches down to her father there in the 1960s. Suzie told me that she learned
about fish processing in her family, working to produce salt fish for sale to Job’s. Suzie tended the children of the lighthouse keeper for several years prior to going over to Job’s. She started work at Job’s in the late 1930s or early 1940s, remaining there, through marriage, children and widowhood, until the plant closed in 1967. She remembers it as a good place to work. She was a member of the first executive committee of the LCSWU, voted in as Vice-President. Suzie occasionally spoke with an ironic tone of voice about management at Job’s, and named her co-workers on the berry line as “youngsters.”

Helen Fogwill Porter was born and raised on the Southside Road. She never worked at Job’s fish plant herself, but many of her friends were employed there at various times. I was very interested in hearing about the Southside Road community in general, so when I met Helen at a Women’s Studies seminar at Memorial University of Newfoundland, I asked her for help. Helen is a noted Newfoundland author of poetry, short stories, magazine articles and books of fiction. She writes reflectively and sensitively about life on the Southside Road. In our first meeting, we talked at length about her thoughts and feelings for the Road and she loaned me some books to read. She also arranged for us to talk with her life-long friend, Dorothy Horwood Fry. A few weeks later, in the depths of a Newfoundland winter day, Helen and I drove a few miles south of St. John’s to Fourth Pond on the Southern Shore road. We walked, arms linked, a mile or so down an icy track to Dorothy’s home. Over a delicious lunch and with much laughter, I listened (and recorded) as they talked about growing up on the Southside Road.

The Southside Road is quite distinct from Fort Amherst in the stories of the women narrators. To an “outsider,” looking at a map of St. John’s, it appears to be one continuous road running along the south side of the harbour at the base of the Southside
Hills. It is, however, very carefully delineated from Fort Amherst, at the Narrows end, and from the section of road running to the west of the harbour. This length of the Southside Road is sometimes referred to as “below the bridge” (Porter:1979). In the years these women were growing up, the Southside Road was a lively community in its own right. Helen Porter writes of that place,

That part of the road was only about a mile and a half long but it seemed a much greater distance when the warehouses and houses were all there, those tall, narrow houses, most of them joined together in ranges so that every scrap of space was used up. We didn’t know what lawns were in those days; almost all the houses were entered straight from the street, or from steps or small galleries in some cases. Because the houses were built into the side of the South Side Hills, (which stretch right from Fort Amherst to Kilbride and Petty Harbour, just west of St. John’s and extend all the way back to the open Atlantic), our gardens were part of the Hill itself...The Long Bridge...divides the south side of St. John’s from the north, just as St. Mary’s Church, on its own small hill that blended into the larger South Side Hills, divided South Side East from South Side West...the Church was the dividing point, it and the stone rectory with its wrought iron fence, neat shrubs and even a few trees...(1979:3)

In various ways a self-contained space, with many families related to one another, the Southside Road boasted its own “grocery stores, cooper shops and waterfront premises.” Warehouses, fish and coal businesses occupied the waterfront side of the road. “Mudge’s, Morey’s, Wyatt’s, Hickman’s, Cashin’s, Baine Johnston’s, Bowring’s, Jobs’s, they were all independent operations where salt, coal, fish, foodstuffs, and, in spring, seal meat and flippers were unloaded” and processed for sale. These premises were the workplaces of many of the male family members along the Southside Road (Porter:1979:4-5). They worked as longshoremen, unloading coal, fish and other goods, making barrels for shipment of fish, or as foremen, time-keepers, and

3 Note that even the spelling of the road name has been altered. On city maps it is always one word, while to those who lived there, it is often two distinct words. In part, this reflects the more nuanced understanding held by former residents of life on the South Side.
filleters. The daughters, sisters and mothers also worked on the Southside Road, particularly in the fish processing businesses. The north side of the harbour, St. John’s proper, was where you went to shop at the stores on Water Street, or to see a movie when a moment of leisure and a bit of money combined.

All this Southside Road community disappeared when the harbour was redeveloped in the early 1960s. Houses were torn down, gardens erased, the church, rectory and school demolished, lives changed. Yet, when I began searching out women, I learned that many of the old ties remain, carefully tended and nurtured along as the residents spread out to other parts of the expanding city across the harbour. Family and work networks were retained, and news of the activities of one person or another passed along the network.

Many men from the Southside Road belonged to the Longshoremen’s Protective Union (LSPU) and worked together around the harbour. Once a large and powerful union in St. John’s, with over 3,000 members, the LSPU now has approximately 100-150 members and runs a small union office near the St. John’s waterfront. When I called for information on LSPU records and activities, Cec Druken, the President, was very curious about the work I was doing. We sat in a tiny office near the old train station, with a couple of other longshoremen present as he told me some of the history of the LSPU and searched the file cabinets for the names of past members. Many of the LSPU men working at Job’s had married women working there and I hoped to locate them through these marital ties. Cec also suggested the names of women he knew from Shea Heights who had worked at Job’s for various periods of time. Nancy Vinnicomb Baird was one of these women. She and her sister, Marie Vinnicomb Colbert, had worked at Job’s in the early 1950s. Marie had stayed for only two days, saying she could not stand the smell of the fish. Nancy told me that Blackhead Road supplied many workers to Jobs over the
years, both summer help and year-round employees.

This third quite separate geographic area - Blackhead Road, now known as Shea Heights - which supplied so many workers to Job's is on the top of the Southside Hills. When I first came to St. John's in 1975, this area was commonly called The Brow, usually with a knowing look or a derisive tone. Most citizens of the north side of the harbour considered it to be an impoverished place, with poor families, run-down houses, and not much incentive for change. This attitude was also supported by media reports about the area. Crime, willful poverty and chronic unemployment permeated the idea of "The Brow." Certainly class distinctions were made clear to me when I arrived in St. John's.

Williamson (1971), in a sociological study on the urban development of this area, notes that this area was locally known as Blackhead Road as it is situated on the winding road to the small community of Blackhead across Freshwater Bay from the Southside Hills. Settlement dates from the late 1800s, although some land leases indicate people held titles there as early as 1820. The area grew up during the 1930s when "city dwellers, unable to afford the cost of living in St. John's began their exodus to the Southside Hills" (13). Families relied on themselves to build homes, dig wells, and establish small farms in the poor soil. The roads were widened by local men working on "the dole" during the Depression years. Throughout the 1940s, more families moved to Blackhead Road, some forced out of living quarters in St. John's by rising rents and demand by military personnel for accommodations during World War II. Others found they could afford cheap land and their own home, without the burden of rents or taxes. Comparisons were often made between the development in Newfoundland outports and Blackhead Road (19). Williamson observes that the Commission Government of the day may have seen the migration to Blackhead Road as "a way of directing and helping cases..."
of poverty and in the process help relieve some in-town congestion” (16).

Williamson notes that in the late 1960s, residents called the site “the hill,” and never “the Brow” in a bid to refuse the prejudice of the latter name (1971:18). In his study, Williamson describes the generalized apprehension felt by those from “outside” the area.

The Blackhead Road has an image, crystallized in the minds of many, as an area where one could be beaten and robbed. The picture one often gets in conversation is of an area comprised of juvenile delinquents, alcoholics and problem families. When St. John’s first embarked on its urban renewal study for the entire metropolitan area (1961), they had trouble with apprehensive interviewers, who later reported back that they were quite surprised to find the area so friendly (1971:19).

It was with some hangover of this naive apprehension that I made the run up the steep, rocky hill in a borrowed car to meet Mary and Leo Dillon. I felt as if I were entering an entirely different community, although it is only minutes above the south side of the harbour. Many residents from Shea Heights worked at Job’s fish plant over the years. Williamson notes that approximately 212 of Job’s employees, more than 55% of the plant’s work force and some 40% of the population of the hill, were from the Blackhead Road area when the plant closed in 1967. Women and men worked at the plant (Williamson:1971:40). Mary Power Dillon and Leo Dillon were two of these workers.

I located Mary Power Dillon’s name in the Roll Books of the LCSWU. Helen White Picco, another Job’s worker, had told me to talk with her as she was a former president of the union. I discovered in a telephone conversation that she is a sister-in-law of the former president; they have the same name. Mary agreed to talk with me and indicated that her husband, Leo, had also worked at Job Brothers as a member of the Longshoreman’s Protective Union. The three of us sat together at their dining table, surrounded by large cardboard cartons, pieces of wood facing, and freshly painted walls, indications of extensive renovations underway on their small home. The telephone rang
several times during our three hours together, and two sons arrived for a chat with their parents. Mary and Leo, both in their sixties, told me about working at Job's, the difficulties of doing that work, often on opposite shifts, and raising children on a small family income. Mary laughed as she talked of the joke-playing between workers, and the moments of disruption to conveyor line work she performed at Job's.

Mary and Leo suggested that I speak to some of the older people in Shea Heights, most of whom were living at the Golden Vista Seniors Apartments, a new senior citizen’s apartment complex in Shea Heights. The complex sits on the edge of the Southside Hills, with a panoramic view of the city and harbour below. Ed Yetman, one of the driving forces behind the construction of the complex agreed to talk with me about living in Shea Heights. The morning I arrived to speak with Ed, he was unwilling to talk to me, describing me as being part of “the media,” a group of people for which he has little respect. Instead, Ed referred me to a Master’s thesis - Williamson’s - produced in the early 1970s for the “history of Shea Heights.” I was to call him again when I had read this study.

Ed Yetman did tell me he had spoken to some women residents in Golden Vista, and arranged for me to chat with them. He introduced me to Margie Mootrey Tulk, in whose apartment we were sitting. Margie started work at Harvey’s fish plant, on the harbour’s north side, in 1944-45, aged fourteen. She made tea and we talked in the presence of Ed for a short time, but she was uncomfortable with the tape-recorder so I simply took notes, and paused on occasion to write down a direct quote. In the late 1940s, Margie moved to Job’s plant where she remained for seventeen years packing fish, and working in the box loft, making up and stamping cartons with identifying labels. She recalled working on Sunday mornings and being called “the buggy crowd” for the amount of overtime pay the workers would receive. When Job’s closed she moved to work at Purity
Factories, a local cookie and biscuit manufacturer.

The crowded apartment of Ettie Evans Norman was just down the hall from Margie Tulk at Golden Vista. On the kitchen table was freshly baked bread and the smell of sweet cake filled the small apartment. Ettie, seventy-nine, was born and raised on the north side of the harbour and started work at Harvey’s fish plant in about 1930 when she was fourteen. She married at twenty-three, had eleven children, and worked at Job’s until well into the 1960s. The noise level in Ettie’s apartment - television, radio and clock combined with the ringing of the telephone and the oven timer - made it difficult to use my tape-recorder and as Ettie was not comfortable with the machine, I took notes as we talked. During our conversation she commented that it was hard to remember about her work and the union because “other memories drive these ones right out of your head.”

Longshoremen’s Protective Union President Cec Druken also directed me to LSPU members in other parts of the city. Ralph Martin was one of these. The former Vice-President of the LSPU in the 1940s and 1950s, Ralph served on the Executive during the period when the women workers at Job’s formed the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union. Cec called Ralph from the LSPU offices and arranged for me to make a follow-up call. Ralph, eighty-four years old when we met, lived in a two storey clapboard house on a short working class street in downtown St. John’s on the north side of the harbour. He had raised his family there. We talked for three hours as Ralph told me fascinating stories of the technological changes on the waterfront in the 1940s and 50s, as well as some of the thinking of the LSPU Executive regarding the prospect of taking in women members to the all-male union.

Around this time, I widened my search by contacting Ian Job Reid, the last managing director of Job Brothers while the Southside plant was operating, 1964 to
1967. It was under his tenure that the decision was made to cease fish processing as part of Job Brothers repertoire of investments in this province. Now retired for several years, Ian Reid lives on the north side of the harbour, on a lovely, upper-middle class tree-lined street. My first telephone call to him came to a rather stunned end when he told me that he had never heard of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union and that he did not think the women in the plant had ever been in a union. We went on to talk later about Job’s, fish processing, the Job family, and the workers in the Southside plant. The Job family has a long history in Newfoundland and Labrador; their social, economic and political involvements in the life of St. John’s, the Dominion of Newfoundland prior to confederation with Canada, and then the province of Newfoundland and Labrador have been considerable.

Not all workers at Job’s came from Shea Heights, Fort Amherst or the Southside Road. Some, albeit fewer in number, lived on the north side of St. John’s harbour most of their lives. Jessie Earle Thomas, for example, was born and raised on the north side of the harbour in a working class neighbourhood on Cabot Street. Helen White Picco, who worked for years in the Southside premises office lived most of her adult life in St. John’s on the northside of the harbour. When I met Helen in 1995, she was living on the northside still, in a housing development with a fine view of the city. We sat in her small kitchen trying to recall where we had met previously, for we had each recognized the other. Eventually, we concluded that we had met in one of the university cafeterias when Helen was working for the food services division and I was an undergraduate student. We went on to talk about changes at the university, and Helen’s early retirement on a low pension due to ill health.

The standard conception of the “researcher” holding power over the “researched” was thrown into sharp relief in my meeting with Helen. Our conversation
was a lesson for me in ownership of narrative and the potential for shifting relations of power in a superficially unequal intersubjective moment. She was not comfortable with my use of the tape recorder and firmly refused to speak if it was running. After some attempt on my part to change her mind, I took notes slowly, with Helen speaking sentences carefully and pausing if I got behind. She watched my writing and occasionally checked to see if I had recorded her words accurately. I was very tense during our conversation. Afterward, I wondered about my audacity to ask women about their lives as if I had every right to know them. This remains an unresolved and still pertinent question for me in conducting research with others.

Frank Sainsbury is also one of the northside crowd. I met Frank, who lives in The Battery, located on the northside of the Narrows at the base of Signal Hill, during a sunny morning walk with an acquaintance. As we strolled along, talking about my research, Frank came up the road toward us. My companion, who had lived in The Battery for a few years, introduced me to Frank and we stood chatting for several minutes. He agreed to talk more with me, so I arranged a meeting for later in the week at his small house in the Battery. Frank worked at Job’s in the cold storage area during 1944-45 after leaving the Merchant Marine where he had served during World War II. A member of the LSPU, Frank continued to work on the waterfront until the late 1950s. He married another Job’s worker, Joan Hicks in the mid-1940s. Frank, now seventy-three years old, described in detail the layout and operations of the Job Brothers plant in the 1940s for me. The verbal and visual maps he drew helped me to understand the complexity of the operations.

I was not able to meet in person with everyone who contributed to this study, however. Two other taped and transcribed conversations which are included here were located in the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archives. These conversations
are the product of interviews conducted in 1992 by Michelle Park, a student conducting research for her Honours dissertation in History. The first tapes comprise the stories of Pearl Tucker Hunt, cousin of Daisy Tucker Hiscock, and Pearl’s husband Cecil Hunt, brother of Alice Hunt Kittinger. Pearl and Cecil now live in Mount Pearl, a modern and competing sister-city to St. John’s, located several miles from the harbour, the Southside Road and Fort Amherst. The couple talked with Michelle about life at Job’s, from fish processing to berry packing, about what they saw as men’s work and women’s work and about meeting on the job. Their stories constructed for me a powerful image of the production of gendered subjectivities in a stratified and gendered workplace.

Michelle Park had also recorded an interview with Alice Hunt Kittinger in 1992. I was fortunate to be able to transcribe this conversation and learn much about Alice’s early years prior to speaking with her myself. In some instances, stories of the same events - one told in 1992 and another in 1994 - provided a fascinating glimpse of the intersubjective production of narratives.

Chesley Janes, a member of the LSPU from 1947 to the 1990s, was recorded in Michelle’s other interview tapes. He tells his stories in a lively voice, referring to personal photographs of waterfront activity and vessels, and occasionally asking Michelle about her life and research. Ches is married to Ruth Fowler Janes whose photograph was taken while she worked on the fish processing line in 1950. Ches was born on the Southside Road and worked in and around the waterfront most of his life. He worked for Job’s processing salt fish from the age of fourteen in 1942. Later, he was employed as foreman over the discharging of the fishing vessels at Job’s wharf. The men in Ches’ family had a long connection with Job Brothers fish plant. Ches’ grandfather was storekeeper for Job’s in the early decades of the twentieth century, and his father, Billy Janes, worked at Job’s as foreman in the cold storage plant and in the blueberry
operations during the 1930s and 1940s. Ches was sixty-four years old and on long-term disability for a work-related injury when he spoke to Michelle. He talked about his own longshore work, his different work with Job’s operations, and some of the social life associated with Job Brothers workplace.

Who was I in all of these meetings? I know from my side of things that I am a middle-aged, middle-class woman, white, a “come-from-away” in Newfoundland parlance, linked to the university, who borrowed cars and rode buses to make our appointment times. I am also a former union member, who can’t locate her union card, and who retains rather negative memories of attending union meetings in a large and noisy hall. I went to perhaps six or eight meetings in ten years, usually when a contract was discussed or elections were held. The union was large, diverse in the jobs held by members, and predominantly male. When I think of those meetings, I remember how hard it was as a young woman to speak, especially if a topic was perceived to be a “woman’s issue,” such as harassment or other problems in the workplace. On the one occasion I when called upon the union to advise and support me in a problematic work environment, the treatment I received from the union representative was scornful and humiliating. So I entered my research, and the various conversations, with a concern for and interest in, other women’s experiences of unions.

Class as a signifier and identity positioning, as well as a narrative frame, quickly came into play in my research. When I began this study, I felt very much a product of working class culture, albeit from another province of Canada. I had previously worked with texts and interviews pertaining to upper-class women and their organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador, and had felt out-of-place in that research.4

4 See Cullum (1993a).
In this study, I rather naively imagined that I would move more easily into a working-class culture, would be seen to be more “the same” as those with whom I wished to talk. This turned out to be an unsophisticated conception of research (and human) relationships.

My notions about my own identity(ies) were tested throughout this research and writing. In contrast to some feminist maxims (Roberts:1981; Oakley:1981; Minister:1991, etc.), I became more acutely aware of how little shared gender provides common ground in these moments. Like Riessman (1994), in my work, gender, age, class, religious and race differences intersected in the conversations. I felt an increasingly troublesome complexity in my own identity as I moved through the landscape of St. John’s and of women’s and men’s lives. I tried to never be the “blank-faced” researcher, one who refuses personal questions directed at herself. Indeed, I was asked many personal questions, some of which had no easy answers. Each conversation involved a complex set of negotiations and adjustments. By their words and actions, the women and men narrators saw me not as I saw myself, but in many different guises - in subject positionings which were multiple, fluid, often puzzling and troubling, and sometimes contested. I see in the transcripts a girl, an outsider, a curiosity, someone to tease about age, about being a Newfoundlander or not, someone who needed feeding, and probably many other things as well.

This thesis is a journey, then, for me as well as for the narrators. Ultimately, it is a journey along very different paths than I had first envisioned.

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5 This term is used by Ruth Frankenberg to describe the expected “neutral” academic researcher. See Frankenberg, 1993, p. 31.
WRITING CONVENTIONS AND CHOICES

Throughout this study, narrative transcripts are referenced. When this occurs, the last name of the narrator is followed by the initials TS, indicating transcript, and the year the narrative was collected. This is followed by a colon and the page number location of the cited material. For example, Hiscock TS94:10, indicates the citation is from the 1994 narrative transcript of Daisy Hiscock, and is located on page 10 of the transcription. For women speakers, the name by which they are known at the time of this study, usually their marital name, is used. The complete record of transcribed narrations is listed in the Archival Sources section.

Archive or organizational names cited often in this study are long and cumbersome to read when written in full. To address this concern, acronyms are used for archive sites or organizations when appropriate. Although the full name of the archive or organization, followed by the acronym, is used when it first appears in the text, the acronym is generally used thereafter. For convenience of reading, a list of acronyms is included in the abbreviations listing in the front of this thesis. Also included is a summary of the few textual forms - brackets, parentheses, ellipses and so on - used in the citation of transcripts.

Occasionally, narrators use commonplace Newfoundland words or phrases in their narratives, such as “slinger” or “queer hand.” These are not necessarily commonly understood outside of Newfoundland, however. Sometimes the context and usage direct the reader to particular meanings of these words and phrases; at other times they do not. To avoid puzzlement for the reader, I have supplied the “official” meanings drawn from the Dictionary of Newfoundland English, Second Edition with Supplement, published in 1990. In most cases I have also quizzed myself and my Newfoundland friends for our understandings of these words and phrases. In all cases, understandings
closely paralleled the “official” meaning so I have provided these in footnotes where needed.

CHARTING THE JOURNEY

In Chapter Two, I outline some of the theoretical considerations and debates - principally feminist poststructuralist discussions - in which this study is embedded. The academic and popular literature detailing the historically contingent experiences of women and unionization in Newfoundland is addressed as well. Although some efforts have been made to recover stories of women, work and union formation in this province, much remains to be examined. The early unions to which women belonged, such as the Newfoundland Protective Association of Shop and Office Employees (NPASOE), have yet to be discussed in detail. As well, the contributions of numerous women, such as Amelia Fogwill, to the work of the Trades and Labour Council in Newfoundland during the late 1930s have not been written. The difficulties in obtaining archival print sources and oral narratives for some of these projects are specified and discussed in this chapter.

In Chapter Three I discuss in detail the multiple methods and questions with which I grappled while “in the field” conducting research, and as I moved into the more formal analysis and writing stages of dissertation production. These categories of work are not entirely separate of course. Rather, they are fluid states, overlapping, interrupting and disrupting their conventional discrete groupings. Analysis begins with the first words spoken; research continues for that interesting citation or record even as the thesis nears completion. In the chapter, I interweave theoretical concerns with methodological approaches as I attempt to tie “theory” closely to “action” in my methods choices. My own shifting subject positionings in this research project begin to become apparent here. “Who am I?” becomes as pressing a question as “Who are the
narrators?” in this study.

Chapter Four describes a material workplace in flux historically, and begins to tease out some of the class distinctions embodied in gendered subjectivity and differing life choices. I suggest that narrators’ stories of “getting a job” with Job Brothers fish plant are sites of desires for, and investments in, particular gendered and classed identities.

The constitution of gendered identities and gendered discourses about work at Job’s fish plant are examined in Chapter Five. Narrators’ stories are both constituent of, and constituted by, these discourses of work. The fish processing line is detailed and women’s contested and sometimes contradictory stories of harmony and resistance on the line are examined.

In stories about working on the blueberry processing line, which only occurred for a short few months in the fall of the year, narrators produced fragmented and contested moments of gendered discourses. In particular, when married couples engaged in discussions about berry processing, clear boundaries were drawn delineating the content and skill level of the work and the appropriateness of it being categorized in discourse as women’s work. I show in Chapter Six that women’s and men’s remembrances of blueberry processing are mediated by their relationship to the production line and each other.

With these challenging narratives of work and life in the fish plant in place, in Chapter Seven I move to stories of the formation of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union in 1948. This too, is a site of competing discourses and contested stories. Here narrators do not so much remember the union formation details as they produce stories mediated by multiple relationships with other women and their work. Race, class, gender and age intersect to locate differently each of the women narrators in relation to
the idea of a union.

In the closing chapter, I draw together the threads of this study, while keeping open the partial, fragmentary and contested nature of the narrations and my research process.
CHAPTER 2

THOUGHTS ON THEORY, INTERPRETATIONS AND SOURCES

I allow myself eddies of meaning:
yield to a direction of significance
running
like a stream through the geography of my work

A. R. Ammon, in Lather, Getting Smart

INTRODUCTION

As the title indicates, this chapter addresses a range of issues pertinent to the framing of my research study. Here I explore some of the recent sociological and historical literature detailing the historically contingent experiences of women and unionization in the province. Efforts to document women's lives in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially the stories of women, work and union formation, have been framed by conventional "recovery" or "discovery" approaches. The difficulties in obtaining archival documentary sources and oral narratives for some of these projects are specified and discussed.

At the heart of this research project are the oral narratives of working class women and men about their lives in the 1940s and 1950s in St. John's, Newfoundland. In particular, I examine the narratives of women workers employed at Job Brothers fish plant, who were members of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union (LCSWU) formed in the spring of 1948, and male workers belonging to the Longshoremen's Protective Union (LSPU).

The narrations include stories of paid and unpaid labour, lives in, and outside of, the workplace. While I began by reading the oral narratives from the LCSWU members through the lens of feminist poststructuralisms and considerations of race, class and
gender analyses, I soon shifted that view to encompass approaches arising from my reading in women's labour history studies. Questions about the physical structures of the workplace, the work, pay rates and so on, as well as how the narrators spoke about that worksite, needed to be considered. The challenge became how to bring these different reading frames together in order to document and analyze the production of meaning-making, and the multiple formations and (re)formations in self-identity, in the lives of these women.

Since oral narratives are central to my research process, and I wish to shift the questions asked of these narratives, I employ some conceptual and reading strategies drawn from feminist poststructuralist work. It is not my intention to "prove" the rightness or "truth" of such theoretical frames. Rather, I use these frames to read the narratives for the work they accomplish in the discursive production of subjects and selves. This means that I often perform several "readings" of the same text.

At one level, I situate and interpret the narrations within the wider terrain of the histories of women's paid and unpaid work, the political activism of women and men in Newfoundland in the twentieth century, and research on women's lives in Newfoundland in general. To this end, secondary literature documenting women's lives in urban St. John's, women's labour and union histories in Newfoundland and the work of the Longshoreman's Protective Union (LSPU) are employed to tease out broader questions and analyses. For example, the discursive and material practices of the male LSPU regarding women's work on the waterfront and their place in a union, raise interesting questions about the boundaries constructing femininity and masculinity, and women's union and workplace activism in the 1940s.

As well, discursive productions of a wide range of concepts - "women," "girls," "wives," "mothers," "work," "women and unions," "masculinity," for example - are
examined in this study as historically variable and contested constructions. Newspapers, journals, and popular literature of the day are explored for their discursive productions of these concepts and others, in particular historical moments and locations. Disjunctures between women's narratives of their work and lives at Job Brothers contest and challenge both archival documents and public newspaper accounts of Job's as a physical workplace and as a site of the constitution of gendered subjectivities. We can see how the narratives are organized, and the discursive work of that organization - the shifts, agreements, challenges, corrections and so forth. Gaps and tensions become visible both within and among the oral narratives collected in this study.

Narrative coherence, within narrations and between different narrations and narrators, is raised as a shaping influence in the formation of narratives. "Is that what Dais said?" is asked many times by narrators. The question - Is my story the same as...? - becomes a pointed interrogation in my conversations with the narrators. The desire to tell the story becomes visible. Likewise, the situational moves within narrations to make an individual narrator's stories "fit" together in a more seamless way points to a will to a particular kind of story telling. For example, on separate occasions, narrators "smoothed over" possible sites of disjuncture within their own narrative, and between other narratives, by saying that perhaps they were not working the day a particular event is said to have occurred. Absence from the scene means no personal eyewitness account on the part of the narrator is possible; therefore, a more flexible rendering of the entire account becomes possible. Thus, competing discourses about events are down played or eliminated entirely.

I have come to see that this thesis has multiple agendas: the telling of partial, incomplete and contested stories of the work of the women and men at Job Brothers fish plant, and the formation of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union in the late 1940s; a
deconstructive reading of meanings made by women and men narrators of their experiences at Job's plant and in their wider lives; and a deconstruction/examination of these multiple tellings for the discursive production of relations of power in and through the organizing practices of gender, race and class in Job's plant.

In these complex readings I look for the intersubjective practices through which our identification with subject positions, memory, community and so forth are organized and, at least in part, accomplished through conversation. I include myself in this examination, for I am part of the intersubjective moments of production of meanings. I also question what the narrators might have meant, intended to say, have “forgotten,” or what they choose not to reveal in our talks. I look to see how the narrators and I position ourselves and each other in intricate ways, how we produce particular discourses and subjects in our conversations. In these readings I am working with interpretations of a different order, where questions of desires for and investments in, particular subject positionings become salient. Finally, the discursive “rules” that operate to produce “truth” about the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union and women’s relationships to it, as well as who is authorized to speak, and about what, are rendered more observable by my readings. These reading approaches allow me to ask questions about the discursive production of subjects and selves, and the work of our everyday talk in the creation, maintenance and shifting of these fashionings of selves and identities. Different readings also allow me to shift the questions that social, labour, and feminist historians and sociologists have asked, and are asking, and the ways in which we, and they, think about the work accomplished. Finally, in these ways I am able to problematize conventional notions about “experience” and “truth.”
WOMEN, WORK AND UNIONIZATION LITERATURE

While the theoretical approaches I employ and the questions I am asking may be somewhat different, academic interest in women and their paid work outside the home is not new. In the last two decades, academic disciplines such as history and sociology have taken up the study of women and their work, both inside and outside the home. As Gonick (1987) states, “[P]rior to the 1970’s, the issue of women’s work in industrial societies was largely ignored on a formal theoretical level. It was assumed that in those societies men worked and women cared for families” (3).

An emphasis on the exploration of women’s lives and “experiences” in the workplace and in the home developed in the 1970s in the field of social history. According to Ava Barron (1991), the “new labor history” of the 1970s, with an emphasis on “the study of working people within the context of community,” opened up possibilities for the study of women workers, and eventually, women workers, unionization and collective actions (4). A growing interest in gender as a category of historical analysis and attention to language in the construction of gender relations has produced exciting shifts in analysis (Scott:1988). In sociology, much of the work has focused on women’s negotiation of the dual roles of paid worker outside the home and home worker responsible for the nurturing and care of family members, especially children.1

A small sampling of the huge and varied body of women and work literature is reviewed here. I examine Canadian, British and American sociological and historical works that address issues of gender and work, workplace struggles, unionization of women, and that employ experiential narratives as a central analytical tool. In general,

1 See the following Canadian work, for example, Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978; Luxton, 1980; Luxton and Rosenberg, 1986; Garnagé, 1986.
these studies examine blue-collar workers and union organizations. Some of these works emphasize factory labour processes, shop floor cultures, or the attitudes and practices of male union officials toward women union members (Gannage:1986; Glucksman:1990; Charles:1986).

This sociological research on women and unions and workplace struggles share some methodological features: they are ethnographic, empirical case studies which rely on participant observation and in-depth interviews for information collection. At the time of their publication, they were present-day studies. The historical studies employ archival records and other documents, as well as in-depth interviews, and in Parr (1990) participant observation and shop floor work "experience" enriches the study. Frager's emphasis (1992) is slightly different. She also relies on archival documents and interviews, but her study focuses on the relations of class, ethnicity and gender in the Jewish labour movement in Toronto from 1900 to 1939, rather than on a specific workplace or issue.

More problematic for my use of these studies as models are some of the epistemological and ontological assumptions underlying their production. A key problem in these studies, with the exception of Parr's work, is that "experience" is an assumed category and remains unproblematicized (Pollert:1981; Cavendish:1982; Porter:1983; Charles:1986; Westwood:1986; Glucksman:1990; Frager:1992). Experience is produced out of binary categories: the "personal experience" of those interviewed is distinguished from, and contrasted with, their "experiences" of a strike action, for example (Porter:1983).

In all of these studies, language is assumed to be transparently representational, rather than being socially constructed, regulatory and productive of the "realities" they purport to represent. Meaning is assumed to be directly accessible in, and through,
language. The revelation, by the sociologist or historian, of “the meaning” is understood as a matter of straightforward interpretation in Marxist terms of ideology and class consciousness, and/or in feminist terms of gender consciousness, rather than as contingent, contested and open to change. This univocal meaning, produced as it is through “insider knowledge” and “direct experience,” is highly valorized and is equated with a privileged, more knowledgeable position - a position desired by the researcher in her will to truth and knowledge (Gannagé:1986:24; Porter:1983:29). Indeed, often unquestioned is the assumption that the female/feminist researcher has better access to this knowledge because of her presumed shared gender position with the female subjects participating in the study.

Kondo (1990) and Gregg (1993) depart from the notion of unproblematized experience in their works. Although quite different undertakings, each examines the negotiations of gender, class, race and the possibilities and constraints of multiple, gendered subject positionings for women in their respective workplaces. Narratives are taken as windows through which discursive practices may be “seen.” Kondo is by far the more sophisticated and complex in her writing, but each employs a poststructuralist lens which offers a nuanced interpretation of “experience” to the reader. Identity (re)formation is not seen as a static object, but as a creative on-going and incomplete process.

This is in sharp contrast with Charles (1986) and Gannagé (1986), who take up their narrators as fixed and unvarying subjects. Porter (1983) observes that women are not a “homogeneous group,” but have many different “experiences” as wives, mothers, daughters, young and old women. However, within these categories, “experiences” assume similarity based on gender, and the emphasis is on the differences between women and men rather than within genders (1-13). Initially Westwood
(1984) does not assume the "sameness" of women based on gender, and does suggest that there are differences within the category of race, in particular. However, she soon notes that perhaps, in the future, "more [Indian women] will come to refer to themselves as black women," thus immediately erasing difference and implicitly positing false consciousness on the part of Indian women who have not yet come to name their identity as black (1-10).

A new study by Creese (1999) takes a different approach. She examines a white-collar office workers' union - the Office and Professional Employees' International Union, Local 378 - at B.C. Hydro. In this work, Creese shows the negotiation of gender, race and class within the collective bargaining process. Questions of the gendering and racing of work processes, the production of masculinity and privilege in the workplace, and the impact of union solidarity on negotiating greater workplace equity are explored in the challenging study. Some of these same questions echo through my own research in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As I have written elsewhere, earlier anthropological and sociological work in, and on, Newfoundland stressed male relationships, work partnerships and formal power structures in rural communities. Women were interpreted as peripheral to these male spheres, their lives merely a support to the seemingly greater role played by men in family and community structures (Cullum:1993a:10-12). As Porter (1993) has observed, until the mid-1980s, "[T]he ethnographic and historical sources...simply made no mention of the place of women in Newfoundland society." Research assumptions about a maritime society - that it is male-oriented and that male activities are of most consequence in the community - had shaped the inquiries (5). Exceptions to this are earlier studies by Antler (1977), Murray (1979), Porter (1983b), and Davis (1983b), each of whom examined women's lives in fishing economies of outport
Newfoundland, and expanded our understanding of women's labour in those households and communities.

Thankfully, in the last decade these lacunae have begun to be addressed in the disciplines of history, women’s studies, anthropology and sociology. A range of academic research has addressed topics on Newfoundland women, their paid labour and their unionization activities. Women’s lives and experiences are being considered in new ways, with implications for new and different understandings of Newfoundland and Labrador. For example, although women have made up approximately forty per cent of the labour in fish plants, their perspectives have only recently been brought to public attention. In 1986, the Fishery Research Group made the first detailed study of the social impact of technological change in the deep sea fishery in Newfoundland. Looking at the outport communities of Burgeo, Arnold’s Cove and Catalina, the FRG concluded that “work, community and family lives of workers” in this fishery had been profoundly affected by technological change during the 1970s and 1980s. Interestingly, women’s concerns at the Catalina deep sea plant during the 1980s eerily echo those faced by the women of Job Brother in the 1940s: a gendered, hierarchical division of labour and wages; restrictions on women’s participation in other plant work; the discomfort of being a forewoman in the plant; the intrusive surveillance of women, especially in the bathrooms, to name just a few (Little:1994). Robbins (1997) examines the disjunctures between rural women’s experiences and the media coverage and reporting on the cod moratorium between 1991 and 1995. She employs an interesting qualitative and qualitative analysis of media coverage, specifically addressing those reports contained in the St. John’s Evening Telegram. Robbins concludes that “women’s voices and concerns about the fishery crisis are silenced or framed from a male point of view” (133). McCay (1995) argues that her focus on women “necessarily leads to an
exploration of the problems of an organization" - in this case, the Fogo Island Co-operative Society, Ltd. Of interest to my study, McCay found that employment in the Co-op fish plants was firmly gender-divided, with women working on the “trimming, grading and packing lines," and men on the “filleting lines and in freezing, boxing and forklift ing stacks of frozen fillets and blocks” (1995:144-147). This mirrors the division of labour in the Job Brothers plant during the 1940s and 1950s. Wright (1990; 1995) looks at the impact of federal government fisheries policies, in particular, how these policies perpetuate gender inequality. She too, employs a media analysis to examine the visual representations of the Atlantic fishery “which reveal ideas about gender roles and fishing” (1995:131). Jane Robinson (1994; 1995) has explored how women responded to economic restructuring in the outport community of Trepassey, Newfoundland, during the early 1990s. Fish plant closures, and a powerful public and state discourse of “adjustment,” forced women who were “highly productive, industrial wage labourers” into the role of unemployed and unskilled workers in need of re-training. She concludes that adjustment programs “have been loaded with notions of class and gender, with built-in prescriptions of how women should act” (1995:173).

In Newfoundland labour history, the emphasis in research and writing has been male labour and their unions. Sociologist Barbara Neis noted recently that little of the research and writing on unions, and unionization activities, in Newfoundland and Labrador includes a gender analysis, or an examination of women’s involvement.2

Occasionally, women can be glimpsed in scholarly and popular work. In Baker et

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2 For examples of this writing, see the numerous works on the Fishermen’s Protective Union and William Coaker. These include: McDonald (1971;1987), Cuff (1986), and Bill (1996). See also work on union organizing by Strong (1987) and Hattenhauer (1970); on the development of the Fisheries, Food and Allied Workers’ Union by Inglis (1983;1985); a social history of male unions and unionization by Gillespie (1986), a government report on union and labour demographics by G. Kealey (1986). Neis points out that her own doctoral work completed in 1988 gives little attention to these questions (1988).
women are allowed a brief appearance. Although women were involved as leaders and members in some of the early unions in St. John's, they are rarely mentioned as an active part of the labour movement. With only one paragraph devoted to women's work in unions, Cuff (1982) describes the role of "a ladies' branch" of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association (NIWA) as interested in "social functions such as sales of work and amateur theatricals" (51). Government sponsored research has yielded some studies which focus on women. For example, Linda Kealey (1986) documents women's paid labour force participation in the 1980s. Women and paid labour have received attention from Forestell, as she documents the extent of working-class women's paid labour between the wars (1986; 1987; 1989). As well, Forestell and Chisholm (1988) and Chisholm (1986; 1988; 1990) examine accounts of labour early in this century, some of which included women. McInnis (1986; 1987) details the history of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association (NIWA), with a substantial discussion of the work of women in the organization. These studies concentrate on aspects of work, the development of unions from the turn-of-the-century to the 1920s, and strike actions. An overview of union growth in Newfoundland by Cadigan appears in the newest volume of the Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador (1994). This traditional research activity has stirred the previously still waters on women and unionization.

The histories of women's lives and experiences in paid and domestic labour in Newfoundland and Labrador during the 20th century is still largely unwritten, however. Insufficient work has been undertaken to document and/or analyze women's experiences in different work sites, over time. In general, research on women in the time period between the 1940s and the 1960s is lacking. In part, this is because of the paucity of both secondary sources and primary archival sources on women, in particular working-
class women. As well, a key feature of research to date has been the focus on outport life, rather than the urban St. John's experience. Working-class, urban women employed in the industrialized fishery have not been the focus of research. An exception to this is the short Honours essay by Park (1992) on the women fish plant workers of Job Brothers in St. John's. It was my reading of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union records and the subsequent production of Park's Honours thesis on the subject that encouraged my interest in these women workers, and, hence, this dissertation work.

UNIONS AND WOMEN WORKERS

Unions were first formed in Newfoundland early in the nineteenth century. Cadigan (1994) notes that they were formed by male "skilled journeymen" and began as "mutual benefit societies" which soon began to represent their members in bargaining with employers. By the mid-nineteenth century tailors, joiners, carpenters, coopers, typographers, shipwrights and seal skinners were organized in unions (453-454).3 According to Greg Kealey (1986), these craft unions predominated in St. John's prior to World War I, although industrial development in Newfoundland meant the growth of unions for paper makers, pulp, sulphite and paper mill workers, railway workers, including telegraphers, trainmen, firemen and engineers and railway employees in general (12-15). These were all male dominated occupations and trades which excluded women workers. These unions did not attempt to organize women workers during this time period. Thus, women were excluded from some union organizations by virtue of their paid labour opportunities, and later, the unions' disinclinations toward

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organizing unskilled women workers.

McInnis (1987) argues that during this period women were not readily organized into unions for a number of other reasons. Most women worked in occupational ghettos quite distinct from men. As such, male union leaders and members were not well informed about the everyday world of women's paid labour. Women workers suffered from workplace isolation, irregular hours and close supervision from employers (186-188). Many women worked in traditional female occupations such as domestic service in private homes. For example, in 1921, nearly 34% of the St. John's female labour force were employed as domestics (Forestell:1986:228). In a small, socially and materially interconnected city like St. John's, keeping an organizing drive low-key was virtually impossible, and women were then vulnerable to retaliation from employers. Many young women came to St. John's from small rural communities and could not risk being fired from their workplace. These material conditions of women's employment made union education and organizing difficult. While the concentration of large numbers of women workers in specific workplaces, such as the larger department stores on Water Street, facilitated union organizing, it was not until the late 1930s that such organizing efforts occurred.

McInnis also suggests that women were thought to be harder to organize because of their perceived intermittent connection to the paid work force. Domestic ideologies of womanhood, which valued marriage and family over paid labour, meant that young women tended to leave the workforce upon marriage (1987:186-188). This conclusion may be very class and gender biased. My research with the women of the LCSWU shows the decision to work was historically and economically contingent, and was not a uniform and unvarying decision for all women working in the Job Brothers fish plant. Women did marry, but did not leave Job's employ until they had children (Hiscock TS94:32; Hunt
TS92:32-33). Some women left only after their second child arrived (Picco TS95:2). Many women who chose to leave work remained in the home until their children were ten or twelve and then returned to work at Job's (Picco TS95:2; Hiscock TS92:111; Hiscock TS87:28-29). Other women chose not to return to Job's but to take work elsewhere after having children (Hunt TS92:68). For some women the choices were not so flexible. They continued to work at the plant year-round for decades, through marriage and children, because their income was essential to support their family (Scott TS94:50).

Forestell's analysis (1987) of working women in St. John's between the First and Second World Wars shows us the extent and diversity of women's paid labour during that time. As part of that work life, Forestell uncovers the activities of women in the St. John's labour movement. In part, her work contradicts that of McInnis. Forestell argues that there were two significant waves of unionization for women in the city: immediately after World War I and again in the late 1930s. Little has been written about these union activities, so we are left with the impression that women did not join unions, were conservative in their union involvements, or "played insignificant or even non-existent roles in the running of them." Men may have filled the public executive positions and the ranks of the membership, but, Forestell states, "hundreds of working women became members of unions, actively participated in them, and when necessary, engaged in strikes" (152). There are a rich histories here to be explored.

With the increase in secondary manufacturing of consumer goods in the first two decades of this century, many new jobs became available for women. They began to work in factories around St. John's producing clothing, boots and shoes, confectionary goods, tobacco, and cordage such as nets and twine. Women often worked together in larger numbers than before, in occupations which exposed them to the possibility of unionization. Newfoundland women were not totally absent from labour groups or
activities, as McInnis (1987) observes

In Newfoundland working women did have a record of activity in local labour groups and participation in strike actions led by established male unions, but figures show that female membership in unions remained limited (189).

Some smaller unions did attempt to include women workers in their membership drives. In 1910, Local 410 of the Journeymen Tailors Union of America (JTU) sought to organize women working in tailoring shops. Usually paid lower wages than the journeymen tailors they worked alongside and sometimes replaced, women tailors became the subject of conflict during a strike action in 1911. The local press claimed the JTU had demanded the prohibition of women workers. The JTU denied this allegation by insisting in the newspaper that their cause was one of equal wages for equal work. If women were to work alongside journeymen tailors, then they should be paid the same rates for the work. The JTU won the dispute. Local 410 actively recruited women tailors as union members, and some women did join. Unfortunately there were only a small number of unionized tailoring shops in the city, and women workers were concentrated in large non-union companies (Forestell and Chisholm:1988:147).

Other sectors of the economy were seeking women members as well. Forestell and Chisholm (1988) state that in 1907 "the largest single group of female workers listed in the city directory [McAlpine's] was retail clerks"(146). According to Hattenhauer (1970s), the St. John's Retail Clerks' Association sought input from women when there were attempts to organize in 1907. Some five hundred clerks and shop employees attended a founding meeting in October of that year. It is not clear whether any of those attending the meeting were women. A constitution was drawn up, and Hattenhauer suggests that the union immediately faced the question of whether or not to admit women to its membership. "Lady assistants" were “interviewed...on several questions of
mutual interest" (Hattenhauer:1970s:116), and in 1908, the St. John's Retail Clerks Union held meetings discussing the establishment of a Ladies Branch of the union. While meetings were held and proposals made, the women workers were never welcomed into the union. By 1911, the St. John's Retail Clerks Union had collapsed (Forestell and Chisholm:1988:147).

The work of Jessie Chisholm (cited in G. Kealey:1986) substantiates women's active involvement in strike actions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Chisholm studied Newfoundland newspapers in order to document women's long history of involvements in, and support of, labour actions. She notes that in March 1897, women operatives of a shoe factory in Harbour Grace struck to protest the lengthening of their work day. Unfortunately, as with many kinds of newspaper accounts, there is no record of the outcome of their action. Later, in November 1899, women operatives in St. John's were unsuccessful in their demand for payment for overtime work. May 1902 saw women workers in a St. John's tobacco factory fail in their strike for higher wages. In March and April 1904, women dressmakers and other women workers in St. John's struck for better wages and working hours. The April strike was successful but no outcome is known about the dressmakers' demands. St. John's women fought the reduction of piece rates in February 1912, but were not successful in their demands. Women workers also supported the strike demands of male workers. One example of this sort of sympathy strike was staged in April 1913 by female operatives allied with male shoe workers at Parker and Munroe in St. John's. The shoe workers sought higher wages and recognition for their union. A compromise was reached in this strike (Chisholm in G. Kealey:1986:24-34; Chisholm:1988). As Greg Kealey points out, Chisholm's exhaustive research "is dramatically revising our understanding of the history of turn-of-the-century urban Newfoundland" (1986:13).
Significant among the industrial unions formed prior to World War I were the Newfoundland Industrial Workers Association (NIWA) and the Longshoremen's Protective Union (LSPU). Each played a role in organizing women workers in different sectors of the economy, and in different decades of the first half of the twentieth century.

The NIWA, founded in April 1917 by machinists employed by the Reid-Newfoundland Railway, launched an island-wide organizational drive to recruit new members. Initially, the NIWA membership included a wide-range of occupations and trades, from railways workers to jewellers, longshoremen and insane-asylum workers. These workers were male, working in male dominated industries and occupations.

McInnis (1986) argues that the NIWA quickly became a “progressive" organization. Importantly, the NIWA made major efforts to unionize women workers. The Association's constitution provided for the incorporation of working women as active members through their membership and participation in a separate women's branch (231-232).4

In August 1918, Julia Salter Earle, 39-year-old engrossing clerk at the House of Assembly, organized the Ladies' Branch of the NIWA (WNIWA). Meeting in the British Hall that night were scores of women factory and domestic workers. The Daily News5 of August 9, 1918 recorded that women from Newfoundland Clothing, British Clothing, Newfoundland Knitting, Standard Manufacturing, Colonial Cordage (rope makers), Imperial Tobacco, Browning's (bakery) and F. B. Wood Company (confectionary)

4 Much of the following discussion owes a debt to the work of McInnis, 1986 and 1987. See also Hattenhauer, "Brief History," 1970.

5 Future citations for newspapers will be abbreviated in the text as follows: the Evening Telegram will be cited at ET, followed by the date and page number and the Daily News will cited as DN, followed by the date and page number.
attended the gathering. Julia Salter Earle was elected president of the WNIWA and
Josephine Morrisey, a tailorress with the Royal Stores, was elected vice-president.
Women workers from other factories in the city filled the executive positions.

Interestingly, NIWA president Phillip Bennett and executive members Warwick
Smith and Thomas M. White were present as well to "extend the encouragement of the
city's male unionists, and as well to lend some organizational expertise to the
proceedings" (DN: August 9, 1918:3).6 The presence of male union members in
support of, and working to organize, women union members was replicated thirty years
later in the formation of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union. At the 1948 founding
meeting of the LCSWU, the LSPU president Leo Earle,7 vice-president Ralph Martin, and
Delegate Jack Squires instructed the women in union formation and guided the election of
the first executive (DN:February 9, 1948:3).

The women's NIWA was distinct from the men's NIWA; the women met
separately, in a different St. John's location, under their own constitution. The WNIWA
controlled their own finances and day-to-day operations. Once established, the WNIWA
moved quickly to address issues of concern to their female membership: child labour,
wages, sick pay, piece-work and factory sanitation. The WNIWA membership was five
hundred strong when, in November 1918, they went on strike at Browning's, a local
manufacturer of bread and biscuits. The women supported their male colleagues in
demands for wage parity with the bakery workers at Harvey and Company in St. John's.
They lost this battle, but clearly co-operative efforts between women and men in the

6 See also McInnis, 1987, page 190.

7 LSP Union President Leo Earle and Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union President Jessie Earle
were not related.
workplace could be organized. Later in November, another action against Colonial Cordage Company at the Ropewalk resulted in a successful demand for a closed shop workplace, in essence, recognition of the union. For many of the strike operations, women of the WNIWA raised strike funds through organizing dances and bake sales. McInnis notes that the WNIWA also organized a range of social and educational activities in order to teach its members about union organizations and issues. He argues that the success of the Ladies Branch of the NIWA refutes the widely-held notion of a “feminine psychology” operating to hinder women’s commitment to unionization (McInnis:1987:191-199). I would argue that perhaps the serious consideration of issues close to women’s work and domestic lives helped to organize women’s response differently than in earlier unionizing efforts.

With the post-World War I downturn in the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador, employment opportunities for working-class women in factories, shops, offices and other sites diminished. Job options became more limited, and returning soldiers competed with women for work. Forestell and Chisholm (1988) argue that an ideology of “the male breadwinner” discouraged the employment of married women and undermined the economic value of all women’s waged labour” (150). Little was said or done to increase the employment of women during this time.

Cadigan (1994) notes that between 1925 and 1937 few unions represented Newfoundland working women. In 1937-38, the newly formed Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council (NTLC) launched a drive to organize or revive unions in Newfoundland. The NTLC supported the establishment of fifteen unions, with 3,940 workers between
February and September 1938. Many occupations in which women worked were included in this drive. Cadigan (1994) and Forestell (1987) note that garment, beverage, confectionary, tobacco, telephone and cordage businesses employed significant numbers of female workers. During this time, the Newfoundland Protective Association of Shop and Office Employees (NPASOE) was formed. Women were active members and leaders in this union. Amelia Fogwill was elected first vice-president of NPASOE and nearly forty percent of the members were women (Cadigan:1994:459). A photograph of the NPASOE Executive of 1939 shows Amelia Fogwill and Ethel Barrett, who was then second vice-president of the union (CNSA:Coll. 079).

Fascinating as this work is, none addresses the work or organization of women employed in aspects of the industrialized fishery in Newfoundland. Neis (1988) briefly incorporates an examination of the records of the Fisherman and Workman’s Protective Union of Burin, Newfoundland. This union, formed in 1947, apparently had both female and male members. The union minutes show several women’s names as dues-paying members from March 1950 onward. No individual examination of the work and issues addressed by this union has been done to date. Stories have not been told and despite these important unionization gains, Forestell notes, that “the majority of working women remained unorganized” (1987:179).

Historical studies tend to focus on land-based industrial sectors of the economy, rather than the fishery. Other disciplines do take up the fishery and workers more

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8 See also Forestell (1987) where the author documents sixteen St. John’s unions formed in 1938, with a total of 4,762 workers. For a discussion of the Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council, later called the Newfoundland Federation of Labour, see B. Gillespie, 1980.

9 This Association is sometimes called Newfoundland Association of Shop and Office Employees (NASOE).
directly, but again largely without the focus on women fish plant workers. In Newfoundland, sociologists, anthropologists and economists have given specific attention to women's economic lives in rural communities and the fishery since the mid-eighties: Anger, McGrath and Pottle (1986) report on the range of women and work in the province, Porter and Pottle (1987) study the position of women in the economy in one Newfoundland community, while Porter, Brown, Dettmer and McGrath (1990) focus on three communities in case studies of women in a fishery economy. Nadel-Klein and Davis (1988) broaden our understanding of various aspects of women's involvement in fishing economies. Davis (1983a; 1983b; 1986) studied women's lives in a rural Newfoundland community, with particular emphasis on social structure, gendered work roles, and experiences of menopause for women in the community. Health and safety issues and technological development, along with social aspects of the fishery, are explored in detail by Neis (1993), Neis and Williams (1993), and Williams (1996). Porter (1993) focuses on the "construction and consequences of the sexual division of labour in the changing economic context of Newfoundland," as well as examining conventional concepts such as "politics" and "culture" as they might be used to illuminate women's places in their communities (6). Other examinations of women in the fishery include Silk (1995) who provides a rich look at her own experience of being a fisher in outport Newfoundland, Rowe (1991), and Walsh (1993) who separately assess the impact of the recent cod moratorium/fishery crisis on women. Ennis and Woodrow's 1994 volume *Strong As the Ocean* documents women talking about the work they do, and have done historically in Newfoundland, including labour as beachwomen, char fishers, inshore and offshore fish plant workers, and as cooks on Labrador-bound schooners. All of these efforts have broadened our knowledge and understanding of women's labour force activities and economic lives as they participate in the fishing
industry as fishers, recent plant workers and now, as victims of the fishery moratorium.

There continues to be significant gaps in the research done to date however. Regrettably, the situation of women workers in Labrador during this time period is not addressed in the previously mentioned work, nor do I take up this issue here. Much work remains to be done in understanding women’s lives and accomplishments in Newfoundland and Labrador. Few accounts discuss the participation of women in fishery-related unions in any depth. All of the sociological writings comprise current-day studies, conducted between the late 1970s and the early 1990s, and contain inadequate historical material. Thus, research on and with women from the earlier decades of this century, through the 1940s to the 1970s is lacking. Historical studies, especially those looking at the development of unions and union movements in Newfoundland and Labrador, tend to emphasize male unionization. Inadequate attention has been given to the participation of women in unions and union movements here. McInnes’ (1986; 1987) inclusion of a discussion about women in the NIWA seems to be an exception to this. In part, this work remains undone because of the paucity of both primary archival and secondary sources on working class women. Central to this gap, however, is the kinds of questions being asked of the materials available. Finally, a key feature of research to date has been the focus on studies of outport life, rather than urban experience.

This brief review of some recent sociological and historical literature on women’s lives, their work and unionization provides the background for my decision to focus attention on working-class, urban women who participated in the formation of a union in an industrial fish plant operation in 1948. I hoped such a focus would fill a gap in the current literature on women, work and unions. As I moved into my research and analysis, however, the women’s narratives in particular led me to move away from my
emphasis on union formation, and to begin to ask different questions of my sources.

In all of this kind of work, researchers face great difficulties: limited collected documentary and oral sources, necessitating weeks and months of locating any extant sources, an uncertain access to existing sources in archives, and the limitations of those sources themselves provide many hurdles.

A NOTE ON DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Hattenhauer (1970s) acknowledges one of the major hurdles to the study of early unionization, and I would argue, to women's paid work lives in Newfoundland and Labrador, is the lack of written records for the pre-1949 period. He suggests some reasons for this situation.

In certain cases, records were never kept because of illiteracy on the part of union members, especially prior to the first quarter of this century, and where such records have been kept—as in the case of the Printer's Union—they were quite often treated as though they were personal property; in many other cases records were destroyed when the office of the Secretary changed hands or when a particular secretary considered old records to be of no further use to anyone. This leaves as major sources of information either newspapers, books or the memory of people who may have been connected with Labour in its early days of development in Newfoundland (2).

Hattenhauer is speaking, of course, about male dominated trade or craft unions in large part. The situation for female dominated service or clerical unions is much worse. Few records seem to have been kept, and what were saved may be archived with records from a male union with which they were allied. This is certainly the case with the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union, which are located within the records of the Longshoremen’s Protective Union (LSPU). Such collection and storage strategies obscure records and documents pertaining to women and their work.

Business records are also lacking in the archival record of Newfoundland and
Labrador. The *Evening Telegram* raised the issue of historical documents and other materials being held by prominent families when the editors eulogized Robert Brown Job in September 1961. Surprisingly, the editorial appealed to these families to make such records available to researchers.

There are several firms and families in Newfoundland which have very long and intimate associations with the economic, political and social history of this province. They have in their possession documents and other materials which, if assembled and notated, would be invaluable in helping to reconstruct many indefinite periods of our history. There is an obligation on them either to do so themselves or make it available to competent researchers to do it for them (*ET*, September 7, 1961:6).

Despite this plea, many of the business records of Job Brothers Limited for the fish plant operations during 1930-1967 appear to have been lost. I made an extensive search through the community of archivists in St. John's, and approached a former director of the firm for assistance. Earlier records of the Job family history, a family tree, pre-1900 family and business correspondence, a scrapbook of R. B. Job's political work during the National Convention of 1947-48, and brief miscellaneous records of other Job enterprises such as Blue Peter Steamships Company comprised the bulk of business and family records of the Job's. Only late in the production of this thesis did further Job Brothers records come to light. These records included the meeting minutes of the Job Brothers Company from about 1918 to 1983, and miscellaneous other records documenting business concerns. No details of the Southside fish plant, such as correspondence files, pay records and so forth, were contained in these records.

At the beginning of this research, I anticipated the Job business records would help me understand the material practices of the workplace, such as fluctuations in the workforce at Job's fish plant, the pace and scale of technological change in the workplace, and rates of pay prior to 1947 contracts. During my conversations with LCSWU women, questions have arisen regarding the constitution of the female workforce
from the 1930s through to the 1950s. This opens up other questions - how did the workforce change and when, how many women were employed during WW II versus post-WW II, did the workplace and the jobs become more gender-divided during this time? How do women remember this period at Job’s? These questions are important in light of research on women’s work opportunities expanding during, and contracting after, WW II. In this project, the women narrators indicate that the shift to processing frozen fish during WW II and the increasing technological development of the plant after WW II meant an increase in the female workforce along with changes in jobs and skills for women workers. Unfortunately, there are no business records which might illuminate these questions further.

Hattenhauer himself is an example of another way in which the record of unionization in Newfoundland and Labrador obscures women’s active participation. With all good intentions, he set out to “recover” and document the history of labour development as he understood it in the 1970s. He located archival records, print sources such as newspaper articles, and conducted oral history interviews with many leaders of the labour movement. Unfortunately, Hattenhauer did not collect sources on women’s participation in the labour movement, nor did he consider a gender analysis in his research. One can hardly fault him for this, however, as gender as an analytical tool was in its infancy in the 1970s, and the prevailing thought was that women, in general, were not active in unions. As a result, few questions regarding women’s participation were asked of the male leaders he interviewed, and he talked with even fewer female union members. One exception to this is a short interview with Mary Deer, the first president of the St. John’s Working Ladies Association. This union was formed by women general cleaners in shops, stores and government buildings. The transcribed conversation runs for about twenty pages, but provides very few details of the workings of the union which
existed from 1950 to 1959 (MUNFLA: Hattenhauer Collection, Tape 3, Track 1). Very limited business records of the union are available, but with few details of issues, executive or membership. They appear to have been concerned principally with issues of wages and working conditions for the seventy-five or more members (CNS: St. John’s Working Ladies Association, Microfilm 414).

Jessie Chisholm (1986), whose in-depth newspaper and archival research, and subsequent publications provide much of the available material on strikes and women in unions in Newfoundland prior to WW I, writes that the daily press in Newfoundland is the “single most important source for a labour history of Newfoundland” (218). This is particularly true when participants in events and organizations are no longer living.

Unlike other provinces or territories in Canada, Newfoundland did not collect information on unemployment statistics, labour disputes or labour issues. In addition, during this time period, the urban daily press did not report consistently on labour actions outside of the capital. As well, the reporting was often biased in favour of the newspaper advertisers who owned the factories and shops where strikes took place, and sometimes the church and government exercised censorship on the reporting of labour news. The local newspapers were not sympathetic with worker’s issues, and only the *Evening Telegram* was a union shop throughout the pre-WW I period. Thus, labour actions, participants views and general information on workers’ issues received limited coverage. Chisholm notes that, while labour activities of women and men are under reported, 215 strikes were recorded in the daily press. One can only wonder at the true extent of worker labour activism during this period (in G. Kealey: 1986:213; Chisholm: 1988).

In order to begin to hear the stories of more recent times about women’s work lives, labour activities, workplace struggles, and so on, it is imperative to expand the
repertoire of "collection" techniques. As in other disciplines, oral texts can provide rich sources for sociological exploration.

ORAL NARRATIVES AND SOCIOLOGY

Although oral narratives have long been used in the writing of history and folklore, the discipline of sociology has been slower to adopt them as a research tool. Approaches to the collection, reading and interpretation of oral texts are often absent from methodological discussions in sociology. Bluma Litner (1992) writes:

This is still a prevalent attitude maintained in the name of valid scientific inquiry, true knowledge, refereed authority. This attitude has continued to prevail with the unspoken complicity of the academy - a complicity which reifies objectivity, theory and abstraction... (10)

Generally, the problems posed by these oral narratives for the discovery of "truth" is the prime concern, rather than how such texts might be read, analyzed and used within the discipline and across disciplinary boundaries.

Stivers (1993) also discusses the lack of serious consideration and use of narratives in social science research. She notes that until relatively recently, narratives "could have no real place in social science." A narrative could not "qualify as knowledge because it was neither a set of logical propositions nor the product of scientific or quasi-scientific method..." The standards set by positivism clearly established what was deemed knowledge, how it was acquired and who could acquire it. The "frankly subjective knowledge" born of oral narrations has been thought to undermine the credibility of this empirically-based research (408-410).

According to folklorist Alessandro Portelli (1981b), positivist concern for the objectivity of oral narratives "lies in specific intrinsic characteristics, the most important being that [oral narratives] are artificial, variable, partial," whereas
written sources are considered to be immutable and thus, "holy." The mutability of narratives results, in part, from the social relationship in which they are produced and embedded (101). As Portelli suggests, the narrative may change as the relationship between the collector and narrator changes; Flax (1993) notes that meanings are "affected by and shift within different intra- or inter-subjective contexts" (108). Of course, the questions posed by ourselves, as both tellers and listeners, and the other tellers/listeners in the conversation, also affect the content and form of our narratives. All of these (and more) interact to give narratives the "unfinished nature of a work in progress" (104). This fluid, open and partial nature of narratives is the antithesis of traditionally-defined positivist research: fixed, knowable, objective and scientifically structured.

As Geiger (1986) contends, these "alleged weaknesses" of narratives "can be viewed as strengths" and oral narratives can provide culturally and historically specific information (338). This is key to "those who are not quite subjects [in orthodox disciplinary approaches]...colonized and enslaved people, working class men and women, bourgeois women, members of variously oppressed groups," opening up the possibility of reconfiguring notions of disciplinary boundaries and knowledge production (Gonick:1993:4).

The advent of new and different theoretical positions, such as poststructuralism and postmodernism, have challenged and undermined positivist approaches to research and knowledge production. As Dehli points out, such challenges are not without precedent:

...long before post-structuralism was 'invented'/produced there were critical investigations of the 'metanarratives of Enlightenment' (which are also incredibly various). Think, for example, of some of Marx's writings...people writing about the social construction/organization of knowledge; the critique of the ideological character or effects of science and 'Enlightenment'... feminists asking if 'women had a renaissance' etc (personal communication, May 1994).
Each of these theoretical developments has challenged traditional and commonly-held concepts about knowledge. As Gonick (1993) notes, these theoretical positions "have interrogated many of the positivist assumptions about what counts as knowledge, knowledge production and the origins of knowledge" (2). Approaches to knowledge which rely on linear, hierarchical modes of thought and research, and which are held to be the unbiased search for "truth" are less easily sustained in light of feminist and poststructuralist theories and questions (Stivers:1993:408).¹⁰

Who is speaking/listening is also being reframed in this discussion. The Enlightenment notion of an autonomous, rational and unified subject is under siege. Flax (1993) states

the metanarrative of Enlightenment...requires a certain form of subject - an undetermined one, who can be a discoverer of truth. It requires a particular view of reality - rational, orderly and accessible to and through our thought (95).

Recent theoretical discussions in poststructuralism, postmodernism and feminism have interrogated these ideas.¹¹ In some academic disciplines and among some theory workers, these theoretical approaches have eroded belief in Enlightenment notions of an ideal, conscious, knowing, coherent and consistent unified subject.¹²

¹⁰See also Flax, 1987 and Pierson, 1991.

¹¹As I write this, I am deeply conscious of the incredible range of poststructuralist and 'Enlightenment' positions, and do not wish to impose the notion of a coherent position. Rather, I acknowledge the beginnings of a mapping for myself of these new seas. For a richer discussion of this in poststructuralism, see Judith Butler, 1992.

¹²I am reminded every day of the precariousness of this erosion, both within and outside of the academy. Enlightenment assertions of an all-knowing, authoritative subject, and tellings of "Truth" predominate. The contradictions and struggles inherent in the meeting of these positions have become even more apparent as I constructed this study. It is evident in the narrators' concerns to get their stories "right," to tell the "truth" as they knew it, to be seen as "truthful," that is to say reliable, rational and
Poststructuralist theories posit the subject as the site of disunity and conflict; subjectivities being produced in and through a range of discursive practices which are complex, shifting, precarious and often contradictory in their productive effects. Feminists have argued the critical importance of concepts of gender and the complex interactions of other social relations, such as race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, for understanding the formation of subjectivities. As Haraway (1988) notes, this is "a short list of critical positions" possible to be examined (586). She suggests that critical positionings can only ever be partial and situated, and that objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility. The moral is simple: only partial perspectives promise objective vision (582-583)

With these emerging theoretical interests, along with considerations of difference, and the partial and social locatedness of stories, oral narratives are gaining credence as a theoretically and methodologically sound approach to research. In a poststructuralist sense, oral narratives are understood to be recounted from many specific social, racial, political and historical locations. The partiality of the narrator's story is assumed; it is determined, in part, by the individual's social location, the conditions of its telling, and by its unfinished, fluid quality. In this light, complexly interrelated issues of subjectivity, representation, identity, history, memory, and how desires and investments shape our subject positionings, present themselves to us as we encounter and explore oral narratives (Smith:1993:393; Walkerdine:1990).

So the solid, reliable, immutable subject has been unsettled, making possible my questions about formations and negotiations of subjectivities. According to Weedon (1987), post-structuralisms interrogate "fundamental assumptions about language, coherent narrators of their lives."
meaning and subjectivity,” hence are appropriate and useful for my project (20). How this may be seen to occur, and the implications of poststructuralist theories for reading differently narratives of experience must be considered in this study.

WHY POSTSTRUCTURALISM? DESIRES AND INVESTMENTS

I have my own desires for, and investments in, this research study. I have chosen to understand more about women’s lives in and around a union few remember and some deny existed.13 These erasures have become the fundamental motivations and motifs for my work in this thesis. I have elected to look at these issues through the lens of feminist poststructuralist theories, an approach that many reject. This is not an easy task. Poststructuralist theories have confounded me for a long time; this is part of their interest for me. They are controversial, and much contested critical approaches which operate within and across disciplinary borders (for example see Butler:1992; Butler and Scott:1992; Canning:1994; Brown:1995). The multiplicity of theorists and theoretical approaches, and the complexity of, and tensions between, those theoretical places make my own use of poststructuralist theories an uncertain and contingent affair. I regularly recheck my tenuous theoretical place.

Much of my course work during my doctoral studies was aimed at exploring the discursive practices which produce multiple subjectivities in a social world. I hold investments in this exploration, as this issue intrigues me in the continuum of my own life. I am interested in how I/we (women) produce ourselves, and are produced as gendered subjects in the social world to inhabit multiple subject positionings - girl, woman, wife, mother, sister, daughter, worker - to name just a few. A contiguous

13 My thanks to Kari Dehli for pointing to the significance of this phrase in my study.
question for me is that of our active engagement in these discursive productions - a conceptualization in which I hold a deep personal investment: how women (I/we) make meaning of, and negotiate, these fluid positionings. I do not mean to suggest that I consider all women as being “the same” or sharing “sameness” on the basis of gender. Quite the opposite: I am interested in how women produce, and are produced differently, and make meanings in our lives, in a social world. This conception of women as actively engaged in producing our worlds implies a notion of “agency.”

Davies (1991) tackles the concept of “agency” in poststructuralist discourses. She suggests that “agency,” as employed in the humanist discourses predominating in the social sciences, is fundamentally different from those found in feminist poststructuralist analyses, and that these differences offer opposing views of the “subject” in the world. Davies argues that humanist discourses construct each and every “sane adult individual” as having identity - it is “synonymous with being person.” Further, this individual identity “is continuous, unified, rational and coherent.” Our identity never varies, changes or shifts; it is the essence of us. Language is used as a “transparent tool” to describe a “real world” in which “choices” made by us as individuals are “based on rational thought...[are] thus coherent...[and] signal the coherence and rationality of the individual.” Historically women, children, “natives” and the insane were not considered to be rational or coherent beings because they were not seen to operate from “rational” thought. Thus women and others lacked full humanness (42-43).

In humanist discourses, the individual is posited as separate from an external entity called “society which acts forcefully upon them and against which they can pit themselves” (Davies:1991:42). History abounds with larger-than-life examples of this construction; it is the discursive production of heroes who stand out from the crowd.
and thus are seen as successful individuals. In this paradigm, stories we tell about ourselves and our lives detail actual occurrences in the "real world," and thus there are "true" stories and "fictional" stories (43). Of course, "true" stories are held in high esteem and deemed morally correct and superior to that which is "not true" or fictional. The agency of individuals is understood as a personal attribute, not a product of a specific situation or moment, a product that may shift with events.

Butler (1992) sees this notion of a fixed, predetermined agentic individual as a way of "thinking about persons as instrumental actors who confront an external political field" (13). For Butler, agency is not a property of a particular kind of individual, but exists in the moment of articulation of the subject. So if we theorize that subjects constitute and are constituted in and through specific material and discursive relations, then "agency" is a condition of possibility within that subject constitution.

Davies (1991) also argues that in poststructuralist theories "agency" is not a focus. Rather, by understanding a subject as constituted in and through many circulating and sometimes contradictory discourses, within which different positionings are possible, it becomes possible to see a range of acceptable practices available to the subject. For Davies, "choice" remains but is not the central concern.

Davies' application of feminist poststructuralist analysis calls for a very different construction of a person, one that is not unified or coherent.

The experience of being a person is captured in the notion of subjectivity. Subjectivity is constituted through the discourses in which the person is positioned at any one point in time, both through their own and others' acts of speaking/writing. One discourse that contradicts another does not undo one's constitution in terms of the original discourse. One's subjectivity is therefore necessarily contradictory (1991:43).

The refusal of an essential, fixed, coherent subject, opens the possibility for shifts, reformations, changes in relations or axes of power. Subjectivities are
understood as being produced, in and through a range of discursive practices which are complex, shifting, precarious and often contradictory in their productive effects. Individuals are constituted in and through various discourses. One discourse does not eliminate or supersede another. Rather, various discourses provide various subject positions, “through which we are spoken into existence” (Davies:1991:43). The hero I referred to earlier exists only as a discursive construction, not an individual characteristic of the person. Humanist discourses would have us assume and read as natural that a hero is a hero because of the specific and inherent qualities of that individual.

By moving away from this conceptualization of the individual, and by asking instead what makes social action possible for the women and men narrators in my study, I am able to look at the historical, geographic, material and discursive social relations that produce conditions for subject making and positioning. It becomes possible to see this activity by human beings as both an individual and collective process.

Finally, Davies argues that “stories are the means by which events are interpreted, made tellable, or even liveable” (43). All stories are understood as “fictions” in the sense of constructedness, rather than as “true” or “false” tellings. In poststructuralist analyses then, the stories we tell may be read as the discursive construction of our subjectivity at a given moment in time. For example, I walk to school one sunny morning. I see many events, people, dogs, cats, cars, buses and so on. I take certain streets, walk under particular trees, past parks, apartment blocks and separate homes. I made that walk. But how I tell a story of that walk, to whom, emphasising particular details, dropping out others, embellishing on still others, will vary in the moment of telling and my relationship to the hearers. In each telling, I am making meanings of my walk to myself and my listeners. It is a process of co-construction in
these inter-subjective tellings.

The discursive production of subjectivities and identities contests the view of subjects as determined wholly by the social structures they inhabit, thus making possible the exercise of “agency” (Valverde:1991a:182-183). Parr (1990) notes, however, that “[W]e live simultaneously, rather than sequentially...” in social relations (8). We are not only gendered subjects, or classed ones, but simultaneously both of these and much more. Our various, and historically varying, significations, our markers, matter in the social world. Writing about her own historical work, Parr states, “[N]either manliness, nor womanliness, worker nor boss, native nor newcomer was a unitary condition; each comprehended diverse possibilities and practices” (245-246). In these historically located, multiple, shifting moments, conditions and meanings shift; possibilities for agency fluctuate. Understanding something of the potentiality of these moments for identity (re)formations, and social change is a goal of this project.

Language use, visible in early oral narratives of the fish plant workers' unionization efforts, constitute some of the changes in self-identity: “naive” and “inferior” workers became “agitator(s)” and activist women workers (Hiscock TS92:118). I draw on feminist poststructuralist theories which address notions of subjectivity, identity and meanings, and that problematize the transparency of language and meanings, in my analysis of tape-recorded conversations (Davies:1992; Weedon:1987; Scott:1992).

Different discourses position narrators in this study differently - as woman, wife, mother, girl, or ladies for example. The use of the word “ladies” in the title of the women’s union - Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union - is interesting because it performs particular positionings of the union members. As “ladies,” and union members, women fish plant workers could still be seen as respectable, despite their
smelly and often dirty hand labour and their organizing efforts. As “girls” in the factory work, their opinions on the appropriateness of certain work processes, or quality of fish could be minimized by male managers and co-workers. Their knowledges and skills could be erased. As “wives” and/or “mothers,” their positioning as paid workers in general became more untenable, for women were expected to leave paid work, especially when children began to arrive. For these diverse, overlapping, and co-existent discourses (and others), to become a “discourse of the real,” that is, to gain coherence and be effective in the world, they must be organized and repeated in and through everyday talk and practices. My thesis documents and explores these discursive formations, and possible transformations in identities and subject positionings, and the meanings fashioned from them, in women’s lives.

POSTSTRUCTURALISM AND THE DISCURSIVE PRODUCTION OF ‘EXPERIENCE’

A key concept in poststructuralist theories is the notion of discourse(s). Valverde (1991b) defines discourses as “organized sets of signifying practices” which range from language to signs, symbols, rituals and material objects such as badges, clothing or buildings (10). Discourses - social, economic, political - do not stand alone or separate from each other, but are interconnected and interrelated; they are “material, discursive and complex, always inscribed in relation to other practices of production of discourse” (Henriques, et al.:1984:105-106). Discursive practices are intimately bound up with the production and mediation of disunified, complex and often contradictory subjectivities and identities.

Working with feminist poststructuralist concepts, Chris Weedon (1987) argues that subjectivities are constituted in specific historically produced social and discursive practices where making meanings is a constant struggle, “constituted within language
and...not guaranteed by the subject which speaks it." Following Saussure's notion that language constitutes social reality for us and that meaning is produced, not reflected in language, Weedon states that language is not simply an individual expression, but constitutes "the individual's subjectivity in ways which are socially specific" (21).

An interesting example of this constitution is discussed by Kondo (1990) in her study of power, gender and discourses of identity in a Japanese workplace. Kondo found that in the Japanese language the choice of personal descriptor for self-reference is situationally negotiated and varies according to the speaker’s (and the listener's) class, gender, region and so on. It was impossible to "form a sentence without also commenting on the relationship between oneself and one's interlocutor" (31). The socialness of the discursive construction of self was evident.

Suffice it to say that the plethora of available "I's" throws into relief the multiple ways people present themselves and their identities in particular situations. You are not an “I” untouched by context, rather you are defined by context...The “I” is shaped by formality, kinship, occupation, other people's desires and usages, and myriad other “contextual” factors; it does not stand for a proper noun that has already been registered in discourse and remains a constant irrespective of the particularities of a given situation (Kondo:1990:29).

A referentially empty, shifting and contextual "I" stands in sharp contrast to languages and cultures which construct the “I” as independent, individual, fixed and unvarying. “I” think that the poststructuralist possibility of shifting, multiple subjectivities is more difficult to imagine and maintain in thought as a result.

While language may be social, it is not transparent, nor does it reflect or express a pre-existing “real” world. Rather, language signifies meaning only over and against other signifiers. Perhaps drawing on narrative examples from members of the Ladies' Cold Storage Worker's Union will provide some clarity on this point. "Women workers," for instance, gains its meaning only in relation to other signifiers, especially
those constituting different, overlapping discourses of womanhood such as “mother” or “wife.” Imbricated in this meaning-making would also be the different signifiers for “worker,” or for meanings of “woman” and “man.” Meanings are not transparent or self-evident; they are also constituted within, and among, socially and historically located discourses (Weedon:1987:22-23, 41). That is to say, the meanings of “woman worker” (and the other signifiers) will vary across cultures, are open to historical changes, and to (re)definition in reference to the social relations of class, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and so forth.

It is through discursive practices that a range of subject positionings are made available to us (or not) and contain within them fields of possible action. Davies (1992) argues that multiple positionings are always already possible.

One also moves through multiple positionings in any one day or even in any one conversation. Positions are discursively and interactively constituted and so are open to shifts and changes as the discourse shifts or as one's positioning within, or in relation to, that discourse shifts. Who I am potentially shifts with each speaking, each moment of being positioned within this or that discourse or this or that way (57).

These shifting positionings may be connected, overlapping, contradictory and/or co-existing on many levels. The ways of being in the world that are attached to the meanings of “woman” and “worker,” for example, may come into conflict at various moments. Nina Gregg (1993) foregrounds these potentially conflictual moments in her discussion of a union organizing drive of clerical and technical workers at Yale University in the 1980s. Taking up a concrete socio-historical situation and moment, Gregg explores resistance, agency and subjectivity, in and through the oral narratives of women workers affected by the unionizing action. She writes

From different and overlapping subject positions as workers, mothers, activists, and citizens, the women's accounts - what I call their “stories about reality” - make visible the contested meanings of self and identity.
It is by negotiating among multiple and contradictory subject positions that women create room for the contestation of meanings, oppositions and change (176-177).

The women in Gregg's study appear to have negotiated complex relations of class, gender and race as they simultaneously grappled with a range of possible positionings vis-à-vis their respective jobs, the union, Yale management, and their social and economic responsibilities outside of the workplace. Thus, unstable and shifting subject positionings, and the resulting subjectivities that are made possible, point to precarious, contingent, and potentially contradictory processes and ways of being in the world.

No one discourse is all-encompassing or totalizing. This is evident in Gregg's account. Even within a specific event, different discourses may be constructing women differently, and may be taken up and meant in different ways. In The Gender of Breadwinners, Parr (1990) observes, "...there are many ways of being in gender within a single time and space." Parr notes that overlapping discourses and subject positionings made possible by women's work on the picket lines at Penman's textile manufacturing in Paris, Ontario in 1949, were used in various ways by the union organizing men and the women factory workers (10,113).\textsuperscript{14} Parr describes the outcome of what the Toronto press called a "wild melee" outside the mill gates.

\ldots OPP officers arrested Gertrude Williams, thirty-nine, and Margaret (May) Higgins, eighteen, and charged them with disorderly conduct. William Stewart, the UTWA field representative in Paris, summoned his best patriarchal indignation, portraying Williams and Higgins as vulnerable creatures by comparison with the real criminals at loose in the province..."Why aren't they out looking for [Mickey MacDonald] instead of arresting the wife of Charlie Williams, and shoving little girls around on a picket line'. Mrs. Williams, in her own account, was less willing to be dismissed from the fray by virtue of her gender. 'I was on the picket line not doing anything. There was some pushing and the next

\textsuperscript{14} Chapter 5 in Parr provides interesting insights on these fluid subject positionings.
thing I knew I was arrested. But I took some arresting. It took three of them to put me in a car. They tried to scare me and say my place was at home. I told them my place was where I want to put it. My place is on the picket line, and that's where I'll be, every day until it's over' (Parr:1990:106).

In this particular instance, the union representative employed specific, patriarchal images and language to (re)present the defencelessness of women against management. The women themselves, like Gertrude Williams, invoked very different images to simultaneously gain public sympathy, present themselves as strong, committed union women, and assert women workers' right to fair wages.

The possibilities created and/or foreclosed by such shifting positionings are not endless, nor are they equally accessible, or entirely open to “free choice.” Walkerdine (1990) points out that, as women, we are not able to take up just any positioning that we desire. Our significations matter, and these signifiers delimit the positionings open to us and which we may desire. In this study, economic class position in St. John's produces and signifies those who own the plant and who employ the working class women and men from the surrounding areas of the city. The social geography of the communities constructs the ties that help women acquire work, make friends, meet potential husbands.

Gender is a key signifier in how hiring is done by Job Brothers and what work is offered - fish packing or fish filleting. Women pack fish, men fillet fish; women process blueberries, men do not. Age shaped access to jobs outside of the fish plant as well as within. Daisy Tucker Hiscock is able to change jobs when she is young and single; she moves from Job Brothers to Purity Factories and back to Job Brothers within a couple of years. Marital status reformed her options; she remained with Job Brothers after her marriage and children. Jessie Earle Thomas was unable to get work as a telephone operator because she lacked experience at fifteen, while younger women were hired to
process blueberries at Job's, and school-girls were hired as surplus labour in the summer months. Education shaped the range of job possibilities available to Alice Hunt Kittinger. With grade four schooling, Alice took work at Job Brothers secured for her by her father. For Joan Wareham Donegani, residence in an area close to the fish plant meant additional work and pay as one of "the Battery girls." For the women and men in this study, subject positionings shaped the possibilities open to them in their lives.

For Walkerdine, our desires and investments in cultural practices are key in the construction of our subjectivities, particularly female subjectivities.

Intertwined in modern practices are the workings of desire, which suggest a complex subjective investment in what I shall call 'subject positions'. These positions, given in the relations of the practices themselves, are not unitary but multiple and often contradictory, so that the constitution of subjectivity is not all of one piece, without seams and ruptures. This means that we can examine those very practices and ruptures as sites of production of subject-positions and of either potential coherence or fragmentation (30).

Many distinct theoretical influences are evident in poststructuralist theories - feminism, deconstructive criticism, psychoanalysis, for example. While each theorize the production of meanings in different ways, I find it useful to work in a combination of ways to explore the production of meanings. For Walkerdine (1990), Davies (1990) and Henriques et al. (1984), a key concept in the fashionings of subjectivities is what they call "desires" and/or "investments."15 These words pose difficult questions. How do we come to want what we want in our lives? To "re-member" ourselves as certain kinds of people? Desires and investments are complex workings of positives and negatives, pleasures and pains, joys and terrors. How do we as tellers and listeners come to articulate, inhabit and embody certain subject positionings and not others at a given

15 This discussion of desire and investments owes much to the reading course conversation of January 20, 1994 with Janice Hladik and Kelly McDowell. Thanks.
moment? What “investments” do we have in telling ourselves as certain kinds of people? Under what conditions? To whom? How might our desires and investments be seen in the complexities and contradictions of our shifting subject positionings?

These are not simple questions, for as Davies (1990) suggests, desires, in particular, are difficult to speak about, “to pin down” (501). How, then, might I “see” the production and operation of desires and investments - of the narrators and myself - in my work? In partial response to these questions, Henriques et al. (1984) argue that attention must be paid to the relation between subjects and the discursive practices which position them. They suggest that how particular discourses “set parameters within which desire is produced, regulated and channelled” may be seen through examining specific, historically located discourses (219-220). This is applicable to the moments of which we speak, and the moments of our speaking, in my conversations with the narrators. For example, how I express my initial reasons for being interested in talking with a particular narrator may help shape how that narrator fashions themselves in their conversations with me. In these conversations with a researcher from the university - a subject positioning I was never able to shake - narrators might be very concerned with being seen as responsible and “truthful” tellers of stories, as good hosts, offering tea and food, as people with stories that are worth my time. They may perform each and all of these selves during our talks, while I perform “the good researcher.” Within the text of our talk, however, many other, sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory, always complex positionings are also being accomplished.

Walkerdine’s work (1990) also indicates that it is important to understand the different conditions in which these pleasures and pains are produced. Is desire or investment configured differently in different situations? In specific, geographically and historically situated discourses, for example? Walkerdine scrutinizes the work of
specific texts in the production of discourses and desires. She examines girls' comics as "cultural practices producing forms of thought and positions for women...and the inscription in those positions of desire." In this case, Walkerdine is interested in the production of desire for particular forms of adolescent sexuality. Fantasy, she argues, is presented through the use of textual devices, "which engage the desires of the reader.

Again, in the case of girls' comics, the "central resolution" to the fantasy of romance and heterosexual relationships is the arrival of "the prince" (89,99). Walkerdine states:

> What seems to be at issue is not a series of roles or simple identities or images which are fitted on to girls. Nor is it a matter of certain behaviours being 'stereotypically feminine' and therefore allowed, and others not. Rather, we need to understand the relationship between those practices which not only define correct femininity and masculinity but produce them by creating positions to occupy. So it is not a case of unitary identities, but a question of those practices which channel psychic conflicts and contradictions in particular ways (103).

With this approach in mind, the importance of examining the discursive practices current in Newfoundland during the late 1940s and early 1950s is further underscored. The production of some discourses are embedded in the textual stories found in daily newspapers, archival documents such as those of the LCSWU and the LSPU, and popular literature of the day. The desires and investments of the LCSWU women, read in and through their oral narratives is a more complex process. Davies (1990) suggests, however, that

> [D]esires are constituted through the narratives and storylines, the metaphors, the very language and patterns of existence through which we are 'interpellated' into the social world. Desire, along with rational argument, evidence, storylines and fantasy, are all implicated in our interpretation of ourselves and of others... (501).

It is also important to make visible some of the discursive practices by which myself and the narrators are now positioned and are positioning others. In this way I am able to place my experience of multiple subjectivities in these conversations. What
subject positions are available to me in our interactions? How do I attempt to position myself? How do the narrators variously position me? How do I position them at different moments? What refusals or negotiations come into play between us? I have already begun to tease out some constructions of my subject positions by the narrators in Chapter One. At the end of that chapter I wrote:

Each conversation involved a complex set of negotiations and adjustments. By their words and actions, the women and men narrators saw me not as I saw myself, but in many different guises - in subject positionings which were multiple, fluid and sometimes contested. I see in the transcripts a girl, an outsider, a curiosity, someone to tease about age, about being a Newfoundlander or not, someone who needed feeding, and probably many other things as well.

Two specific examples of negotiations of subject positionings stand out for me in my research for this study. One I contested and challenged, while the other inscribed me in a desired position. In my meeting with Ed Yetman, he quickly and firmly positioned me as "media," particularly after I produced my tape recorder to be used in our conversation. I am reminded that Valverde (1991) points to material objects as being as productive of discursive relations as language. Although I attempted to refuse this particular positioning, seeing it as potentially threatening to my work, Ed drew upon a discourse of danger when he suggested that I was not trustworthy because I was "the media." He challenged me to display my trustworthiness by going away and returning to speak with him only after I had read a specific document. I felt this moment in our conversation as a particularly charged one, and as I reflect on it now, it seems to me to be one in which meaning making and discursive relations are enacted in the service of patriarchal power.

While this moment of subject positioning with Ed is fraught with contestation and some pain for me, another example of (more harmonious) co-construction of subject positions may be seen in a conversation with Daisy Hiscock. After our recorded conversation in her living room, we adjourned to the kitchen table and cups of tea. Our
conversation there was produced differently - we talked about our lives differently over those cups of tea. Daisy brought out a Christmas craft project she was working on and, for a while, we inhabited a partially shared, if fragmented, subject positioning embedded in our craft work and interests in local history. This subject positioning I took up with pleasure. Why is this one different from my experience of being positioned as “the media?” How is my desire to be seen in a particular way present in these interactions? What investments do I have in either of these subject positionings (or the many others which became negotiable in my research study)?

The work of desires and investments in the constitution of our subjectivities is not addressed in the traditional women and work literature. This is unfortunate, as the work of Walkerdine, Davies, and Henriques et al. challenges us to reexamine our easy acceptance of experiential narratives as transparent representations of the social world. In this study, the notion of oral narratives as complete, coherent and unmediated representations of “the truth” is contested. Importantly, our implication in the production of subjectivities gives a lively turn to questions/debates about concepts of “agency,” and the inter-subjective, social nature of discursive practices.

I have mobilized these insights in this study. By producing different “readings” of the transcribed narratives and our inter-subjective engagements, I make visible the work of those material and discursive practices. It is through these practices that identification with subject positions, memories, communities and so on is organized and accomplished in our conversations together. Gender, class and race, as well as age and marital status intersect in the production of identities in these complex narratives. It is possible to see how we are actively producing the subjects of which we speak, even as we produce our selves in that speaking. A second reading addresses meaning making in and through narratives and inter-subjective moments. The shifts, ruptures, discontinuities
and the active work of narrators to produce coherent stories, ones that “fit” with the stories of other narrators are examined. Through these readings it is possible to “see” history in a different way: as an active construction of subjects and events, rather than as the revelation of a “pure” memory of the “real” thing.

In the following chapter, I move on to consider the range of sources specific to this study and their gaps and tensions. I also discuss and question the value and limitations of the various methods I employed to locate, hear, and “make sense” of the stories told to me by the women and men narrators. In this approach I re-visit my own methodology notes, kept while in the thick of the research process, in order to tease out the tensions contained in this work.
CHAPTER 3

OPEN READINGS/SHIFTING MEANINGS

in nature there are few sharp lines
A. R. Ammon, in Lather, Getting Smart

INTRODUCTION

The narrations developed in my conversations with the women and men introduced in Chapter One are the basis for this study. In this chapter, I discuss the multiple methods and questions with which I grappled while “in the field” conducting research with these narrators, and as I moved into the more formal analysis and writing stages of dissertation production. Some of the difficulties of hearing narratives are explored here: the thorny issues of subjects who are not willing to be subjects of my research and the production of narrative constellations are addressed.

In this project, I wanted to hear how women fish plant workers constitute themselves in their talk with me. How do they create themselves in our conversations? As my analysis (reading) of the transcribed narrations proceeded, I also became interested in wider questions of identity: how did women constitute their work, their domestic lives, Job’s workplace, the company, male workers and men in general, the Longshoremen’s Protective Union and their own union, the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union? What sorts of words and language did they use? What gaps, disjunctures, or silences are in their narrations? What sorts of “meanings” were made in that language use, those gaps, disjunctures and silences?

In the end, despite, or because of, the questions I asked and the trails we followed in our conversations together, tensions were created between what I thought I wanted to know and what the women and men narrators talked about with me. As I moved through
the conversations and re-readings of them, my hearing of what might matter to the narrators began to change. For example, the minutiae of work processes were described to me, often with some reluctance on the part of the narrator, while hearty and lengthy discussions of the workmates, friendships, workplace atmosphere and working conditions flowed more freely. Union stories were not easily produced either; many commented that "the union was a long time ago." Yet so was the workplace. How could I account for these differences? These tellings varied to a great degree between and among the narrators. No two were alike in this regard. Women's stories differed from men's stories as well - what was important to convey to me was markedly different. This became particularly evident in the contestation of stories between the married couples included in this work.

As these moments occurred and I became more sensitive to these different tellings, my thinking about my research changed. I began to see individuals with unique stories rather than heroic narratives of collective union struggle and victory. The Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union, initially at the forefront of my research, began to recede. The questions I had thought were for "background information" became fundamental.

The narrators' stories, when taken together, illuminated the intricate web of relations and material realities encountered by them in the fashioning of their lives. I have come to read subtleties of gender, age, class, religion and race as complexly interwoven threads in each person's story. The complex constitution of material conditions, and of fluid, multiple and sometimes contradictory subjectivities of the narrators are historically embedded in, and contingent upon, the moments of their constitution and positioning.
MULTIPLE METHODS

My research approach for this project is empirical and interdisciplinary in nature, working as I do from a sociological perspective while taking up methods and practices of historians and folklorists.

I conducted primary research between 1994 and 1996 through tape-recorded, then transcribed, conversations with key narrators. Locating some of the approximately 200 former members of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union proved to be rather difficult. Fifty years had passed since the Union was formed, so time was not on my side in my search for contacts and narrators. Many of the women workers had married since their days at Job’s, and only their single names appeared in the Roll Books of the LCSWU, thus making them virtually impossible to trace.¹ Some women had left Newfoundland for other towns and cities in North America. Still others were mature women in 1948, and many of these women had died during the 1970s and 1980s.

Many people provided me with narratives and connections and names in this research. Some I simply stumbled across, such as the Reference Librarian at a public library who had attended a local elementary school with the brother of one of the women for whom I was searching. The Librarian’s information pushed me to continue to look further for this particular family. I was rewarded in the end with an interesting conversation with the woman I sought. I often followed such tenuous leads. Slowly I developed a name pool of eighty potential narrators, and located and contacted about fifty women and men. I talked with twenty-five of these, all of whom were between the ages of sixty-three and eighty-five.

¹ Papers of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union (LCSWU), Collection 040, Series 5.0, Roll Books 1951-1958, 5.01.001. Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John’s, Newfoundland.
Ultimately, I recorded twenty narratives of varying lengths, usually in the homes of the women and/or men narrators. In addition, eleven shorter narrations were collected, sometimes during long telephone conversations, sometimes in the narrator’s home. All of the narrations vary greatly in length, content, and presentation (or performance) style. Archival and library searches uncovered previously recorded interviews with some of the women of the LCSWU. With the permission of the original researchers and collectors, these were also incorporated into my research. The narrators and narratives are discussed in further detail below.

I undertook extensive review of the historical business records (Roll Books, Dues records, meeting Minutes) of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union (LCSWU). These union records do not include the first 3 years of the LCSWU. Rather, they cover the period from 1951 to 1967, when the plant closed and the union ceased to exist. As with any “official” record, these documents provide a particular view of the LCSWU, but one that is partial and incomplete.

The business records (Roll Books, Minutes) of the Longshoremen’s Protective Union (LSPU) have been scrutinized as well. These records provide another partial view of the LCSWU and its relationship with the LSPU, as well as a sense of the discourses, organizational structures, and boundaries of the LSPU.

Initially, only limited business records of Job Brothers were catalogued and available in the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL) and the Maritime History Archives (MHA). These included eighteenth and nineteenth century records of the Job and Bulley families, such as wills, family trees, limited personal correspondence and indenture certificates. I reviewed eighteenth, nineteenth and scattered twentieth century business records, such as letter books, memos, financial statements, some minutes of meetings, ship’s lists, sealing accounts, and undated
scrapbooks. Much later in my research, the Maritime History Archive received a donation of Job's business records covering the years between 1918 and the early 1980s. I studied the 1940s and 1950s Minutes of the Board of Directors for the company and was able to make linkages to other records and references in union, Newfoundland Employer's Association Limited (NEAL), and St. John's Board of Trade records. The breadth of the company's paternalistic approach to their workers, particularly expressed by the chairman, the Honourable R.B. Job, became more evident in these records.

I located records and accounts of contractual negotiations and correspondence of NEAL in the Board of Trade records located in the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL). This material opened up questions about the gender differentiated wages and benefits negotiated by the LSPU for all workers, women and men, at Job Brothers. The records also provided a partial view of the shifting organizational landscape of relations between businesses and unions during the period of the 1940s and 1950s.

In the early absence of other Job Brothers records which might detail the work organization and physical geography of the Job Brothers Southside fish plant, I studied insurance maps and plans, housed in the City of St. John's Archives. In these sources I read a sense of the changing physical and social terrain in which the narratives of the women of the LCSWU and the men of the LSPU were set.

As well, I examined popular literature of the day - daily local newspapers and journals in particular - for accounts of Job Brothers fish plant, the LCSWU and the LSPU as well as discursive constructions of a range of concepts related to women, work, unions and so on. I also looked specifically at the articles and stories aimed at the female reader during the late 1940s and early 1950s. These included serialized fiction and the
"Women's" pages in the local newspapers. Insofar as I was able to trace information on radio programs during this period, and their "women's" content, I did so. Some of the narrators spoke of reading specific newspapers and of listening avidly to particular programs, at particular times and in specific places.

All of these aspects of my research, and the sometimes messy processes involved in my work, will be reviewed and discussed in this chapter.

RESEARCH PROCESSES

Researching as a flowing, meandering, recursive (?) line. Constant revisiting the files at CNS, cross-checking and rethinking and rereading/relooking at what I had already "seen" in order to "see" differently as other information comes to my hands. Reflection of this thesis as a shifting, changing project ....(Methodology Notes, 1995)

My own experience of research is that it is a recursive process. Analysis begins even as words are spoken in conversations, new questions occur and are "blended" into the study where they were not articulated previously, documents are made accessible where none were thought to exist. Such is the case in this study. For example, well into the archival research for this project, I despaired of ever finding more business records of Job Brothers and Company, ones which covered the Southside plant during the 1940s and 1950s. Some limited records existed in the Maritime History Archives (MHA), but did not cover the time period or content for which I was looking. I adopted a pattern of asking my archivist friends and contacts every few months whether any new records had turned up lately. To my surprise, one day in early 1998, the answer was yes! Business records of Job Brothers and Company, including Minutes of Meetings of the Board of Directors from 1918 to 1983, correspondence and other files on Northlantic Fisheries, Canada Bay Cold Storage Company, and some limited financial and legal documents had been donated to the MHA by the Ayre family, former partners in the Job businesses. The
records had lain in an unused attic for many years. While not providing the usually rich sources found in extensive correspondence files or payroll records, these records gave me new insights into the technological developments at Job’s Southside premises, such as the introduction of the conveyor belt line and plant extensions and alterations. This in turn caused me to be more confident in my questions about shifting employment opportunities for women after World War II. I also was able to understand more about individuals in management positions, such as Maurice Job Taylor, and the roles they played in the firm. The patriarchal relations of the firm can be read, in part, through these newly-found minutes, and R. B. Job’s personal interest in the social and economic responsibilities of Job Brothers in the community and toward employees is visible. All of this, in turn, helped me situate the narrators’ stories in the plant’s historical trajectory.

I adopted very practical organizational strategies for this project. As I moved further into the research, I developed “data card” files on Narrators, Contacts, Archival Records, Other Union Sources and Newspaper/Journal Sources categories. In this way, I kept track of the many details that were building up. I was afraid of losing a name or a phone number or a catalogue reference. Everything I touched took on a glowing importance to me. I could hardly distinguish between the important and the mundane.

As I read articles and books related to my study, I broadened my already considerable annotated bibliography file. I built this card file as I worked through materials in my doctoral course work and as I reviewed bibliographic records from my Master’s research. This latter approach provided interesting linkages to my previous work as some of the reading for this study overlaps or is contiguous with literature and
Ideas from my Master's project. I continuously added to Labour History, Women's History and Poststructuralism categories of readings. In addition, an on-going card file of "Emerging Questions" assisted me in keeping track of, and incorporating into my thesis thinking/writing, questions, concerns or ideas arising in the course of my research.

I kept field notebooks during my library, archival, narrative collection and transcription phases. These notes allowed me to track back to sites of specific information, such as names, addresses, archive sites, newspaper search notations. Although these notebooks initially contained "facts" or questions to be followed up on, I slowly began to write about my fears, frustrations and anxieties as I proceeded with the research. As well, I noted, (although not in as thorough a fashion as I later felt I needed) my reflections about the narrators and their narrations. I included "field" notes on the physical site of our conversations, some of their (and my) body gestures and my thoughts on our conversation. In this way I attempted to be reflexive in my on-going analysis. My notes often constitute myself as an uncertain researcher, trying on different tactics and approaches in the research process.

I hardly know where to begin with these notes. So many things have happened in collecting the interviews, reading the archival documents, searching for missing records, consulting others for assistance, searching for people. In doing these notes I will simply dump my thoughts on the page, group them together and order them in categories, and continue to flesh things out as I go along I think. The notion of emergent methodology seems to suit the way things are going in this research process. I shift, change, alter, return to etc all the time depending on the needs of the moment... I [try to] give up on the boundary making procedures of interview manuals etc and work it out as you go (Methodology Notes, 1995)

My own subjectivity became part of this research work and I frequently

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2 See my Master's thesis: Cullum (1993a), and a number of articles based on that work: Cullum (1995), (1997), and (1992).
struggled with the question “Who am I?” in these moments.

I think I have to include a discussion in the thesis of reading and writing practices and it occurs to me that I should be conscious of speaking practices as well...what and how I speak in the context of collection of narratives. I hear myself on the tapes and I hear someone who slips and slides in and out of different identities ... one minute I am the university researcher, the next somebody sent over by a neighbour or friend, the next a chatter over tea. They are all pieces of me but I do move back and forth constantly, negotiating the inter-subjective realms of my research. My voice level, speech patterns and use of language changes in these shifts as well. I move into a more colloquial way of speaking, laugh at jokes, drop my g's at the drop of a hat!! I “play dumb” to different degrees too. Sometimes I have been aware that I have revealed the depths or not of my knowledge with a simple question or statement to one of these women or men. (Methodology Notes, 1995)

Being as wholly “present” and “open” as possible in these conversations was difficult and sometimes frightening work. “Who am I?” was/is bound up with “What am I doing?” and “Who am I to be doing this work?” Uncertainty about the “best” approach to use in collecting “data” sent me back to the research manuals and course notes from my graduate study, looking for the ideal way of conducting my work.

I feel that I question my work constantly. I always seem to be assessing and reassessing everything from why women don’t talk to how pieces might be constructed together. I am very conscious of “making” this story I am going to write! (Methodology Notes, 1995)

This floating, shifting uncertainty does not end. Rather, I find it extends into and through my thinking/writing in this study. I find closure and certainty to be impossible; generalizations useless. Where one narrator’s story comes to rest for a moment (for they never truly “end”), another’s carries on. Memories are “worked up” as the narrators and I speak together, and in the next moment are contested and re-constructed.
The central source of materials for this study are the oral narrations of women and men who worked at Job Brothers Southside premises. As a methodological approach to my research, I have chosen to examine the narrations, or stories, we tell about ourselves and our "experiences" as one site in the production of subjectivities. As the work of Davies (1992) and Gregg (1993) shows, stories have a place in this production. Indeed, Gregg states:

The stories told...provide examples of the relationships between experience and meaning, of connections between women's realities, the choices they perceive and the actions they take (176).

Reinharz (1992), following Althusser, argues that the collection of personal oral narratives "assist in a fundamental sociological task - illuminating the connections between biography, history and social structure" (131). Davies (1992) suggests further that poststructuralist analyses, in particular, offer ways to examine the place of stories or narrations in the formation of female subjectivities (53). I would also argue that through women's oral narratives it is possible to see women's dynamic making of society and history in the course of acting out their lives (Tonkin:1992:68). Following these themes, the collection and interpretation of women's experiences through extensive oral narratives is central to this thesis.

As I discussed in an earlier paper, defining the boundaries of what constitutes oral narratives is not a simple task (1993c). During my review of literature from anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, folklore and history, it became clear that the word narrative, in particular, covers a wide terrain of meaning and implied approaches. Some of these approaches have clear and tight boundaries.

Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet (1991) constructs a very particular and narrow conception of a narrative. She clearly delineates what she considers to be "real
narrative" in her work with a "life-story" approach in women's oral history research. In Chanfrault-Duchet's terms, the spoken text is only acceptable as a narrative form “[W]hen the collected material is sufficiently elaborate to be considered a real narrative (ie., when it does not consist only of answers to the historian's questions)...” (79). The lack of such a narrative is rigidly constructed as “failure.” In an accompanying footnote, she states that “[T]he production of a real narrative [Chanfrault-Duchet's italics] implies that the interviewee has been able to organize the information conveyed by her (his) memory in such a way as to give it coherence and significance” (91). Failure to produce a "real narrative" is seen as a result of the personal failings of the interviewer or the interviewee, or both. The interviewer fails to "become a real narratee in the interaction"; the interviewee fails to present themselves "as the subject and hero of a narrative," or both fail in their attitudes as "members of the interaction" (91). The intensely regulatory and normative standard set by such narrow confines effectively eliminates the wide range of narrative forms and moments presented to us in research situations. Further, the use of photographs, questions or other sorts of stimuli are clearly not allowed in this model.

In educational research, narrative traditions generally assume narratives as "given": they are assumed to reflect the "real" world and to present a clear view of the lives and experiences of teachers and others. Michael Connolly and Jean Clandinin (1988) describe narrative as "a kind of life story, larger and more sweeping than the short stories that compose it" (24). In working with teacher narratives or stories, Connolly and Clandinin take them at face value, without asking how these stories are constructed, what discursive practices are being employed. Rather, they search for "narrative unity," implying that this exists or is desirable in telling one's story, or "rhythm" as an indication of temporal or emotional markers in the course of a teaching
year. They take up language as "close to experience" (59), as transparently representational of that experience and as requiring no further analysis. For example, in one biographical narrative the teacher conjures up the image of "home" as a metaphor for her teaching practice. The narrative is steeped in white, middle-class values, assumptions, practices and rituals. At no point is the narrative interrogated for the production of these themes, or for their impact on the teaching practice of the teacher who holds these unexamined assumptions and values.

For my research, an instructive and useful definition of narratives is provided by Sherna Gluck and Daphne Patai (1991).

We are using "oral narratives" to mean the material gathered in the oral history process, typically utilizing a tape recorder. These narratives take a variety of forms, including life history, topical interviews, and testimonies (4).

I find this description useful because Gluck and Patai take into account the social conditions of narrative production in their discussion, as well as pointing to a range of imbricated narrative forms.3 For me, their inclusion of potentially invasive technological gadgets in the narrative relationship is a helpful reminder of the staged and performative nature of narratives and indeed, everyday talk.

A distinct gap exists in the literature on oral narratives regarding the concept of narratives as "spoken autobiography." A wide range of terms circulate around the notion of autobiography - personal narrative, oral narrative, testimony, memoir, and so on - which give it an elusive quality. In writing about filmic autobiography, Janice Hladki (1994) notes that the eclectic nature of autobiography can be a distinct advantage. She

3 This is a moment of contradiction for me. Even as I describe these various forms as "imbricated", implying a connection between them, I am aware that their separate naming constructs through language discrete categories for analysis. These different "forms" of narratives signify meanings in particular ways, especially in relation to other categories of narrative. The same may be said for the following discussion of "spoken autobiography."
observes that, although the term 'autobiography' may be wide-ranging, I find the extensiveness and slipperiness of its boundaries an advantage. This leaves openness and flexibility for posing questions about: what counts as autobiography, under what conditions, and who decides; the relations of self/Other, and self/social; the relations of self to experience; and autobiographical works as productions of knowledge (fn 3).

In addition to these advantages so clearly enunciated by Hladki, I include the sense of spoken autobiography in my conception of oral narrative because it conveys to me a sense of oral narratives being (re)tellings of historical selves as both subject and object of the tellings. Often in the narrators’ accounts, they take themselves up as central actors in the story; they are the active initiators of events, the reactors to situations, the designers of deeds. They are the historical objects of their own stories at the same time they are fashioning themselves as subjects in the present. This sense of their stories keeps visible for me the acts of creation involved in the production of oral narratives.

By emphasizing the oracy of these autobiographical texts in my thinking, I am excluding written narratives - autobiography, biography, journals, letters, diaries - from my considerations. While written texts are important to feminist research, and perhaps share some of the same constructedness as oral narratives, the oral text is the focus of this work (Geiger:1986:169). By defining oral narratives/spoken autobiography in such a way, I find myself standing outside much of the discussion in current work on written autobiography. Hladki (1994) also notes the “dearth of work on forms other than writing” (5). I continue to ask whether questions interrogating written autobiographies, and other genres such as film or video, are directly applicable

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4 Of course, as Susan Geiger (1986) points out, there is nothing inherently feminist about either women’s oral narratives or women engaged in the collection of these narratives.
to oral genres, but recognize that my speculations are also an attempt to expand the conventional notions of autobiography as a written product. In this study, there is, at times, a more collective production of narrative at work than might be found in written autobiographies or individualized interviews or conversations.

Thus, for the purposes of this work, I employ the term oral narratives and consider these as the narratives spoken in the process of a social relationship, and always mediated by technologies. In my work, these narratives usually focus on women's life experiences - their paid and domestic labour, their experiences of the workplace and workmates, their thoughts about the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union, and so forth. Finally, I use the words “narratives” rather than “data” or “interviews,” and “narrators” rather than “informants” or “interview subjects” throughout this work. I do so in order to keep present the idea that the women and men who share their narratives or spoken autobiographies with me are creating these narratives, creating these texts, as we talk together. The texts are a product of the inter- and intra-subjectivity contained in the social interaction in which we are engaged, and they (and we) are shaped by that interaction (Flax:1993:101,108). This potentially fluid and shifting production of subjectivities has implications for the collection and analysis of oral narratives.

In trying to elbow my way into the women's narratives, the materials I felt I could “see,” the pieces I was teasing out by my reading and questions, were very “bitsy.” Indeed, this concern occupied much long-distance telephone call discussion time between myself and other thesis study group members. What does a “narrative” look like on the printed page? Is it a solid-looking, long passage, of one person speaking? Is it variable and fluid in form, like its telling? How to grapple with the few sentences of conversation that I felt I could use scattered over many pages of transcript? Working
with an interview transcript where someone is answering a question that has been
directed at them was proving to be as difficult as working with recorded group
conversations where the flow of talk was not as immediately seen to be prompted by a
direct question. Some of our classed and gendered expectations and assumptions about the
nature of transcribed narratives can be read in this discussion between Mamina and
myself. The idea that a question asked, or a point raised, is a question answered, a point
elaborated, and, further, that the “question” and the “answer” may be read in a clear
and direct manner is the assumption embedded in our discussion. How, too, are our
assumptions about class and gender influencing our expectations of how a narrative
“looks?” Is the fragmented and bitsy look of these passages on the page telling something
about the narrators, about the way they relate experiences, about our interactions?
Women’s patterns of speech are often quite different from men’s.5 Is this what I am
seeing?

Subsequent and on-going work with the narratives has proven to be a complex
and frustrating process, one that has produced a sense in me of the multiplicity of
threads and identities interwoven and produced through each speaker’s narrative. It is
difficult to separate out ideas, discourses, themes into discrete and “manageable”
categories of transcript. One section of narrative often contains many threads to be
examined; I find myself re-examining some narrative pieces in the context of different,
yet overlapping questions which I am attempting to address in different chapters of this
work. There are tensions between and among these threads. It is important not to look at
these narratives too narrowly or categorically, but to hold open the possibility of a
multiplicity of readings. This seems to me to be a fine example of what Susan Bordo

5 For an interesting discussion of gender differences in speaking patterns see Coates, 1986.
addresses when she writes of gender, for example. Bordo argues that gender
“never exhibits itself in pure form but in the context of lives that are shaped by a
multiplicity of influences which cannot be neatly sorted out” (150). My recursive use
of narrative pieces underscores the complex, fragmented, yet contingent meanings and
subjectivities being constructed by the narrators in this study.

Women’s narrations of the social relations and materiality of their lives and
work in Job’s Southside Road fish plant, the discourses they produce and the discursive
relations in which they are embedded differ. They defy the “presumed homogeneity of
female experience” (Gregg:1993:179). Their subject locations - based on age, race,
class, marital status, and gender - separate their stories one from the other, and from
those stories told by male workers in the Job Brothers plant who were members of the
Longshoremen’s Protective Union (LSPU). In the coming chapters, I will tease out these
different tellings and some of the meanings the narrators actively fashion.

BEGINNINGS

Unlike the fantasy image of a carefully planned, smooth-running doctoral
project, my research has been messy and complex, often appearing (and feeling)
unfocused until another clue turns up to revise the picture being constructed. It has been
something of a detective novel: numerous phone calls to unknown people resulting in
occasional “successful” contacts, days spent in the library to unearth one small but
significant piece of information in the search for members and Executive of the LCSWU,
and narrators’ “memory gaps” and silences characterize the “boom or bust” feeling of
this project. The questions with which I embarked on this project have lost their
simplicity and their shine.

Between October and December 1994, I conducted a 10-week pilot research trip
to Newfoundland. I examined relevant material in archives, talked about my project to anyone who would listen, began to establish contacts for potential narrators, and initiated searches for further archival documents concerning the LCSWU, the LSPU and the Job Brothers cold storage plant operations.

I began my research by locating any previous materials on the LCSWU, women in unions, women's work in fish plants, and so on. This yielded surprisingly little material, especially concerning the more recent periodization of my work. For example, the extensive business records of the Job Brothers fish plant - payroll, correspondence, worker and office details - which might show women's participation in that workforce appear to be lost. Accounts of the work women did for Job Brothers disappeared with these records. The most recent previous record of their existence is in an unpublished Master's Thesis produced in the early 1970s. Ian Reid, last Managing Director of the fish plant, 1964-67, attempted to locate more records when I asked for his assistance, but to no avail. Several phone calls to former employees and subsequent owners of the former Job Brothers property yielded no new records at that time.

The stories and histories of women's work in fish plants in Newfoundland and Labrador were neglected prior to the 1970s and 1980s. Little research has been done on women's work in the 1930s and 1940s generally, less on the fishery and women in general, and even fewer efforts have been directed at women in fish plant processing, none on urban women in fish plant work. This lack or absence of records and prior research both discouraged me and reinforced my "detective" inclinations and curiosity. My desire to find what no one else had found or could find propelled me onward into the project. The further along I went, the deeper my investments became in the journey and

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One of the most encouraging aspects of conducting research in St. John's, Newfoundland, is the size and social connectedness of the community at large. In general, the population is very homogeneous - most are white, of Anglo-Irish heritage, Protestant or Catholic. Despite the size of the city, people often remain in touch or otherwise connected over many years, as I discovered when I began to enter Fort Amherst, Shea Heights and the Southside Road communities. Close-knit, extended families are common and, like many smaller communities, knowledge about the life histories of friends and neighbours is not unusual. People still make a habit of inquiring about an individual's background; I was asked many times about my grandparents' histories, my parents' lives, especially my father's work, and my St. John's connections during my research. While many newcomers to St. John's find this process of connecting a little unnerving, it was useful and informative for my research. I adopted this practice of inquiry when meeting new people, and offered information in return. When I began the search for narrators and records from the LCSWU, the LSPU and Job's, this practice of community knowledge greatly assisted my work. This social geography is more than a helpful coincidence, however. The connectedness of the narrators across time and space is central to how they fashion their stories in this study. Narrators often refer to each other, provide personal names and geographic locations as reference points, and produce each other as co-constructors in the work place and their wider lives.

Although I had initial name contacts from the LCSWU Roll books, and access to the

7 This "locating of the other" in a social and economic geography of a community occurs in many Newfoundland communities. In my work in rural Newfoundland during the 1970s and 1980s, I was routinely asked in which bay or community my grandparents originated and where my parents were living.
archival records, finding information about former members of the Union and locating them was still a daunting task. I tried many approaches: placing advertisements in three local newspapers, writing a letter to the editor of The Downhomem (a newspaper for expatriate Newfoundlanders which is read across Canada), obtaining referrals from those women with whom I had already spoken, but nothing increased my range of contacts and information “bytes” as much as simply talking about my project to anyone who would listen. For example, I gained valuable information on the family of Jessie Earle Thomas from casual conversations with three different sources: a government archivist; a reference librarian who had gone to school with another family member; and a member of a Legion branch who remembered her father. The information I gleaned allowed me to make contact with Jessie Earle Thomas in California and to tape-record several conversations with her.

As the project developed and I began to contact more women, I observed a new feature in my conversations. In late November 1995, I noticed that some women knew more about my research than I had told them myself. In one instance (Bertha Bussey), the narrator told me that she had read a copy of Michelle Park’s 1992 Honours thesis that I had passed on to Daisy Hiscock in the fall of 1994 before I returned to Toronto. Bertha had mentioned Daisy before, but now she told me that Daisy and she had talked about my wanting to interview Bertha, and Daisy had given her Michelle’s paper. I was surprised at this passing of print information, but it does confirm my thoughts about the connectedness of some parts of the communities in which I am talking, in this case, Fort Amherst. Bertha and Daisy live close to each other out on the Fort road. Unfortunately, Bertha could not meet with me, largely because of her commitments and responsibilities to her family.

A second incident of this nature roused my thoughts about information transfer
and production of memories in these communities. When I was searching for two women from Job's whom I thought were closely related, Nancy and Marie Vinnicomb, I started by simply calling all the Vinnicombs in the phone book who lived in Shea Heights. On the third phone call, I reached the daughter of one and the niece of the other. When I explained who I was, the daughter/niece simply said "oh, yes," and gave me the phone numbers I needed. No questions asked; she knew who I was and what I was calling about. I was startled by this, but did not think to ask about her knowledge. These experiences point to the on-going interrelatedness of families and women fish plant workers in the different communities and to the interconnectedness of their stories.

But how to collect women's narrations once contacts are made? Elsewhere I have explored some of the difficulties inherent in interviewing, and in hearing narratives. It is not a simple matter of social interaction, of intersubjectivity. Who is doing the telling, and who is doing the listening are implicated in the construction of the narrative. A shared ground of age, experience, gender, and so forth in no way guarantees shared meaning-making or a common history. There is no simple division between "insider" and "outsider" in my research. Rather, the multiple specifics of subjectivities, time, and place partially determine the nature of the narrations (Cullum:1993:6-10). In the case of the LCSWU members, our gender and race is often the only "shared" ground. I am not positing a sense of homogeneity, shared understanding or communication produced by shared gender. On the contrary, I was acutely conscious of our differences as we talked.

Some of the women I spoke with are very active in their communities and outside activities while others are more confined to their homes due to age or illness. The reaction to my telephone contact and my interest in their stories ranged from mild puzzlement to enthusiastic interest to active distrust and suspicion. These various reactions caused me to re-evaluate the approaches I used when making, and following
through on contacts.

Originally I envisioned a fairly standard letter form to initiate a contact. Upon my re-immersion in Newfoundland culture and style, however, I decided that this more formal approach was not as useful as I had anticipated. Many women were puzzled as to why I would send them a letter, especially when I was speaking with them on the telephone. I also realized that my approach was rooted in my class-based assumptions about asking others for personal information, and in my assumptions about what constituted “proper” academic research structures.  

In order to lessen the formality (and possible sense of threat) of my request, I developed a more casual approach: I made contact by telephone, and, if the narrator chose this option, followed up with a letter which outlined my project, referred to pieces of our telephone conversation and gave personal details about myself and my family, my relationship to/with Newfoundland, and my previous academic work. Thus each letter was personalized to the potential narrator; occasionally my personal details were raised by the narrators and further questions about my personal life and my work were asked in my follow-up telephone call. This sharing of personal information - putting my multiple identities on the line as well as theirs - served to create at least a measure of rapport with some of the narrators.

Often, my proposal to meet with me to talk was met with great resistance - not wanting me to come over or wanting (albeit reluctantly) to talk on the phone. Sometimes I could tell that they were being kind to me and agreed to talk only because I asked.

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8 Throughout this study, I experienced an increasing sense of personal dislocation and disjuncture based on my assumptions about class locations and interests of the narrators and of myself, and on the part of the narrators about themselves and me.
Virtually every woman I contacted said that she had little to say. Many said their memories of that time were too vague to be of help. There is a certain conception of remembering and forgetting here, I think, one that insists on details being clear and thoughts being present at the time I ask. A conception of proper subjectivity may be read in these exchanges as well. Women may have regarded themselves as “poor subjects” for my research if they could not readily “remember” the past. After all, how authoritative and coherent a story would they have to produce for me in order to be “credible” and “authentic” fish plant workers and union members? This investment is illuminated for me by a narrator’s remark. As our talk ran over two hours and into lunch time, I apologized to Mary and Leo Dillon for taking so much of their day. Mary replied, “You’re not taking our time, boy, we’re taking up your time” (laughs) (Dillon TS95:82). I understood Mary to be meaning that what she and Leo had to tell me was not very important: it was just talk about a past that was not always clearly remembered.

I usually attempted to reassure them that other women had said the same thing, yet often when we began talking they “remembered” more than they had anticipated. Some women were convinced and agreed to talk to me in person. Some put me off several times, and didn’t want to talk to me at all, I feel. For example, one woman turned me away, very pleasantly, three times, but always telling me to call again. This stage of my research was an arduous and disappointing process for me. Many questions swirled in my head: Do women simply not want to talk to me? Or to someone from the university? Is there a suspicion of academics? Is it not about “me” at all? Are their experiences of work not valued by them? Do they not want to remember? Is the it “typical female

9 In my initial telephone contact with potential narrators, I invariably spoke only with the woman of the house before our longer conversations in their home. The exceptions to this are the conversations I did not have with former LCSWU members because of the gate-keeping work of their male partners.
behaviour" regarding the importance of our knowledges and skills? Certainly, narrators' investments in telling stories of their pasts to a stranger were very different than mine as a researcher struggling to find a thesis project. Ultimately I have to ask, however, what’s in my research for these women?

My own positionality as a middle-aged, white, “come-from-away” Newfoundlander shapes/influences/informs how I am seen by others and what I “see” in these narrators and their narrations. The production of a narrative is, after all, an interactive, intersubjective “process of knowledge production” (Whitaker:1993:28; Kondo:1990). As Deborah Britzman (1995) points out, my “interestedness” as a researcher plays a major role in shaping my telling of this narrative, this representation of the Newfoundland narrators, and this research process. I wanted to like the women I spoke with in this project, and I wanted them to like me, to be able to connect with my project. I also wanted to see these women as active agents in the creation of their own work and domestic lives. I was not prepared for the ways in which my investments and identities, and those of the narrators, would be formed and reformed, “arranged and rearranged” throughout the course of my research process (Britzman:1995:141).

I realize now, well into the writing stage of this project, that I had some clear assumptions about this work. I expected the women to be interested in talking about their histories, their experiences, their triumphs. I saw the formation of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union as one of these triumphs, and that this study would revolve around heroic union formation stories. I was somewhat surprised by what I constituted as the “lack” of response to my inquiries - some women were not interested in talking about this time in their lives; some male family members challenged my interest in the stories; many women I spoke with on the telephone were not willing to speak further
with me in-person. How I could have interpreted these responses as “lack” I don’t now know. Perhaps because they did not serve my imagined end product - a thesis full of wonderful details and pleasant people! When I encountered the women and men narrators, I held an image of them all as “nice” people, as “union” people who would tell me what I wanted to know. It was only as some of the narrators spoke about the pleasures of their lives along with their struggles with poverty and raising children that I came to understand that not all their stories are ones to be remembered or cherished.

I did imagine that there was more than one story about this event, and that details and understandings about it would provide an opportunity to examine the stories through the lens of poststructural theory. That the event itself might be multiple events, and might have meanings quite different from those I looked for, had not yet crossed my mind. It took me a while to hear the “formation stories” as stories about friends and family, or about pipping off to a Sunday movie rather than attending union meetings.

My assumptions about my project thus changed gradually over the course of the work, as I encountered the women and men, reflected on our conversations, and began to analyze and write.

THE NARRATORS AND THE NARRATIONS

The narrators I spoke with are the women (and some men) you met in the first chapter. They were aged 63 to 85, most retired, and living in and around St. John’s when I spoke with them. Two of the narrators, Jessie Earle Thomas and Joan Wareham Donegani, live in other locations in North America - California and Quebec specifically. I spoke several times on the telephone with Jessie Thomas and in-person with Joan Donegani.

Each new meeting with a narrator, and sometimes her male partner, was fraught
with uncertainty and anxiety for me. Not every meeting was comfortable and I was conscious of the shifting dynamics of power and control in some meetings more than in others. It has to be said that this contested zone was most obvious to me when a narrator exerted her (or his) control over our meeting situation and conversation. Some refused my suggestions of conversation topics; others refused to let me use my tape recorder, forcing me into a struggle between note-taking and talking. I reflected on the toll this was taking on me as "the researcher."

My exhaustion at interviewing people...The energy it takes to just phone people to make a first contact is amazing. I often find that I have to psych myself up and then call about 4-5 in a row. This leads to more exhaustion! Then when I get to the interview situation it is even more stressful: being always alert to follow-up, being sensitive to their energy levels, trying not to intrude on their personal lives too much by hanging around, getting people to see me a second time...not to mention the times I must take notes rather than using the tape recorder. That is very stressful as I am constantly aware that my attention to the person is slipping while I try to capture that note! (Methodology Notes, 1995)

The conversations usually began with present-day concerns - the most comfortable place to sit, their children, jobs, the economy of Newfoundland, the latest antics of City Hall. Slowly, as the narrators indicated by a question about, or reference to my study, we moved into talking about their lives and work. This part of the conversation proceeded with the prompting of a semi-structured "checklist" or "aide-memoire" which served to highlight two aspects of women's lives: their paid labour and their domestic labour (Passerini:1992: 673). This aide-memoire was composed of about twenty points which covered early work life, work at Job's, forming the LCSWU, descriptions of a 1948 strike action, reactions of friends and family to unionization, personal effects of the union, to whom stories of these moments had been recounted, and under what conditions and so on. In the end, I did not follow this aide-memoire rigidly. Rather, new questions were added in the conversational moment, the order of the ideas
changed from one conversation to the next, some questions or issues were left out entirely. In some cases, I cut by half the areas discussed in response to concerns expressed by the narrators about their energy levels, time commitments and remembrances. Gregg (1991) writes about “transforming method” as her approach to the shifting emphases and changing ideas about her research study (250). Like Gregg, I altered the questions I asked, changed tracks of stories I followed when narrators raised different issues or suggested to me that something I was focusing on was not important to them. Through this process of change, it became apparent to me that the assumptions I had held at the early stages of my research had shaped the aide-memoire, directed the conversations and worked in constructing the early narrations. For example, I began to question my early focus on unionization as a central theme, and I moved away from inquiry into a 1948 “strike action” when many narrators did not “remember” the event as a strike and did not understand my asking about this moment.

The “intersubjective” creation of the narrative moments produced narratives that are under construction even as they are being spoken. As Daphne Patai (1988) observes in her own narrative collecting, the particular life moment and the person inquiring about that life influence which stories, with which emphases, are told (147). The idea of narrations or stories being developed in an intersubjective, mutually constitutive moment, and therefore, being of a specific content and detail, rooted in that moment, is not how telling one’s story is understood. In this setting, telling is an act of collaboration, not an individual process. In this telling, identities are partial, contingent, and in flux, even momentarily. This conception of remembering is at odds with conventional Enlightenment understandings of “truth” and “the real” as being fixed and unwavering foundations of our lives and stories.

At times the narrators questioned me about some of the same themes we were
discussing such as my work life and family connections. For example, in my conversations with Jessie Earle Thomas, we moved to talk about education and her later work teaching at a Montessori school in California. This conversational turn seemed to prompt her to ask me about my life, this research project, and other aspects of my academic life and previous work. She was interested in how I came to be doing my education work in Newfoundland, just as I was interested in how she came to teach in California.

ASKING QUESTIONS/HEARING STORIES

How do researchers/ask questions which help to make visible women's multiple, shifting subject positionings and “multiple relations of power based on age, culture, class, ethnicity” and/or gender (Sangster:1993:30)? Age, experience, class, race and sometimes gender among other positionings, may separate us in our conversations.

I found some conversation approaches, such as multiple meetings in diverse locations were not very workable with the range of narrators I located, and with whom I spoke. The LCSWU women narrators’ age and often less than good health, restricted the time and energy they were willing, or able, to give to my project (after all, it is my project, not theirs). Conducting a number of in-depth conversations with each narrator was not always possible. Generally, I talked with each narrator for as long and as often as she was willing to talk with me. Sometimes this was in person, for two or three hours in the course of one day, other times it was an hour or less, in person or on the telephone, and at others, a couple of hours on the telephone over several months.

The resulting narrations, although full of colour, drama, and humour, are more restrained in the ground they cover than I had originally hoped. I believe this to be, in
large part, the result of my initial assumptions and questions, circling as they did around the idea of unions and unionization as the “important” moments in the stories. Thus, early on the women’s narrations dwell less fully on connections between work and family, the organization of family life, domestic labour, neighbourhoods, local networks, or other activities the women may have engaged in beyond J ob’s. Indeed, the workplace relations - who worked with/liked whom, when, for how long, how were disputes settled prior to union formation, and so on - were explored in limited detail with some narrators. In the course of my research, I had come to see the silences as large “gaps” in my own meaning-making about the LCSWU. This was an idea rooted in an ego-driven assumption that I was the researcher, and consequently in control of the conversations with the narrators. Aligned with this assumption was one that established in my own mind that my ideas, thoughts and questions about the union and the workers were of more importance than those I had gone out to hear. It took me several conversations before I acknowledged that my assumptions were getting in the way of my research!

In response to my emerging concerns about the terrain we were covering, I widened my range of initial questions to break free of my assumption that unionization and strike are key moments in all of the narrators’ lives rather than only part of the stories. Sangster (1994) points to this kind of assumption as being problematic. She notes that it may lead the researcher “to ignore the effect of the strike [and unionization] on young women marginalized from the union” (1994:20). Thus, I later included greater conversation on the general life history of the narrator in order to draw out more about the pattern of their work and workplaces, the relationship between their paid work and family lives, between themselves and their co-workers. I believe this situates their work at, and comments about, Job’s in a wider understanding of their lives. Assumptions about the union as central to women’s lives may also lead the
researcher to exaggerate the importance of events such as unionization or strikes in the lives of women. To assume the importance of one moment over another also denies the range of possible meaning-making in the women's lives, and my imposition of “important moments” - unionization and strike - virtually eliminated the possibility of hearing the important moments identified by the narrators.

Now, I ask how different stories told by different narrators are making meaning in ways I did not anticipate and therefore, did not readily “hear” in the early research phases. For example, when I asked Alice Hunt Kittinger to talk about the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union, her stories emphasised her personal friendship with Jessie Earle Thomas rather than recounting details such as union talks and meetings or the election of the first executive. It took many readings of the transcribed conversation for me to “see” Alice's construction of the union in and through this friendship. For her, the union itself carried less meaning in her life than that relationship. As well, one of the narrators made it abundantly clear to me that there was more to her life than the narrow focus within which I was attempting to confine her (Norman TS95). It became obvious that I should not assume that work at Job's plant so many years before was the only site of meaning making or shifting subject positionings in the lives of these women. The women vary greatly in the moments they remember, or make meaning of, in their lives. Shifting focus to explore these moments had implications for narrators and narrations; longer periods of conversation were required to address the broadened perspective, and sometimes more than one conversation time was needed. Given the age, interest and energy of some of the narrators, it was impossible to be consistent in the time span, content, and form of all conversations. Often, it was simply not possible to meet again with narrators. To address this, I broadened the areas of conversation with any “new” narrators I located, and where possible, pursued additional conversation times with
previous narrators.

I used a consent form with the narrators or received verbal consent for the recording of the narrations they offered to me. In good feminist form, I asked if they wanted to see the transcribed conversation. Virtually all refused this offer outright; a few asked me to clarify what it would look like and how I would be using it before saying "fine." No one wanted to read the transcribed narrative. A small number of women simply chatted on the telephone with me and, even though they ultimately declined a longer conversation, they did not object to information they had given me being employed in this study. If it was unclear to me that permission to use a narrative had been given, I attempted to clarify this. If it was still not clear, as in the case of one or two short conversations, I have not included them in this study. In these exchanges, I told the narrators that they could withdraw at any time from my study. No one withdrew from the project. When I raised concerns about using their actual names in my thesis, fearing they would be reluctant to be identified with their comments about Job's or other workers, no one requested a pseudonym.

Other previously recorded interviews held in the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) form part of this study. I was given permission to use these oral history collections by the original collectors. Tape-recorded interviews conducted in 1992 by Michelle Park were transcribed and analyzed with her permission. Susan Williams, a private researcher in St. John's, allowed me to use a short interview conducted in 1987 with Daisy Tucker Hiscock and Les Hiscock. Susan learned of my research project from others in St. John's and kindly wrote and offered the material to me. The inter-related and sometimes overlapping communities in St. John's benefited my research on more than one occasion (see below).

In total, I collected and transcribed twenty different key narratives of varying
lengths for this project. In addition, eleven short narrations from potential informants, who ultimately declined to meet with me for a longer conversation, contain further rich information valuable to my project. Encounters with "declining subjects" - women who never entirely refused to speak to me, yet would not commit to a longer in-person conversation - provoked much thought and angst on my part.

DECLINING SUBJECTS

I began to think about the difficulties of trying to understand the narratives of the LCSWU women after a particularly trying week of phone calls and letters to potential narrators - a week that culminated in several refusals by "my subjects" to be subjects of "my research." At the risk of forfeiting the image of a credible and competent researcher, I explore here some of the questions opened by one narrator's refusal to speak.

The following discussion owes a debt to the work of Kamala Visweswaran in Fictions of Feminist Ethnography (1994). In examining the "story of a woman who would not talk to me," Visweswaran recognizes the "authority" and "authenticity" of her research work resides, in part, in her ability to "name," to produce "subjects" who speak, from her fieldwork. What happens when a subject refuses to be a subject? Can an interrogative text be produced "without interrogating a subject," she asks (60-62).10 Good questions, I thought, for this is a place I know well in my own work. Following Visweswaran's lead, I began to consider these moments of refusal as very particular moments of meaning-making. What might these refusals be about? What does

10 I am conscious that with each academic writing convention I employ, such as footnotes, I am also representing my work as competent research within the acceptable academic form. This is yet another convention which underpins, in a quiet way, authority, authenticity and veracity in social science writing.
this mean about "my" research? Does it speak to their identities as women, as workers, as union members? To my identities as working class, as researcher, as a woman? How does this complicate the exploration of narratives of identity?

I had many moments of refusal in this research; some have been complete - the loud sound of a telephone being hung up in my ear; some have been partial - women inscribing the boundaries of what will be spoken and what will not. Here, I look at one instance of a declining subject, whom I shall name "D" - a good mystery genre trope indicating something unknown, unfilled out, a puzzle.¹¹

D was the second President of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union, beginning in 1949. Her name had been given to me by two different contacts early on in my research so I was anxious to speak with her. According to these contacts and the LCSWU Roll Book, D appears to have worked for many years in fish packing, for different companies, and to have held a supervisory position as forelady in Job Brothers fish plant, as well as being a fish packer. I thought she might be a woman with interesting things to say about her work, coming at it, I assumed, from a number of different locations in the labour process. I decided that it was imperative (for my research) to speak to D. I made first telephone contact with her in November 1994. My short, sharp field note tells much.

...not an easy chat; did not want to be taped; had full schedule till Christmas; not wanting to get together. (Methodology Notes, November 1994)¹²

¹¹ This trope appeals to me because I am an avid reader of mystery genres and this research has proven to be something of a detective hunt itself. Visweswaran ironically refers to "the suspect" rather than "the subject" in her writing (1994:62).

¹² The description of my conversations with D are from my Methodology Notes of 1994-95 and from the contact card file I kept during my research.
D's voice during our first telephone call seemed very wary and suspicious. She asked me to tell her in detail how I had located her telephone number. I explained my research and contacts as carefully and fully as possible. I remember shuffling through my contact card files for information in my effort to provide her with a satisfactory (and safe) reply. The mention of former work mates with whom I had already spoken did not ease the tension on the telephone line. I remember feeling quite anxious myself during our conversation. After some minutes of silent pauses and questions on D's part, she told me that she had, indeed, worked at Job's in the 1940s. D told me she was a forelady there in the 1950s and that she had worked with the first LCSWU president, Jessie Earle Thomas. Drawing strength from this and feeling on the verge of new information, I asked a further tentative question about D's work at Job's. The telephone call ended quickly with D refusing further conversation. I felt rebuffed and stunned.

[meeting in person is] often met with resistance - not wanting me to come over or wanting (albeit reluctantly) to only talk on the phone. Sometimes I can tell that they are being kind to me, talking only because I ask....Some ...Don't want to talk to me at all....It is an arduous and disappointing process for me. (Methodology Notes, 1995)

The more I thought about it, the more the experience upset me. I avoided thinking further about this experience as I moved on to other contacts and conversations.

I did not try to contact D again until nearly one year later, the fall of 1995. This time I tried a more formal approach. I sent her a letter with details of my work, my personal history in Newfoundland, and my desire to talk with her. I followed this up with a telephone call 3 weeks later. Again, D did not want to talk, saying that she was "in her seventies now" (card notes, October 1995). She did suggest that I call the next week, however, indicating that she would be willing to talk with me then. I called again a week later, wishing intensely to build a connection with her. This time, D told me the house was being painted and she could not talk to me, to call back in a week. We repeated this
verbal dance four more times before I simply gave up and left D alone (card notes, October and November 1995).

I still believe that D had stories to tell of her time at Job’s. She had much work experience of the kind I wanted to hear, she had been an early executive member of the LCSWU, and a union member for at least five years. Further, each telephone conversation produced small bits of those stories, but without any sustained narrative. I was faced with a complex and contradictory subject! She seemed cheerful during each succeeding conversation, asking a lot of questions about me, making a joke about her memory, her husband’s thoughts and comments, and her busy life. However, she also stressed that her work at Job’s was not important to talk about - it was “just a job” (card notes, 1994-95). Confusion may be read in my running methodology notes from that time.

In some cases I think that women do not think that Job’s and the Union are worth remembering much about, other than the good memories of “happy times” at work. Few of the women “remember” or will talk about “bad” things like disputes or difficulties, etc. Virtually every woman contact says that she has little to say...Is [their work at Job’s] not valued by them? Do they not want to remember? Is it “typical” female behaviour about our knowledge and skills - refusing the importance of them? (Methodology Notes, 1995)

There is a danger here of my analysis falling into what Visweswaran calls “an all-too-common gendering” in which I assume that D is unable “to see the value of her own contribution within larger social or historical narratives that would work to deny it” (1994:69). Indeed, this recognition of women’s place in larger narratives of history is relatively recent in the scheme of things. Public history has denied women a voice in how their lives are represented on the page and working class women have largely been absent from the history books.

Historian Joan Sangster (1994) notes that women “remember the past in
different ways in comparison with men." Cultural values and expectations, class, race, ethnicity and gender shape whether women tell their stories, what they tell and how they tell them. In some cases, women refuse their central role; we tend to understate or to remain silent on personal accomplishments, choosing to highlight the work/roles of others (7). Some women's boundary setting in our conversations clearly staked out the terrain I was allowed to cover. One contact, who agreed to speak with me in her home, refused my use of a tape recorder to record our conversation, and told me she would not talk about anyone else from Job's (Picco TS95). This made discussion of her work, in relation to others, difficult.

Luisa Passerini (1989) found in her oral history work, however, that Italian working-class women's narratives “often begin with an emphasis on the importance of work” and develop into representations of self as "joker, rebel or impulsive character." Sometimes work is raised as a “means of emancipation,” for its role in independence, but “not as a basis for self-esteem” (194-195). Work is thus the staging area for the production of particular, sometimes oppositional, identities.

Much was at play in the brief conversations between D and myself. I have come to realize that issues of memory and remembering, of telling one's stories to a stranger, of class differences evident even over the telephone are at work here. I am also asking a difficult task - thinking back over fifty years to a job and work site about which they may have very mixed feelings and memories. Sheer length of time, “water under the bridge,” suggests a weathering of memories, a possible forgetting of specific detail conventionally associated with telling one's story.

...many say their memories of that time are too vague to be of help. There is a certain conception of remembering here I think...One that insists on details being clear and thoughts being present at the time I ask.

(Methodology Notes, 1995)
As I discussed above, the idea of narrations or stories being a collaborative act between the teller(s) and the listener(s) is not how telling one's story is understood.

The past is not always a comfortable or happy place, as I discovered from the narrators. A call from someone unknown, a disembodied voice attempting to link together women who have not been connected for a long time may be unsettling. Relationships from the past, perhaps long forsaken, are being raised. It may be that D's position as a forelady in some ways alienated her from other women workers at Job Brothers.¹³ Anxieties about sharing stories with other workers, about a contested workplace, may be at work here as well.

My being a stranger to Newfoundland - a “come-from-away” - and class differences, read in and through my voice and appearance, are interesting pieces of this as well. I've lived in Newfoundland for over twenty years, but I am not a native Newfoundlander. These alone place me in a different class position relative to the narrators. I am “outside.” I am a product of a working class family, now working in the rarefied air of an academic milieu, therefore not seen as working class.¹⁴ The university setting is immediately associated with “being educated” and thus, being different from the majority of the narrators. These fragmentary subject positions translated into many questions directed at me by the narrators. Several of the women were clearly puzzled by my interest in their lives. They asked why I wanted to know about Job’s and “ordinary” plant work. What was I going to get out of their stories? What was I looking for? Who am I? These issues of identity were, and are, complex negotiations.

¹³ See Little (1994) for discussion of some of the possible consequences faced by women assuming a foreperson position in a fish plant.

¹⁴ For an excellent range of discussion on the conflict and frustration of being working class in the academic world, see Dews and Law, 1995.
I hear myself on the tapes and I hear someone who slips and slides in and out of different identities...One minute I am the university researcher, the next somebody sent over by a neighbour or friend, the next a chatter over tea...[The next an asserter of my working-class roots]...I move back and forth constantly, negotiating the intersubjective [shoals and eddies]...

My voice level, speech patterns and use of language changes in these shifts as well. I move into a more colloquial way of speaking, laugh at jokes, drop my g's at the drop of a hat!! I am dumb to different degrees... (Methodology Notes, 1995).

I remember feeling false or "not right" in the course of many of these conversations. Fields of power and meaning shift in these moments; identities are fragmented and challenged. I can feel these moments in the pit of my stomach as I write these words.

Dorinne Kondo (1990) tells of her struggle to grapple with her own shifting identity formation in the midst of examining the formation of identities in others during her research in Japan. She describes her research "informants" as "in the act of being, actively interpreting and trying to make meaning of the ethnographer." Kondo sees this as "their means for preserving their own identities" in relation to Kondo herself. She argues that "[t]hese power-imbued attempts to capture, resist, and rewrite each other were...Productive of understandings and.... Alternately wrenching and fulfilling" (17).

Kondo's analysis of her experience gives me some insight into the interaction between D and myself. As I look back over the notes and files documenting our exchange, I can read a pattern in the interplay - one which allowed D to contest my quest for her stories, to control access to those stories and thus, her life and, ultimately, to provoke questions in me about my project. It is not only the identities of "our subjects" which are examined in the research process, but our own as well.

I am not suggesting that all of the declining subjects I have encountered are the same. Rather, I think that each instance can be unpacked and examined for its own meaning-making and identity formation possibilities. In terms of my own research,
these declining subjects have had a profound effect on how I think about the telling of stories, memory and experiences. D’s refusal to speak challenges many of my unquestioned assumptions about my research topic: that unionization carries great meaning for workers; that unionization of a group of women is an important and memorable event for the women members; that it will have an effect on their lives; that they will want to talk about it; that these moments constitute a watershed of sorts, around which notions of “identity formations” might be explored. D’s refusal problematizes my assumed linkages between identity, memory, experiences and history. Without the speaking subject, and her memories, is there history? Some of these questions are what propel Kamala Visweswaran to wish to imagine “another form of ethnography” (1994:67-68).

The declining subject complicates immensely any work on narratives of identity. As a researcher, I can only speculate from slim evidence about why I am refused. I can ask further questions about the conditions of refusal, however. Ultimately, I am left with a puzzle in which the pieces may not fit together - may never be made to “add up.” Certainly, these moments of refusal do not fit easily or comfortably into a larger narrative which seeks closure and coherency. Acknowledging the complexities and contingencies inherent in the use of oral narratives has compelled me to tread lightly on the issue of closure and finality in concluding remarks. On the other hand, it is not possible to deal with refusals in the usual manner, that is, by removing them from the research data. Rather, we must problematize our interactions with others and continue to ask ourselves how these brief narratives of refusal make meaning in the lives of the narrators and ourselves. This position shifted my research and analysis onto a different and less level terrain of inquiry. In keeping questions of subjects and subjectivity open and active in my work, I also resist certainty, generalizability, and closure which are
conventionally understood as the ultimate results of social science research.

REMEMBERING/FORGETTING

As I consider the question of remembering and forgetting, I hold present a particular understanding of the word "remember." For me, it is a very descriptive word of an active, embodied process, one that creates a vivid image in my mind. I picture the actions of arms drawing something back, bringing it in close to the body - remembering - reconstructing something complex that has been dis-membered. In my work with the narrators in this study, I have come to realize it is also a social act, one that is embedded in, and draws from, our relationships with others. How is it that we remember, or forget? What is my work in this?

Interesting and puzzling questions also arose regarding my methods of stimulating narrations. In a relatively unexamined manner, I took with me to these conversations newspaper clippings of the LCSWU formation, the 1948 LSPU strike, ads and union notices, and photographs of groups and individuals from Job's plant in order to stimulate narrators' thoughts. Sometimes I brought out these items and used them to prompt discussion, sometimes they remained in my file folder. Often I brought out the photographs toward the end of the conversation because I then knew that the narrators would be interested in seeing particular people or moments in their work lives at Job's. Most of the women narrators expressed particular interest in the newspaper item on the LCSWU formation which contained a photo of the first President, Jessie Earle Thomas.

At the time these processes seemed quite natural to me, arising as they do out of my work in adult education, and my observation and implementation of research methods employed in oral history and folklore. In the fall of 1995, sociologist Barbara Neis suggested to me that this approach was not typical of sociological research. Until that
moment I had not considered my work a unique methodology! I saw my strategic use of prompting materials as assisting myself and the narrator by providing an interlude of re/remembering and, sometimes, a shift of emphasis in the narrator's story. This, I imagined, would reduce the narrators' stress around the pressure to “remember,” and my stress around the pressure “to hear.” I imagined these “interludes” as a quiet backwater in a moving river of conversation.

My main concern in this was a nagging uncertainty as to whether I was “feeding lines” to be played back to me in narrations. Sangster (1994) also questions her own use of newspaper clippings with narrators, wondering if

[It is possible that by appearing with newspaper clippings of strike battles, I actually encouraged Edith and Margaret to remember it as a conflictual event? (20)]

Nevertheless, mindful that I was not searching for “pure,” or “authentic” narratives, and that the narrations and meanings were being produced intersubjectively in that moment and place, I decided this should not be a major concern.

How these “prompts” organize and produce narratives is visible in the narratives themselves. Narrators reference people, photographs, newspaper articles and even, in one instance, an earlier academic paper on the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union. At times this illuminates a certain will to coherence around “the story” in narrators’ talk as they ask if their stories “fit” with public accounts or the stories of other narrators. Indeed, occasionally narrators suggest that their “lack” of stories (memories) is a reflection of their no longer having documentary evidence in their possession. For example, Jessie Earle Thomas said she lacked memories because she no longer possessed any documentary records of her years with Job Brothers and the LCSWU due to moving so much after her marriage (Thomas TS94:5). Alice Kittinger also credits thinking of Jessie Earle Thomas as the way she remembered: “I’m surprised that
I remembered a lot of things....Jessie brought it all back to me” (Kittinger TS92:107).

Clearly prompts of many kinds are at work in the remembering/forgetting.

When is a past, and memories of it, lost? Under what conditions? There may be a sociality of forgetting as well as remembering at work here. Time, space, distance and dis-identification with Job Brothers, the fish plant work and the LCSWU are at work in the production of narrators’ stories. In Jessie’s case, not being called upon to produce the subject positionings that were available and taken up as a fish plant worker at Job’s or a union member has weakened (perhaps severed) her connection with those moments.

If I propose that women make meaning in the process of the on-going co-construction and reconstruction of narratives, is it appropriate for me to try to stimulate another (different?) response if the narrator has said “I don’t remember” (for example, Thomas TS:1994:15)? Is not remembering a part of the meanings she and we are making? I was unable to meet with Jessie and so had no opportunity to introduce some of the “prompts” mentioned above. How might these prompts have altered memories? Does not remembering point to other considerations? For example, the life of Jessie Earle Thomas, a “woman of colour,” was very different after she left her work at Job’s - she married, moved to the USA, travelled and lived with her husband in many countries, and ultimately became a Montessori school teacher in California. So when she repeatedly says of her time in the LCSWU, where others describe her as a key organizing figure and first President, “I don’t remember much,” how am I to understand? When is an event too peripheral or too painful to be remembered or recounted? When does the business of daily living, where such memories have little salience, or they cannot be spoken, supersede the past? How might a remembering of that earlier time shatter senses of self that a subject has worked hard to produce?

Large pieces of information on the union in general, and connections she had with
others, like the LSPU leadership, remain hidden in this as well. The sociality of narratives and memories are suggested by what we remember and what we forget. For Jessie Earle Thomas, such joint re-membering (and co-construction) of early work memories was not possible. With Jessie's departure from Newfoundland in about 1957, much of her connection with the province and her life here, especially her work life, was severed. On one visit in the early 1960s, Jessie met with one of the foreladies, Kitty, with whom she had worked at Job's. Other than the occasional card or letter from family, Jessie had no contact with others from, or about, her earlier life. No stories were told amongst friends, no specific incidents or events reinforced or transformed by re-tellings. Jessie said she sometimes told stories to her children but that their interest in this early part of her life, lived in another country and another time, was limited (Thomas TS94; TS95). Her stories were historically and culturally foreign to her family.

In contrast, the sociality with which Daisy Tucker Hiscock, Alice Hunt Kittinger and Pearl Tucker Hunt together fashioned and refashioned their memories of working at Job's provided a context which nourished these rememberings and their subsequent narratives. This was made clearer to me when I started analysis of the narratives collected from Daisy, Alice and Pearl. I began to discern the importance of relationships and collective re-membering in the crystallization of particular memories. I came to call these more collective stories “narrative constellations.”

NARRATIVE CONSTELLATIONS

As I proceeded through my research, I questioned the appropriateness of the “snowball” method by which I located narrators. Careful and considered selection of informants is usually promoted in methodological discussions in qualitative research;
bias in “collecting data” is to be avoided at all costs. Was I “skewing” my research by talking with narrators who know or are related to each other? As I proceeded with locating narrators, I realized that the close-knit communities in which I was working meant that I was bound to be given names of women known to those women with whom I was speaking. It was unavoidable if I wanted to locate and contact Job’s workers and members of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union. They were connected across geographic space and time, through their work at Job’s, membership in the Union, familial and marital ties, their location in the physical geography of communities. Connections of all sorts were virtually inescapable.

Initially, I contacted Daisy Tucker Hiscock and Alice Hunt Kittinger, two women who had been interviewed by Michelle Park in 1992. They spoke with me and named each other as women who would be good to talk with about the union. As I listened to their narratives, replied to them in the context of our conversations, transcribed the tape recordings, read them against other narrations from 1992 and 1994, and now reconsider what I have heard, I realize that there are specific constellations of stories being told to me and particular “crystallizations” of anecdotes being constructed (Hiscock TS92 and 94, Hunt TS92 and Kittinger TS92 and 94). These crystallizations may point to what Sangster (1994) has called the illumination of “the collective scripts of a social group” (8), as well as the intertwined fashioning of the individual and the social.

As I reflected on this, I realized that Hiscock, Hunt, and Kittinger are related to each other either by kinship or marriage. They had known each other for many years and may have shared these same stories in family gatherings or conversations with each other. Particular constructions of the event(s) had become somewhat fixed. This is, in itself, an interesting observation on the work of narratives. How do particular stories
become the most "acceptable" to recount? How to these particular accounts work to produce acceptable subjects when there is more than one person in the story, and doing the telling? What happens to other accounts? I came to call these/their stories "The Family Compact," and wondered what other women, outside this one family circle, would make of the same moments or events. Would their narrations reflect different constellations of stories, different crystallizations? I had an inkling of the action of narrative constellations when Mary and Leo Dillon began recounting together stories of Maurice Job Taylor (see Chapter 5). One narrative was clearly shared by both narrators, each telling specific moments, with an awareness of the direction and content of the entire narrative piece. This then, was a moment of production of another, different narrative constellation.

These were afterthoughts, however. During the research phase I simply attempted to diversify my choices of possible narrators to see how (or whether) other stories, events, and moments were foregrounded or worked up in narrative ways that differently constructed meanings for different women.

THE TEXT OF CONTEXT

The narratives produced by the women of the LCSWU may be situated historically and culturally in an understanding of women's waged labour and domestic lives in a small urban setting in pre-Confederation Newfoundland. Historians Joy Parr (1990) and Joan Sangster (1993) grapple with similar inter-textual issues in their respective case studies. Both situate personal oral narratives at the center of their work, and then build outward in expanding circles to expose social and economic relations shaping their respective work forces, time periods, industries and locales. Parr, in particular, presents a complex and multi-layered view of women's lives in the workplace, on the
strike picket line, at home and in social interaction with other women and men. This view is enriched and made “thick” by her extensive use of archival documents, photographs, maps and substantial description of ethnicity and migration patterns which embed the personal narratives of women and men historically and culturally.

Anthropologist Dorinne Kondo (1990) also firmly embeds her study of power, gender and discourses of identity in a Japanese workplace, in the changing historical and cultural Japanese milieu. For example, in her analysis of gender and part-time work, Kondo first reaches back into the larger discursive field of Japanese history to detail the development of the ideology of “good wives, wise mothers,” gender in national policies and labour laws, and the promulgation of the Meiji Civil Code reforming the laws of household succession in Japan at the turn of the century. Her discussion of the industrial and business context of her study is also rich with historical detail. In these examples, Kondo takes up both “events” as recorded history and discourses shaping that history and that recording.

In my work, as well, women’s oral narratives are centered, and the concept of identity is historicized by exploring a range of discursive productions of “women workers,” over time and in specific instances (Parr:1990; Kondo:1990). Some of these discursive productions are made visible in the disjunctures and ruptures in “storylines” or narrations told by the women workers (Davies:1992). It is to the women’s narrations of life experiences that I look for clues to the formation of subjectivities and to the “connections between biography, history and social structure” (Reinharz:1992:131). These clues do not cohere around linear stories or unidimensional subjects.

With a feminist poststructuralist approach in mind, the importance of examining the discursive practices current in Newfoundland from the 1930s to the 1950s is
underscored. The production of discourses is embedded in the narrations told by the LCSWU women and the LSPU men, stories found in daily newspapers, archival documents such as those of NEAL, Job Brothers, the LCSWU and the LSPU, and popular literature of the day. To accomplish one aspect of this analysis, I read historical newspaper accounts contained in the two principal St. John’s newspapers, the *Evening Telegram*, and the *Daily News*, to determine the range and content of discursive currents pertaining to positionings as wives, mothers, sisters, women workers, unions, the fishery, the LCSWU, the LSPU, as well as concepts such as “women workers,” and others. I paid particular attention to accounts and advertisements related to union actions such as meetings, notices, and news releases and coverage of Job Brothers, the LCSWU and the LSPU. Extensive descriptive articles on technological developments at Job Brothers in the 1940s, and workers’ places in these developments, accounts of the public history of the Job family and businesses, and the work of the Newfoundland Employers Association Limited (NEAL) contribute to my analysis.

During the 1940s and 1950s, several different newspapers were published and available in the St. John’s area. As in most places with more than one newspaper, daily or otherwise, there is great variation in the form, style, content and politics of the newspapers in St. John’s during this time. The two most prominent newspapers were the *Daily News* and the *Evening Telegram*; they are the most important to this study as they had the widest circulation and are occasionally mentioned by the narrators (Kittinger TS94:52). The *Evening Telegram* was founded in 1879 and continues to publish daily in St. John’s. The *Daily News* survived for ninety years as a daily in St. John’s, ceasing publication in 1984. In general, scrutiny of the *Daily News* shows that this paper

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15 This discussion of newspapers is informed by the work of Suzanne Ellison, 1997.
contained more local content and story coverage than the **Telegram**. During the 1940s, the front page of the **Daily News** often carried advertisements for local products and announcements of regular and special union meetings for the Newfoundland Protective Association of Shop and Office Employees (NPASOE), the Longshoremens' Protective Union (LSPU) and the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union (LCSWU) as well as a host of other male craft unions. The **Evening Telegram** carried no such ads or notices on their front page. Occasionally, union meeting notices appeared in the back pages of the **Evening Telegram**.\(^{16}\) One of the narrators confirmed the **Daily News** as the main source of public information on the LCSWU when she commented on the media coverage of the Union activities. Alice Hunt Kittinger observed “Everything, somethin’ happened with the, uh, the union it was always put in the **Daily News**.” (TS94:52).

Other newspapers were also available in St. John's, although perhaps read by different, more specialized audiences than the **Evening Telegram** or **Daily News**. The **St. John's Sunday Herald** has been published under many names since its inception in 1946. This newspaper, often found in tabloid form, published “sensational news filler, gossip, sports, entertainment, history, social commentary, advertisements...” (Ellison:1997:106). **The Newfoundland Trade Review** ran weekly from 1898 to 1946, and then bi-weekly from 1946-1948. According to Ellison, this paper was “a newspaper devoted to trade and commerce and all that pertains thereto.” Business, fishery and shipping information predominated, with editorials, general news, public notices and advertisements filling out the pages. Later a “women’s section and serial fiction were added” (111). A brief inspection of this paper from 1946 to 1948 revealed several lengthy fictional stories and a photograph or two showing women working in the home or

\(^{16}\) See for example, **DN**, March 15, 1948; March 1, 1948; April 25, 1948; May 8, 1948 and **ET**, May 7, 1948, NPASOE; May 8, 1948, Labourers' and General Workers' Protective Union (LGWPU).
performing “female work” such as sewing or shopping. Few articles on Job Brothers specifically appeared, but a number on fishing and fishing policy in general made the front and middle pages.17

The Observer's Weekly began publishing in 1934 as an independent paper. In 1937 -1938, it was purchased by the Daily News and reprinted much of that publication. It ceased publication in 1963 (Ellison:1997:121-122). The Monitor was (and still is) a monthly publication of the Catholic Church in Newfoundland. It printed news pertaining to the Catholic Church, Vatican statements, and national and foreign news on Catholic concerns (89). The Family Fireside was distributed free of charge in the city. It printed “provincial news, household hints, poetry, serial fiction, social news and advertisements” (Ellison:1997:52).

In the 1940s, Newfoundland was not an isolated island. Indeed, years of international trade, saltfish exporting, geographical location on shipping lanes, and kinship and marital ties to the British Isles and the “Boston States” meant that Newfoundland was embedded in a complex array of social relations. News, information and social commentaries reached St. John's in various ways. Between 1934 and 1946, little political reporting was included in newspapers because of the tight control over government business exerted by the Commission Government. Will and Cuff (1991:131) suggest that this lack of local political news forced St. John's papers to expand “Canadian coverage and sports news” and to include new features such as women's pages created from syndicated columns published elsewhere. The addition of thousands of Americans during WW II only increased the possibility of contact with wider discursive practices for St. John's residents. Newspapers carried stories from

17 See for example, March 30, 1946, page 5 for discussion of the arrival of the RONALD GEORGE, skippered by Arch Thornhill and the discharging of fish at Job's wharf.
around the world; the St. John’s Evening Telegram regularly featured international wire service reports on European and British events, a “Washington” news page and an “Australian” news page. Many Newfoundland women married American servicemen and eventually moved to the United States. This was the case for two of the narrators in this study, Jessie Earle Thomas and Alice Hunt Kittinger.

Discursive messages about women were not necessarily direct or simple. Meyerowitz (1994) argues that popular literature, in the form of women’s magazines published in the United States between 1946 and 1958, offered complex and contradictory discourses on women. In her study, Meyerowitz sampled four hundred and eighty-nine nonfiction articles from eight publications - two “middlebrow” magazines - Reader’s Digest, Coronet; two “highbrow” magazines - Harper’s, Atlantic Monthly; two aimed at African Americans - Ebony, Negro Digest; and two classified as “women’s magazines” - Ladies’ Home Journal and Woman’s Home Companion. She found “neither a monolithic nor unrelentingly repressive” message for women in these magazines. Rather,

[A]ll of these magazines sampled advocated both the domestic and the nondomestic, sometimes in the same sentence. In this literature, domestic ideals coexisted in ongoing tension with an ethos of individual achievement that celebrated nondomestic activity, individual striving, public service and public success. (Meyerowitz:1994:231)

Privatized feminine stereotypes co-existed alongside stories of women’s public accomplishments, generally ignoring tensions between these dualities. Traditional gendered descriptions, such as “pretty” or “soft voiced,” and linkages between femininity and domesticity were consistently re-inscribed in the text and photographs, while other articles asserted a strong work ethic and the importance of waged work for women. Meyerowitz suggests that recent film and literary criticism supports her contention that mass popular culture, at least in the United States during the post-war
period, "delivered multiple messages, which women could read as sometimes supporting and sometimes subverting" conventional notions of appropriate womanhood (233-251).

Complex, multiple messages are also present in the publications readily available to the women in St. John's area. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, not all women's pages or articles in newspapers are overtly conservative in their discourses. Women's pages of the *Evening Telegram* during the second half of the 1940s were edited by Dora Russell.¹⁸ Harris (1995) notes that under Russell's editorial control, the *Evening Telegram*'s "Page for Women" included more than simple reproductions of syndicated columns (and thus particular discourses) from elsewhere. Russell herself wrote four different columns, more or less simultaneously, during her four year tenure as editor: a daily editorial feature called "The Woman's Angle," a daily fictional column in diary form, "Day by Day," a profile column called "Woman of the Week," and a more occasional column of fiction, the "Spec'tatler." Material in all of these columns covered local concerns: "the promotion and support of local women in political, business, voluntarism, and domestic roles; the focus on issues relevant to women readers; and the emphasis on the activities of the local women's community, as well as coverage of the activities of the larger social and political community from a woman's perspective" (Harris:1995:2-3). Russell's editorials in "The Woman's Angle" took up social and economic issues and, during the 1947-48 National Convention, Russell advocated women's participation in the Confederation debates.

Of particular interest to this study, Russell wrote about Jessie Earle Thomas in her "Woman of the Week" column of March 6, 1948. Russell emphasized the formation of the LCSWU, Jessie's age (21) and experience as a singer, her work in Job Brothers

¹⁸ For an in-depth study of Russell's contribution to women's writing see Harris, 1995.
plant, and the positive aspects of unionization for workers of all kinds (ET: March 6, 1948:10). Jessie is described in a specifically gendered way: she has a "pleasant, soft-spoken voice," and is an "enthusiastic" first president. Details of her public singing are confined to noting she entertained troops in St. John's during WW II and patients at the local Orthopaedic Hospital. No mention is made of her performances at local dances or singing the blues with local bands.

As Harris notes, Russell acknowledged and "respected social status" in her writings, and "appreciated and praised women's contributions in traditional domestic and support roles" while at the same time "challenging traditional boundaries for acceptable female careers" (1995:50-52). In the February 10, 1948 "Woman's Angle" column however, Russell promoted an employment exchange for women run by the local "Y." The jobs being promoted were for domestics, office workers, factory workers, stenographers and shop workers, jobs considered acceptably feminine (8). The March 13, 1948 column, "Lost Lives," argued for doctor's care for pregnant women. Newfoundland women, Russell argued, have "wrong eating habits, too much strenuous work on the fish flakes, in the garden, over the washtub" and they "disregard symptoms" of physical problems. Women are positioned as keepers of the family in the areas of health and nutrition. A familiar Newfoundland discourse appears here, this time applied to women: "The women of Newfoundland cherish their sturdiness and independence..." As we see in the next chapter, this discourse of "the hardy Newfoundlander" is called upon to create a particular subjectivity for both women and men.

My own review of the Evening Telegram's "Page for Women" located other, more traditional articles for women's consumption: instructions for knitting and sewing projects; cooking instructions for women; the latest fashion news, usually linked to the
latest sewing project; grooming tips to attract male attention; and horoscopes (ET: January-July, 1948). The photographs included in “Page for Women,” and sometimes throughout the newspaper, project a different image however: a sample of photographs show women participating actively in sports such as ice boat races or skiing (ET: February 4, 1948: 8-9); running dog-teams in Ontario (ET: February 11, 1948: 1); conducting scientific work in the United States (ET: February 11, 1948: 8); engaging in political protests such as fasting to challenge the high cost of living (ET: March 11, 1948: 12) or women strikers being arrested (ET: March 19, 1948: 9). It is worth noting as well that none of these photographs were of Newfoundland women. Rather, they show women from other distant places challenging traditional stereotypes.

Throughout the Evening Telegram, a mixture of columns from Britain, the United States, Canada, and other international news services brought ideas about women’s lives as well. One notable feature is the serialized fiction running in the Evening Telegram. In the spring of 1948, the story “Freedom for Two” suggested that a single woman was both unhappy and unsuccessful in life. This state could only be remedied through marriage and an exclusive, heterosexual relationship. Although the leading character in this story was earning her living in an unconventional way, she eventually finds her way to a “successful” marriage and a bright future.

The Daily News ran quite similar syndicated features and articles, however, few photographs of women’s accomplishments appeared. If anything different might be said of the Daily News “Page For Women,” it is that the contents reflect a more conservative image of women’s work and lives. Certainly, a middle-class notion of important issues for women are encapsulated in these pages (DN: January-July, 1948).

Each day the paper offered short stories depicting heterosexual relationships complete with romanticized sketches of idyllic couples. These stories often contained
moral messages as well about the good of charity work for women, the importance of becoming a marriageable woman, and a good mother and hostess. “We, the Women” featured columns on the importance of a husband’s comfort in the home, home as a peaceful refuge at the day’s end, and how a woman might have her own ideas about the world without losing her femininity. A joint banking account was encouraged but primarily because it would teach women how to be fiscally responsible: if a woman is a financial partner rather than simply being given money by her husband, she will be less extravagant with her share of the family money it is argued.

Photographs on the Women’s page focused on fashion layouts, hair care tips and shopping advertisements. The fashions reflect a middle and upper-middle class economic position and body image for women as they highlight glamorous clothing for ski vacations, winter fur fashions, and evening dresses for the career woman. Modern homemaking, nutrition, recipes and child care are emphasised in columns such as “Let’s Eat” and “The Doctor Says.” Interestingly, the recipes seldom included local food products but highlighted more exotic foods such as green pepper, and “foreign” recipes such as Cauliflower Soufflé, South American Pancakes, and Spanish Eggs.

Women were encouraged to improve themselves through columns on language use, word acquisition and pronunciation - miniature, compunction, taciturn, and inherent are detailed for example (“Lessons in English”). Simple social experiences such as how to politely refuse second helpings when out to dinner (“Social Situations”), and quick household tips and repairs, many of which centered on cleanliness and maintenance of middle class decorative standards (“How Can I?”) were also featured. Advertisements on these pages focused on women’s beauty products, health products, food purchases for the family and children in particular. The “Children’s Corner” featuring puzzles and connect-the-dots drawing games was conspicuously located on the “Page For Women.”
As Meyerowitz demonstrates through her analysis of American magazines and journals, multi-layered, conflicting discourses about appropriate women's lives are to be found in newspapers. My review of the contents of St. John's newspapers during the late 1940s indicates that Meyerowitz's argument regarding the complexity of discursive constructions of women during this time period is borne out. These discourses may not be all encompassing or totalizing, however.

Only two of the women narrators mentioned reading newspapers or journals and magazines as part of daily or weekly activity, however. Alice Hunt Kittinger noted that announcements for the LCSWU meetings were always placed in the Daily News, and that she saw them there, indicating that she occasionally read the newspaper (TS94:52).

Leisure activities for the women narrators in this study also included listening to the radio (Dillon TS95:81), and going to movies at the York or Crescent theatres on the north side of the harbour on Saturday evenings or Sunday afternoons (Janes TS92:30-31; Thomas TS95:7). Joan Donegani remembers she saw "always a Roy Rogers or Gene Autry movie" (Donegani TS:1995:11).

What, what we were, like the three of us just loved to go watch cowboy movies which is kinda silly you think of it now but that's all we used to do on Saturday. The three of us get, come home from work, get washed and dressed and go to the movies. (chuckles)

(Donegani TS95:69)

Joan remembers reading "[A]nything I could get my hands on! (Laughs)...At that time it was mostly comics, you know, I wasn't uh, I didn't really get into novels like I do now, but uh..I just liked to read. I'll pick up anything and read it" (Donegani TS95:69).

Radio programs, movies and even comics are also sites of discursive production of gender, race and class images and ideas. Radio seems to have been more accessible to the narrators: they spoke about listening to the radio at home, and of having particular,
favourite programs. Joan Donegani talked about her favourite listening in the late 1940s. She links her remembering of these programs to hearing them recently on a local Montreal radio station.

We used to like uh, I don’t know if you remember, uh, ‘Laura’s Limited’ or ‘Laura Limited’. There used to be one, it was like a, it was like a soap opera I guess. I rushed home at lunch time to see, uh, hear that! And, and uh, that was ‘Laura’, ‘Laura Limited’. (not clear 3 words) used to watch uh, listen to uhm, ‘The Shadow’ and all those things eh, those shows uh. Now sometimes now at night they have them here, uh, they play them on, on the radio...

(Donegani TS95:70)

Joan hurried home for lunch in her Job’s uniform in order to eat quickly and listen to her favourite radio program.

Yeah, I think it was an hour. Time you got home, listen to it and had something to eat. That was...maybe there’s another one but I just remember ‘Laura Limited’. I used to listen to that. That, that uh, mean I’m not in the soaps now, I never listen to them but at that time it was Laura’s.

(Donegani TS95:71)

Serialized, romantic soap operas such as “Laura Limited” were abundant in the 1940s in Newfoundland. Many were imported on commercial discs from other countries such as Australia, bringing with them particular notions of femininity and women’s place in the world.

The radio also relieved the tedium of work for the women workers at Job’s. On Saturday mornings, the women were allowed to have the radio on while they packed fish or picked berries. Daisy Tucker Hiscock remembers a radio “up on the post” where the women could hear the programs over the noise of their work (Hiscock TS94:12).

...we used to have a radio, you know. They broke down to get us a radio. And Saturday mornings we used to have on what they used to call the Big Six

19 According to the Census Report 1935, there were over seven thousand radio sets in the country. By the late 1940s, thousands more people were listening to programs.
and all Irish songs and that was good. But, and, but in the afternoon then just had the other songs. Sometimes it wouldn't be on in the afternoons at all. But it used to make time go, you know. Ummm. I think the union got that, yeah. But they cut that out after a while.

(Hiscock TS92:37)

Along with soap operas and music programs, local privately and publicly owned radio stations subscribed to wire services and syndicates for news, information programming and other sorts of content. Local information programming was created in St. John's as well, often promoting the goods and services of the sponsor through the specific tone, style and content of the program. Job Brothers Company sponsored a radio program in the late 1940s which focused on nutrition and cooking fish products for women for example (DN: December 31, 1948: 82; Philip Hiscock, MUNFLA, personal communication, May 19, 1998 and March 26, 1999).

PROCESSES

While multiple methods were used to collect narrations and other information for this project, methods of organization, selection and analysis were not so direct and clear. Initially, I transcribed all of the narratives I had recorded, and made up information cards on each narrator in order to better “sort” the information I was collecting. Then I read and re-read the transcribed narratives.

I began by reading the narratives as if they were a rough anthology of related short stories, without taking notes. To some degree, the collected narrations bear the characteristics of a literary anthology. Some of the same moments and events are discussed, to varying degrees, by a number of the narrators, familiar names appear and

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20 This occurred to me as I was reading a collection of short stories by Alice Munroe. In the collection, the same characters sometimes re-appear, only viewed differently through the diverse positionings of other characters.
re-appear across the narratives, linkages are made by the narrators which point to other narratives collected. I began to form, through my reading, a "sense" of the diversity of the narrators, their shifting locations, across time and space in relation to each other, and the intricacy of their multiple identity positionings.

Feeling overwhelmed by the complexity of contiguous, sometimes overlapping and often contested stories and subject positionings, I created a long, hand-written chart in which I attempted to apprehend the slippery and multiple identities of narrators. Included in this charting was each individual's family and married names, location where born and raised, location when interviewed, age, the work they did at Job's, the dates of this work, where else they worked previously or subsequently, connections to others in Job's, and so forth. This distinctly quantitative method allowed me to see the multiple subject positionings of each narrator, as identified by the narrator, relatively quickly. I referred to this chart often during my writing and thinking about the narrators and their stories, mulling over various positionings constituted by each narrator, and digesting the information as I considered a narrative passage or direction.

Anxiety and fear accompanied this process of reading. I struggled constantly with the worry that I did not have it "right"; that there was some mystical, yet practical, way to analyze "data" in a poststructural fashion that was eluding me. Some days I could not even face the computer screen or the transcript page, choosing instead to walk dogs or work in my fledgling perennial garden. Constructive avoidance was not difficult to achieve. When I look back over that time I construct this engagement/disengagement process as a dance, as a time of coming to grips with the slipperiness of multiplicity and fluidity in my work.

Eventually, after reading a narrative over several times, I began to make detailed notes. My analysis strategy at this point was simple: read, draw out the narrators' own
words/language to see how they constituted ideas, work back through the ideas and see how they constituted larger themes, again in their own words; and then develop out of these larger concepts some conceptual frames or questions to organize my analysis. I printed out the transcripts to run down the left hand side of the page, thus leaving room for my comments down the right hand side. This writing on the page soothed me somewhat, feeling as I did that I was now “doing something concrete.” I began to “look for” how women constituted certain themes in their narratives. Using the words of the narrators, I noted themes that I “saw” in the narratives: Job’s workplace, relationships, work processes, or union formation stories, for example. These I noted, along with page numbers, on 4” x 6” file cards. This process proved to be very difficult and contradictory. The themes I “saw” in the narrations were shaped by the questions I had in my mind as I approached and proceeded through my research. I am implicated in the co-construction of the conversations but I am also, now, alone, constructing the analysis of these narratives. My reading of the narratives as text was also a process of constituting. Jane Robinson (1994) describes this as the story being “doubly narrated, or coded, first by the participants to me, and then by me to you” (56). Soon, from only one narrative, I had many notations for each of about twenty themes. Virtually every re-reading of the narratives sparked new ideas and new notations, eventually producing a rich concoction of thoughts, notes and further sources and references to pursue.

Gradually, I arrived at a wider, yet more specific area of inquiry. What did I look for in the narratives?21 I was interested in the silences as much as in the voiced, the gaps and tensions in, between, and among the narrators’ stories, the disjunctures between the public newspaper accounts of Job’s and the work, and the narrators’

21 My thinking on this was stimulated by a conversation with Janice Hladki. My thanks to her for inspiration.
accounts. Moments of change intrigued me: points in a story where the narrator's voice or manner took on an added urgency, joy, or pleasure; moments of repetition, denial or refusal; places where narrators' stories were contested, contradictory or disruptive. I looked in my fieldnote books, where I entered my thoughts after the conversations, searching for my observations about facial expressions or tone of voice, matched them with the transcript text, read them together. In the process of transcribing the conversations, I had noted on the transcript page where a narrator gestured or employed other than voice to express a thought, idea or relationship. I read looking for all of these moments. I tried to look beyond binary oppositions, to ask how questions. How do/did the narrators constitute their work, themselves as workers, other women, other men? How do/did they resist certain representations of themselves, of the work? How do/did the narrators negotiate different, sometimes competing discourses positioning them? How are/were they differently invested in, desirous of, particular discursive constructions of their identities? It is key to see these moments in the narrations as both about the past and about the present positioning of identities. Kondo (1990) encourages me to see the narrators as "decentered, multiple selves, whose lives are shot through with contradictions and creative tensions," rather than as unitary, fixed beings, easily fit into discrete and simple categories (224). In these questions, I enacted my assumption of women (and men) as active agents in their lives.

At times, I found myself searching for patterns of similarity in the narratives, as if the task of the analysis was to substantiate certain issues and produce coherence and "truth" through sameness. I had to keep reminding myself to be open to differences in the narratives, that in searching for similarities I was obscuring other operations in the text, such as contestation and contradiction. I took to carding multiple meanings in the narratives, opening up to new, emerging themes which I had not imagined previously.
Throughout, I doubted my process, questioned my capacity to engage with the narratives, wondered if I would ever finish my dissertation.

WRITING

Earlier I suggested that it was through reading and writing practices that I could most embody feminist poststructuralist approaches to my work. As in the on-going analysis of the narratives, how I think about what was said to me is important. I recognize the shifting flow of my thinking in relation to each “stage” of this study. My expanding questions about the production of this study shaped how I finally arrived at different writing processes.

How to represent the people with whom I spoke? How do I represent myself in this writing? What can I say and how can I say it? Anthropologists James Clifford and George Marcus (1986) suggest that “all constructed truths are made possible by powerful ‘lies’ of exclusion and rhetoric” (7). How is inclusion in a narrative also a process of exclusion? How do stories and silences together make meaning?

This account I am constructing in the remainder of this study can only ever be “partial and located, screened through the narrator’s eye/l” (Kondo:1990:8). In my writing, I have felt myself constrained in my knowing by language (Williams cited in Robinson:1994:57). I have puzzled over verbs, adjectives and nouns, realizing multiple meanings in each. I have searched the Dictionary of Newfoundland English, and questioned friends to confirm my understandings of “true” meanings of Newfoundland dialect language.

The interrogation of language has become a deconstruction tool here. Early on in this writing, I realized that my choice of verbs was/continues to be fraught with uncertainty. For example, despite attempting to employ (or deploy) what Clifford and
Marcus call “a consistent manner of quoting, “speaking for,” translating the reality of others” (1986:7), my resulting writing was unsatisfactory. To simply say the narrator “told” me was to obscure my interpretative reading and forclose a multiplicity of meanings possible to be read in the narrator’s talk. “Told” has a closed, final ring of “truth” to it as a word. Similarly, the verb “asked” seems to effectively preclude the very mixed and uncertain wanderings of my side of the conversations with narrators. Even to employ “the narrators” as a descriptive identifier of the women and men who spoke with me for this study is to come perilously close to invoking a totalizing discourse, one that obscures individual locatedness and interrupts contested stories. Through my selection of specific words, my own and those of the narrators, I am producing a meta-narrative of sorts, one that imposes meanings even as I try to self-reflexively contest the process. Here I try to make clear the processes of thinking, doubting, retracing and questioning that shapes those meanings. This writing is, in itself, partial, incomplete and disruptive.

In the next chapter I explore the historically contingent and unstable meanings of Job Brothers as a business and a workplace.
CHAPTER 4

CROSSING TIME AND SPACE

There are not many places in Canada, indeed there are not many places in North America, where a family and a business and a tradition, like that suggested by the name “Job”, exists.


INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I explore the historical development of the Job family, its economic engagements in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the evolution of their Southside Premises. Much of this “history” is read in and through documents not usually consulted for this information - insurance maps. In many ways an old-fashioned familial organization, they nonetheless operated like a modern industrial company, vertically integrated and thus controlling most aspects of their fish business from catching different fish species to exporting value-added product. The contribution to the family of “Job women” in the maintenance of class and gender relations is considered here as well.

The family had the social, economic and political power to organize “spaces” in St. John’s: the ordering of workers’ lives in and through hiring and management practices in the workplace; and the organizing and gendering of social geography in and around the plant are discussed here. Getting a job at Job Brothers was not a straightforward process. In and through its hiring practices, Job Brothers management produced a spacial organization of difference within gender. Potential women workers were not seen as an undifferentiated working-class/female group. Rather, Job Brothers selectively hired women from different geographic locations around the plant depending
on the company's work needs.

The gendering of waterfront work in St. John's was a long, historically specific accomplishment, characterized by processes of exclusion. The construction of masculinity in longshore work has not been explored in any detail by trade union and labour historians to date. Here, I begin to think about the historical development of men's work and women's work on the waterfront and in the fish or berry processing business.

JOB'S IN NEWFOUNDLAND

The Job family has been involved in the social, economic and political life of Newfoundland and Labrador for over two hundred years. The Job's introduction to Newfoundland came in the 1780s when young John Job became the ward of Samuel Bulley, a merchant from Devonshire. Newfoundland author Paul O'Neill (1980a&b) suggests that the Bulley and Job families may have been friends or perhaps relations in Devonshire, hence the apprenticeship of sixteen-year-old John Job to Samuel Bulley.¹ The Bulley family had established business concerns in Newfoundland in the 1730s with the purchase, by Samuel Bulley's father, John, of a parcel of land known as Prosser's Plantation, located on the southside of the St. John's harbour. By 1750, they had built up a prosperous fishing and trading business operation on this site. The family firm continued to run a myriad of operations related to fish and seal processing from this site for the next two hundred years. It is near Prosser's Plantation that the Job Brothers Southside fish plant, workplace of the women and men whose narratives of work and

¹ ET: June 13, 1980:15; DN: June 13, 1980:A-3. Although these articles are not credited, Paul O'Neill claims authorship in a letter to the editor of the Evening Telegram, July 14, 1980. Interestingly, O'Neill argues that major editorial changes have been made in the text he had originally written on the Job family history. I have listed these pieces under O'Neill's name in the bibliography accompanying this work.
domestic life form the basis of this study, was situated.

The alliance with Samuel Bulley was cemented when John Job married Bulley’s eldest daughter, Sarah, and, at age 25, became a partner in Bulley, Job & Company of Teighmouth, England. Management of the growing empire was conducted from both England and Newfoundland, with directors of the company making transatlantic voyages to Newfoundland during the summer months, and returning to winter in England. By the 1840s, branches of Bulley, Job and Company were established in Liverpool and in Newfoundland under the name of Job and Company. As was often the case in early Newfoundland businesses, partners came and went in the Bulley, Job operations until only the Job name and family members remained at the heart of the increasingly diversified operations.

Through the nineteenth century, the Job family name became increasingly entwined with the economic life of Newfoundland and St. John’s. In particular, a dry goods operation, the Royal Stores, was established in 1895, in co-operation with another Newfoundland merchant family, the Macphersons. They became pioneers in Newfoundland textile manufacturing (Baker:1990:177). It is not without reason that the noted Newfoundland author Margaret Duley described the Job family as “merchant princes” in the foreword to a descriptive history of the Job family written by Honourable R. B. Job (Job:1961:11).

By the early 20th century, the Job family had interests in a wide range of industries in Newfoundland and Labrador. They participated in mineral exploration and mining for iron ore, chrome iron, platinum, copper, manganese, slate and soapstone. The early part of the century saw them develop timber interests on the west coast of the island of Newfoundland. Manufacturing and processing of products such as wool, berries, boots and shoes, bread and crackers also engaged the family, as did sales of coal, real
estate and personal and marine insurance. Steamship and fisheries investments dominated, however, with Job Brothers owning and operating sealing, coastal and cold storage steamers, sailing vessels such as schooners and bankers and motor vessels including tankers and fishing trawlers (Job:1961:101-107). Ungava Steamship Company, Blue Peter Steamship Company and Blue Peter Steamship Company Limited were operated by the Job family between 1934 and 1964 (MHA, Job Family Papers, Coll. 004, Series 4.00 to 9.00). Operations included annual trips to the sealing front and the year round catching and processing of fish products.

Sealing was a mainstay of the family’s operations for many years. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, Job’s prosecuted the seal fishery and developed the technology for catching seals. They constructed three “wooden wall steamships of oak, the HECTOR, NEPTUNE, and NIMROD” in order to prosecute the seal fishery. Job’s was also part of the construction of one of the earliest steel steamers to go to the Front, the BEOTHIC. Many of the male heirs in the Job family went to the ice in the spring seal hunt (Job:1961:10). It is almost a rite of male passage for some in the Job family, a first-hand introduction to the male-dominated family businesses. The seal hunt remains today a site of particular forms of masculinity and myth - hardy, rugged, tough men challenge the elements to secure a living and control a profitable resource.\(^2\)

Paul O’Neill, writing the public history of Job Brothers & Company in their 250th year, observes that the seal fishery was “one of the most important financial resources of the country.” Seal pelts were delivered each spring to Job’s Southside

\(^2\) The NIMROD was purchased by Sir Edward Shackleton to make his 1908 attempt to be the first man to reach the South Pole.

\(^3\) See Wright (1984) for an interesting anthropological account of a voyage to the ice, sealers and sealing operations.
premises; one year some 180,000 pelts were processed (DN: June 13, 1980b:A6).

Sealing remained a major part of Job Brothers enterprise well into the 1950s. Much of the processing of seal carcasses into pelts and the production of oil was handled at the Southside plant. Prosecuting the seal fishery was an exclusively male occupation and processing seals - that is, the skinning or flaying of seals, and the scrapping, salting, piling and packing of those seal skins, was an exclusively male occupation at Job Brothers.

While seal processing was important, cod was king in the Job Brothers Southside operation. Initially it was processed as salt fish at the Southside premises and in outport stations around the island and Labrador. O'Neill (1976) notes that as early as 1817, Job Brothers was shipping cargoes of salt fish from St. John's to British Guiana (914). Job Brothers handled fish buying and processing, first as different grades of salt fish product, and later as fresh and fresh frozen products. They maintained fishing establishments in various parts of the Island and Labrador. Processing of fish was conducted regularly at these sites as well. Writing in the early 1960s, R. B. Job described the Labrador operations.

...The Company's fishing establishments at Blanc Sablon, Lance-au-Loup and Forteau in the Straits of Belle Isle where the largest individual fishery in the jurisdiction of Newfoundland was carried on by Job Brothers and Company for over 30 years under the very able management of the late Captain Samuel Blandford and his successors, Edwin G. Grant and S. O. Grant. As much as 15,000 to 20,000 quintals of salt cod fish was in those years produced and shipped annually from these establishments in the Straits of Belle Isle direct to the Mediterranean markets (Job: 1961:87).

About 300 men were hired at Blanc Sablon each season, providing employment for many outport families each year (O'Neill: 1980b:A3). Indeed, families from Fort Amherst, the

4 For detailed analysis of the Newfoundland saltfish trade of the 19th and 20th centuries see: Ryan (1986) and Alexander (1977).
Southside Road and the Battery on the north side of the Narrows relied on the sale of home produced salt fish to Job Brothers in order to support their families as well (Reid TS95:19; Scott TS94:2). Later, as Job Brothers began to produce frozen fillets, the production of salt fish declined.

Job Brothers brought innovations into the fishery as well. O'Neill notes that they were the first to use equipment for the artificial drying of fish in salt fish processing. Traditionally, such fish would be dried by the sun on raised wooden flakes in a complex and labour intensive process of watching the weather, turning, stacking and relaying the split and salted fish until they were “cured.” In a country where the sun does not always shine, the development of artificial drying methods took much of the uncertainty out of the salt fish production process. Job’s were also “foremost among experimenters in the modern process of freezing fish” (O’Neill:1980b:A8). In the 1930s and 1940s, the company researched and purchased modern freezers and storage units for frozen fish production. They also developed the use of new technology in smoking fish at the Southside premises (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. Of Mtgs., May 7, 1945). These innovations developed the facilities in Southside premises where most of the narrators worked between the 1930s and the 1950s.

WEALTH, POWER AND POLITICS

In Newfoundland, wealth and power has been concentrated in the hands of a few well-established elite merchant families. Marriages provided beneficial alliances between and among the wealthy families of St. John's during the nineteenth century. The women and men of the upper classes in Newfoundland were embedded in a complex network of extended social relations that they called upon and used to support and maintain their business, social and political lives. The Job family and their business
partners were no exception. In each generation, marriages organized relations with other established merchant and political families. They cemented ties in the small elite community in St. John's, especially in the political arena.


The practice of politics and the possession of wealth and social status are deeply entwined in Newfoundland history. Neary (1988) describes politics in the early 19th century as "modelled on the practices of English local government," and comprised of a "small elite, a modicum of gentility and intellectual life, newspapers and inevitably, advocacy of reform" (4). In the early 1800s, Job family members took their place alongside other elite families in various aspects of state formation in Newfoundland.
Historical record has it that Robert Job (1794-1849), eldest son of John Job, was the most influential force in the Job family.

He served the community on local boards and committees, including the Board of Roads Commissioners and the Committee for Public Buildings (which were responsible for the Colonial Building, the St. John’s Academy and the Hospital Board). He was also one of the founders of Newfoundland’s agricultural society, first Chairman of the St. John’s Water Company (incorporated in 1846) and a director of the Bank of British North America. He served several terms as vice-president and president of the St. John’s Chamber of Commerce. (Riggs:1991a:112)

Robert Job was committed to reform of political life in Newfoundland. He was one of the petitioners lobbying for the granting of local legislature in 1831. In 1843, he was appointed to the Executive Council by Governor John Harvey. Thomas Bulley Job (1806-1878), brother of Robert Job, was first elected as MHA for Trinity in 1846, and again in 1848. After his electoral defeat, he was appointed Member of the Legislative Council, 1852-55. William Carson Job, grandson of Thomas Bulley Job, was also appointed to the Newfoundland Legislative Council, 1909-17. (Riggs:1991c:113-114).

The last direct male heir of the Job family, Robert Brown Job (1873-1961), also serves as a useful example. The Evening Telegram of September 6, 1961 details his involvements in political life.

Mr. Job was one of the last surviving members of the Legislative Council - the Upper House - of the last Responsible Government of Newfoundland (1934)...president of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, as well as being an active member of its committees for many years...For 18 years he was consul for Belgium in Newfoundland...He was elected a member of the National Convention, a body of men which was elected to debate and recommend the forms of government suitable for Newfoundland upon expiry of government by Commission. [1946-48] (4).

R.B. Job retired from politics after the National Convention. He was also an amateur historian, publishing several articles in local magazines, and author of John Job’s Family, the history of the Job family and Job Brothers and Company in Newfoundland.

On the 250th anniversary of John Bulley's land purchase on the southside of St. John's harbour, both St. John's newspapers carried the "public" history of Job Brothers and Company Limited (ET:June 13, 1980a:15-23; DN:June 13, 1980b:A3-A12.). Nearly a dozen pages in each paper detailed the chronological history of the firm and its subsidiary operations, with additional space used to publish the wide range of public congratulations extended by St. John's businesses large and small. This anniversary was a big event in Newfoundland social, economic and political history. The Daily News editorial writer suggested that Job Brothers stood as a larger symbol to all Newfoundlanders:

...those in charge showed the stuff of which they were made and the grit and determination that marked ancestors from the old country...and they survived and flourished and carried on...Firms like Job's and other ancient enterprises in this land mark the spirit and spunk of Newfoundlanders who have clung to the old rock through thick and thin, adversity and misfortune, always looking to a brighter tomorrow...They are distinctively Newfoundland... (June 13,1980:4).

This editorial entwines discourses of masculinity and a romanticized, patriarchal Newfoundland nationalism in a tribute to the Job family. The image in my mind as I read this passage is one of a long line of men, standing with heads high, facing the elements and surviving against all odds. Through such strong discursive images, Job's is linked with the solidity and strength of England ("the old country") and the physical creation
of a new land - Newfoundland. The male line ("those in charge") are configured as actors, standing for those people who settled the island. The upper class position of the Job family is at once buttressed by the reference to England and "ancient enterprises," and reconfigured as the common, 'everyman' "in the spirit and spunk of Newfoundlanders." The family and the companies they control are valorized as "distinctively Newfoundland," embodying the identity of all Newfoundlanders.

This rather over-the-top editorial can be read as a product of the times. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, a surge of Newfoundland nationalism, portrayed through the arts in particular, was at its zenith. In plays, poems, stories and songs, outport men (and some women) were valorized for their stoicism and commitment to Newfoundland. Particular identity positionings and physical appearances, especially those linked to outport communities, became "fixed" as embodying Newfoundland. At the moment this newspaper editorial was written, the nationalist male discourse of Newfoundland identity made possible the large claims embedded in the editorial. Indeed, the masculine construction of all Newfoundlanders, including women, as hardy and resilient has a long history in Newfoundland public discourse. Dora Russell invoked such a discourse in her writing for the Evening Telegram in 1948. Webb (1997) discusses the radio stories used in the 1930s by Joey Smallwood, writing as "The Barreman," as "well suited to reinforce characteristics associated with masculinity: courage, strength, endurance and stoicism." When Smallwood was criticized for not including more about Newfoundland women, he told stories that "showed the courage of Newfoundland women"...centering his discussions on "their endurance and bravery in rescuing sailors in trouble." As Webb notes "[W]omen were incorporated into the 'masculine' attributes
of bravery and strength that Smallwood saw in all Newfoundlanders” (1997:n.p.).

Women were constituted only in and through their relations with men in Smallwood’s radio world.

THE JOB WOMEN

As the foregoing account suggests, women appear primarily as wives, mothers, daughters in the Job family records. The majority of historical records document the lives, activities and contributions of the male line of the Job family. Little is said of the women members. Indeed, the women do not appear to have had any hand in the family business, although some of them, such as Fanny Job Taylor, living in England, held shares in the company. Records indicate that their brothers, fathers and uncles “took care” of the management of these shares, reported dividends to the female shareholders, and sold shares for them (MHA, Job Family Papers, Coll. 004, 11.30, 1921-1922, Letters and Memos, letter to Fan Taylor from affectionate brother (T.B. Job), September 21, 1921 and to Miss M.A. Job from T.B. Job, March 2, 1922).

Writing in 1961, Margaret Duley, an author as well as a class and gender contemporary of many “Job women” during the twentieth century, observed that

The Job women were some of the most energetic and constructive that the country has ever known. They possessed all the feminine virtues and were trained in women’s crafts. The motto of one, Mrs. William Carson Job. O.B.E. (or “Mrs. Will”) who was a heroine of service during the two major world wars, is challenging: “If thou wouldst be well served, serve thyself”, and that phrase seems to exemplify their approach to every task. If there was something important to be done the Job women did it themselves. (Duley in Job:1961:13)

In this short paragraph, Duley calls upon a specific class-bounded discourse of femininity. It emphasizes public service to those less fortunate and the employment of skills, noted here as “women’s crafts” which underpinned a particular notion of
femininity. In the case of “Mrs. Will” public service included leadership in providing “comforts” such as hand-knit socks and scarves, Red Cross supplies and so on for Newfoundland soldiers overseas in the wars and the skills to produce the goods herself. Duley’s glowing statement also implicitly assumes the leisure time for the Job women to engage in these public services, the energy to take up the tasks and the established social position which facilitated their entry into leadership roles in the community. Women, such as the narrators in this study, who did not have servants to keep their own homes running smoothly simply did not have the time or energy to enter so forcefully into public or charitable service. Indeed, as I show later, the working class women at Job’s fish plant were the objects of Job charity and potential domestic labour for the upper class “Job women.” The linkages through marriage to prominent families meant that the Job women assumed the leadership positions in many of these efforts. They were able to call upon personal and financial resources to accomplish the tasks at hand.\(^5\)

Thus, while the work of the women members of the extended Job family in Newfoundland and England is not clearly visible, it constituted, and was constituted by, social relations of class and gender. The social and material positions they were able to occupy, and the influence they exerted in their own lives were made available to them, in part, through the historical discursive construction of the Job family in Newfoundland.

**JOB BROTHERS IN THE 1940s AND 1950s**

By World War II, the Job family was actively involved in ownership or directorship of many Newfoundland companies. The 1952 edition of *Newfoundland Who’s

5 For discussion of the work of elite class women in the maintenance of class and gender relations and state formation in Newfoundland of the 1930s and 1940s, see Cullum (1993a). Davidoff and Hall (1987) discuss in wonderful detail how gender and class worked together to construct the middle class in Birmingham, England in the early 1800s.
Who lists the many activities of the Job Brothers & Company in the 1940s and 1950s. The insert, placed first in the volume on the inside face of the front cover, advertises their one hundred and seventy years in business and promotes their work as steamship agents, general merchants and agents and importers. Prominent in the advertisement is the exporting of “salt codfish and all fishery products,” with “fresh frozen products a specialty.” Job’s produced its frozen products under a number of brand names: Hubay and Labdor brine frozen salmon; Hubay quick frozen fillets; Flag brand smelts.

Letterhead for Job Brothers used in 1948 details more of their import and export fish operation. They handled dried codfish, cod oil, medicinal cod-liver oil, seal oil, seal skins, pickled herring and salmon, canned lobsters and salmon, fresh, frozen and smoked fish of all descriptions, and blueberries (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. of Mtgs., 1918-51, Letterhead, March 9, 1948). Many of these commodities were produced in the St. John’s Southside premises of Job Brothers.

Job’s was also the marketing agent for many retail lines in groceries, provisions, hardware and naval or ships’ stores (Hibbs:1952:np). A breakdown of what constitutes “hardware” shows the wide range of equipment involved in marine services: marine engines, ships anchors and chain, ships hardware, red iron, nails and spikes, oakum, pitch and tar. During 1948, Job’s advertised it had acquired two new agencies - Atlas Imperial Diesel and Stationary Engines, and Fisher Marine Radio Equipment (DN:December 31, 1948:82).

Job Brothers also saw the possibility for promotion of their fish products by using the increasingly common medium of radio in the late 1940s. On a local station, VOCM, a “new radio program designed especially for the housewife” publicized nutrition and food information, and not incidentally, promoted Job’s fish products every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The radio series stressed the “importance of a balanced
diet and new ways to economize by serving Job’s famous HUBAY fillets" (DN:December 31, 1948:82). Dr. Philip Hiscock, former Director of Memorial University Folklore and Language Archives, suggests that this form of “block advertising” was common in the 1940s and 1950s. A block of radio air time was purchased by a sponsor - Job Brothers - the content was structured by the sponsors and the performers were paid directly by them. Typically in the 1940s and 1950s, sponsors targeted women during daytime broadcasting hours. These programs were both classed and gendered in their content. Program content was based on specific assumptions about what “intelligent women” would find interesting. As with the Job’s program, cooking, nutrition, economy for the home, and household tips were strong elements of this type of radio broadcast. Both private businesses and government sponsored this style of programming for women (Hiscock, personal communication, May 19, 1998).  

JOB BROTHERS PREMISES

Job Brothers maintained premises on both the north and south sides of St. John’s harbour. The Northside premises, finger piers and wharves were located at the foot of Job’s Cove, almost directly opposite the main Southside operation. The Royal Stores was

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6 Donna Varga (1997) has written on the extensive work done in Canada from the 1920s to the 1950s publicizing ideas about child rearing. Broadcasts on radio and later, on television included discussions on childhood in general, education of children and child rearing practices (67). This work was aimed at educators and parents. Little work has been done on radio broadcasting in general in Newfoundland. Specifically, program content, sponsors, audiences and so on are seldom explored beyond three famous Newfoundland programs: “The Barreelman,” “The Irene B. Mellon,” and the “Doyle Bulletin.” See Hiscock (1988) for discussion on content of some early radio programs and Hiscock (1994) for a detailed folklore analysis of “The Barreelman”; Webb (1997) for discussion of 1930s radio as a political, cultural and economic vehicle, the shift from radio listening as a male activity to a family activity, and the influence of broadcasting beyond the households that could afford a radio set (Webb:1994:224-225; 242). For general discussion on radio programs see Wade (1993). I have been unable to locate any substantial material related to “women’s” radio programs. See also Miriam Wright (1990) for a very interesting discussion of gender ideologies and their effects in the modernization of the fishery.
located just behind this site, on Water Street. The Northside premises contained Job’s Stores Limited, providing wholesale and retail provisions, as well as offices of the company. In the 1950s and 1960s, store houses, refrigerated warehouses and ice storage facilities are listed as part of the Northside operations (Newfoundland Directory 1936:350; MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Report on Expropriation of St. John’s Harbour, 1962). With the development of the harbour in the 1960s, the waterfront was substantially altered, and finger piers, wharves and buildings disappeared.

The Southside premises, situated very near the old Prosser’s Plantation site in the shade of the Southside Hills, housed the seal and fish processing operations of Job Brothers in St. John’s. The production capacity of the plant was altered over the years, depending on the product emphases required by Job Brothers. Few business records exist in public hands to illuminate these shifts in production, however. Researchers must rely on other means to understand something of the changing economic scene in the fishing industry during this time period. Insurance plans and maps provide some clues. Careful study of insurance plan maps from 1880 to 1968 indicates alterations in the spacial geography of Job’s Southside fish plant (City of St. John’s Archives (CSJA), Fire Insurance Plans, Job Brothers Premises, Southside Road, St. John’s, 1880-1889; 1893-1902; 1914; 1925; 1946). These historical maps also show a changing industrial and residential landscape on Southside Road. The maps suggest on-going development and change in the economic, social and physical landscape of the Southside Road. In certain periods, maps and photographs show a thriving residential community along Southside Road, and in Fort Amherst, hovering at the Narrows leading into St. John’s harbour. Two and three storey clapboard and stone homes, gardens and small
stores dot the long Road. These residential areas - Southside Road, Fort Amherst and on the top of the Southside Hills, Blackhead Road, now known as Shea Heights - provided most of the workers for Job's fish plant operations. They co-existed with the industrial and processing landscape. Eventually in the 1960s, the homes along Southside Road were demolished to make way for harbour redevelopment. Many of the business sites were affected, having land expropriated and waterfront altered (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Report on Expropriation, St. John’s Harbour, Letter to Job Brothers from Peter Fenton, June 19, 1962).

Salt fish and sealing operations are clearly highlighted at Job Brothers site in the late 1800s. Storage of salt and wooden casks for packing finished salt fish, storage of oil, likely cod liver and seal oil, for shipment, and molasses and fish occupy a large area of the plant. Sunning tanks with glass roofs, used for drying cod are also shown on the map. This may well be the innovation in fish drying mentioned by O’Neill. Buildings on the site range from one storey to three and one half stories. At this time, the properties adjacent to Job’s are owned by Goodfellow and Company to the west, and William Stephen and Company to the east.

The insurance map for 1893-1902 shows the presence of outside fish flakes for drying headed, gutted and split cod in preparation for the production of salt fish. Likely these flakes were present in earlier days as well but were not drawn on the map. Buildings have been added to the site, extending capacity for drying cod. In this period it is unlikely that women workers were employed at Job’s due to the nature of the salt fish

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7 Thanks to Ernie Walsh, Public Works Canada, Marine Engineering office for a look at some of the photographs taken prior to and during the reconstruction of St. John’s Harbour facilities in the early 1960s. These photographs are now located in the National Archives of Canada. As well, a poster print which hangs above my desk shows the Southside Road in the early 1940s, lined with tall houses and gardens. I have been unable to trace the source of the photograph.
work, and the male labour force supply in a larger centre like St. John's. Folklorist Mark Ferguson, studying salt fish production in Newfoundland, notes that women did perform the work of salting and drying fish in their own homes, and for large merchants in some outports such as Grand Bank where they formed the shore crews, and acted as crew bosses, working on the beaches to make the fish. In part, this may have been the result of the full occupation of outport men in fish harvesting and the lack of male labour for fish processing in outport communities (Boyd:1997). At Job's, situated close to a ready supply of male labour from the communities around the plant, making fish appears to have been a male occupation in this time period.

The World War I insurance map indicates a further complexity of operation as well. For example, one large building section indicates storage of fish, oil and molasses on the first floor, while sunning tanks with glass roofs are on the second level of the building. An iron water tank, containing twenty-two thousand gallons of water, has been added to the hill above the Southside Road. A 650-foot hose runs to the wharf, perhaps to supply fresh water to the incoming boats and to be used in case of fire and cleaning needs. The map-maker notes, however, that the water pipes are generally exposed to the air and may freeze in “hard weather.” A notation on this map indicates an insurance limit of five thousand dollars in April 1910, which is raised to seven thousand five hundred dollars in April 1918. This increase may be because Job Brothers expanded their operations on the Southside to include the property situated to the west once owned by Goodfellow and Company. On the former Goodfellow site are fish flakes and storage of seal skins as well as a cooperage for constructing the wooden barrels required for shipping fish products. William Stephen and Company no longer occupies the site immediately to the east of Job Brothers. The inscription “ruined wharf” is the only sign of the former premises on the Stephen site shown on the insurance map of 1912-1918, published in
January 1914 (CSJA, Map A.014, 1912-18). Once again the landscape of the Southside Road is changed. Over the years, businesses come and go, premises change hands, land is turned to other uses. By 1914, many of the smaller wharves and premises have disappeared, leaving larger merchant families in possession of the properties: Bowring Brothers, Munroe Export Company, Morey and Company coal handlers, Baine Johnson and Company, A. J. Harvey Company and Job Brothers and Company. Most handle fish products of various kinds, including drying, salting and storage of cod fish, processing of cod and seal oils and marine supplies storage.

The 1925 insurance map indicates multiple usage of some Job Brothers buildings, depending on the demands of the seasonal round of maritime activities. For example, the building listed as a fish shed on the first floor also indicates that this floor operates as a skinning shed in the spring during the seal fishery. Since seals are harvested in the early spring, before various species of fish are present in great numbers for harvesting, such multiple-use areas of the premises were essential. The 1925 seal oil factory, which appeared on the 1880-1889 map as the site of storage of casks and salt, also has clearly differentiated areas of work. General storage of salt occurs on the first floor, cooking on the third and grinding on the fourth. Sunning tanks are still prominent, indicating the importance of dried fish products to Job Brothers operations. On the property to the east, Imperial Oil has established a site for distribution and storage.

Structural considerations in the 1946 insurance map indicate a shift from dried fish products to fresh frozen fish products with the construction of additional buildings to house filleting, weighing, packing and cold storage areas. Ice machines, cold rooms and freezers as well as fish, ice, box and gear storage round out the new facilities. A Club
House, set back against the Southside Hills, and accessible from the Southside Road by steps is also a new feature. This is the one storey building referred to by a number of narrators as the “social” club run by and for male Job employees. The women speak of the club house as an exclusively male space, where meetings and social gatherings are held, a site from which women are excluded. This general layout of the Southside operations is the approximate configuration of Job Brothers premises during the narrative time-line of the women and men in this study.

THE SOUTHSIDE PREMISES AND FROZEN FISH

As we can observe by studying these insurance maps and plans, changes in Job’s operations occurred over the years. By the 1940s, Job’s Southside premises had a variety of buildings, ranging from 1 to 3 stories and constructed in wood and brick. A shift in production emphasis is evident. Between 1925 and 1945, Job’s moved from dried salt fish products to fresh frozen fish products. Additional buildings and work areas were constructed to house filleting, weighing, packing and cold storage areas. Ice machines, cold rooms and freezers, as well as fish and ice storage and box and gear storage were also added (Figure 3).

According to narrators in this study, office space was also located on the site (Picco TS95:2). This facilitated the day-to-day management of the Southside premises and the workers. The man charged with the oversight of the Southside premises and its operations was Maurice Job Taylor, nephew of the Honourable R. B. Job. “Motty” as he was known to his family and friends was born in England and came to Newfoundland after World War I to work in the family firm. He worked for several years at Job’s sealing station in Blanc Sablon and on the processing and freezing vessel, the BLUE PETER, collecting frozen salmon and blueberries from the Labrador coast as far north as
Cartwright. Job Brothers experimented with brine freezing of salmon aboard the BLUE PETER beginning in 1929. When filled to capacity, the crew and processing workers returned to St. John’s and the BLUE PETER steamed to England to sell its cargo. During World War II, Taylor went overseas with the Newfoundland Forestry Unit and returned to Job Brothers in 1945 (ET: July 26, 1960:3; Reid TS94:10; Wright:1997:49). Maurice Job Taylor figures prominently in the narratives of the women and men who worked at Job Brothers. Joan Donegani described him for me in our conversation in 1995.

Oh, he was tall, very thin, always had a pipe in his mouth, a hat and scarf. And he just walked around looking. He never, as I say he never spoke very much. And that was it. And I don’t think I’ve ever, ever hear him speak...and that, when he uh....Just like, he just keep an eye on things and like that you know.

(Donegani TS95:32)

The workers’ experiences under his management vary widely in the telling; gender, class and age appear to shape and figure in the development of these relationships as the narrators construct them. For some he was a boss who was “so-so,” but who also fired people in anger (Picco TS95:4), who closely observed and timed workers actions on the processing line (Hunt TS92:60), or who policed the women’s use of the bathroom during work hours (Dillon TS95:33). Others remember him as a “fair man” who drove Daisy Tucker Hiscock in his car so she could place the order for her wedding cake (Hiscock TS94:18) and would give a pregnant worker a lift home in his car (Picco TS95:4). Although Taylor died in 1960, Pearl Hunt has continued to place flowers on his grave each year at the annual flower service held at the local cemetery where he is buried. In later chapters, I will tease out the multiple and contradictory identities constructed for him in and through the narrators’ talk.

The shift to fresh frozen fish products was part of the change affecting the fish
processing industry as a whole. Up until the early 1940s, Job’s processed mostly salt
fish and seals, as well as brine freezing of salmon (Reid TS95:13-14). During the
winter of 1939-40, changing market demands led Job Brothers to experiment with the
production of a land-based “frozen fillet operation” in partnership with Harvey and
Company Limited and Munroe Export Company Limited. The frozen cod fillets were
destined for sale in England. Initial reports on the viability of this production were
doubtful, but the processing continued again the next year. The Eighth Annual Report of
Job Brothers and Company (1941) notes that “[D]uring the winter of 1939-40 and
1940-41, we produced Cod Fillets for the English market and as buyers stipulated these
should be quick frozen certain alterations had either to be made to our plants or a new
plant erected with the result that during the year about $15,000.00 was expended from
Capital Account for this purpose.” Markets were expanded to include the United Kingdom,
the USA, Canada and local Army bases constructed in and around St. John’s for the war
effort (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. of Mtgs., June 16, 1941 and January 30,
1942). Although Job’s made sales, clearly further refinements were required to widen
the markets for the frozen product. The timing was right for the support of the
government in the development of this new industry in Newfoundland.

According to Sinclair (1987), the Commission Government in Newfoundland
began the promotion of a frozen fish industry in the early 1940s. In 1944, the
Commissioner for Natural Resources, P. H. Dunn, announced the government’s plans for
the development of the fishery. The Commission advocated the catching of fish by deep sea
trawlers and the production of frozen fish products for sale to American markets. As
well, with WW II in full swing, Britain required fish from new sources as their
traditional fishing fleets and European vessels were constrained by the war effort.
Wright (1997) notes that with “local agricultural resources being directed towards the
war effort, Great Britain was in need of high protein foods for its people” and frozen fish supplies provided the needed resource (34). Indeed, Job Brothers records show that between May and July, 1944, 1,365,000 pounds of frozen fillets and 228,000 pounds of salt fish were produced from their Southside plant (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. of Mtgs., August 5, 1944). This reflects the growing interest in fresh frozen product and the decline in salt fish production generally. By 1945, “13 trawlers and 18 freezer plants” were operating in Newfoundland, producing “35.85 million pounds” of fresh and frozen groundfish, over half of which were shipped to Britain (Sinclair:1987:32-35).

In 1945, Hazen Russell, a former director of Job Brothers and then President of the company, formed a holding company called Northlantic Fisheries Limited (Wright 1997). R.B. Job was appointed Chairman, Russell acted as President, and another long-time Job’s director and manager, W.F. Hutchinson, served as Vice-President of the new company (O’Neill:1980b: A8). R. B. Job observed that in the early 1950s Russell’s policy had been “to develop the fresh and frozen fish industry, and the steamship business. This policy is bearing fruit, and has resulted in the establishment on the Southside premises of Job Brothers and Company Limited of a very modern and effective fresh and frozen fish plant, served by a large number of employees” (Job:1961:81). Plants were also operated in Bonavista, Englee and St. Anthony. Two steel-hulled side trawlers, the BLUE SPRAY and the BLUE FOAM were purchased in the United States to

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8 This holding company was made up of Job Brothers Limited, Bonavista Cold Storage, Northatlantic Sealers, Blue Peter Steamships, Canada Bay Storage, St. Anthony Cold Storage, and Bonavista Mutual Traders (Wright:1997:51). Ian Job Reid, former Managing Director of Job Brothers calls Russell “a mover and shaker” in the fish business (Reid TS95:4). For further discussion of Russell’s extensive contribution to the development of the frozen fish industry in Newfoundland, see Miriam Wright (1997).
feed the plants.  

The Fifteenth Annual Report for Job Brothers describes the Commission Government as "sympathetic to the acquisition of these trawlers as the operation of the same would give added employment in the Country and they advanced the sum of $400,000.00" toward the purchase of the vessels in 1947 (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. of Mtgs., Fifteenth Annual Report, August 17, 1948). It is in this context, with support of the state formation, that the modernization of the Southside plant was undertaken in 1947. Wright (1997) argues that Hazen Russell believed the development of the frozen fish industry had the potential to increase employment in fish harvesting, including "crews for deep-sea vessels," and in land based workers off-loading the catch and processing the frozen product (39). With the purchase of trawler technology, different species of fish could be supplied to Job's on a steady, year-round basis, rather than seasonally as with earlier fishing methods such as banking schooners and dorys. The trawlers could steam further, for longer periods and catch larger quantities of fish for processing. This, in turn, affected the employment possibilities of fish processing workers, especially women. Production of fresh frozen fish product meant hiring more female workers for the conveyor belt line, and an increase to year-round employment from the former early spring to late fall processing period.

From the early decades of the twentieth century, production varied throughout the year at Job's Southside plant and was dependent on the seasonal round of seals, fish of various species and blueberries which Job's processed. Many of the women narrators remembered and were quite specific about the flow of seasonal work in the 1930s and

9 The BLUE SPRAY was originally named the CHALLENGE, and the BLUE FOAM the FEARLESS. See Captain Arch Thornhill's interesting account of his fishing life as told in Andersen (1980 and 1998). The latter volume provides a fascinating glimpse into the seafaring world from the 1920s to the 1960s, from banking schooners and dorymen to trawler technology.
1940s. Seals were processed in the spring of the year, skins and oil being the important commodities produced. Then came the cod fishery. Small boat inshore fishermen working out of St. John’s harbour supplied Job’s from June to the October with cod\textsuperscript{10} for making into salt fish. Reid (TS95:19) describes St. John’s as “one of the best fishing ports on the Island...[W]e used to get ten million pounds of fish in a year.” Former Job’s worker Suzie King Scott talked about people from outside St. John’s settling in the Fort Amherst area in order to fish.

Ye-s-s-s. (drawn out word for emphasis) Yeah. Lot of people out there, there were a lotta boats cause it t’were all Tuckers, and the Kings and different men, you know, come in from around the bay to go fishing there. 

(Scott TS94:54)

Daniel Driscoll, a fisherman from the Middle Battery on the opposite side of the Narrows from Fort Amherst, gave evidence at the Kent Commission in 1936 about his fishing activity and life. Driscoll sold “most” of his catch to Job Brothers, with some going to Bowring Brothers (PANL, GN 6, Royal Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Sea Fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador other than the Seal Fishery, 1935-36, Testimony of Daniel Driscoll, May 22, 1936, p. 278). Suzie Scott’s father also sold his fresh catch to Job’s. Her family lived near the Narrows on Southside Road and her father owned a trap skiff. Like Daniel Driscoll’s family, members of Suzie’s family worked to “make fish”, that is, produce salt fish from the fresh catch. This process entails many steps and requires skill, knowledge and patience to produce quality salt fish. When I asked who might have shown her how to head, gut, fillet or split a fish, Suzie replied

\textsuperscript{10} In Newfoundland, cod is generally called simply “fish” with all other species being called by their proper names. i.e: haddock, halibut, rosefish, and so on. This dates back to the days when cod were so numerous in the sea that they were the staple catch; all other species were not prosecuted in such quantities. For ease of communication in this thesis I have used the word “fish” to indicate the wide range of different species, rather than just cod. It is true however, that Job’s processed tremendous quantities of cod during the time period of this study.
Sure anyone can do fish...[W]e were always fishermen. Our parents were, uh, our parents were fishermen...Yeah. God, it’s only to take a fish and (makes a loud clicking sound and gestures [a sweeping motion of filleting]) that side, turn it over...that’s all. Take out the big bones, see. Only two sides, then...

(Scott TS94: 47-48)

This knowledge, gained through experience in her family’s economic production, taught Suzie how to fillet and salt fish, learning which may have helped her get work at Job’s beginning in the late 1930s. She just “worked our way in...” to employment at Job’s (Scott TS95:2, 48).

Large banking schooners, using two-man fishing dories, delivered mainly cod to Job’s from June to October. Job Brothers often contracted with other schooner operators, such as W.W. Wareham or Munroe’s for the purchase of fish in order to keep a flow of product through the plant (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. of Mtgs., March 12, 1945). With schooner harvesting, the women employed at Job’s in the early 1940s would be laid off from about November to February because no fish was coming in during winter months, and the blueberry crop had been processed by that time.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the introduction of trawlers with the capacity to catch in the deep-sea off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland kept fish species flowing into Job’s from January to December each year. Trawlers were maintained and outfitted during the summer months and were used to supplement the catch by inshore trap boats during the summer. The trawlers and their crews resumed full-time fishing in the fall of the year. Species such as cod, haddock, halibut, flounder, rosefish, herring, perch, eels, and salmon from a variety of sources were processed (Reid TS95:19-22). Avoiding a “glut” of fish, and yet maintaining a regular and manageable flow for processing was an on-going consideration for the Directors and managers of Job

11 See Neis (1993) for a good discussion of women’s work within familial patriarchy in the fishery.
Brothers (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. of Mtgs., February 6, 1945). It could also be a source of irritation and complaint for the processing workers. Leo and Mary Dillon had firm thoughts about the impact of a glut of fish, for themselves and for those who caught the fish.

LD: Uh they, they, I mean, to be honest in that work there, like, uh, the fishermen, uh, Job’s at that time used, they used to give the fishermen sometimes a half a cent a pound for fish and a cent an, uh, a cent and an half and if they, uh, had too much fish into the plant they used to heave the fish, that long some of it (gestures with hands about 2-3 feet apart)...

MD: Get rid of it!

LD: ...heave it in the harbour!

[edit]

LD: ...I think of the stuff, what the fishermen had to do cause they couldn’t sell their fish they had to heave it out in the harbour, no-one wanted it...

(Dillon TS95:26-27)

Although Leo and Mary comment primarily on the impact on the fishers of a glut situation at Job’s, their work too would suffer. Any fish not retained for processing meant less work and therefore less money in their pockets at the end of a run.

By the end of the war, Britain sought cheaper fish products elsewhere, but the United States emerged as a major buyer of frozen fish products. Wright (1997) notes that forty percent of the frozen fish production was exported to the United States at this time (35). This change in product destination meant changes in how the fish was processed and packaged, and thus, changes in the work of women at Job Brothers. For example, the fish fillet products shipped to Britain during the war were shipped skin on, while those shipped to the USA were cleaned of skin before being packed. The frozen fish was packed in different weights, packaging and labels for the US market. In some cases, these product changes meant the direct and close supervision of the buyers, for example
male representatives of the A & P grocery chain from the United States who routinely showed women workers how to use equipment and maintain a quality product for A & P.

The introduction of new technologies such as conveyor belts, fish trays and buckets and wrapping machines, increased frozen fish production at Job's plant (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. Of Mtgs., January 29, 1946, August 17, 1948). In this shift from salt fish processing to processing of fresh fish into refined frozen product, there was also a shift in the employment of women. As larger fishing vessels, especially trawlers, were acquired, and more fresh fish arrived at Job's to be processed, more women were hired (Reid TS95:18; Hunt TS92:12). This coincided with the early post-war period.

The recruitment of women specifically to work on conveyor belt operations, especially in the food production industry in Britain during the inter-war years is discussed at length by Miriam Glucksmann. In her 1990 study, *Women Assemble: Women Workers And The New Industries In Inter-War Britain*, Glucksmann examines food processing industries such as jam making, fruit preserving and canning and biscuit making. She argues that

> with the advent of mass consumer production, women assumed a new and heightened significance within the industrial workforce. Employers deliberately recruited them to operate the assembly lines and conveyor belts used for mass production. (3)

As well, a rigid sexual division of labour was established, with women's jobs being confined to the assembly lines and men doing all the other jobs. This is reflected in the structure of the division of labour in Job's fish plant, and indeed in the fishing industry as a whole. For example, at Job's, women were confined to onshore, inside processing jobs, located on or near the conveyor belt line. Men harvested the fish offshore or worked on the wharves; women packed and wrapped fish, generally considered low skill...  

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work, while men occupied positions as filleters, generally considered highly skilled work; men ensured the smooth running of the conveyor belts and other machinery in the plant through servicing and repair work, while women were subject to the pace and flow of the conveyor belt line; women performed the work and men managed the work at Job's. In Newfoundland, this division of labour reflects the continuing division in the industrialized fishery today. As some narrators stated, however, in the family-based production of salt fish women filleted fish as well as performing other knowledge-based tasks such as laying the fish for drying, gauging the suitability of the weather for drying and salting fish in bulk (Scott TS94:47-48). Expertise in all aspects of this work meant the difference between a good price for your salt fish at season's end or starvation wages for the family.

Industrialization in fish processing altered the gender composition and the work performed by the workforce. Glucksmann describes a clear division between these gendered jobs.

As in other industries, work sex-typed as feminine was routine and repetitive. It was portrayed as clean and light, requiring no training or formal skill, but rather as depending on dexterity, concentration and the ability to tolerate monotony. All jobs that were presented as heavy and dirty or as necessitating formal training, manual skills or technical knowledge were ipso facto 'men's work'. Since people were allocated to jobs on the basis of gender, the workforce was inevitably divided on the basis of gender. (1990:5)

Glucksmann's portrait accurately describes the division of labour in the Job Brothers fish plant in the 1940s and 1950s.

This gendered division of labour was reinscribed further through the gender-divided unionization in the Job Brothers Southside operations. Although the number of workers employed varied somewhat with the seasonal round of processing activities, and the number of boats unloading at the Southside wharf, in general the male workforce
outnumbered the female work force. Newspaper accounts vary in the employment figures they report. The *Daily News* of February 19, 1948 reported that sixty-eight women were employed processing fish (7), and two months later in April 1948, the *Evening Telegram* reported that sixty-five “girls” and seventy-eight “longshoremen” were currently working at Job’s (April 17:9). Helen White Picco, who worked in the office doing payroll beginning in 1951, estimates that the total workforce was two hundred in the Job Brothers plant (Picco TS95:3).

Glucksmann states that in the inter-war period in Britain, employers gave preference to the hiring of younger women as assembly line workers. Women between fourteen and eighteen were preferred over those in their twenties. This was particularly true for the food processing sector in 1935 where women under eighteen made up 41.8% of the operatives (Glucksmann:1990:259, 64). The women workers at Job’s ranged in age from about twelve to forty-five years old and came from the Southside, Shea Heights and Ft. Amherst, with a few crossing the harbour from St. John's in the BLUE WAVE, a small covered motor boat provided by Job Brothers to transport workers and operated by Steve Burt (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. of Mtgs., July 19, 1948; Picco TS95:2; Hiscock TS94:5). Although the workforce fluctuated, many of the women workers were from families whose male workers were already unionized workers in others sectors of the fishing industry or the longshore (Park:1992; Hunt TS92:2; Kittinger TS94:3).

**GETTING A JOB**

Women came to work at Job’s through many avenues. Family and friends often
provided the access to, and motivation for going over to Job Brothers to ask for work.  
Some young women began work during the peak summer months between school terms, when they would be hired to pack fish and/or process blueberries, others went to Job’s after leaving school and remained there most of their work lives, still others worked for shorter periods at Job’s and went on to other forms of work (and other unions) later. When teased apart, these generalized categories glossing women’s early experiences with full-time work are seen to be historically contingent and open to contestation, not always representing women’s material conditions or desired life-stories. Women entered employment with Job’s for many different reasons and under rather different circumstances. According to the narrators, however, neither ethnicity nor religion shaped who sought work at Job’s, who was hired, or which woman worked alongside another. At the same time, it is clear that with women coming from the same families and communities, similarities in ethnic origin and religious practices can be found.

Joan Wareham Donegani started work at Job’s during the summer of 1945 or 1946 when she was thirteen years old, and stayed on at Job’s after the summer ended in order to help support her family.

JD: Well at the, at the time I, I said to my parents I wanted to work for the summer. Ok, you go ahead, but when the fall come I didn’t bother to go back to school and they didn’t argue, they just let me stay there. Yeah, so I did.

LC: Yeah. Were you not interested in going back to school or how’d..you..?

JD: N-o I just, I just liked working and uh, that was it.

LC: You were the oldest in the family?

JD: Yeah.

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12 See also Sangster:1995:113-114 for discussion of the importance of family in securing a factory job for working class women.
LC: Again a lot of the women have commented that, uh, they took the jobs at Job’s because of, sort of family economic circumstances.

JD: Yeah, that’s it definitely. Cause, uh, at the time I think that kept the house going what I was making.

LC: Yeah, yeah, so would you just take your cheque home? How did that work?

JD: I would just, well you’d get paid in cash I think...

LC: Oh, of course...

JD: You bring the envelope home and that was it. I got an allowance and, uh, maybe fifty cents a week and, huh, that was it. (Laughs) (Donegani TS95:9-10)

Joan remembers going down to the Job Brothers premises with two friends, “the King girls,” Cynthia and Violet King. She believes that one reason she got the job was the geographic location of her home. She lived close to the plant in Fort Amherst.

JD: Well I think everybody, any girl that, they used to call us the Battery Girls, if you went up there you more or less automatically got a job. Know, used to always call us the Battery Girls.

LC: That’s interesting. Why, why do you think that you automatically got a job?

JD: I don’t know, because we’re close by I guess. Could walk back and forth and if, like if they needed us a phone call and five minutes we were there.

LC: Uh-huh...

JD: I think that was the convenience of it. Yeah. (Donegani TS95:8).

A family’s economic need, Joan’s desire for paid work and her position in the age order of the children of the family constituted her as an employable worker at the age of thirteen. The geographic location of her home in Fort Amherst marked her in the eyes of the Job Brothers management as a suitable “girl” to employ. Being categorized as a “Battery Girl” had consequences for the work Joan was asked to do at Job’s: this group of
women were expected to stay after the processing shift was over in order to clean up the fish plant before processing began on the next load of fish. Joan commented, "We done all that maybe an hour after to clean up, make sure everything was washed down, things like that and then we'd go home" (Donegani TS95:19). This designation as a "Battery Girl" had material advantages for Joan Donegani and the other women in this group because they gained an extra hour's pay after the shift was finished. Her young age - thirteen - may well have been factored in by Job Brothers, as they frequently hired younger workers during the highly productive summer fishing months to supplement the workers who remained year-round. It was one way of handling the glut of fish that might arrive at the plant.

Pearl Tucker Hunt started work at Job's when she was twelve years old, around 1941. Some of her family already worked for Job's, but her mother was not happy about her daughter going to work there.

...right. Dad brought a list of paper down he said anyone wanna go to work at Job's...at the berries and Mom said no we're not goin and I said I am goin. So we went... my sister Vera, myself (coughs) Daisy and all of us went there and uh...

(Hunt TS92:2-3)

So in the company of her sister Vera and cousin Daisy, Pearl was hired for work on the berry processing line at Job's.

Anyway I went to work to Job's. Couldn't reach the berry-belt... Gandy Coombs, the fella in that picture said I'm gonna get a block and tackle and stretch ya. Anyway we worked there. I used to be on the line, boxes and different things down there. But I liked it.

(Hunt TS92:4)

Madeleine O'Reilly Janes learned from a friend that Job's was hiring "girls," so she "just went over to look for a job and they hired me on...[I] just had a friend working there...she said they were looking for girls so I just took a chance and went over...and I
got a job right away." She began work at seventeen or eighteen years old, in the mid-1940s. Madeleine worked a different jobs in the plant, weighing fish, making cartons for packing fish, and stamping fish species names on cartons. She never worked at the berry cleaning or packing, even though she remained at Job's until the plant closed in 1967 (M. O'Reilly Janes TS95:1-2).

Suzie King Scott's description of getting work at Job's in some ways echoes Madeleine's. Suzie, who began work at Job's in the middle of the economic depression of the 1930s at the age of 25, said that women

SS: ...Worked our ways in, yeah. That's what all the girls did. You know, you see over to Job's they wants a couple of girls and then they go over to see could you get on. Just like now, goin into a shop for, uh, interview.

LC: So you just went down and...

SS: And, yeah, and they took your name. 'Praps they send for ya in a week's time, yeah.

LC: Oh yeah. and once you got on, did you stay on work then?

SS: Yeah, then you're there....

(Scott TS94:48)

Later in our conversation when I asked Suzie if she had much opportunity for work in the 1930s and 1940s, she said "[N]o. There was nowhere when I get that job" (TS94:56). Suzie saw her options for paid work as limited, perhaps because of the severity of the economic situation in Newfoundland at that time. Thousands of men and women were out of work and on the dole or relief payments from the Commission Government. The proximity of Job's premises was very important to Suzie as well. It was "right handy to my home," and so was prized for convenience, especially after she married and began having children. The proximity to work helped her maintain paid labour at Job's, while at the same time taking care of her domestic responsibilities.
throughout her married life.

Newly-arrived from a small outport community many miles south of St. John's, Helen White Picco had a friend, May Ivany, who was working at Job's packing fish. Helen was keeping house for an ailing aunt and working in the kitchen of a local hospital. She didn’t like this work so she “went over and applied” for work at Job’s and got hired “making packages, boxes” in which fish would be packed. Helen quickly moved to a new job however, when Maurice Job Taylor, manager of the Southside operations employed her in the Southside office. She learned the work directly from Taylor: “He told me what to do and how to do it. What way he wanted it so I did it like that.” Helen already had grade ten, but when she started work in the office, she took a night school typing course which she paid for herself. Even though the course “only cost a couple of dollars that’s all,” Helen was able to use the training in her new office job (Picco TS95:1-3).

Job Brothers was not the only waterfront employer of women in the late 1940s. Harvey’s also had a fish and blueberry processing plant on the waterfront, across the harbour from Job Brothers. Ettie Evans Norman went to work at Harvey’s plant processing salmon in about 1930, when she was fourteen years old. Ettie had completed grade nine when she was thirteen. To get the work at Harvey’s, she “told a lie, said I was seventeen” (Norman TS95:2).

Ettie’s narratives of her fish plant work are complex and layered. She loved working at Job’s - she had “the best kind of time” and “[E]njoyed every minute I was there” and would go back if they opened again. Yet she produces what might be called disidentification at the same time.13 Ettie carefully separates work with fish from work with blueberries in her narrative. She speaks with pride of her skill at brine

processing salmon, telling me a Mr. Lundrigan told her that when she “heaved a salmon up,” she was “like a man” (Norman TS95:3). Ettie left Harvey’s, however, when the company started berry processing before World War II because people working on the berry processing line were “not my company.” She was adamant about this refusal in her narrative, “I wouldn’t work at the berries...didn’t want to go pickin’ no berries...don’t want to work at it.” Ettie calls upon a discourse of class relations and social geography to explain why she refused the berry work: she thought berry workers to be a rough crowd of people, “from the Battery and places like that” (Norman TS95:2). Sangster (1995) also found that women who were described as “loud, boisterous or quick to make an argument” were seen by the women in her Ontario-based study to be “tough,” and to lack respectability (115). This notion of conduct tied to respectability was not held by all of the women in my study, however. As I discuss in the next chapter, some women argued, and physically fought each other, putting their job at risk in order to “stand up” for themselves and other women in the workplace.

As in Joan Donegani’s narrative, the geographic location of a worker’s home marked them as different, separate and “other”. In Ettie’s narrative however, a social class marker is attached to the geography; workers from specific locations are not her social equals. Ettie Norman took work at Job’s after she left Harvey’s, bringing her skills and experience in brine processing of salmon to Job’s plant.

For Jessie Earle Thomas, work life started at Job’s in a summer job as a blueberry packer, “cause that’s where all the kids were going to work..that summer (laughing)...all the kids from my school, from my neighbourhood,” and she returned to Job’s to work after she left school in grade eight (TS95:22,12). Working at Job’s fish plant was not Jessie’s first choice of employment.

JT: Oh, I think I was, think I was fifteen. When I started working...[Y]eah,
I went to work for Job’s fish factory. You know that was the only place you could get hired... (coughs) Cause I applied for, uh, uhm, telephone, to be a telephone operator, or person, but uhm, they always said you had to have experience. At my age how was I gonna get experience?

LC: Yes.

JT: (coughs) Because I had you know... It didn’t uhm, you know there was no where I could get experience... [U]nless they gave me the experience and couldn’t get it.

(Thomas TS94:10-11)

In this conversation, race circulated through my mind as a reason for her difficulty in getting an operator’s job. Eventually, and with some uncertainty as to how she would react to the question, I asked Jessie directly if she thought that being black had any effect on the kind of work she could secure in the 1940s. She seemed unfazed by the question, despite my nervousness in asking it.14

JT: I don’t think so. At that time, uhm, race didn’t become an issue until the GI’s came up there.

LC: Oh, that’s interesting. How did it become an issue then?

JT: Uhm, I had cousins and they had, uh, one of them had a, a white boyfriend, a GI, and he didn’t want her to associate... he’s from Georgia, Alabama or wherever they come from.... (coughs) and he didn’t want, uh, (coughs), excuse me... He didn’t want her associatin’ with us. He said, they’re niggers.... So that was when the word, you know, that’s when, uhm, the race issue come up and... uh, you know cause, eh, I mean I didn’t even know I was black! (laughs) Until the Americans came up there. So...

LC: Right. So you didn’t experience any, any prejudice in Newfoundland particularly?

JT: No, no.... Not till the Americans came up, they... Well my mother, uh, was wheeling one of us in a, I don’t know which one of us it was, but she was wheelin us in a carriage and this, uh, American said, uh, what you doin with this black baby, you know, babies or black babies or whatever.

14 Upon reflection, I realize now that my own hesitation to speak of race is linked in part to a lack of public discourse about race in Newfoundland. I didn’t know how to approach the question.
But anyway one of my brother’s or father’s friends knocked the hell out of him. Excuse my expression.

(Thomas TS94:19-20)

Jessie remembers here two incidents in which her own racial awareness was heightened by public, confrontational moments with American servicemen stationed in St. John’s during and after World War II. In this narrative, this moment is marked by Jessie as a change in signification. The word “black” is transformed into a very different, material and social reality for Jessie. A whole new discourse of race enters her world. Is this a moment of rupture in which a strategy of refusal of difference/assertion of sameness on Jessie’s part is revealed?

The cousin Jessie refers to in the first incident is white, a relative on Jessie’s mother’s side of the family. Relationships between Newfoundland women and US servicemen were common. During WW II some twenty-five thousand Newfoundland women from across the Island and Labrador met and married servicemen from the United States. Indeed, Jessie herself married an American serviceman in 1953, as Alice Kittinger did in the late 1950s. Interestingly, Jessie identifies the offending serviceman as being from the southern US - Alabama or Georgia - states which stand for racial tensions even today. Where else would a man using the word “nigger” originate? Jessie calls upon archetypes of racism in this moment.

The second incident described is not so clear to me. The timing and characters in the narrative do not fit with my knowledge of Jessie’s family. For example, Jessie’s biological mother died in 1936, yet the incident she narrates is set during or after WW II - “when the Americans came up.” What is the meaning to Jessie of this juxtaposition of elements? Who is the “mother” in this narrative? Does this story point to a different family composition than I previously understood? Jessie has suggested this in other narrative pieces, for example, when she mentions the existence, and subsequent deaths
of many other siblings than are listed in family records or census documents. This could point to different forms of integration into St. John's life, by different family members, than I am able to trace. How might race feature in these different unions? These are questions which remain with me.

I read these narrative as moments of the crystallization of racism for Jessie, rather than a precise occurrence which she transparently remembers, and unproblematically recounts for and to me. Of course, other questions linger as well. Was this indeed the time period of the introduction of a discourse of “race” into Newfoundland society? Discourses of race, like other discourses of identity, are historically and geographically specific. They change over time and space, and words do not have stable meanings where or whenever they are spoken or written. An example of this is the word Jessie heard from the American soldier - “nigger.” In the 1990s, this term has begun to be re-appropriated by some young African-American men as a statement of both identity and defiance. In Chapter 7, I discuss the work of this and other discourses of race in more detail.

Being constituted, in part, as an inexperienced worker, and thus unable to gain employment as a telephone operator, Jessie went to Job's fish plant where the demand for skills and experience was less in evidence. She remembers her pleasure in earning her own money.

Oh-h, let's see. I know you couldn't go to work before you were 15 or 14 or 15 I don't think. I really don't remember (laughs). All I know I was young with, just as happy as, as a sissie in a cc can as they say, by getting my first little cheque (laughs). That I really earned it, could take and do what I want with it! Instead of you know, it was different than being on an allowance where you had to do this and do this and it's gotta last you so long. I could spend it all in one day, or in one half hour, whatever, it was mine to do it. (Laughing)

(Thomas TS95:12)
Looking back on that time, Jessie makes sense of this moment in her life as one of new possibilities and changing material circumstances, of economic freedom. The notion of a unified identity as a child or schoolgirl is unsettled here, it is a moment of fluidity and change in subjectivity. She claims other identity positionings too: a self-described young person, who might not have been of legal age to be out of school and working, a newly employed working female, one who had control over her income and who had left her “allowance” earning days behind her. In this discourse, Jessie takes up the control of her own money as a sign of adulthood, as a marker of change in identity in her life and family circumstances. Jessie describes this moment with pleasure in her voice and narrative. This is quite a different experience of family relations than that of Joan Donegani, whose earnings helped keep her family fed. As Joan laughingly recounts earlier, she took her pay home in an envelope and was given an allowance of fifty cents a week for her own spending. Just as they came to work at Job’s for different reasons and in different ways, each narrator’s experience of, and stories about, family economic relations differs.

Alice Hunt Kittinger asked her father to get her a job at Job’s fish plant. Her narrative about this part of her life constructs a very different version of women’s work at Job Brothers. A customary dividing line based on, and supporting, the gender division of labour in the plant is interrupted by Alice’s story. In this storyline, produced in conversation with Michelle Park in 1992, Alice makes the point that she started out as a fish filleter, traditionally a male occupation at Job’s.

AK: I asked my father try to get me a job and uh, he came up that day and he said, “You can go to work but you’ll have to go to work filleting.” I said good enough. So I went with him and Tim Reed [Reid] and they showed me how to do it.

MP: Oh yeah...did many girls or women do that then?
AK: No. I was the only girl down there.

MP: So that was normally a man's job was it?

AK: Yeah, yeah.

MP: Oh. So you were...

AK: Yeah me and all the young fellas.

MP: Oh-h, there you were.

AK: But I, I started off and my father and Tom, Tom, uh, Tim was showin me how to do that.

MP: So after that where did you ...

AK: But I wasn't workin there long, down there with them. They put me upstairs in the plant, the fish.

(Ackering TS92:67)

Alice describes a hesitation on her father's part regarding the work he had acquired for her at Job's. Perhaps he was concerned about the appropriateness of her taking on a filleting job. Alice's account of his words indicates that he may not have considered the male filleting line, with no female co-workers for support or company, to be a desirable place for Alice to work. As it turned out, Alice's work as a fillette was short lived, as she was soon moved "upstairs" to the fish packing area where women traditionally worked.

Interesting gender relations are pictured in Alice's account. Alice gets her first job, working with men, through her father's connections at Job Brothers, and she is trained in her work by another male, Tim Reed [Reid]. The power to influence hiring, and the acquisition of specific knowledge and skill is under male authority and control. Other narrators speak of getting work at Job's through connections to female friends or relatives rather than fathers. That Alice was thought to require training points to expectations of her skill and knowledge of fish processing, in particular filleting. At Job's in this time period, men held the knowledge of, and control over, the filleting
process, so it is not surprising that a man would provide Alice's training in filleting.

In this section of Alice's transcripts I am faced with many interpretive and analytical challenges. This is the only narrative which suggests that women worked as filleters at Job's. How am I to understand this moment? Alice's assertion raises questions for me about the production of a particular identity positioning in our conversations together - one that risks and locates itself in challenging spaces in an all-male environment. In our conversations, Alice frequently places herself at the center of activities in the fish plant, in wage disputes, and in the formation of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union as well as other union organizing efforts in subsequent work places. These stories produce a firm identity that is bolder than I personally found Alice to be in our conversations. This constitution both disrupts and refuses my own positioning (in the present with me) of Alice as mild, gentle and not one to involve herself in such activities. Her words subvert her physical presence for me. My experience of Alice in a particular time and place is at odds with her constitution of herself in our conversations. As I think back over her narrative and our time together, I must hold these images in tension for they vividly illustrate (and constitute in this moment) complex and oppositional identity positionings.

A pattern of interrupted employment with Job's characterizes Mary Power Dillon's work life storyline. Mary Dillon started work at Job's in 1951, at about seventeen years of age, because a friend, Helen Warford McGrath, was already working at Job's. Mary remained at Job's for four years and returned in 1960 to work in the canteen until 1964 (Dillon TS94:4). Her new occupation as fish plant worker in 1951 was quite different from her previous employment. Here Mary Dillon and her husband, Leo, negotiate the telling of her narrative. Mary's narrative is subverted by Leo when he shifts the talk to the social and physical consequences of fish odours in the plant.
MD: No, well like I wasn't workin see, an so, uh, ya had ta..

LD: Just left school.

MD: Well, no I was outa school the year before and I mean I definitely was fifteen right.

LD: O.k. you worked uh, to, uh, Mammy's Bakery that it was.

MD: Yeah, I worked a few different places before that and then Helen got me job down there, she said you get a few dollars more, right. I remember first thing when I went down there first I got the smell a the fish and it was so cold I thought my God...(laughs)

LD: (laughs)

MD...am I nuts to come down here or wha? (laughs)

LC: After the Bakery...from warm to...(laughing)

MD: Yeah (laughing)

LD: When I ...when I worked down there first when I went down there, down there I was doin (makes sound like throwing up and gestures as he does it)...arup, arup, arup...(laughs heartily) the smell....

MD: The smell of the fish right, until ya got used to it.

LD: ...the smell. ..different kinds of fish, right. It gives a different odour.

MD: And after a while it was a part a you and you went over on the, on the, waterfront then on the Water Street buying (laughs) stuff, you walk into the store and people just (makes loud sniffing sound and laughs) smell the fish offa ya right.

LD: Run away from ya. (laughs)

LC: So did the smell make you sorta feel sick to your stomach?

LD: Oh yeah.

LC: Yeah...takes a little while...

LD: Till you got used to it.

(Dillon TS95:29-31)

The smell of fish not only affected Mary and Leo as plant workers but it also marked and
positioned them socially and economically as fish plant labour when they went across the harbour and into the shops downtown. Leo redirects Mary’s narrative. While he stays with the theme of first work at Job’s, he enters his own experience of the smell of fish into Mary’s story. As he dramatically mimes throwing up from the fish smell, Mary explains to me that he means the smell of fish was overpowering. Along with Daisy Hiscock and Alice Kittinger, Mary Dillon was also chosen to work on the blueberry processing line in the fall of the year.

Daisy Tucker Hiscock also constructs her paid labour for Job Brothers fish plant as discontinuous. She began packing fish for Job’s at the age of thirteen or fourteen, in about 1942. A year later, she left for work in another factory, then returned to Job’s in the mid-forties. After she married in 1949, Daisy stayed home with her children. In 1960, she returned to work for Job Brothers. She saw changes in work processes, technology, and the gender-division of labour in the plant. There weren’t many women working for Job’s in the early 1940s. In a 1992 conversation with Michelle Park, Daisy suggests that there were low numbers of women workers “[B]ecause that was first when Job’s started up their fish. Uh, was after the war that, that Job’s moved up into a big plant” (Hiscock TS92:95-96). This was the period when Job’s was scaling back its salt fish operation and moving more heavily into the production of fresh frozen fish products for export.

And, uh, and when the fish, when the fishing season was over you’d work in, in the summer then and when the trap skiffs was finished then you went at blueberries, workin in the coldstorage at the blueberries. But later on then they got their draggers, uh, bankers...no we had our bankers then, but uh, when the, I’d say now February, something like that, when the weather was bad, then you’d work at blueberries, cleanin blueberries, packin blueberries. In the cold storage...

(Hiscock TS94:2)

Daisy produced vacuum packed fish as well. This involved placing the fish into a large
rubber bag and drawing the air out of the bag before sealing it (Hiscock TS92:95-96).

She and other women workers did a variety of fish related production over the years in the plant.

...Uh, we used to pack em in, in wooden boxes, first and, and then we, there was so many going in vacuum pack and uh, let's see...And later on they, they had girls working at the saltfish. They had (us?) picking the bones out and packing em. But there wasn't that many, was only a few girls did that. And, and they also done fish sticks for, put up, mixed em up like you know but that was in later years, right. That was only just before we closed down.

(Hiscock TS94:4)

Shifting patterns of work and skill development in relation to product production is clear in Daisy's account of her work at Job's. The women had to be flexible producers, able to handle a wide range of processing operations for both fish and blueberries well. This flexibility made women valuable employees for Job Brothers.

A few years after starting work at Job's, Daisy and her cousin, Pearl's sister, left the fish plant and took factory jobs at Browning-Harvey's, a maker of biscuits and confectionary. Daisy produced biscuits and marshmallows on a regular work schedule which she valued (Hiscock TS94:48). The work was very different.

Oh, Browning-Harvey's....that was...I guess I was, what, 16, left Job's cause Job's used to close down in winter and you used to have to go to, we'd say, go on field (UIC), right. But, uh, not at that time because I don't think we were even in Confederation. We left and went to Browning-Harvey's because we had work all year round and you knew your hours, you know. You'd work eight hours a day and that'd be it, you know. And you'd have weekends off and, uh, up to Job's you don't know when you were off. Twelve hour days, six days a week.

(Hiscock TS94:6-7)

Employment at Job Brothers offered Daisy long, often irregular hours of work, depending on the arrival of fishing vessels. A worker couldn't be certain of regular time off. Further, in the years prior to the trawler fishery, processing at Job's was not year-round. The plant closed from late fall, after the fish and berries were done, to
early spring, when seals were again available for processing. This meant that workers had to find other employment for the winter or risk having no earnings to support themselves and their families. In contrast, Browning-Harvey offered better hours and a regular work schedule. Daisy and her cousin had to walk a long distance to the Browning-Harvey plant each day, however. It meant crossing the bridge from the Southside Road to the northside of the harbour and working with people she didn't know well. Daisy and her cousin stayed at Browning-Harvey's for a little over a year, returning to Job's in about 1945 or 1946. In a conversation with Michelle Park in 1992, Daisy described casual encounters with the manager of Job's, Maurice Job Taylor, as the deciding factor in their return to the fish plant.

... Yeah... me and my cousin, that's Pearl's sister. And when we'd be comin, walk, we had to walk from here then right up to Browning-Harvey's and we'd meet Maurice Job Taylor, and every time we met him on the street. And every time we met him on the street, he'd stop us and ask us to come back to work to Job's. So anyway, he asked us so often that we were, we were (laughs) we didn't like sayin no all the time and it was handier to home so we gave up our job at Browning-Harvey's and went back to Job's.

(Hiscock TS92:82)

In 1992, Taylor's enticement and Daisy's discomfort with "sayin no all the time" are cited first as the main reasons why they returned to Job's to work. The issue of geography, of Job's being "handier to home," is mentioned last in this narrative piece. Two years later, however, in 1994, when I asked Daisy why she returned to Job's and the cold, difficult work, she recounted feelings of closeness and community - an intertwining - she experienced at Job's.

...No place like Job's. (laughs) I guess what it was, we went to Job's when we were only teenagers, young and I don't know we just clicked I 'spose girl, you know, you seemed like you were more intertwined. But at Browning-Harvey's...well I think what it was too, we knew just about everybody at Job's and when we went to Browning-Harvey's we had to get to know people, you know. Different.

(Hiscock TS94:47)
Knowing the people you worked alongside each day, and feeling comfortable with them - clicking - was important to Daisy. Developing new relationships, outside of family connections was a different (and possibly uneasy) experience for Daisy and her cousin. Distance, both geographical and emotional, are deciding factors in Daisy’s memories of this decision to change employment. In this Daisy produces herself (and her cousin) as subjects desirous of connections, and a place in relationships with family and friends of long standing.

This remembrance fashions a very different storyline and subject positioning than Daisy constitutes of her early work days. Thinking back over her life, Daisy constitutes herself as a “child” when she started paid labour in the fish plant. Daisy describes this fluidity and change to Michelle in 1992.

I was very passive... I had, I, I was to a certain extent (laughing) and I had an inferiority complex to a certain extent... Until I started work and after I started work I gradually started come out of my shell. But I was only a child right. And I gradually started to come out of my shell... so uh, ... full blown agitator today. (laughs heartily)

(Hiscock TS92:117-118)

Daisy carefully constructs herself as occupying non-unified and shifting subject positionings throughout her work life. Her description of emerging from a shell produces a very graphic image and signals her constitution of her work life as a birth. She makes sense of her journey from passive child to “full blown agitator” by crediting employment, not just at Job Brothers, but in general, for her transformation. Her hearty laughter and tone of voice in the recording signify her pride in the position she took up in 1992 - that of agitator.

Indeed, in her community of Fort Amherst, Daisy is a very active force in the preservation of its history, development of a local boat basin and tourism potential. She has worked hard to organize reunions of former residents and to get municipal services
for the area (Hiscock TS92:75, 117). When I talked with Daisy in 1994, she told me of her many community involvements, but refused to name herself, and thus position herself, as “agitator.”

DH: ...Although, uh, I, I'm the type that I got to be head and heels in everything, you know. Like out here, now, my mind and mouth never stops. They calls me the mouth. Cause I'm, I'm on the board of directors for the Boat Basin and, uh, we've got a Fort Amherst Community, uh, uh, what would you call it? Well we, there's five of us just keeps everything up, you now, if there's anything goin on out here. And I'm also on another committee that we're havin for a reunion. [short comment not clear] Anything goes wrong they calls me and then I gotta get after the council or the government or, so I'm always active right. (laughs) Always live one.

LC: You always like that? Were you like that...before you joined the union?

DH: Oh yeah. I didn't care. I, I always wanted, uh, everything to be...right. You know. I'm, I'm not an agitator, no way, but, I, I if anything is wrong, I like to see into it, see if we can get it corrected. You know. And I'm not, you know what I mean, uh, what do you call it.....in the meantime... anything goes wrong they call me. Then probably we'll all get together, you know. But we done pretty good out here. (Laughs) (Hiscock TS94:19-20)

In this passage I attempt to link her activism with being a member of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union, a link that Daisy does not refuse. This is a very different constitution of herself than the one she produced with and for Michelle Park in 1992. Gone is the image of a passive child emerging from her shell. In its place is an engaged identity position, one that operates to represent herself as a community leader and activist. A representation in which Daisy has a keen investment. In these different passages, Daisy produces fragmented subjectivities that are complexly constituted and constituting. They are historically contingent as well, being negotiated in specific moments and under particular material conditions. These moments of subject positioning unsettle the notion that an individual life is a product of a unified, coherent and fixed subjectivity. Rather, in Daisy’s stories, we can see multiple subjectivities, in an on-
going state of flux across time and space.

In just these few short narratives, we can begin to see how the intersection of classed and gendered identities, age and social geography operate to constitute difference among and between the new women employees of Job Brothers.

GENDERING LABOUR ON THE WATERFRONT

By early in the twentieth century, the St. John’s waterfront was a male preserve. This covered a wide range of jobs: steamship labourers who loaded and discharged general cargo vessels as well as salt or coal boats; fish wharf labourers who transported salt fish in barrows from the boats to the wharf and sheds and packed the salt fish, filled and cleaned cod oil tanks, culled salt fish for quality product; seal labourers who skinned, scrapped piled, salted and packed seal skins, cleaned and filled seal oil tanks, drummed seal skins during manufacturing processes; men working specifically in cold storage areas in ships and in plants where the work included checking, weighing, skinning and filleting fish; all those men who worked in casual labour both around and in merchant’s premises on the waterfront.

Some of this waterfront labour strictly defined as male in the twentieth century was not always organized in that manner. Indeed, some of the heavy labour of moving fish was performed by women, working alongside men on the wharves. Chisholm (1990) has done remarkably detailed research and writing on the early years of the dock labour in St. John’s and the organizing work of the LSPU up to World War I.15 Although focusing on early organizing and strike actions on the St. John’s waterfront, Chisholm has also

15 The following discussion on women on the waterfront is informed by the work of Jessie Chisholm and historical sources she uncovered. I thank Jessie for her generous sharing of her ideas and her writing.
uncovered descriptions of pre-1900 longshore work by women. The Earl of Dunraven (1914), writing of his observations during a visit in the 1870s, described women's work on the wharves of St. John's as integral to the movement of fish on the wharf. They transported the fish unloaded from small schooners moored at the wharf to the next step in the packing process. "Women with hand-barrows attend upon the cullers, carry the fish into an adjoining shed, and upset their loads beside barrels standing ready to receive them." Young male workers would then fill the casks with fish and wheel them to the next stage of packing (Earl of Dunraven:1914:196). The Reverend Philip Tocque (1895) also noted this form of women's work in the making of salt fish in Hermitage Bay and other areas of the south coast. He also observed that "[i]n St. John's they used to work in loading and unloading vessels..." (Tocque:1985:46).16

This form of women's work continued in outport communities well into the twentieth century.17 In 1906, an American tourist named Bertha Arnold, writing from on board the steamer PROSPERO, complained to the editor of the Trade Review in St. John's, saying

I have been struck with the hard and unnatural work performed by some of the women folk...surely the Creator never intended for delicate women to carry a barrow of codfish weighing two hundred weight over slippery and uneven flakes and stages from morning till night or crawl on her hands and knees all day stowing fish in the hold of a close and stuffy boat... (Arnold: 1906:n.p.).

Toward the end of her letter, Arnold describes barrowing work as "men's work." Upon trying to lift the barrow herself with the aid of another female passenger, Arnold states

16 Fascinating historical photographs illustrating women's work in the salt fish industry, including barrowing, can be seen at the following website: http://collections.ic.gc.ca/fisheries/main.asp. Thanks to Mark Ferguson for this information.

17 See Andersen (1998); Boyd (1997); and Murray (1979) for discussion of the active participation of women in the making of fish.
the load was too heavy for them to carry any distance at all. She marvels at the strength and endurance of the women barrowers.

In her complaint about women's work, Bertha Arnold calls upon a discourse which separates work into gendered categories, rendering some forms of labour as unnatural for women to perform. She goes on to link this discourse with a medicalized discourse on women. A little further in the letter she argues that this "unnatural" work has resulted in the "mal-nutrition and over-working of women...in fishing hamlets," and contends that this is chiefly responsible for the growth of "lunacy...especially amongst the poorer people..." in Newfoundland outports (Trade Review; 1906:n.p). Thus, specific forms of women's labour are constructed as unhealthy and threatening for the general population of Newfoundland.

The author of the "Sanctumettes" column of the Trade Review, September 1, 1906, agrees that a "draft," or two hundred and twenty-four pounds of codfish per barrow, is too heavy a load for women to carry. The writer acknowledges, however, that this work by women

...has always been a more or less recognized custom; but the number employed has grown very much lately. This is due to the enhancement in the value of male labor, and to the increase in the number of fish shipments by outport merchants direct to market (n.p.)

Women were hired to do this work because male labour was more expensive for the merchant to employ. Yet the merchants were shipping larger quantities of salt fish to market, and needed the workers. As well, women workers were likely valuable because they already knew how to do the work. The journal points out that female members of a fisherman's household "assisted their fathers, husbands, or brothers in handling the voyage," but received no pay for their work. Thus, since women were available, likely needed the money for family income, worked for less pay, and were highly competent,
they were hired. Profits were secured for the merchant under this pattern. Regulation and control of women's labour on the wharves is advocated in the "Sanctumettes" column: women should only be allowed to work in those areas of the fishery that held no "hardships" for them, "and only such work as barrow-carrying forbidden by women" (n.p.) . This prohibition against women's work was "to protect them against themselves by forbidding the carrying of a two-quintal barrow of fish" (n.p.). The journal column went on to argue that if women were to be permitted to carry barrows at all, the barrow loads should be considerably reduced in weight and a substantial wage increase be given for this work. The then-current wages of thirty to forty cents per day is described as "bloodsucking" and the column author argues women "should be paid at least eighty cents, if not a dollar per day" (n.p.). The author calls upon a patriarchal discourse to advocate for the male protection of women workers. The author appeals to the "manly feeling" of the male merchants and planters, saying, "no man with a conscience ought to be able to look his wife, sister or daughter straight in the face, knowing that he is paying some other woman, just as dear to someone else, something like three cents an hour, AND "take it up" (n.p).

The Trade Review points out that the practice of women barrowing in St. John's was discontinued after a fatal accident occurred involving two women, and "then the moral indignation overspread the town, put an end to the employment of women on the wharves" (September 1, 1906:n.p). This moral outrage reconfigured the gender boundaries of work and thus, constrained the employment of women on the waterfront thereafter. Once the LSPU formed in St. John’s, wharf work, including barrowing, was constituted as men's work only. The waterfront was contained and represented as a male-dominated space.

The question of who had the right to an identity embedded in the waterfront space
in St. John's did not go away. In the 1920s, women and waterfront work gained a public profile once again, this time as a threat issued by the Employers Association during contract negotiations with the LSPU in 1920. Under the category “Greenfish Labor and Labor Curing and Drying Fish” inserted in correspondence between the Employers Association and the LSPU, the Employers argued for the right to hire “women and girls” at lower wage rates than they were presently paying the LSPU men - the barrowing rates.

This has been charged for the “barrowing” rates. In the outports and in other countries the work is done by women or girls at much less than ordinary rates. Employers claim that if men are employed at it they should not be paid more than the ordinary general labor rate and that employers should have the right to employ women or girls for this work at suitable rates if they desire to do so as is done by neighbouring rooms in St. John's. Unless this can be arranged it will necessarily interfere with the amount of employment that can be given on certain premises during the summer months. When it is particularly desirable to find employment (PANL, Board of Trade, Box 11, file 14, 1920).

The wage rate for barrowing at that time was thirty-five cents an hour, while the ordinary general labor rates were set at twenty-five cents an hour (PANL, Board of Trade, Box 10, file 13, May 7, 1912). Women and girls were paid even less; they received half the wages of the male workers generally. Thus, the employers used the hiring of women and girls in an attempt to pressure the LSPU into agreeing to a lower wage rate for the union men. The LSPU resisted this pressure and listed this action as “Objectionable Restriction on Wharf Labor.” A hand-written note in the margin of the paper indicates a return to “ordinary rates,” less than the barrowing rates, but I was unable to determine whose writing this might have been, and no written contract was located to see the outcome of this negotiating tactic. Chisholm suggests that this initiative to lower the LSPU wages was successfully resisted by the LSPU (Chisholm:forthcoming).

Whether the Employers, of which Job Brothers was one, would have actually
hired women and girls is not at all clear. This brief note does indicate that other fish handling premises on the St. John's harbour, those businesses not large enough to be part of the Employers Association, employed women and girls in "making fish." According to the 1921 Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, one hundred and six women, living within the census confines of St. John's East or West, were "engaged in curing fish." As well, some eight hundred and seventy-six females, living in small communities around St. John's were listed as active in making fish. This work occupied many women and contributed to the maintenance of many households.18

Little work has been done to explore the production of masculinity in longshore and waterfront labour. Trade union and/or labour historians and sociologists have tended to accept the historical, gendered categories of work and workers, never problematizing the construction of those categories or unpacking meanings produced within them. Very recent work in Europe and Scandinavia shows that in some places women performed the hard, heavy labour they were considered incapable of in St. John's (see Proceedings of the Comparative International History of Dock Labour Conference, 1997).

The Job family organized classed and gendered "spaces" in the city in and through hiring and management practices in the workplace and the organizing and gendering of social geography in and around the Southside Road plant. In and through its hiring practices, Job Brothers management produced a spacial organization of difference within gender and class. Potential women workers were not seen as a uniformly working-

18 Unfortunately, the 1935 and 1945 Census Reports did not collect the same information and did not always list by gender and occupation. The introductory note in the 1935 Census states that regarding the fishery "females were not taken into account" and that "only males fifteen and over were considered." In 1945, the Census lists fish curing under "Fish Canners and Curers," so an accurate count of women working at fish labour on the waterfront (even by enumerators' flexible standards) is not possible. Some one hundred and eighty-seven women are listed in the whole of Newfoundland as "Fish Canners and Curers."
class/female group. Rather, Job Brothers selectively hired women from different locations depending on the company’s work needs. In this way, we can see “women” as a constructed category cut across by other axes or dimensions of difference. This spacial organization of difference also illuminates the organization of class and gender hierarchies within categories of workers. The prevailing social geography of St. John’s was reinscribed by these practices.

Women were not uniformly happy with getting work at Job Brothers. As we have seen, the gendering of work on the waterfront was a long historical process, one that has not been explored in any detail by trade union and labour historians to date. I have only begun to unpack the historical development of men’s work and women’s work on the waterfront and in the fish and berry business in this chapter.

We shall see in later chapters how discourses of masculinity and femininity both constituted, and were constituted by, the gender division of labour on the waterfront and at Job Brothers plant. To accomplish this, it’s important to examine in closer detail women’s and men’s everyday talk about their work at Job Brothers fish plant. Women produce stories of their experiences in, and competing discourses about, work at Job’s in this everyday talk. How do women construct their experiences of Job’s? What stories get told? When? How do they, and others, speak about the material conditions under which they accomplished their work for Job Brothers? How does the discursive production of public knowledge about Job’s contest women’s knowledge? How are these discourses gendered? In the next chapter, I explore these questions.
CHAPTER 5

GENDER AT WORK: "SKILLED MEN" AND "DEFT GIRLS"

We worked at Job's fish plant as well you all know,
We worked through' the rain and the wind and the snow,
And when the work's over, we're ready to go.

Job's song, 1960s, Daisy Hiscock TS94:39

INTRODUCTION

As in most working environments, Job Brothers Southside fish plant used particular work flows and job responsibilities to accomplish the work of the plant. This applied to all aspects of production, whether it was the processing of fish, seals, oil or blueberries. In this chapter, I begin to explore the relationship between the materiality of work processes and discourses of gender as displayed in women's and men's narratives and public newspaper accounts in particular. Gendered work processes, spaces, and environments were all created and sustained in the Job Brothers plant. Competing discourses of gender are employed by the narrators to buttress the structuring of work and relations there as well. These discursive productions constitute and are constituted by the women and men working at Job's, and by the public accounts circulating in St. John's in the late 1940s.

In the Spring of 1948, the two main local newspapers - the Evening Telegram and the Daily News - reported on the fishing industry and on technological developments in fish processing at Job Brothers plant (ET: April 17, 1948:8-9; DN: February 19, 1948:7). The new "endless" conveyor system described in the newspaper articles carried various fish species to all stations along the processing line, connecting two floors of the fish plant. Both articles were accompanied by photographs of work inside the plant. The Evening Telegram article was one in a series of articles on fishing, and
contained fifteen black and white photographs taken in and around the Southside plant. Thirteen of these photographs represented different work stages in fish processing. The photographs from both newspapers are carefully structured to enact productive work activity and pleasant working conditions. For example, the thirteen photos in the *Evening Telegram* show individuals or small groups of women and/or men at work. The one large three-column photo in the *Daily News* shows the new conveyor system with women seated before it, all attentively focused on the work (February 19, 1948:7). None of the photos show work in the coldest areas of the plant, no holes, water or “slub” can be seen on the floors, no hurried pace of work is discernable. Rather, an orderly, connected and coherent work process is constituted through the images.

These photographs can be read in many ways - as records of particular work processes in a fish plant, as studies of the gender division of labour, as illustrations of new fish processing technologies used at Job’s, and, since so many of the workers are shown smiling at their work, as the deliberate creation of an image of a pleasant workplace for all, and so on. The text accompanying the photographs also inscribes these messages. “[C]lean and light” aspects of women’s work are highlighted in the St. John’s *Daily News* article reporting the fresh fish processing plant to be “as streamlined as an automobile producing production line and as hygienic as every possible precaution can provide.” Women workers are described as “[D]eft girls...dressed in blue overalls” who handle fish, but somehow manage to maintain an appearance “equal to that of any good cook in a spotless kitchen” (*DN*:February 19, 1948:7). These references may allude to contemporary debates on “women’s proper place” after WW II - the home or paid work. Certainly respectable women were expected to know about clean kitchens and good cooking. If the work was clean, light and hygienic it might be seen as more acceptable to the general public than other kinds of women’s work. Glucksman has noted the portrayal
of women's factory work as appropriately and properly feminine by the use of such language. As well, discourses of "scientific progress" are embodied in the emphasis on cleanliness, lightness and hygienic conditions, yet employing new, improved, "streamlined" technology in the work. One wonders if the reporter who composed these lines has ever seen a car assembly line!

Thus, newspaper depictions of the work, both text and photographs, inscribed publicly a very particular, gendered and familial image of the work at Job's. This inscription does not correspond to the work experience narratives of women at Job's plant, however. In their different and partial stories of their experiences, the narrators unsettle the image that is represented in the photographs: that Job's workplace was a clean, progressive, streamlined and harmonious site of coherent, consistent worker identities and actions. A careful look at those photographs chosen for public consumption, read alongside the narratives of the women workers, begins to unpack Job's plant as a worksite. What we begin to see is a workplace that was anything but "clean," "light," "streamlined" and "hygienic." Nor do "deft girls" work in "spotless" kitchens. Rather, the reality of cold and shivering bodies, cut fingers and dangerous machinery are remembered. Moments of boredom and repetitiveness on the line, of small acts of sabotage and disruption, of jokes and relationships between women, and between women and men, are recounted. Job's "modernized" plant may be seen as a site of contested experiences and contradictory discourses, fluid subject positionings and resistances, and material struggles for equality for women and their paid labour.

WORKING FOR JOB'S

With the arrival of fishing vessels at Job's wharf on the Southside, processing work began. The plant operations were structured by the conveyor belt flow of fish.
Although described in the newspaper as "streamlined" and "modern" (DN: February 19, 1948:7), and as producing a product "as near perfection as possible" (ET: April 17, 1948:8), workers' narratives challenge this construction. Even Ian Job Reid talked very differently about the new technology in the plant as he described the complex flow of fish and work to me.

IR: O.k. Well, uh, it was very inefficient in that it had two levels. Now most of the plants, they came in here (indicates location with hand) uh, and just went right through on the flat, right out through there (indicates location in space opposite the first gesture) and the freezers were all there. We didn't have anything like that.

LC: A direct line...

IR: Uh, one floor. So they, they brought the fish in front end loaders, great big front end loaders, ah, and they had four lines (of filleters) and uh, and they had big hoppers that kept going all the time and, and putting the fish, which was mixed with ice, up into the, and that would, into the hopper, a hopper and then it would bring it up and it would flow down along the uh, the table, people on either side, and it would flow along and they would put their hands down in the water and take up the fish and fillet it and then put the fish up on a rubber conveyor belt...o.k.? And that went to the trimmers and they trimmed it and then put it in boxes, aluminum boxes (pans) and that was taken by hand and put on a conveyor that went upstairs. It came upstairs and, uh, then was passed to the women in these things and they'd take it and put it in a little shelf and pack from that. When they finished it another one would be put there for them. And they'd pack it and they'd put the finished product on the, well I mean it might be a different size, it might be blocks, it might be pieces, it might be ones depending on what it was, there'd be a little different routine then.

LC: Uh-huh, uh-huh...and it would go from there to...?

IR: There, right down to the plate freezers. And the men would be there loading into the plate freezers and they had so many hours. And then, after they'd open the doors, bring this product out, load it again, uh, and uh, they, in that way kept the whole...they'd load it and then pack up what came out into the cardboard cartons to be packed on what you call dollies... You know little conveyors, and that would go right into the freezers and be put in certain areas. And then when it came to loading a ship they'd say well o.k. that's for, that's uh, cod 1's for A&P. Now we need 500,000 pounds of that. So they'd load, take that and put it back on the dollies, take it over and slide it down slides. So I mean it was very inefficient.
LC: Right. Would there be repacking for something like, uh, you know for, for something like A&P after it was frozen?

IR: Well it'd be put in the cardboard carton but never, once it's in the cardboard carton that's it...and it's all stowed there and the codes are on it so you can see which day it was packed...So you wouldn't take what's packed today, you'd take what's packed three weeks ago.

(Reid TS95:29-31)

The interconnected flow of work in Job's fish plant can be seen in Reid's description of the plant layout. With the arrival and off-loading of fish from vessels, to the hands of the male filleters dipping into the flowing water trough to pick out fish for cutting, to the transporting by hand of loaded trays of fish to female weighers, packers and wrappers, to freezing and re-loading of packaged frozen fish products for export to grocery firms like A&P Tea Company in the United States. In his account, Reid portrays a fish plant organized inefficiently on two floors rather than the more efficient one level. Conveyor belts and separate work sites combine with hand-carrying loaded trays of both fresh and frozen fish in order to move the product through the plant. The plant was divided by gender into separate work spaces, with men working on the main floor, women on the second floor and men at the end of the line in the plate freezers and loading vessels for shipment of the product. In his description of the processing flow in the plant, Ian Reid specifies women's work and men's work. At other points, however, he refers more vaguely to "they" and "people," who perform the work. The complexity of knowledge and skill required to accomplish the work of the plant is obscured in his description. Women appear as packers of fish products and nothing else, in contrast to the detailed and engaged stories told by women of their work at Job Brothers.
The Banks Trawler Fishery Provides the Nucleus for A Very Important Industry

"Horse" and "Horse" Quality Products Produced in Modern, Efficient Plant-New Dehydrating Firm Started With Winter Fishing

By MARSHALL

When the banks fishing boats come into port, the best-quality fish are landed and delivered to the banks dehydrating plant. This is a modern, efficient plant which was started in 1948, and is now in full production. The fish are brought to the plant in insulated boxes, and are immediately processed. The dehydrated fish are then packaged and sent to market.

FIGURE 4: Evening Telegram, April 17, 1948, pages 8-9.
LAST IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON FRESH FISHING
A GENDERED ORDER ON THE LINE

Generally, unless a special agreement with the Longshoremen's Protective Union was made, the men unloading the vessel onto the wharf were members of the LSPU (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. of Mtgs., March 31, 1944). Longshoremen handled the unloading of mixed species of fish from trawler hold to wharf, and the transporting in wheeled tubs from there to the scalers/skinners and filleters on the first floor of the plant. The Evening Telegram photo of this stage of the work shows two men doing this work. This wheeling of fish is similar to the barrowing of salt fish done in former days by women (see chapter 4). This task, constituted as men's work because of the heavy loads carried in the barrows, was retained by male workers in the move to industrialized processing of fresh fish.

Depending on the market for the fish product, the fish scales were removed by scrubbing, or the fish went directly to the filleters. The Evening Telegram photograph shows eight men, in long aprons, heavy work shirts and peaked caps working as fish filleters alongside a “stainless steel chute” which brings the fish to their work station. This photograph is unique in the thirteen for the description underneath it: the filleting work is described as requiring “a high degree of skill and dexterity, and these men are experts at it” (ET:April 17, 1948:8). None of the other photos have such laudatory captions. This caption is in line with the generally held concept that filleters - always male - are the most skilled labour in the plant and command both respect and higher rates of pay (Dillon TS95:43, 90; Scott TS94:10; PANL: Nfld. Board of Trade, MG 73, Box 50, file #4, 1948 Agreement between LSPU and NEAL, p.18).

Ralph Martin, former vice-president of the Longshoremen's Protective Union and a long-time Job's worker, strenuously refused the idea that women might have been filleting fish at Job's.
Oh, no, no, no no no. Oh, no. (very firm) No, no that's all men's work. Men did the filleting and trimming and all that sort of stuff. Men did all that, they just done the...when they went upstairs, when the fill, fillets went upstairs they just done the packing you know and, an put it in boxes and that sort of stuff. That was their work. Then they had men upstairs too to take it and put it in fridges you know or put it on the, on the containers and put it in the blast freezers and all that sort of stuff (Martin TS94:42).

Ralph articulates a prominent discursive production of work in Job's plant in this piece of narrative. He constitutes a clear line between women's work and men's work, even as he expresses this distinction in dissimilar terms. Ralph vaguely describes women's work as "that sort of stuff," yet is specific in naming men's work - "filleting and trimming," transporting fish to "fridges," "containers," "blast freezers." A specific valuing of work is also woven into this narrative as he consistently uses the word "just" to characterize women's work in the fish plant - packing and boxing of fish. The more valued work - men's - is clear and hierarchically organized to Ralph, while women's work is not. Men perform the skilled work at the fish, and the heavy, masculine work of conveying the packages of fish to freezers, containers and fridges.

Regardless of the fish species being processed, each fish "had to be cut" so the filleters were key in the fish plant operation (Reid TS95:20). As well, filleters were central to the cycle in the fish plant because their skill in filleting can save or cost the company profits, and because the production of filleted fish for packing drives the work of the women on the weighing, wrapping and packing lines. If no fillets are available, the women have no product with which to work, and the processing line grinds to a halt (Hiscock TS94:14).

While LSPU men were hired directly to fillet fish, there was another way into the higher status, and higher paid job. Leo Dillon represented this avenue to me, along with one process of recruitment of "boys" into the men's world of the LSPU, in the
midst of a narrative piece about another Job's worker. He breaks off the line of narrative about the female worker and begins to speak about her sons and their work.

LD: ...But the boys, he's, her boys has worked down there too. Uh, fileters an uh, how they got the job see...they go in as young fellas puttin the fish into the bucket...

LC: Oh yeah...

LD: Right?

LC: Right...

LD: That go upstairs you know, the buckets of fillets and, uh, they'd only gettin, you know, less than what the girls would get right. Or, maybe the same amount. But, uh, they wouldn't get as much as fileters would get see. So they might be there two or three years and when they get up to eighteen, they get into the five dollar Union we used to call it.

LC: Oh yeah...five dollar, five dollar union card?

LD: A month..

MD: That's what it was, yeah.

LC: Oh, o.k. You'll have to tell me about that.

LD: And uh, they, uh, then they'd work their way in to get jobs as fileters see.

LC: Uh-huh...

LD: While they were there then, they're learnin how to fillet theirselves see.

LC: Yeah...

LD: So when they come then to go filletin, they knew about it.

LC: Right.

LD: No one had to show em.  

(Dillon TS95:117-118)

The “boys” here are literally boys in age - being about fourteen or fifteen when they
worked as scrubbers or skinners of fish. They learned the work of filleting "on the job," by watching the men, so "no one had to show them" in the sense of providing them with specific training and time to develop skill and speed at filleting. They entered the filleting line with the knowledge and skill already in hand to do the job. Leo marks their unskilled and junior status as scrubbers by comparing their wages to that of the female labour in the plant. The boys were paid "less than what the girls would get" or "maybe the same amount." The clear delineation that Leo draws in his talk is between the filleters' wages and the boys' wages, not between the wages of male and female workers. The assumption here is that women should not be earning the same as men.

Leo's narrative constructs the induction processes into both the male world of skilled fish plant labour and higher wages, and the Longshoremen's Protective Union. The provision of the temporary LSPU card - the five dollar card - allowed the boys to work on the waterfront after the age of eighteen when they were eligible to join the LSPU. While the young men did not have "the same privilege as a Union man," in that they would not be hired before a full-fledged member of the LSPU, they were considered next in line for the work after all the union men were hired. This allowed the young men to move gradually into the waterfront world and the LSPU (Dillon TS95:118-119).

The pattern of narrative production between Leo and me, when reproduced on the page, clearly shows Leo's adaptation to my ignorance of the LSPU operational details regarding membership. When I express my uncertainty about the meaning of the five dollar union card, Leo begins to speak in shorter sentences, waiting for my verbal acknowledgement that I understand what he is telling me before he moves on to the next thought in his narrative. In this intersubjective moment, my positioning of Leo as "narrator" slips. He seems to speak more carefully, to an obvious outsider, one who must be brought along in her knowledge and information about the LSPU. There were
many moments like this with all of the narrators, moments when the illusion of shared
ground of interest and meaning-making became apparent.

No women are shown doing filleting work in the 1948 newspaper photographs.
Narrators’ stories point to a different reality in the fish plant, however. Alice
Kittinger’s first job at the fish plant in the early 1940s challenges the dominant
discourse that works to constitute men’s work to produce a gendered demarcation of skill
and status. If we re-visit a section of Alice’s narrative where she (and Michelle Park)
construct her as holding a special place in the filleting line, we can see that the dominant
discourse of male work is contested, if only briefly.

AK: I asked my father try to get me a job and uh, he came up that day and
he said, “You can go to work but you’ll have to go to work filleting.” I said
“Good enough.” So I went with him and Tim Reid and they showed me how
to do it.

MP: Oh yeah...did many girls or women do that then?

AK: No. I was the only girl down there.

MP: So that was normally a man’s job was it?

AK: Yeah, yeah.

MP: Oh. so you were...

AK: Yeah me and all the young fellas.

MP: Oh-h, there you were.

AK: But I, I started off and my father and Tom, Tom, uh, Tim was showin
me how to do that.

MP: So after that where did you ...

AK: But I wasn’t workin there long, down there with them. They put me
upstairs in the plant, the fish.

(Kittinger TS92:66-67)

Here Alice unsettles the dominant discourse and at the same takes up a transgressive
subject positioning for herself, albeit gently and mildly. She may have been doing men’s work on the filleting line, but with permission and by arrangement of her father, and with the assistance of another male figure, Tim Reid. Is this a desirable image for Alice - only herself and “all the young fellas?” Alice asserts a position of uniqueness based on worker identity in this narrative piece. She is the only woman on the filleting line. At the time of this work, the early 1940s, fresh fish was received into the plant on the ground floor and the filleters worked on that level. The conveyor belt system carried the filleted fish to the second floor, where the women packed and wrapped the product. Thus, Alice was not only working alongside men, doing the same work, but she was also isolated, separated from other women workers by both her job and her physical location in the plant. None of the other women narrators tell of working as filleters on the processing line at Job Brothers.¹

CUTTING THE BAD OLD PARTS

The next stage in the fish processing is trimming the fillets to remove “unwanted particles” or “spots” (ET: April 17, 1948:8; Picco TS95:4). The trimmers received the conveyed fish for inspection and cleaning off of unfit portions of the fillets. Again the Evening Telegram photographs show only men doing this work, standing at the chute. Nevertheless, women narrators in this study speak of their own work as trimmers. Mary Diilon and Leo Dillon talked about the circumstances under which women might do trimming work in Job’s plant during our conversation in 1995. Any waste from the filleting or trimming processes was moved off the conveyor belt through a side chute. The fish offal (to which Mary refers) and scrap fish were sent to the Liqua Fish Plant,

¹ Women did work as filleters in other plant operations, however, this was not until the 1980s. See Little (1994) and the Fishery Research Group (1986).
owned by Ches Crosbie, and located next to Job's site. This material provided a basic ingredient in animal food products (ET: April 17, 1948:9 and MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Report of Directors to Fifteenth Annual General Meeting, August 17, 1948:2).

Mary remembers work trimming fish when she started at Job Brothers in the early 1950s. Her narrative constructs this work as occasional and sporadic work done by women.

**LC:** Tell me a bit about the work that you did at Job's. You went there in...?

**MD:** Yeah, '51 right. Yeah, '51 right. Mostly packing fish that's what we were at, right an sometimes we were cleanin off the fish, like cuttin offal, the old bad parts and stuff you know, stuff like that right.

**LC:** Trimming...

**MD:** Um-m-m, trimmin the fish right.

**LC:** Did you ever do, uh, filleting?

**MD:** No, no...

(Dillon TS95:23)

Trimming fish is minimized in Mary's narrative of her work. She describes it as "cuttin offal, the bad old parts..." that would only be used as animal food. This locating of her labour as working with "bad," "old" parts of the fish, the "offal," may be accomplishing multiple and disparate purposes. Mary is describing simply, for my benefit, the kind of work she did, but she is also constituting that work as less than, or marginal in relation to, other work with fish through the use of particular language.

In my response to her description I attempt to categorize her work as trimming rather than filleting, setting the two processes apart and inscribing difference. While I was trying to understand the complex processes of the fish plant, my change of topic constitutes trimming the offal as less important than filleting, and redirects the narrative away from Mary's work to the work of others in the plant since Mary did not
work as a filleter.

Leo Dillon, who had been on the telephone during the previous few minutes of my conversation with Mary, returned to the table with the firm opinion that “girls” did not do filleting at Job’s. He sets the terms of the conversation in this section of narrative, specifying the conditions under which women would be expected to do the trimming work. When women did do such work, Leo argues, it was a case of repairing the “sloppy” work of men.

LD: No the girls wasn’t at that. They weren’t that advanced at that time.

MD: No, at that time the girls didn’t do no filleting no, no. Only now...

LD: Only now and again they’d do it, if, if it was a lot of bone, say if a filleter was kinda sloppy in his work...and there’d be a lotta bone like say the backbone’d be left on, on the fillet so the girls’d have to do it then.

LC: Right, when they were trimming the...

LD: Yeah.

MD: More or less, you only, you only need to trim a bit then yeah. That’s true too right, you know. Cause we worked downstairs with the gi, like the men, like you said on one side and the girls on the other, right. Comin through, you’d push the fish through for the girls in on the other side, right. It was, uh, you’d pack it...(not clear)

LD: Since I been down, when I was down there I think it was around two or three times the, uh, ammonia busted...

LC: Oh yeah.

LD: ...hadta get outa there quick.

(Dillon  TS95:23-24)

Leo’s comment that “they weren’t that advanced at that time” is confusing in this context. Is he meaning that Job Brothers did not hire women as filleters and so were not “advanced?” Or does he mean that women were not “that advanced” in demanding and getting hired for the more skilled and better-paid filleting work? Or that women’s skills
were not “that advanced” to get the filleting jobs? Is Leo presuming my desire to hear a discourse of liberation for women workers? This is a contradictory and confusing moment in our conversation, one which I neglect to clarify or catch when it is occurring.

There is also a slipperiness in language here. “Trimming” is renamed as “filleting” by Leo, perhaps pointing to a more fluid meaning of these occupational categories to Leo in particular. This shifting of meaning through shifting of language used to name this trimming/filleting work also occurs in other workers’ narratives. In particular, Susie Scott speaks of filleting and trimming interchangeably (Scott TS94:6-7).

As Mary turns the conversation to working “downstairs,” and away from the question of who does filleting and trimming work, Leo intercedes and re-directs the conversation to a topic of his choosing - the drama of ammonia leaks in the plant. In my conversations with Mary and Leo, he frequently turns the thread of conversation to another topic, shifting the momentum of talk and framing himself and his topic as the centrepiece of the moment. Mary responds by following his lead, but seldom declines to give her own opinion on a point under discussion. The shift and flow of power relations between Mary and Leo, expressed in and through the control of talk in our conversations, is a feature of their construction of narratives together.

Filleting and trimming were risky operations as “[C]utters and trimmers would cut arms or hands you know, stuff like that. Get caught in the machines...there were a lot of machines there” (Picco TS95:4-5). Accidents did occur, and were handled by whoever was posted as First Aid worker for the time. There was no nursing staff employed on the Job Brothers premises. Helen Picco, who usually worked in the office on the Southside, worked “a lot of nights in case someone got hurt in the plant. Somebody had to be there to call the taxi, get them to the hospital or something...” She remembered
hearing about one particularly grisly accident

I remember one woman, I wasn’t there but she cut her arm [indicating forearm, inside, elbow to wrist] needed 42 stitches...There were other things - people would get sick. They would come to the office and be sent home.

(Picco TS95:5)

This same accident appeared in another form later in my conversations with the narrators. It was recounted to me by Mary and Leo Dillon, marking it as a particularly outstanding and, thus “memorable,” occurrence. It is another example of a narrative constellation, where particular moments, through their telling and re-telling by different people have come to embody and stand for other instances. It is as though they have become a form of moral lesson, in this case of the danger of the work, and technology, at Job’s.

Mary prompts the conversational turn by remembering the incident itself, but none of the details, which allows Leo to elaborate the narrative. Together they develop the story.

MD: Leo, what was that, uh, the fish used to go up and go down through and be packed into the, remember that, remember the girl put her arm in there one time or something or a stick in or something.

LD: Oh that was, uh, that was like a stick fish, used to call it. Uh, that was great big blade used to cut the fish, and uh, she put her hand too near the blade and the blade used to come down like this see (demonstrates by downward gesture) right, big round blade.

MD: Supposed to turn off the machine before she put a stick in it to clear out the fish.

LD: Yeah. Yeah and she put her hand and it ripped...

MD: Turn it off.

LD: ...it right up here like that (gestures up his right forearm)

MD: Tore it off, her arm was hangin apart. Who was that eh?
LC: Uh-h. who was that?

LD: I forgets that. (Dillon TS95:115-116)

There are parallel but interwoven narratives being developed in this conversation. Mary introduces the theme of accident with machinery and moves the flow of talk to Leo in order to provide the mechanical details of the accident. Leo obliges by dramatically describing in words and gestures, the severity of the incident. Mary initially calls upon a commonsense discourse of machine safety, and perhaps of the machine operation rules of Job's, implying that the worker did not take care to observe safety rules. With Leo's dramatic arm gesture, Mary abandons her narrative track and takes up Leo's colourful construction of the accident adding her own graphic description. The "unsafe worker" is re-positioned as "the victim," while at the end Mary shifts the conversation flow to elicit yet another identity position, that of the name of the injured female worker. The latter positioning is the one most interesting to me at the end of the conversation piece, for a name will assist me in locating the worker so I might speak with her. My question is a clear construction of the "interestedness" in particular positionings at a given moment. This complex constitution of multiple, mobile and sometimes contradictory positionings of the female/unnamed/unsafe/worker/victim/potential narrator shows that no single subjectivity is produced, no single "identity" is readily available. A great deal is left unknown and/or unsaid.

In accident situations like these, a variety of Job's workers served as First Aid during their work hours (Dillon TS95:4-5, 115-116; Picco TS95:4-5). Both Mary and Leo performed this work at different times. Mary was describing her work at Job's when Leo introduced the first aid work she had performed as well. This narrative turn expanded my conception of Mary's responsibilities at the plant, and it provided Leo with
an opportunity to introduce his own first aid work and to assert his knowledge and skill, especially in the area of knife wounds.

LD: And she was first aid.

MD: ...doin first aid work an, night shift that was.

LC: Oh right....

LD: I used to help em at first aid too downstairs where fellas'd get stabbed in their hands and stuff like this right...

LC: Were there many accidents?

LD: And then, then there might be a couple up gettin bandaged up as it is so I'd give Taylor Betts a hand right and make a doughnut like you know, but you know they always haul out the knife! Instead of leavin it there cause you don't know what damage they're doin right?

LC: Yeah...were there many accidents like that?

MD: I did...well a lot of em probably cut uh, cut a bit of flesh off the top a their finger or somethin while they're cuttin their finger'd be too close to the fish (laughs) Somethin like that right you know.

LC: Little nick?

MD: Yeah, yeah, yeah more or less. Cuts here and there, right. I remember there was one time one of the girls cut, cut the top off her finger, a big piece off right. They were goin round lookin for the top of her finger. I said, "Mary, bandage it up." (laughs) I says, "you can go up to the hospital, take it with her right." (laughs). So she had that in one, one pocket, wrapped up and finger bandaged up, blood goin everywhere. Oh my!

LC: Was this someone who was doing trimming?

MD: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, she cut the top of her finger right. Well yeah there was a lot of things like that, someone slip or something like that you know, but like, there wasn't, there wasn't too many bangs now really was there, slips? Mostly cuts...

(Dillon TS95:4-5)

In the course of this narrative, Mary begins to laugh at the memory of trying to locate the top of an injured woman's finger. The slightly absurd image of everyone looking for
the fingertip, plus the high drama of the story as Mary recounts it, turns a moment of danger and concern into "a good story" to tell about the workplace. Mary's enjoyment of the telling to me is palpable.

"TO KEEP A LINE OF GIRLS GOING": WEIGHING THE FISH

In the Evening Telegram women are shown in two different weighing stations: one woman works alone weighing "skin on fillets" being packaged in five pound allotments, and four women work together with different scales to weigh "skinless" fillets to be made into one pound packages. Pans hanging from an overhead track were loaded with trimmed fillets and carried to the female weighers sitting on either side of the conveyor system (ET: April 17, 1948:8). The pans were "tripped" automatically to empty "at points where female operators [were] stationed" (DN: February 19, 1948:7). The weighers received the "skin on" or "skinless" fillets, and weighed them into the appropriate size for packaging depending on whether they were destined for the US or British market. Wright (1997) notes that five pound packages were made during the war years for the British and that after the war, frozen groundfish was packaged "in either one pound packages, or ten pound cod blocks" (50).

There were two weighing processes in the conveyor line. One large capacity weighing - 25 pound pans - at the head of the line, and one for small wrapped weight packages of fish at the end of the wrapping stage. Packing and wrapping of fish for different markets happened in between these two weighing stations. Daisy Hiscock recounts her experience as a weigher of large capacity pans when she wasn't deboning

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2 Sociologist Barbara Neis notes that in recent years, women have not been sitting, but have been standing to work at the processing lines.
Along with Susan Williams, Daisy develops the story line, in part, by calling upon her husband Les to support her in the details of the narrative from 1987. Although this is talk about a woman's job in the plant, Les actively participates in the conversation. Affection and teasing between Daisy and Les are integral to narrative production here.

DH: Well I deboned uh, the, the salt fish but you usually do that when there'd be no fresh fish on the go. Uh, then I was a weigher. Weigher mostly, wasn't I?

LH: Yeah.

DH: Weigher and uh...

LH: A slinger...

DH: (laughs) Who are you callin a slinger!

LH: (laughs) Doin nothin!

DH: Oh you're [not clear]. No, you'd uh, you didn't get away with it then because they were breathing down your neck! No, and at the vacuum pack. Yeah. And at the blueberries. I wasn't a trimmer. I was workin...

SW: Weighers work at the end of the line right?

DH: No, uh ...no, we used to weigh it all up in, we'd, big boxes'd come up to us first before they had the buckets comin off. And we'd weigh it up in 25 pound pans, wasn't it?

LH: Yeah.

DH: Twenty-five pound pans and you had to keep a line, uh, uh, a line of girls goin. How many girls we have? Seven, eight.

LH: Oh...

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3 Fresh frozen fillet and saltfish productions appear to have coexisted in Job Brothers plant between the late 1930s and the end of WW II.

4 Story et al. in The Dictionary of Newfoundland English, Second Edition with Supplement, 1990, defines slinger as "an idler, truant from work."
DH: About 8 wasn’t it?

LH: Yeah, at that table yeah.

DH: Yeah, and you keep weighin up 25 pounds and throwin that up on the big table.

SW: You’re 13 years old doin this?

DH: Yeah. For how many hours a day? Twelve hours a day.

LH: Yeah. We, we at it 9 in the mornin, 10 at night and then clean up.

DH: Yeah, well ya did have ta work after. From 10 till 11 we were cleanin up.

LH: Yeah, a $1.20 a day.

(Hiscock TS87:4-5)

In this narrative, Daisy draws out the pressure and responsibility on the weighers for the pace of production on the packing line. With management “breathing down your neck,” Daisy emphasises the heavy and demanding physical labour and long work hours. For a thirteen year old girl, like Daisy, this must have been a hard job. As one of the “Battery Girls,” she stayed from ten o’clock until eleven o’clock in the night to clean up after the day’s work. Her pay amounted to ten cents an hour.

WRAPPING AND PACKING

Joan Donegani worked as a weigher and fish packer at Job’s from 1946 to 1950. When I talked with her in Montreal, her home for the last forty years, Joan used a faded xerox copy of a newspaper photograph to describe to me the conveyor line operation. The difficulty of communicating the details of the plant processes to an outsider, like myself, became more obvious to me as I transcribed and read our conversation.

JD: Well, uh, usually get like uh, a pan of fish like this an you take it an you wrap it in six pieces and you put it in a pan, you put it on conveyor
belt and it would go to be weighed. Meanwhile there was a girl weighing it but when you’d packed it and put it on the conveyor belt it was checked by someone else.

LC: Uh-huh...

JD: You just wrapped it in cellophane.

LC: Right.

JD: And, uh, then it went to go into the freezer.

The wrapping and packing of fish fillets was performed by women. The conveyor belts, bearing loaded pans of twenty-five pounds of weighed fillets delivered product for wrapping to the women who were seated at individual work stations. The markets determined the size and wrapping of the product. “Skin on” were wrapped in cellophane and waxed paper in five pound boxes, while the “skinless” fillets wrapped in cellophane and waxed paper and placed in one-pound boxes. As Joan Donegani describes the process of wrapping and packing, both verbally and physically with her hands during our conversation, she constructs her work as requiring skill in wrapping the fillets well and in judging the size and weight of fillets that would make up the various size packages. With a change in fish species being packed, knowledge of the species’ weights and judgement on the packing would also change.

LC: Uhm, hmmm, was there different kinds of packaging for different kinds of fish? So if you had perch and then you had cod...

JD: Oh, they probably had different names or, the, the, the uh, the cellophane would have a different name, maybe but I remember Hubay that, that was the name of one product uh, that was called. But if you did the fillet, you had to have like the fillet cellophane that was, uh, not the, uh, rose or perch, you’d have to have a different cellophane then to wrap them in.

LC: Be in the same size of package?

JD: But I think...yes, I think, yeah, cause you, you have uh, five pounds
but you have like three..layers in the bottom, three layers, you had six, six rows of fish, eh, you got three and three. You had to make six packages out of that five pounds to go in the box.

LC: Oh I see.

JD: So you put, three, three, uh, wraps in the bottom and three on the top and you got six sections of uh, fish in there.

LC: So they'd be, the sections of fish would be wrapped separately...

JD: Yeah. so they, they would be like, uh, uh, maybe a less than a pound in each one you wrapped. You wrapped in, you have your fish, you wrap it up, you put one package here, and you wrap another one, put it here and you make three...

LC: Just above it..

JD: ...and then three more and you have it. Then you (not clear).

LC: Ah-huh...

JD: So, but they're all wrapped uh, like six, you hadda have six uhm, uh, section.

LC: Did you... how did you judge that wrapping process? Was that, you know how much you put in each pack?

JD: Yeah well you'll see how much fish you had and uh, some you'd have to put two, maybe two fillets or maybe one would be big enough for one. And it, maybe it wouldn't come out perfectly even but I guess when they weighed it in the stores they sold it by whichever weight the, uh, package was. Because sometimes you get a big piece of fish, maybe it's some smaller, so you put two or three smaller ones together, you know.

LC: Yeah that's what I was wondering, like would you just develop an, an eye for it or?

JD: Yeah, well you get used, you, you watch what you had and sometimes you would, you would have a tough time to make six, but uh, and if they're all big you couldn't do it. (laughs)

(Donegani TS95:64-68)

In this narrative passage, Joan constitutes a different and new knowledge about women wrappers and packers. At the same time, she unsettles the totalizing discourse
produced about this work by other narrators. Rather than women "just" doing this work, as constructed by Ralph Martin (see above) Joan discriminates between various tasks and abilities required to perform the work. She points to the need for wrappers to recognize different species of fish packed at Job's - cod, rosefish, and perch, in particular. To not recognize different species could result in material and economic losses for the company. There are also specific ways to pack different species of fish, depending on the size and weight of the fillets delivered to your work station by the conveyor pan. Of course, not all fillets were the same size, as not all fish species or individual fish within a species were the same size and weight. Joan's narrative highlights the layered packing and, perhaps more implicitly, the matching of weights and sizes of fillets in each cellophane wrap. All of this work process involved individual worker quality control management, and required skill, judgement and experience to accomplish well and quickly. To express this skill and knowledge authoritatively in the workplace was not always an easy task, as we see below in Daisy Hiscock's narrative about differentiating between sole and flounder.

Being able to recognize different species of fish - cod, redfish, yellowtail, grey sole, flounder, and so on - was central to the expertise women had to have on the packing line. This knowledge was challenged by their male supervisors as they conducted product quality control surveillance. Indeed, women's knowledge of their work and product could be contested very publicly by a supervisor. Daisy Hiscock recounts one experience with such a challenge to her expertise and knowledge.

...(laughs) I remember one of, ah, we used to work at, when we had so much different kinds of fish, this was when the draggers, the draggers now, not the bankers...and uh, they had just bring in sole and they have yellowtails and, uh, and the sole and we had a new foreman come on. And the sole was, just like jelly, you know, right white and jelly. It was gorgeous. And we used to pack it up. Certainly we knew what it was, we knew it was good, it was the best kind of flatfish. So we'd pack it up and
he'd go up down the end of the, the, the end of the, where, the end of the conveyor, takin off a scattered pack and lookin in it and he'd see this white flatfish there. Bring it back. At that time you couldn't get away, they knew who packed what. You had, everybody had a number to put on their box so you know, you couldn't say that wasn't mine, right. They had ya. So he come up and, I know he came up to me a dozen times and he'd say, "Dais, what do I tell you about puttin in that bad flounder?" I'd say "What do you mean that bad flounder?" "That bad flounder," he said, "throw it out." I said, "Do you really want me to throw that out." And he said "Yeah." "Well," I said, "buddy what you wants you gets." I said "That's not bad flounder," I said "that's sole." "No way, throw it out." So, anyway we threw it out. Outside of the thing we had a corner where we used to put the bad fish. So we threw it out and uh, [Ralph Slade] was the boss down there, he was good....And, anyway, he, uh, he come over and he looked at it this day and, "Who's throwing out the good fish?" And nobody said a word cause we didn't want to tell on our supervisor, you know. We didn't want to tell on him, but then we weren't gonna get in bull either, you know. So we says, "No," wouldn't tell....everybody, you know, one look at the other, you know, "Will we tell?" So anyway he got really dirty and "Who's throwin out the good fish?" And I says, "Well boys, the best thing for you to do is ask Harold Gover cause that's who it was" and he was related to mother. "Ask him," I said, "He's tellin us to throw it out." And he says, "Do you know that's grey sole?" I said "Yeah, we knows but apparently he don't." (laughs) So after that then oh, he was a long while he wouldn't even speak to us, you know. Yeah.

(Hiscock TS92:30-32)

In and through this storyline, Daisy constitutes the unequal relations of power in the plant between male supervisors and female workers. She remembers well the injustice of this moment, and in her conversation with Michelle Park produces a complex narrative encompassing knowledge, skill, gendered authority, familial relations, and worker solidarity. This story is also about who possesses knowledge and who does not, who has the authority to speak, about what subjects. In Daisy’s telling, she is constituted by her own male relative, the new supervisor Harold Gover, as a subject without the entitlement to be knowledgeable, or to speak, about fish species. The boundary of entitlement rests here on gender and class: as a woman and as “just” a packer on the line, Daisy is positioned outside the boundaries of authoritative voice. The exercise of managerial authority by Harold Gover, results in tension between the workers and
management in the plant. In this storyline, Daisy produces herself as central to the development and resolution, constructing herself as standing up for the workers in the face of management threat, and despite the fact that Harold Gover is a family relation. Harold is described as challenging her first in the packaging of “bad flounder.” In turn, Harold is constituted by Daisy as “new,” as lacking expert knowledge in recognizing fish species - knowledge which the women packers possess - and so he does not identify the fish species correctly as grey sole. When a more senior male supervisor, Ralph Slade, enters the fray, the tension escalates in the narrative. Ralph Slade is positioned as credible in Daisy’s narrative as she believes him to be knowledgeable about the fish business. The narrative shifts then to emphasize the struggle of workers against management. Worker solidarity, and a unified worker identity is produced here over management in the plant. The women are seen to understand the implications of this challenge, and the power structure in the plant, well enough to confirm their actions through eye contact with each other, rather than verbally. According to Daisy’s story, their connection to each other in this moment, as women and plant workers constitutes them as a unified and cohesive group. To “[T]ell on our supervisor” is not an acceptable option; revealing his lack of knowledge could produce more difficult relations between Gover and the women. Daisy may also have felt the complication of speaking against a family member in a workplace where she, and others, are embedded in familial relationships, and those ties are imbued with significant meanings. To take the blame - “get in bull” - for discarding good fish is not an option either in Daisy’s view. Only when Ralph Slade becomes more threatening - “really dirty” - with the women does Daisy step forward and implicate Harold Gover in the decision to throw out the good fish. The resolution of this story is Daisy’s rather triumphant affirmation of women’s knowledge of fish species. The consequences are still memorable - Harold refuses to
speak to the women after this event. Whether this moment had personal consequences for Daisy outside of the plant is not clear. While working in the plant with friends and family members provided a closeness and comfort level for Daisy, it could also provoke difficult decisions and confrontations.

In many ways, the story-telling performance styles of Daisy, Leo Dillon and Alice Kittinger are a researcher’s dream. With both myself and Michelle Park, Daisy and Alice produce longer narratives, interspersed with lively conversational “quotes,” material details, and suggested personalities. Leo Dillon often does the same in conversations with me. This particular style organizes how they “perform” a story, as it simultaneously produces a sense of “truth” in their narratives. The organization of knowledge as eye-witness accounts, personal engagement and the direct quotations of actual individual’s words, lend credence and legitimacy to their stories (Alonso:1988:35-36). It was only when I began to arrange these narratives using required, formalized and standardized thesis production practices, complete with the appropriate quotation marks, that this style, and its consequences, became visually evident to me. Alonso refers to the work of these sorts of framing devices, and the use of “voice” in producing historical accounts, as discursive strategies “deployed by both oral and written histories to create ‘effects of truth’ and to transform partiality into totality” (35). This is as true of this account I produce here as it is of the newspaper accounts from which I draw, and the narratives on which I rely.

CHECKING AND MONITORING

The second weigh-in was performed after the fillets were wrapped. This is the stage Joan named as the work of a woman “checker” (Donegani TS95:65). Daisy Hiscock describes to Michelle Park the careful checking and monitoring of women’s packing work.
and the possible consequences.

DH: Oh, it was checked on the bottom...see after you weighed up your fish and you passed it out in the pan well then the packer packed it up. Now there's so much water, right? So you're gon to loose some weight, so, uh, and, uh after you had it packed up you push it in on a conveyor and it would go down the bottom of the belt....and there'd be another girl down there with a scale and she'd be checking it. And she had the pan of fish there and if there was a little bit over, she'd take it out and if was a little bit under, she'd put some in...You were o.k. as long as you didn't have any bones. (laughs) If there was any bones caught in it then it came back to ya.

MP: Did, ya have to mark your number on the outside...?

DH: Oh, no ya hadda, everybody had...

MP: ...strokes.

DH: ...Yeah strokes...different colours. (Hiscock TS92:60-61)

One of the ways Job's used to maintain product quality control and oversight of women packers was through this system of personal marks on boxes of fish. Margie Tulk described this as a way for Job's male managers inspecting the product to know who packed "dirty fish" (Tulk TS95:5). The marks became important only in a negative situation, when the quality of fish packed was under scrutiny. Daisy Hiscock remembered the box marks well. When I asked her about her employment after Job's closed in 1967, the box marks were an integral part of her memories of Job's. Daisy shaped her reply to emphasize the hard work expected at the fish plant and the pressure she felt to produce a clean product. Work with other employers was not the same at all.

DH: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. That’s true. But it was never the same. Although, you didn’t work as hard. I didn’t, I never did work as hard as I did at Job's. Cause for one thing, you had more mental stress too because you were packin fish, you had to make sure there was no bones in it, no hairs in it, no nothing in it. You had, you had, uh, so many packages to pack up in so many minutes and they’d be comin around and you couldn’t say, you know, if your box went down and you, some come out of it, you couldn’t say that’s not mine because you had a maker and you marked how many... (gestures
strokes downward). So they kept a count they knew right where the boxes came from. If a mistake was made they’d bring it right back to ya.

LC: That was before or after the union?

DH: Before, uh, I think ya had a..I’m not sure now. I vaguely can remember markin a 2 (laughs) I don’t know. Can’t remember now. Yeah, I, I could be wrong now but, there’s something in the back of my head tells me that. But I know the other ones you just marked so many straight (lines) You know, you had a stack of boxes, put this way (gestures facing her) and so you had, your number was three you just hauled three marks down on all the whole boxes and then when each box come up there might be only tiny mark on it but it’d be your mark. And everyone have the different colour. (laughs)

(Hiscock TS94:34)

Daisy makes sense of the dispersal of Job’s employees after the plant closed by describing the difficulty of work at Job’s, and the “mental stress” for women workers in particular. For Daisy, no other occupation rivalled the intensity and challenge of working at Job’s. She conveys the simplicity and effectiveness of the marking system as a surveillance tool. With each woman packer having a different box number and pencil colour to distinguish her work, there was little chance of escaping identification as the poor or slow fish packer.

My intervening question about the union implies that unionization is a key marker in Daisy’s work life, and encourages her to constitute her narrative around this point. Daisy does not necessarily see it as key, however, as she quickly dispenses with my (irrelevant?) question by returning to describe the marks made on the fish boxes. My attempt to organize her narrative around the concept of “before and after the union was formed” displays my lingering investment in identifying the union as important in the overall life at Job’s fish plant. This was not the first time, nor the last, that my assumptions about the importance of unionization to these working-class women are refused by the narrators.
“TWO HUNDRED POUNDS PER HOUR”: THE PACING OF WORK

In the late 1940s, women were expected to produce fish product at certain rates per hour - in effect a minimum individual quota for women's work was set. The labour agreement signed between the LSPU and NEAL in 1947 establishes an hourly quota for women packers of “200 pounds of fillets (wrapped individually in celophane) per hour” (PANL, Nf. Board of Trade, MG 73, Box 50, File #4). Although it is not clear whether the production quota existed before the formal 1947 agreement, this standard remained in the contracts through to 1954 at least. Daisy Hiscock laughs when she describes the difficulty she experienced in meeting that quota.

Oh, was pressure....Because you got your fillets and some of it was large and some of it was small and you had to try and get the bones out, pick the bones out, and get that packed to the right weight without, uh, and try to get all them packages done? Wasn't easy, yeah......Lotta people, lotta women used to, I used to never get it done. [Laughs] But a lotta women did, but I always said they had to pack dirt because I couldn't see it, no.

(Hiscock TS92:136)

Pearl and Cecil Hunt remember together the consequences of not meeting the quota: management might tell you that you were slow, and your pace would hold up the processing line in general (Hunt TS92:107-108). The Hunts do not mention this specific packing quota for women workers, but Pearl comments that the introduction of the new conveyor belt line did “...speed it up. We had to work a little bit faster, right. That's when they [Maurice Job Taylor] go round with the stop watches” (Hunt TS92:106).

Thus, new developments in technology brought new management and surveillance methods to Job Brothers fish plant. These 1940s management approaches challenge the findings of previous research on fish firms in Newfoundland. Neis (1988) argues that within the “multiplant” model of fishery firms there was “relatively little supervision
and no direct control by management over the pace and content of work” (232). While Job’s Brothers conforms to the multiplant firm model suggested by Neis - a large company, in part, family-owned, operating more than one fish plant - it nonetheless used quite different and more intrusive management techniques (140-141). Indeed, Job’s managers actively monitored and supervised all aspects of the production lines: they employed production quotas for women packers, product quality control surveillance, and, as I discuss later in this chapter, “time and motion” observations of women’s work, and personal identification marks to allow for the maintenance of individual standards of production. Furthermore, these findings challenge the assertion that such management techniques were developed only much later, in the 1970s and 1980s, in response to the dwindling fish stocks and changes in markets for fish products (Neis:1988:232-233). Rather, my research suggests that close managerial control was certainly present in some fish plants as early as the 1940s and may be linked to changing technologies, that is, the shift from saltfish production to fresh frozen fish product for export.

At first glance then, the tempo of processing work might not be seen to be in the hands of the women workers. The conveyor belt carrying the fish travelled at a specific pace and the work flowed accordingly. Fluctuations and disruptions in the work process could occur, however. Daisy Hiscock observed that the flow of fish was integrated all along the line, so a slow-down or stoppage at any point would affect the women’s work. In particular, the men working at other plant locations such as off-loading vessels, or filleting fish, prior to the women’s place on the line had more control. A slower rate of discharging fish from vessels, or quicker filleting of fish would change the pace of women’s work. Here Daisy links the pace of women’s work with a short work stoppage or strike by the LSPU workers.
DH: ... if men wasn’t workin we couldn’t. (laughs)

LC: How do you mean?

DH: Because they were filletin the fish an, and, the same way, if, if men on the wharf, that was bringin the fish in, if they went on strike, well the filleters couldn’t work because they had to fillet the fish and we couldn’t work because we had to pack...(laughs)

LC: So the whole line stops.

DH: Yeah. Yeah. (Hiscock TS94:12-13)

Here Daisy represents herself as part of a long line of workers, whose individual and collective actions could affect her own. Specifically, she constitutes herself as a worker who is not responsible for the tempo of her work or indeed, if she works at all. Her place and work at Job’s is contingent on the place and work of others. Daisy does not suggest that she herself controls the pace of work of others coming on the processing line after her. At no time in her extensive narrations does Daisy suggest that control of the pace of her own work is possible.

The following narrative, given by Daisy in 1992 to Michelle Park, interrupts and disputes the narrative recounted to me in 1994. Daisy crafts a different account of relations between women on the line, one in which women actively struggle among themselves to enforce a fair division of work on the line.

...how do I explain it? It [the conveyor] came up and went around the ceiling and it had pans going around....and on the top and the bottom they had fish coming up in buckets. And you had, I think it was four, four tables and the, the, conveyor would come up and go around and as it was coming around the....weighers would dump out the fish and it would go right around...down to the cutters again. And, we had a good many fights about that. Especially when it was nearly time to finish up. Who, the first one [weigher] that the fish would come around to, she had her table, she had so many packers to keep goin. And she wouldn’t bother [to empty the fish], no way, she was gonna be clear first so she just let the fish come right around to us and we’d have to dump it (laughing) before it went downstairs. So we used to have ours, used to call them hoppers, where
you'd dump out your fish and, uh, we used to have our, uh, fish piled high and on the other side. Where they come up first there'd be no fish. So that meant that they could clear up ahead of us. And we're left behind to finish up our fish....Yeah, so it didn't work because, it did for awhile but then as we got piled up and they were cleared up they used to have to work harder because they'd have to come over to our table and take out excess fish and bring it over and put it in their own hoppers. So they learned. (Hiscock TS92:29-30)

Daisy begins to reveal some of the on-going tensions between workers on the fish processing line - in this case, between the women acting as fish weighers on the packing line. She describes one way in which the weighers, at the head of the line, attempted to manipulate the conveyor belt delivery of fish to different positions on the line, and the actions other women on the line took to control the performance of the weighers. Piling the fish up at the end of the line, in plain sight for all to see, pointed out the actions of the weighers passing fish along from the beginning of the line. While laughing in the middle of the narrative, Daisy is firm in her view of the weighers' actions being unfair. In some ways, this narrative is a moral tale, presenting the consequences of the negative actions of the weighers and the lack of solidarity among workers. In the end, the weighers have to perform extra labour in carrying the excess fish across the plant floor before weighing and passing it on to the packers.

SWINGING THE BUCKETS

From her position as a fish packer, Mary Dillon constructs a very different idea of worker control in her narrations of processing fish at Job's. Challenging the management surveillance in the plant required innovation and boldness. In many ways, Mary constructed an identity for herself in our conversations that differs from the other narrators. She consistently told stories about transgressive acts which she initiated or in which she took an active part. This passage begins to tease out the way in which she
spoke this particular subject positioning into being around the topic of her work as a fish packer on the conveyor driven processing line. In the middle of our conversation about maintenance of plant machinery by male workers, Mary introduced the concept of “swingin the buckets.” I didn’t know what she meant.

MD: Yes, and if you wanted to get a half day off you’d swing one of the buckets and say nothin. (laughs loudly)

LC: (laughs) What does that mean? Tell me about that!! (laughs)

MD: Swing one of the buckets and let em get caught then and...

LC: Oh!

MD: ...We’d be tired workin on em an we’d cause, cause a problem right, get, get an hour or two break (laughing all the time) then while Max’d be fixin it right. (laughs)

LC: You’d flip the buckets that were comin down....

MD: Yeah...be comin through (laughs)

LC: ...and it would just pull it out...

LD: Go down tru the prongs...

MD: Haul it back and let it go like (demonstrates lifting an object in the air and dropping it) pull it...double up at the other end right (laughing)...

hope we weren’t seen right.

LC: Is that, did people do that very much?

MD: And we’d say “who done that” right and..oh nobody done it, right. We’d say, “Ah, shag it b’ys, we got an hour or two off now (laughs) while we got a breakdown.”

(Dillon TS95:25-26)

For Mary, one way of resisting the pace of the conveyor belt line was to disable the line itself. Such “everyday forms of resistance” of the work pace are often overlooked in analysis of women’s engagement in their work lives (Scott:1985:36). To target the processing line conveyor belt, which drove the daily pace of women’s work, and was a
site of tension over the sharing of work between the women, was to strike directly at the regulation and control of women's work, bodies and relationships. While this particular action is more public and more direct a confrontation than other women engaged in, such as jokes and teasing of management and each other, it nonetheless accomplished the physical (and psychological?) break the women sought. Finally, that other women on the line concealed the identity of the actual perpetrator points to the collective action undertaken by the women. Keeping these spontaneous and specifically targeted actions in mind, we can see the active negotiation, challenge and surmounting of a work pace that was endless.

In conversations with the women narrators, the discrete tasks of weighing fillets, wrapping of fillets, and packing of the wrapped fillets in boxes are often blurred together. The women worked in one continuous line, together, and they performed a variety of jobs over their years at Job's. As well, this blurring of lines between tasks may be due, as Daisy Hiscock suggests, to women taking turns doing these different forms of labour in order to relieve each other.

DH: You had weighers and you had packers. Uh, we used to change around. You'd get out weighin for so long and then you'd go in and sit down and pack and somebody else'd come out and weigh.

MP: Oh. have breaks...

DH: Yeah.

MP: And women were wrappin fish too.

DH: Yeah.

MP: All right. And then they put, women would put the fish, the fillets into the boxes?

DH: Yeah.

MP: Women would do that?
DH: First we had wooden boxes...

MP: Oh yeah, and then you had a cardboard one?

DH: ...and then we had, uh, cardboard box. (Hiscock TS92:59)

The women rotated through different positions on the fish processing line in this section of the plant. Individual women learned both the weighing and wrapping/packing procedures which made the workforce more flexible for management, and allowed the development of women's skill and knowledge so that they could be chosen in the future to do different forms of work in the plant. So the fish moved from the weighers to the wrappers/packers, who placed the wrapped fillets in small cardboard boxes, which were then placed in larger boxes for export. Daisy's reference to working with wooden boxes points to the changing technologies in the fish plant. When Daisy started work in the early 1940s, men produced the wooden boxes for packing, but when cardboard was introduced for packing, women became the manufacturers of cartons. This work took place in the box loft, a site of intrigue, sexuality and relationships between women and men in the plant.

MAKING BOXES AND OTHER THINGS

When women could be spared from the packing line, they worked making boxes for packaging the fish for export. The frozen fillets were moved to the packaging area, again staffed by women, and boxed for markets. The fillets, ready for sale, were placed in holding chambers for shipment, principally to the United States. Margie Tulk, Alice Kittinger, Helen Picco and Daisy Hiscock spoke of "making boxes" for this stage of the production line. Generally this activity took place when there was a lull in the processing of fish. It was also gender divided work, shifting historically from being a
male dominated task to being a female task with the development of new materials for packing. Prior to the early 1940s when wooden boxes were used for shipment, men constructed them using carpenters tools, but when cardboard boxes were introduced as the shipping medium, the production of cartons became women’s work (Hiscock TS94:24-25; Picco TS95:3). Helen Picco commented that when she was “making boxes” only two or three other women were working at this task. Helen was trained in the procedure by Sheila Brazil who was the forelady in charge of this work (Picco TS95:3).

Joan Doneganí remembers her work in making “little cardboard boxes” as one of the “Battery Girls.” Working with three other “girls,” Joan’s stint at box-making lasted only a short time, but she remembers the thousands she folded together, and the very specific manner in which they were stacked.

JD: ...I know one time, uh, the, they made work for the Battery Girls uh, to make boxes. We made boxes and we made boxes and we made boxes! And I'm tellin ya they had, a place upstairs that we had, I don't know how many thousands of boxes we made a pallet, put em together so they'd be ready for when they got busy.

[edit]

JD: ...We worked in the plant room where they kept them, and we piled them up and then they were..when they need them they were brought down.

[edit]

JD: You..well, they were like this (shaping a rough square with her hands) and you just took them and folded them over and put them together an piled em up. They were like flat and you just folded them over..

LC: Folded the sides in and...

JD: Yeah and pushed in the ends and just piled em up in the, and they come like a, a fan.

... 
JD: I think we only did it the one time they did it. They just, I don't know what, what was the occasion. We did it, uh, I mean, lots and lots of boxes.
Prepare for something. I guess we used em, I don't remember.

(Donegani TS95:47-48)

Both Helen Picco and Joan Donegani commented that they folded the cartons into shape in the "box loft" located on the third floor of the processing plant. When immediate work was not available, management used workers to build a supply of the boxes for the heavy processing periods during the year.

In the following narrative passage with Mary and Leo Dillon, the physical location of the box loft is thoroughly contested, with Mary calculating the site by remembering specific gendered spaces within the fish plant. She recalls the flights of stairs between the main floor, where the women worked at one point, and the view from the box area, overlooking the main floor. For Mary, the physical relationship of the different work areas to each other is key in her remembering of the plant. Leo resists this interpretation of the plant layout and working areas by arguing that the box loft could only be the area where all the boxes were assembled - the third floor. He discriminates between stages of box work, and ultimately, supports his position by calling on personal experience. It is this conversational move that begins the turn to a thinly-veiled conversation of alternative uses for the box loft.

MD: I'm just tryin to think now. The boxes woulda been on the se-ond...

LD: They used to make boxes...

MD: Oh no, yeah used to over...we'd go over the first flight...

LD: ...because where, the second floor she talkin about, that's where they used to do the smokin.

MD: That's right, you came over the first flight, the stairs, from down stairs, you go in that way for the box loft. So the box loft was really on the second floor, was lookin down on the first one we were workin on.

[narrator's emphasis]

LD: Yeah but uh, uh, the main one where they used to pack all the boxes,
was up on the third floor. And they bring em down on the elevator...so they’re assemble em on the second floor. [narrator’s emphasis]

LC: Uh-huh...

LD: (not clear)

MD: Now ask me a good question, I can’t remember.

LC: (laughs)

LD: Yeah I knows because...we used to all go up around the box loft see?

MD: I know cause used to torment, used to torment Mr., Mr. Yetman. Used to torment Mr. Yetman, right. He used to know what everybody was up to. Used to say “Yeah cause you’re always up in there,” well they didn’t call it the box loft, I won’t tell say more an that...because

LC/LD: (laughter)

MD: ...(laughs loudly)

LC: O.k.!

MD/LD: (Laughing)

MD: And they used to torment him about it, right. He, “You’re always up in that” you know (laughs).

LC: Yeah...So people, so you’re saying that people went up and hung out in the box...

LD: Oh yeah, smokin an that right.

LC: Oh yeah...uh-huh..

LD: But it’d never be a fire (laughs)

LC: Yeah...

MD: Cause some of the fellas and girls used to go up there in the boxes... (hearty laughter)

LD: (laughs)

LC: Ah-hah! Other activities!
MD: That's what we used to torment Mr., we used to torment Mr. Yetman, "Go way boy, Jack, you're always around the corner." right. (laughs) He'd say "Aha I knows you're up in that box loft" right. He'd say to the boys and girls like, you know. He was a queer hand anyway right?

(Dillon TS95:53-55)

Neither Mary nor Leo would say directly what occurred in the box loft other than smoking. Together they imply that the box loft was also the site of sexual encounters between women and men workers in Job's plant. They tease me with allusions to other activities, but do not make explicit their memories or thoughts on this topic. This narrative is accompanied by much laughter and smiles. Jack Yetman's two daughters worked at Job's so perhaps he knew well the liaisons and connections the workers made when management wasn't looking (Dillon TS95:55).

Interestingly, in the middle of our conversation, Mary demands that I ask her a "good question," one to which she can "remember" the answer. What constitutes a good subject for my research is one that has answers, that can satisfy the researcher's needs. In this way Mary would be seen by me as a coherent and knowing subject, rather than the less competent one she seems to feel she presents to me. Thinking out loud is not allowed.

"KEEPING AN EYE ON THINGS": REGULATING WORK AND GENDER

The conduct of bodies in the workplace was managed on a micro level at Job Brothers. Male management employed various surveillance and supervision tactics over the years to, as Daisy Hiscock said, "breathe down the necks" of the workers, particularly women workers, in the plant. Workers also regulated themselves in the workplace, producing conduct that was gendered in particular ways by discourses of "respectability" and proper womanhood.

Direct supervision by foreladies such as Suzie King, foremen like Jack Yetman, and by manager Maurice Job Taylor himself, included observation of women's presence
in, or absence from, specific locations in the plant, timing of work processes and
observation of skills at work, surveillance of women's time in breaks and bathrooms,
prohibition on women smoking in the plant, and the enforcement of uniforms for the
women workers. Women negotiated this terrain daily, engaging to various degrees in the
shifting power relations on the plant floor.

FORELADIES

The women workers were supervised, and kept under surveillance, most directly
by 'foreladies', who kept an eye on the work being performed. They also showed new
workers how to perform the tasks set for them, as in the case of Helen Picco, who
learned how to assemble cartons from forelady Sheila Brazil (Picco TS95:3). Joan
Donegani, who did fish packing and weighing, remembers Susie King Scott's work as
forelady on the processing line.

LC: Were there, uh, women, foreladies?

JD: Yeah, Sue King was.

LC: Uh-huh, what did they do, what was their job?

JD: Just make sure things moved, uh, I don't, I mean Sue would, if she was
there, she just didn't, uh, if you did your job she didn't bother you, you
know but uh, she had to make sure things were going and she kept an eye
on things..[not clear word]

LC: What, what happened if they felt you weren't doing your job?

JD: I guess they'd tell you, hey smarten up, you know (laughs).

LC: Did they ever dock pay and things like that or?

JD: I don't know. It never happened to me anyway. (laughs) (Donegani TS95:35)

The role and work of a forelady might be quite different if viewed from another
location. Following from Joan Donegani's lead, I read the narrative transcript from Suzie Scott, looking for references and discussion about foreladies. Early in her narration, Susie responded that she performed this supervisory work, but then, as our conversation went on, she resisted identification with this role. Perhaps Susie does not want to be, or be seen to be, fashioned in this particular way after so many years.

LC: O.k. Were, uh, the foreladies, were they part of the union as well?

SS: Yes I was. (Laughs)

LC: Oh, you were a forelady too, o.k. (laughing) Good enough. Tell me what you did as a forelady. Gotta keep me up on all this see!

SS: No, I wasn't a forelady. It twas uh, another woman. I forgets her name. I believe she's dead. Yeah, cause I was talkin to uh, what's her name the other day and she said she was dead, Mrs. Blackwood, she's dead. (pause) That was all.

LC: Uh-huh, what, what did the foreladies do, what kind of...

SS: Oh, she, she used to come around see were we doin our work and look around and see were there anything that, that we're doin wrong, you know. That's all.

LC: And just check and make sure....

SS: Yeah, make sure was everything was goin on the right way you know.

LC: Right, yeah. So would they then, as foreladies, report to...

SS: They only had one!

LC: Oh! O.k. would the forelady (laughing) report to Jack Yetman then or?

SS: Yeah, no...she used to come and tell Jessie.

LC: Oh, I see o.k.

SS: Cause she was our, in our union see, and she was lookin after us.

LC: So would the forelady if there was a problem, would the forelady tell Jessie Earle?
SS: Jack Yetman...

LC: Would she tell Jessie Earle or would she tell Jack Yetman?

SS: No she'd tell Jessie and Jessie'd go to Jack.

LC: Oh, o.k. And sort that, any problem...

SS: Yeah, whatever problem ya had there.

(Scott TS94:29-30)

For Susie, being a forelady meant that you were part of the management of other women workers, responsible for reporting to Jessie Earle Thomas after the LCSWU was in place. It is not clear from the remembrances of workers whether foreladies were in the LCSWU or not. Nonetheless, by this story, Suzie refuses the notion of confrontational positioning of the foreladies as management surveillance agents in the plant. She constitutes them as women, working with other women and supporting the union. Gender identity seems to be at work here as one constituting feature in union-management relations.

This narrative also works to shift (and lessen?) the potentially negative positioning of foreladies in general, and for Suzie in particular, as a former forelady. Suzie remembers reports going to Jessie Earle Thomas and Jack Yetman in certain circumstances, and that Jessie and Jack would sort out any problems in work process or with workers. Here she constructs an image of co-operative, tension-free management arrangements between the LCSWU and Job Brothers foremen as well as the contribution of foreladies to this environment.

Being chosen for forelady work, even though it meant a slight raise in pay, was not desirable at all for some women, however. Daisy Hiscock disrupts Suzie's positive positioning of foreladies in the plant structure. Daisy saw the role to be one which had the potential to separate her from other workers, an undesirable place to be.
MP: What about, like promotions. You said you were offered to be forelady. Was that because you were a good worker?

DH: I don't know, uh, huh...

MP: Ya don't know why they liked ya...(laughs)

DH: No. I didn't take it, I know that.

MP: Yeah. Well, would they take, say, somebody they could trust and rely on...

DH: Oh yes, well you had to be a good worker or, you know, and they knew who was doin the work and who wasn't and who they could trust, you know. Yeah... but I wouldn't..

MP: Why wouldn't ya do it...

DH: Because I wanted to be one of the girls. I didn't want to be down on them all the time..

MP: Yeah. So would, like a forelady, be seen as like, one of the management or lower management?

DH: A forelady would be, a forelady would be seen with authority and you wouldn't be able to trust her. You know, you'd...

MP: She wouldn't be on your side?

DH: Well, they, well she wouldn't because she'd be from management anyway. She hadda get production out right and I was the type, certainly I was asked in two or three different places that I worked, for, for supervisor. I would, I got no time for that. I would never be able to tell another person what to do. Or say to that person, You're doin that wrong. Cause there's nobody right all the time and I wouldn't, I wouldn't be able to, no if I couldn't be one of the, one of the girls, I didn't want...

MP: [not clear]

DH: ...yeah, forget it. Money, you know two or three cents more on an hour wasn't worth it. NO-o-o. and then you always had pressure gettin things done and...

(Hiscock TS92:94-95)

For Daisy, the solidarity of being “one of the girls” was important in the fashioning of her identity in the workplace. In this complex passage, Daisy weighs financial incentive
of “two or three cents more an hour,” and the positioning by management as a “good worker” who could be trusted to influence other workers and as being worthy of an elevated role in the plant, against what she perceives as social isolation in the role of forelady. She would be outside of the group she identifies with on the basis of gender and class relations. Further, authority and control over workers and production are accompanied by the stress and responsibility of “gettin things done,” of turning out product. Nothing outweighs Daisy’s positioning of foreladies as management, as women you couldn’t trust to support you in the workplace. Here gender identity and class position, and solidarity with others based on those identity positionings, are more precious than a few cents an hour.5

Daisy remembers the conversation with her supervisor when she was offered the forelady position.

DH: Yeah. And I said there is no way [her emphasis] because I was one of the girls and I couldn’t stand over one of my friends and time her doin her work when I knew she was doin what she could and doin the best that she could. And I said no. “Well,” he said, “what about,” he said, “if, we tells ya, uh, you know, there’s neither job if you don’t take forelady.” “Well,” I said, “I guess I’ll have neither job.” Yeah.

MP: Then what happened?

DH: Oh I stayed there [laughs].

MP: Oh [laughs] So you....

DH: No, no. And uh, I guess too, uh, huh, that was just before I was married and I, I knew I wasn’t going to be working much longer so, you know, I probably didn’t care.

(Hiscock TS92:111-12)

Daisy’s narrative constitutes her as resisting the supervisor’s threat of job loss for

5 See Little (1994) and the Fishery Research Group (1986) for excellent discussions of women’s careful negotiations of power, alienation, and refusal in the position of forelady.
refusing the forelady’s position. Solidarity and connection to other women workers are key in her construction of herself as a worker at Job’s. She glosses over her resistant stance by suggesting that her position as a soon-to-be-married woman, and thus less reliant on Job’s employment for her wages and survival, are a mitigating force in her resisting the forelady position. For the women narrators, like Daisy, potential options in their lives as women opened up a space that allowed for resistance in some moments with management. In this narrative, Daisy sees her future possibilities as not including work at Job’s and so she is able to take up this position as a way to resist the work, and the threat of no work, offered to her. For others, like Suzie Scott, who remained working steadily at Job’s until 1967, the options may not have been so open to resist the offer of a forelady position and the extra pay that accompanied the job.

Daisy’s concern that the forelady could be implicated in the added pressure on herself and women’s work may be linked to the production of product for export. The pressure to keep a good product was enforced by the management structure of Job Brothers and by those companies that purchased large quantities of packed fish from Job’s. A&P Tea Company, owners of a large grocery chain in the United States was one of those companies. Joan Donegani remembers the emphasis on quality product enforced by the male A&P representatives - Joe Benatti and David Cararri.6

JD:...they come in and they would, uh, whereas I say we were doin it for the, uh, certain lot for the A&P in Boston and they, uh, they just kept an eye on things and they made sure that they were getting well, I guess what they were paying for, you know...[brief edit]...they just came and just watched what we were doing, made sure that we were doing, you know, they didn’t stay long. There was, there was one came and he was for a

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6 The spelling on these names is approximate as there was no discussion of the A&P representatives names in the Job Brothers records, and none of the narrators were able to supply more than an approximate spelling. I did locate an R. or A. Benatti in the St. John’s telephone directories for 1947-1952; Cararri was not located at all. Pearl Hunt (TS92:101) was the only narrator to recall their full names.
while at it and nother man came and stayed for a little while but...[brief edit]...The only one I remember is the second guy who saw something he didn't like he really came down and he raised hell. He made us stop and he went through all the boxes. What he needed he saw and he went and complained. He didn't want like, little pieces of fish, he wanted either the whole fillet or, but someone's stuffing and he happened to be watching, just to get the weight way it was. So I think the person got kinda blast for doing it and he went and saw Maurice Job Taylor you know. [brief edit]

LC: So...they would have had some im, impact then on, on the working conditions.

JD: I guess they just wanted a, a, a product that was you know, good. Like I said they were. That's the only thing I can remember that they, they really complained. They just usually watched and, I guess they wanted to see what was going on.

(Donegani TS95:23-24)

Some of the other narrators mentioned these two men in their narratives as well (Hiscock TS94:50-51). Here Joan points to a shifting standard of production which made women's work on the line more demanding and critical to a "good" product and continued sales. Joan's description of the packing process that upset the A&P representative Cararri - "He didn't want like, little pieces of fish, he wanted either the whole fillet or, but someone's stuffing and he happened to be watching, just to get the weight way it was" - reproduces the usual packing process at Job's. Fish was packed to weight, and small pieces were added to make sure that the weight was accurate. There was less regard for the contents of the package when it was not to be an A&P product.

REGULATING BODIES IN SPACE

Regulation of women's bodies and gendered workplace spaces were expressions of the power of foreladies to enforce rules established by Job Brothers management. One of the foreladies' tasks was to ensure that women did not linger or smoke in the bathrooms during work hours. According to Mary Dillon, women, including herself, did smoke in
the bathroom. If caught, the offending female smoker could be laid off work for a week as punishment. On one occasion, Mary attempted to turn this regulation to her advantage. Mary was about to marry Leo, and she wanted time off work prior to the wedding day. So she deliberately went into the bathroom, lit up a cigarette, and hoped to be caught smoking by her friend Val Cooper, forelady for that shift.

MD: ... deliberately, right? So I figure o.k, I'm smoking now the forelady'll give me a week off right. Cause you know... then, right...

LC: Oh, I see to get your week to get married?

MD: (laughing) Yeah! Right she give me a week off! She came in she says, “Mary.” I said, “Yes.” She said, “I caught you smokin” and I said “Yeah, I gets a week off now don’t I.” “No,” she said, “ya works every night this week.” (laughs)

LD/LC: (laugh)

MD: So you have extra money. (laughing)

LC: I don’t know... is that good or bad?

MD: That was my punishment.

LC: Who was the forelady there?

MD: She stood up for us all after, Val Cooper right.

LD: Val.

MD: She, she was me bridesmaid right. Instead of putting me off that’s what she done.

LD: She knew...

MD: Work every night right.

(Dillon TS95:64-65)

This story was told to me with much amusement by Mary despite (or because of) her failure to use the non-smoking regulation to her advantage. Mary constitutes herself in this narrative as challenging the regulations of the plant in an inventive manner.
Perhaps Mary hoped Val Cooper would be willing to follow the rules even in the face of a friend’s transgression, and thus give her the week off to prepare for her wedding. In Mary’s view of the event, Val takes control of the moment and in a humorous manner turns the situation on Mary, not allowing her the prized week off. Mary is quick to observe that she gained more money out of the week’s work than her own plan would have netted her. Mary produces a story that denies tension, even between workers and foreladies in a challenging situation by telling me that Val was a witness at her wedding a few days later. I am left with an image of a large game, one in which Mary makes a move and is caught out, but no hard feelings remain.

Mary’s narrative about smoking points to the worker’s uneasy participation in the regulatory practices organizing the workplace as well. Through shifting and fragmented processes of negotiation, resistance and compliance, workers actively co-construct the management regulatory practices on smoking and other such activities in the Job Brothers plant.

This discussion about smoking brought forth profound differences between Mary and Leo Dillon. The conversation shifted quickly to disagreement and tension between them, with Leo strongly asserting that Job Brothers ("they") made the rules and workers conformed to those rules. While Mary agrees with this, she goes on to illustrate various actions taken by women in order to have a smoke out of the sight of the foreladies. The bathroom is the one spot where there was somewhat less chance of being observed immediately, and some women, like Mary, would risk being caught. Bathroom breaks were closely monitored, and if the odour of smoke was detected, “that was it.” Mary understood the risk.

LC: Did women do those, uh, that sort of thing very often, to kind of, get around the rules or to make use of the rules in a different way than...
MD: I s'pose you know they, they...

LD: No, No they, they made the rules, you had to go by.

MD: Yeah like if you were caught smokin...well everybody'd be tryin to avoid bein caught because you know, if you were too long in the bathroom or somethin right...

LC: Uh-huh...

MD: You weren't supposed to stay in the bathroom too long so if you were in there too long see she'd be out right and she smelled smoke that was it right. I mean they all had ta watch that right? You get time off then see for being out to the bathroom too often or...

LD: Now the girls weren't allowed to smoke.

MD: No.

LD: Any up in the bathroom. Now the men, could have a carton of cigarettes there at hand and, an smoke the whole lot of em, be nothin said.

LC: Oh that's interesting. But, did, did the men go to the bathroom to smoke or did they...

LD: Oh yes, there..

LC: Yeah?

LD: And sat at the table too, with a smoke.

LC: Oh yeah, havin a smoke... Why, why the difference?

MD: I don't know...(laughing)

LD: Well see, why the difference was...

MD: Women!! (laughs)

LD: No...no, I wouldn't say that. It's because, know they all had the packages, and if they were smoking and, and uh, if that part of it fell into the package, an, and they didn't see it and they wrapped it up and that, that went to the States somewhere they're not gonna buy any more fish.

MD: No. No...it's the women...

LD: And if the men smoked, an it fell on a fillet...it goes through the brine...
LC: Uh, it's gonna be caught and cleaned?

LD: That's right...that's

MD: No, Leo what I'm sayin is men and women, nobody was allowed to smoke in the plant itself, where you're workin.

LD: Yeah, we used to smoke on the line.

MD: I know we weren't. (Dillon TS95:66-67)

Leo states that "the girls weren't allowed to smoke" and Mary agrees with this statement. Then Leo goes on to say that the men on the filleting line could smoke whenever and wherever they wanted, including the bathroom. This statement of men's actions directly contradicts his earlier declaration that workers followed the rules laid down at Job's. It also positions the male workers as more powerful and resistant to Job Brothers rules than the women workers. It is an assertion of strong masculinity and control.

Mary is firm in her assertion that the difference is based on gender, that the monitoring and control of women's actions, particularly regarding smoking, occurred because they were women. Leo contests this analysis, taking up a management discourse as the basis of his argument. He contends that the regulation of smoking hinges on the worker's place in the production line, that if men dropped ashes on the fish it would be washed off in the brine rinse before being packed by the women. If the women smoked and dropped cigarette remains on the fish, it would be packed up and shipped to the States in that condition, since it does not pass through any other wash prior to packing. Mary is unable to successfully contest Leo's ideas, and so returns to the original argument that no-one was allowed to smoke at Job's, men or women. Leo resists this interpretation again, stating firmly that men smoked on the line. Mary refuses to deny her experience
of discipline on the line, or her analysis, and asserts her knowledge of gendered regulations - "I know we weren't." This contests Leo's storyline but leaves space for difference.

Even a short break to change tapes in my recorder did not shift the topic from the different interpretations of the production of clean fish and the curtailment of women's lives in the plant. Leo employs a personal experience anecdote about buying unclean fish to buttress his gendered argument that women workers on the processing line needed to be more closely supervised regarding cleanliness, in particular about smoking on the line. Mary turns the conversation to women smoking and the social conventions of the time which oppressed her. Interestingly, this was not a conversation which included everyone in the room. Rather, Mary and Leo face each other across the table and argue point for point. I'm left sitting in the observer's chair.

LD: ...and you take I, like one time we opened a package, uh, of fish that be bought at the supermarket, and was a big fish fly in it.

MD: Oh yeah, that happened yeah.

LD: Right?

MD: yeah.

LD: So, that girl, or whoever it was, was packing that fish mighta done like this [gestures turning away from the package in front of him] and the fly went - shup - and then she covered it up. Went through the machine an, packaged it up and it went to the freezer and it was gone.

MD: Oh yeah, yeah.

LD: Right?

MD: Yeah, yeah.

LD: But now that fell on, if that, the fly goes on the fish where the...

MD: Wipes off I know as it's goin through...
LD: Wiped off, no proof that there was ever a fly.

MD: But they weren't really fussed about girls smokin anyway back then.

LD: Oh no. They didn't want the girls smokin.

MD: I mean girls wouldn't put a cigarette in their mouth goin down the street then, I members sure, I members you turnin on me for that. (laughs)

LD: No, it's not proper for a girl to smoke on the, on the street like that.

MD: Well what's the difference in a man and a woman?

LD: Well, uh, woman is more feminine than, than a, man. A man's expected to be maybe take a cigar in his mouth and go, you know.

MD: We'd be on our way to a movie sometimes, an probably, probably come outa the movie and light up a cigarette and he'd say to me, get right dirty with me right, for lightin up a cigarette. I'd say, "Look boy I don't give a damn anyway, I wants me smoke when I have and that's it. I don't care if ye likes it or lumps it." (laughs) It's the one thing I'm not gonna let him stop me from doin right, (laughing) havin me cigarette!

LC: Interesting difference of views...about, you know...

MD: Yeah...you know...so I'd smoke it anyway. He'd probably walk aheada me! (laughs)

LC: Leave him on the street...

MD: Women don't smoke on the street right. [imitating LD] Well, I mean, this is what it was really, is the women never had no rights. That's what it was, that way. I mean, I mean...

LD: I wouldn't say that...

MD: No, but now Leo ya got ta agree there's a lotta things that women...

LD: Go way, Mary, the women had more rights...

MD: No.

LD: ...than any man.

MD: No, I don't think they did. I don't think they did. I really don't think they did. I think men had more rights now than the women. I think the men
thought that's good enough boy (LD speaks over MD) (MD laughs).

LD: Now the women got good when they got the vote, I'll agree with that one. When the women was allowed to vote, yes, I'm 100% behind em for that. Because they got rights too.

MD: Well the way I looks at it, we're all human beings and we all got the same rights. That's the way I looks at it, right. If I wants to do somethin, I'm gonna do it anyway. (laughs)

LD: Sure we knows that! (laughs)

LC: Must be some lively conversations in this house (laughing)

LD/MD: (laughing)

LD: You want to believe it!

(Dillon TS95:67-70)

There are hints here that this is was debated between them on previous occasions. When Leo is describing the removal of the fly on the fish, Mary says “Wipes off I know...” indicating that she too, knows about this process. She shifts the direction of the conversation to repressive notions of female respectability and restrictions on the behaviour of “girls” “back then.” The “they” Mary refers to here is not Job Brothers exclusively, but includes Job Brothers in the wider social mores of society of the day. “Girls” were not supposed to smoke, period. They were certainly not supposed to smoke in public, on the street. This disciplining of women’s bodies also constitutes them as specifically female gendered bodies.

In these contested memories, Mary and Leo have different investments in how they remember themselves at that time of their lives, and in how they are fashioning identities in this moment. For Leo, a woman smoking on the street is abhorrent, and reflects negatively on Mary’s femininity and moral character. It’s “not proper” for a woman in Leo’s view, but it is fine for a man to smoke on the street. Then Mary announces that she and Leo have argued publicly over this regulation of her behaviour.
Indeed, Mary mocks Leo by imitating his voice and manner when he says "[W]omen don’t smoke on the street." Interestingly, this section of the narrative is developed between Mary and myself, in collusion against Leo. What is Leo’s stake in this image of Mary as a less than “proper” woman? Perhaps Leo’s careful construction of himself as a “proper man” is at risk here? After all, if it is improper for women to smoke on the street, and your wife does it, what does mean about you? How might Leo’s own subjectivity be challenged in this moment?

Skeggs (1997) writes about the intersection of class, gender and the notion of “respectability” for working-class women in Britain. Historically, appearance and conduct have been markers of social class and respectability for women. Leo may have feared that, as a working-class woman, Mary’s smoking on the street might be taken as sign of deviancy or impropriety. His concern is expressed as loss of femininity by Mary. Skeggs argues that “being, becoming, practising and doing femininity are very different things for women of different classes, races, ages and nations” (98). As a young, white, working-class woman in Newfoundland after the Second World War, smoking practices were contested terrain. For Mary, prohibitions about smoking on the street are remembered as repressive and confining. They may stand here for larger issues of gender inequality as well, for Mary contests the regulatory differences between men and women, arguing that “the women never had no rights.”

The tensions and contested storylines in this narrative are resolved, at least momentarily, by Leo agreeing that women deserved the vote. In this he falls in line with Mary’s argument, which she refuses to relinquish in the face of challenges from Leo. She calls upon a humanist discourse of equality as human beings to assert her own personal right to do what she wants in her life. Gendered regulatory discourses are not for her.

Leo and Mary Dillon are negotiating power, masculinity and femininity as they
recall together the work, the fish plant regulations on smoking, the rights of women and what is deemed to be “proper” in social spaces of the city and community, such as on the streets, and in movie theatres. They are also negotiating their own relationship, and who has the power to regulate Mary’s behaviour in those social spaces, and within their relationship. The managerial regulation, and self-regulation, of conduct in the workplace extends into the wider social world of Mary and Leo.

The regulation of women’s bodies, and the gendering of work and work spaces was also accomplished by male supervisors at Job Brothers. The means of control exercised in the plant included work pace, overtime, and short notice on the scheduling of work. The pace of work for the employees in the fish plant shifted considerably with the increase or decline in fish catches over the season. In 1948, seventy to eighty thousand pounds of fish per day was processed at Job's (ET:April 17, 1948:9). A year later, in 1949, almost a million pounds of fish per month was supplied to Job's by the trawlers, BLUE SPRAY, under Captain Baxter Blackwood and BLUE FOAM, under Captain Arch Thornhill. Haddock, cod and flounder made up the bulk of the catches (DN:June 11, 1949:3).

To process these large catches, women and men were expected to work late into the night, or to work seven days a week and to accrue significant amounts of overtime, thus increasing their pay. Ettie Norman commented that “[W]hen we heard talk about a boat comin in we were so happy” because it meant extra work and overtime pay in your pocket (Norman TS95:3). But this abundance of fish created tensions and stress in the plant as well. Daisy Hiscock remembers the arrival of a fully loaded boat kept workers at the plant long after their regular hours of work.

...oh my...how many times did they con us into cleanin up the, the, they come in around four o'clock and they’d say, “O. K. girls, get it all cleaned up now, you’re off tonight.” And we’d work our hearts out. We’d get, we’d
do about three or four hours work in an hour just so we could get off that night. And at five o'clock he'd say, "O.K. girls, back tonight, dragger just hauled in." But they knew all the time that the dragger was comin'...so that's the way they treated us, like dogs. Yeah. (Hiscock TS92:113)

The “he” referred to by Daisy is Jack Yetman, supervisor in charge of the women and their work (Hiscock TS94:40). To Ian J. Reid, a Director of Job’s in the 1950s, Jack Yetman was foreman over the women working at fish packing upstairs, on the second floor of the plant. Reid describes Yetman quite differently from Daisy Hiscock, “Great big guy and they loved him. And he treated em very well and uh, he uh, Jack was uh, they’re all gone now course, but Jack was a good man...” (Reid TS95:27). From the perspective of the management of Job’s, Yetman was able to get the work out of the women, while not creating problems resulting in open dissention on the plant floor.

Lack of open conflict among workers, between workers and management, or directly with Jack Yetman did not necessarily mean “peace.” As James Scott (1985) observes, even countries and wars have been “ undone by a social avalanche of petty acts of insubordination,” everyday acts, which in Job Brothers plant could be disguised as something else entirely (31). At Job Brothers, humour was used to maintain discipline, and perhaps a measure of harmony among people, as well as to contest management control. Women, individually and collectively, played tricks on men and on each other (Hunt TS92:22-23). For example, Daisy Hiscock describes nailing the jacket of her future husband, Les, to the wall of the plant and waiting to see what his reaction would be; Pearl Hunt remembers dropping vacuum bags full of water on the men standing below (Hiscock TS92:80; Hunt TS92:29). Job’s workplace is often described by the women narrators as “fun” (for example: King TS96:2; Hiscock TS94:5). Verbal teasing was frequent, and being seen by others as having a sense of humour could be a saving grace. According to Daisy, “You...had to be witty...or you’d never survive” (TS94:5).
Mary Dillon remembers Jack Yetman for very different reasons, and in very
different ways than Ian Reid: as a supervisor whom the plant workers, particularly
women, “tormented” with teasing about his surveillance over them. Yetman in turn is
positioned as a supervisor who could, and would, tease the workers about their own
activities in the plant. Mary ends the passage with the comment that Jack was a “queer
hand,” a compliment in this situation where a different personality might have offended
Mary.

That’s what we used to torment Mr., we used to torment Mr. Yetman, “Go
way boy, Jack, you’re always around the corner.” Right. (laughs) He’d
say, “Aha I knows you’re up in that box loft,” right. He’d say to the boys
and girls like, you know. He was a queer hand anyway right?

(Dillon TS95:55)

A few minutes later in our conversation Mary Dillon repeats her assertion about
Yetman, “...we used to get a great charge outa Mr. Yetman. Everyone liked him boy. He
was a queer and....,” adding that he was also well liked (Dillon TS95:55). Apparently,
Yetman was able to position himself in such a way as to deflect the personal identification
with management.

Resistance on the plant floor did not always take the forms of loud explosions or
tension-filled struggle. Everyday forms of resistance, to employ Scott’s lovely phrase,
and negotiation with and defiance of, authority certainly existed in Job Brothers plant.
(1985:36). Whether these individualized acts were viewed as having any social or
economic significance to Job Brothers’ and the work of the plant is not apparent in the
narratives.

Neither “workers” nor “management” are unitary subjects existing in simple,
all-encompassing categories. Rather, these categories gloss over a complexity of

7 Story et al., (1990) define “queer hand” or “queer stick” as “one who is of or cultivates an
unusual, humorous character, an odd manner or behaviour” and further as a “peculiar, humorous person.”
subjectivities and positionings, produced in constantly shifting fields of power. The relations between workers, women and men, and management, exclusively men, appear to have shifted a great deal in the course of work demands at Job Brothers. To characterize these fragmented relations in a rudimentary binary manner - as “good” or “bad” - does not capture the often layered and nuanced engagements among, and between, workers and management. This complex of relations calls into question a straightforward and simple notion of power in the workplace.

MAURICE JOB TAYLOR: MASCULINITY, STOPWATCHES AND FLOWERS

Foreladies, foremen or supervisors as they are variously called by the women narrators, and the plant manager, Maurice Job Taylor, all exercised power over, and regulation of, women workers at Job’s. Taylor presented, and represented, the face of the Job family and company in the daily life of the Southside Road plant. Authority and governance were embodied in this one man; he was a site where multiple social relations of class, race and gender relations were expressed, along with complex relations of resistance, negotiation, humour and so on. Maurice Job Taylor was the son of Fanny Taylor, sister to R.B. Job, the head of Job Brothers interests and companies for most of the twentieth century. “Motty” was brought out from Liverpool, England, at the age of twenty “to assist and live with” his uncle at the family home in St. John’s, “Rostellan.” He was taken into the family business through trips to the ice for seal harvesting, work on the BLUE PETER collecting blueberries and salmon from outports and lastly, as manager of the Southside Road operation. When he died in 1960, Taylor had carried on the Job family tradition of family business and public life in St. John’s, albeit on a rather more modest scale; he was a Director of Job Brothers Limited and honourary consul for Belgium in Newfoundland (Reid TS95:10; PANL, Job and Company Limited,
Maurice Job Taylor is constituted in the narrators' conversations, with myself and with Michelle Park, in a particularly contested and fragmented way. Even his name changes with the narrators who speak of him: he is variously called Maurice Job Taylor (see Hiscock TS94:4,16; Donegani TS95:24,31,34), Maurice Job (see C. Janes TS92:7,12,20,43), Uncle Maurice (see Scott TS94:14), even if, in the plant, he was consistently called Mr. Taylor (see Dillon TS95:34-36; Kittinger TS94:18,19; TS92:43). Everything about him comes under scrutiny: his class position, ethnicity and nationality, style of dress, relationships with workers, incompetence as a "man" in the eyes of some of the male (LSPU) workers, generosity and thoughtfulness toward women workers, to name a few. All are produced by the narrators as markers of particular positionings. Narrators have different experiences with Taylor, which they constitute in various complex ways, and thus make sense of Taylor's engagement with them and others, inside and outside of Job Brothers plant. The result is a plethora of identity positionings embedded in relations of class, gender, race and power. Skills and knowledges thought to be common to men in Newfoundland are seen to be different (and deficient) in Taylor; women's stories of Taylor's relationships with them differ from men's stories; ethnicity and nationality are used to explain Taylor's "otherness" in the context of Job's plant and Newfoundland society. In addition to differences between narrators' stories, individual narrators have multiple, contradictory experiences of Taylor and thus position him in multiple and fluid ways. Sometimes these relationships are held in tension, boldly contradicting each other. This presents me with a fragmented and multiply-positioned Maurice Job Taylor, his identity contingent on the moment of experience being "re-membered," and on the context of the telling to me in our conversation. In the following narratives, Mary and Leo Dillon, Alice Kittinger, Daisy
Hiscock, and Pearl and Cecil Hunt recount (and develop) their stories of Maurice Job Taylor.

With Mary and Leo Dillon, I feel as if I have walked into the middle of an oft-told constellation of connected stories about Taylor. As usual, much of their talk swirls around me, but is focused on engaging with each other in the co-production of this long narrative. Together, and sometimes on top of each other, with much humour and laughter, they constitute Taylor in a multiple, partial and fragmented manner as they try to communicate Maurice Job Taylor to me.

MD: Yeah..He was kinda, yeah, he was kinda surly tho in a, a sense. He, he...

LD: I never ever minded him.

MD: ...wanted his work done that was it. He was...

LD: Yeah...

MD: ...he was, he was stern that way. I mean that was it you know, you had to do your work and that was it, right. And he'd say, say to the girls, “Ya can't, you know, you can't stay too long out in the bloody bathrooms, now ya know, ya got work to do now.” Right.

LC: Did he go...Was he the guy used to go and uh, check the bathrooms?

MD: Yeah, he'd stand, he'd stand by the bathroom door you know. See you'd probably have to be in there too long...

LD: That was the only thing he was good at! (laughs loudly)

MD: He probably say, “Ya after bein to the bathroom two or three times you know, in the last two hours you know,” or something like that right. And I'd say, “Well what can you do boy, you know, it's cold in there and that's the reason why ya got to go to the bathroom.” Right, you know. (laughs)

LD: You cold? (spoken to me) Can turn up...

LC: No no I'm fine.

MD: (laughing) Right. He was a queer hand like that right. He, didn't get
much conversation just more or less to be checkin on ya and stuff like that, right you know.

LD: I used to talk to him.

MD: Right...

LD: I, I, I felt that he was no different than I was.

LC: Did he treat you the same way?

LD: That's ....oh yeah!

MD: He was good, I mean like that, you know.

LD: He said to me, "My," he said, "I..." all the boys were there, and he come in and he said, "How ya Leo?" I said, "Not too bad, Mr"...you know...and he said, uh, "I, I, felt bad boy this mornin." I said, "Why?" And he said, "I went down," he said, "last night," he said, "to, the water busted...in the house and I didn't know where the valves are," he said.

MD: (starts to laugh)

LD: "and it was up to me ankles," he said.

MD: He got soaked! (laughing)

LD: ...then, he said, "I went, it went further," he said, "up...almost up to me knees," he said, "I was askin the wife," he said...

MD: Where's the valve? (laughs)

LD: "Where's the valve! What valve?" and he said, "Here's the two of us and we didn't know where the valve was at," he said, "we never even heard tell of a valve," right. Anyways, he said, "I had to call one of the men," he said, "in the...turn off the valve for me, to find the valve," he said. And I said, uh, "Do you work to, or do your wife do any work around the house or anything?" You know? " Yes," he said. I said, "You don't mean to tell me," I said, "your wife is workin, around your house," I said, "and you can't afford a maid?"

MD: (laughs) Poor Mr. Taylor yeah!

LD: (laughs) He said, "No," he said, "she does all"...

MD: I think he wore the same coat and the same hat from...
LD: Yes...and the same...

MD: ...first time I saw him (laughs)

LD: He's like, he's like uh, he's like, uhm, Mayor Murphy, same old suit! (laughs)

MD: Yeah, we always see him in the same, same hat! Same jacket on, right!

LC: Any picture I've seen it's the same, it's the hat and he's got the pipe!

MD/LD: Yeah, yeah.

LC: One he's got sort of like, gaiters on or something?

MD: Yeah! That's him! (laughs)

LC: And he dressed like that a lot?

MD: All the time...(not clear)

LD: Lookin like that, what it is, he belonged to Scotland Yard you know. (laughs)

MD: Looked like he went to bed with it on and got up with it on I think.

LD: (laughs)

MD: It was always the same outfit.

LD: The same wrinkles.

MD: It was always the same outfit right. Everyone knew him, "Mr. Taylor's comin now."

LC: Somebody mentioned to me that, uhm, at one time he went around with a stopwatch and timed.

LD: Oh yeah!

MD: Oh yeah, yeah.

LC: Tell me about some of that.

MD: Time, time the people goin to the bathroom and stuff like that.
LC: Uh-huh? He timed, uh, fish process, the packing and...

MD: Oh I don't doubt that too, cause like I said, you know you wouldn't know. He'd be there sometimes see. He was sneaky like that you wouldn't know he was there right and all of a sudden someone would say, “Don't look behind,” you know or..."You don't go talkin, keep packing, Mr. Taylor's over there." (laughs) You know what I mean, mumblin and stuff like that right!

LD: Yeah, he was strict you know...

MD: He be...(not clear)

LD: A sneak attack that's what he used to do at that stuff right? You would never know, he could be up in the elevator shaft looking down at ya. And he'd be timin ya cause I used to see that too.

(Dillon TS95:32-36)

Much is happening in this narrative co-construction - a physical description of Maurice Job Taylor, the construction and valorization of specific forms of masculinity with Taylor as deficient when measured against these standards produced by Leo, Taylor's active participation in regulatory practices in the plant. Also in this intersubjective moment, Mary and Leo, and to a lesser extent myself, are actively co-producing the narrative, in being each other's audience.

"Surly," "stern," "wrinkled," "sneaky," "good" - the language used by Mary and Leo suggests the incredible variety of identity positionings they produce for Taylor. As a manager of Job's, he exercises power in the workplace through surveillance and regulation of women's work, their bodies and their use of gendered spaces such as the bathrooms. Leo suggests that Taylor observes, times, and attempts to regulate the men's activities at work as well. Leo constitutes himself over and against Taylor in this passage, representing himself as equal to Taylor, in class position and conversation, and as more ably embodying masculinity than Taylor. The capacity to know about and understand the working of household plumbing is produced as a marker by which the
accomplishment of appropriate masculinity is gauged. That Taylor turned to his wife for assistance, and then resorts to calling one of the male Job’s workers to turn off the water valve, is added grist for the demasculinized identity mill. That he places Taylor’s story in a male gendered setting - “all the boys were there” - where his own skill, knowledge and production of a specific expression of masculinity would be recognized by others, implicitly measures Taylor against other men and finds him wanting. For Leo, the story of searching for the water valve represents Taylor’s deficient or subordinate expression of masculinity.

Leo’s inclusion of a challenge to class position, which Taylor again fails to satisfy, introduces another theme to Leo’s humorous critique of Taylor’s deficiencies. He is also incapable of properly representing his upper-class position. Taylor does not provide his wife with a maid, which Leo sees as what is expected if one is to produce a satisfactory identity as an upper class member of Newfoundland society. Likewise, material objects such as clothing are taken up as markers of class and ethnic respectability: Taylor’s presentation of self as “wrinkled,” and wearing the same peculiar “Scotland Yard” suit repeatedly, produces an otherness that sets him apart from, first, “proper” Newfoundland upper class positioning, and second, identity as a Newfoundlander.

What am I to make of this talk about Maurice Job Taylor? The denigration of someone whom you recognize as occupying a different class position to yourself is a strategy I remember well from my working class upbringing. My own father, for many years a warehouse labourer, often expressed similar sentiments about the men working in the office portion of the business, those who wore suits to work, or had titles like Manager, or Director. These men asserted a different expression or form of masculinity, one that did not fit with the rough and ready expression of the warehouse (or fish
Leo and Mary’s talk about Maurice Job Taylor is constituent of, and constituted by, discourses of class, race and gender. All of which Taylor fails miserably to satisfy, despite the fact that he embodies authority in the Job Brothers plant. Given Mary’s delighted reactions to this story, and the timing of Leo’s presentation style here, I suspect that this is an oft-told tale, clearly appreciated despite its repetition! This narrative piece produces a different configuration of the “narrative constellations” concept I discussed in Chapter Three. As with the narrative constellations produced by Daisy, Alice and Pearl, Leo and Mary produce particular stories, of specific events or people. Here, however, the story is produced together: one narrative line is shared by them, each telling certain moments with an awareness of the direction and content of the entire narrative piece. The smooth flow of their interaction and performance left me in no doubt that this story had been told before. Perhaps the repeated dual performance and storyline are part of the crystallization of “memories” and the production of remembering for Leo and Mary.

“Sneaky” is a word used by Alice Kittinger to describe Maurice Job Taylor as well. In this narrative, Alice presents herself as “always the one that got caught” when Taylor walked around the plant, observing work and regulating workers. She constructs a victim position for herself as one who is persecuted for “only talking,” to the women working around her, in particular Jessie Earle Thomas. Alice then positions herself as
the ultimate “good worker” through her story of being the fastest wrapper on the floor.

AK: If Job, Maurice Taylor came round he, I, I uh, I was always the one that got caught. He’d come in another way see and the women’d be tryin to tell me that he’s...

MP: ...he’s comin...

AK: ...he’s comin and I didn’t bother, too busy yakkin to Jessie on the side of me, see...

MP: [laughing]

AK: ...and...“How we doin Alice?” I said, “Fine, sir, doin’ great.” “Is she teach ya everything she knows?” he said to Jessie. Jessie said, “Oh yes, yes, sir she is, she is.” He said, “Alice is our little talker here...” and this he said, “She don’t stop talkin no matter who’s comin around.” And all the girls’d tryin to warn me you know.

MP: Yeah, just in case.

AK: But uh, I said “Heck, I was only talkin.”

MP: Yeah, coulda, you could do worse.

AK: Yes. I was still, I ran, I was the fastest wrapper of fish in the whole plant. He sent in the guy one time, see. We didn’t know he had a stop watch and he was goin up and down behind all the girls and he asked em their names, and they’d tell him you know. And we didn’t know what was goin on. And I was there wrappin my fish neat. And uh, he says, “What’s your name?” I said “Alice.” “Alice who?” I said, “Alice Hunt.” “O.k.” he said. So he went down the line again and he came back and he watched me wrap again.

MP: Ummmm

AK: And uh, so he went off and I said, I said, “Jessie, we musta did somethin wrong.” Jessie said, “No you didn’t.” I said, “He came back me a second time and he didn’t do it to the rest of ye.” And so Maurice Taylor came up then, next... He said uh, “You know the man that was goin round asking all their names, he had a stop watch and he was timin everyone that was wrappin the fish.” He said, “Wanted to find out who was the fastest wrappin the fish.” And, uh, Daisy said “Who was the fastest?” And he said, “Alice.” “Her, she can work just as fast as she can talk.” (laughs) I said, “You bet your boots.” “If I’d known that guy had a stop watch,” I said, “I wouldn’t of slowed down!”
MP: Was that, when was that? When you had the union in or..?

AK: No before.

MP: Oh that's before the union.

AK: Wouldn’t be allowed to get away with that if we all unions. And I said “You’re a bad man you know, Mr. Taylor,” I said, “to do that and not lettin us know.”

MP: What was he like?

AK: I got along with him. Everybody hated em. I got along with him. I didn’t hate him.

MP: Why was, why would everybody hate him?

AK: Because he was sneaky.

MP: Oh...yeah.

AK: He’d sneak up on ya like you know and gettin that guy to time everybody. Sneaky like that, you know. That was dirty, that was dirty pool.

MP: Yeah, yeah.

AK: But uh, like I said to him, uh, I said, “We had a union in here, you wouldn’t get away with pullin stunts like that.” He’d, “it’s a good thing ya haven’t got a union.”

(Kittinger TS92:83-84)

The stories of Taylor's surveillance of the women workers have a significant meaning for Alice in the construction of narratives about her work at Job's. In 1992, she brought forward to Michelle this story of low-level confrontation between management power and surveillance in the workplace and the workers, embodied in herself. Talk of fear of doing “something wrong,” and of management attention directed specifically on her work produce a sense of tension about her work. Here, under difficult conditions of being timed by a man unknown to her, Alice triumphs personally by producing good work that is applauded by Taylor. Her victory is spoken for all to hear, in
particular her cousin Daisy, and her friend Jessie. A small expression of resistance to the whole situation is conveyed by Alice’s words, “I wouldn’t of slowed down!,” implying that of course, she could do even better work but chose not to under the circumstances. It is a complex story of resistance and compliance on the plant floor field of gendered power relations (Scott:1985:284).

Alice situates this experience in a particular historical moment, before the LCSWU was established, by suggesting that Taylor was well aware of the limitations on his authority a union organization for the women would create. Here she constitutes union organization in general as good for workers, protecting them from such “sneaky” “stunts” by management. Alice uses the threat of unionization as a verbal challenge to Taylor in this moment.

In 1994, during our conversation, Alice elaborated her story of Maurice Job Taylor timing her work with a stopwatch. Her pride in telling me of her speed as a worker was evident. Once again, she links his freedom to conduct close observation of them on the line to the lack of a union to represent the women workers. In this narrative, Alice produces a particular conception of what a union would do for workers in on-going struggles with management. Left to their own devices, women had few options for resistance to Taylor’s actions. As Alice says, “you had to fasten your opinion behind ya and...stop work” so Taylor would go on to time another worker. While this might have been effective for the moment, such individualized actions, even if produced by a number of women, would not stop the surveillance.

AK: He used to come up and he’d, he’d say uh, he’d stand behind all the girls what were wrappin fish and that you know. And weighin. (clears throat) And uh, I said “What’s goin on Mr. Taylor?” He said, “Nothin, just watchin see how you’re doin.” I said, “You got a stopwatch there, you’re timin us aren’t ya?” You know I was the only one there that used to pack the fish the fastest but I didn’t know he was doin this see. And uh, he said, “Yes,” he said, “you’re the fastest on the wrapper, wrappin up fish.” I
got to be a real expert on it (laughing) you know.

LC: (laughing)

AK: But, uhm, he, uh, he, yes, he used to go round and, he, started doin it to the men and the men got, well the men had their union then, see. We didn’t. (clears throat) Ours just startin to get off the ground like. And uh, he said, uhm, he used to go round, he started on the men, and the men started a big racket and walked out. Which meant the men were gone, it was only us doin it. So, uh, he, uh, he said, “Alright,” he said, “go back to work,” he said, “I won’t do it any more.” But he was a bad man.

LC: Did he continue to time the women or to...

AK: No, he didn’t after...

LC: ...like, worry the women...

AK: ...we got the union, I said, “Try timin us now!”, I said, “and we’ll all walk out.” So he never did that after. But you had a fasten your opinion behind ya and we had to stop work so he’d away from us you know.

LC: Interesting, isn’t it?

AK: He was a b-a-d...

LC: Sneaky guy...

AK: Yeah, he was sneaky but I loved him!

(Kittinger TS94:19-20)

Here, a union is positioned as a strong protector of workplace rights for women workers. With a union, women at Job’s would not be subject to the vagaries of management surveillance and control. Alice represents the power of the LSPU union organization by describing the collective action of the male workers at Job’s when Taylor attempted to time their work processes. The LSPU is produced here as a strong and united front in this particular processing plant when Alice points out that with the men gone, there was only women left to process fish. Since women did not perform men’s jobs in this plant, unloading, filleting, and freezing of fish was suspended. With no fish entering the plant, women had nothing to pack. Essentially, all work ceased. Taylor is depicted as quickly
retreating from his surveillance measures. In this story, a union, especially the LSPU, holds tremendous potential for change in the workplace.

With all that Alice has said in her account of Maurice Job Taylor, why does she say that she loved him? How are the multiple and shifting subject positionings of both Taylor and Alice unsettled by this statement? Certainly, I am left with an altered interpretation of Taylor, one that keeps open the possibility that other relationships with workers are imaginable.

Only one of the narrators' stories - those of Helen Picco - tell of Maurice Job Taylor firing women workers. She began by saying that Taylor was "so-so." Helen worked for Taylor in the office in the Southside Road plant. Although he trained Helen specifically for her work in the office, he "...used to fire me one day and tell me to put my coat on and go...and then tell me to get back to work," and on occasion, "he'd get mad." Not unlike Alice Kittinger, despite this rather unpredictable treatment, Helen then says "I liked him." Perhaps because Taylor displayed other aspects of himself to Helen, in forms of paternalism and patriarchal relations with workers, in the course of her work for him in the office. For example, Taylor received the London Daily Mail every week and often shared the newspaper with Helen. When she was working overtime in the plant office, Taylor "brought it into me to read in the night time" (Picco TS95:3-4). In her narrative, Helen indicates that she appreciated this gesture very much. I have a sense of a momentary levelling of class relations for Helen in these events.

Pearl Hunt remembers different stories about Maurice Job Taylor as well, ones that point to his differential treatment of men. Several narrators' stories recount tension between male workers and Taylor, and the firing of male LSPU workers from the plant (C. Janes TS92:13; Hunt TS92:53, 62). It appears that these firings were temporary however, as the men tell of returning to Job's within a few minutes, hours or
days. It may be that Taylor exercised his authority to fire workers in order to regulate the men in various moments and situations in the plant rather than to remove the offender from the plant as a permanent measure. Pearl told a story of Ches Janes' firing to Michelle Park in 1992. Pearl, as a worker, is implicated by Taylor in the control of Ches when he instructs her to "[W]atch him."

I can, no I can remember that, Ches was puttin the fish to me when I was checkin it out on the big checkin machine, weighin machine and, uh, Maurice did come over an tell him he was finished, got his last chance, he got fired. And he said, "Watch him." I said, "Yes Maurice." He come back again, "Ches you're gone." Next thing Ches had gone out the door, back in again (laughs)

(Hunt TS92:61)

The firing of Ches Janes was short-lived, but Pearl offered no thoughts on why this might have been the case.

In 1992, Cecil Hunt picked up and redirected the conversation with Pearl and Michelle Park to his own accounting of Taylor's management practices. Cecil, a self-described "saucy guy" during the war years when male workers were in short supply, states that "[M]yself and Maurice could never get along together" (Hunt TS92:107, 61). Cecil cheerfully reports being fired repeatedly by Taylor.

CH: Well I got fired five times in three weeks..

PH: ...in three weeks.(laughs)

MP: Oh-h. (laughs)

CH: But they used to hire ya back again see? (Hunt TS92:62)

Cecil’s last sentence provides a clue to the repeated firings by Taylor. Workers may have had little to lose by being fired by him. They were hired back again later or, as the next narrative suggests, almost before they had a chance to leave the plant.

In his narrative, Ches Janes represents his relationship with Maurice Job
Taylor as a fraught one. Ches portrays himself as inhabiting a particularly powerful and unsettling subject positioning - as the bearer of “that evil eye.” In this case, I read Ches to mean that he constituted himself, and was constituted by others, as a source of disruption and provocation in the plant. He too, begins his narrative by producing Taylor as “other,” embodied in Taylor’s penchant for riding his horse to the Southside Road plant, a distance of about six kilometres from his home. Again the contradictory account also positions Taylor as a “good man.”

CJ: Maurice Job used to ride to work back in the ’40s on the horseback.

MP: Oh really?

CJ: Oh yeah. He was a good man too you know.

MP: Yeah?

CJ: He was very strict but...you know.

MP: Yeah.

CJ: He fired me 11 times in one day.

MP: (laughs) 11 times in one!

CJ: And do ya know what...

MP: What did you do?! (laughs)

CJ: And you know what. You know the nickname he put on me? Last Chance!

MP: Last chance...(laughs) To be fired 11 times! What did you do? Did you just...

CJ: Well I was blamed in the wrong all the time. Somebody else’d do it and I’d get the blame for it. Because I had that evil eye (laughs)

(C. Janes TS92:12-13)

Many of the men’s narratives of Taylor constitute him as not being a properly masculine man in their eyes. In and through these accounts, Taylor is produced as an ineffective
boss and manager of male workers as well. Those he fires are hired back, jokes and laughter surround his actions, everyday resistances are mounted to his management methods. Another reading of these situations might be that of the tenuous and individual accommodation made for particular workers by Maurice Job Taylor. The patriarchal whims of management at Job Brothers could have unsettling results. If a worker could be fired so readily and hired back as easily, would the day not come eventually when the fired worker would not be rehired?

Some of the narrators related other stories about the actions of Maurice Job Taylor, however. These accounts suggest that he did take a personal interest in the lives and relationships of particular women in the plant. Daisy Hiscock and Pearl Hunt recounted his personal comments and actions toward them and their relationships with their husbands and presented a quite different understanding of his workplace paternalism. Daisy makes sense of the different treatment she received from Taylor in terms of good sides and bad sides to an individual.

DH: Oh yes. He was a fair man. Uh, well I know when I got married, my husband worked there all his life. Well actually, no not all his life, but most of his life, and, when we got married he gave him a week off, with pay. Never happened up there before, never happened after. First time. And uh, like when I went to, to get my cake, he drove me to, to Walsh's, Walsh's Bakery and I ordered my cake and brought me back to work. He was like that you know. Yeah. But now, I guess we got sides, we got our good ones, we got our bad ones.(laughs) Good points I should say, and our bad sides, our bad ones. But he, you know, I found him pretty good. Yeah. He was an Englishman.

LC: Was he friendly to workers in the plant?

DH: Oh yes. Yeah, yeah. I can see him now with that old pipe. (laughs) And you know, he said to my cousin Pearl, “Now, I tell ya,” heuh, he didn't have a family. He said, “I guess when I dies somebody put a flower on me.” And he's up in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery now. And every flower service, Pearl'll bring up a flower and put on his grave. I think that's the only flower he gets. Yeah.

(Hiscock TS94:17-18)
Taylor's differing treatment of workers is summed up by Daisy in the sentence, "[H]e was an Englishman." Taylor's "otherness" is again called upon to make sense of his actions in the workplace and toward the workers. His physical appearance - the pipe - is used to embody and signify difference.

The story of placing flowers on Taylor's grave is one of the constellation of narratives shared by Daisy and Pearl. Daisy introduces a conversation between her cousin Pearl and Taylor as a marker of his friendliness, but also of his difference. Pearl also recounted this relationship with Taylor at two separate points in her conversation with Michelle Park in 1992. Pearl describes Taylor as offering a firm opinion on Pearl's choice of husband - Cecil Hunt. It is not a flattering comment on Cecil, but Pearl resists the implication that her life would be one of starvation - "[H]e could only see me now" may refer to Pearl's ample weight at the time of her conversation with Michelle.

PH: (laughing) He always told me I'd starve I marry ya...

MP: (laughing)

PH: He only seen me now...But the only flower is on his grave, I puts it there every year. Yeah..

(Hunt TS92:62)

Pearl tells the "flower" narrative here almost as a moment of pardon of Taylor for his negative comment about Cecil. It is recounted and developed further later on in the same conversation. Pearl begins by telling a story of Taylor's rather dismissive treatment of Cecil after he and Pearl were married. Cecil is called by his last name, Pearl by her first name; Cecil is relegated to the back seat of Taylor's car, Pearl sits in front with Taylor. It is interesting that Taylor is positioned as directing the seating arrangements, rather than Cecil or Pearl taking charge. It is not clear whether the conversation between Maurice Job Taylor and Pearl Hunt took place during the ride in the car. It
seems unlikely to me, with Cecil present in the back of the car. Pearl then shifts the
direction of the narrative to Taylor’s charity efforts toward her family, perhaps to
explain the “flowers” story.

PH: After we got married I’d be goin down to Mom’s and be walking down
down the Southside, Maurice come along in his little car and pick us up, “You
got in the back Hunt, Pearl you get in the front.” (laughs) And then he’d
drive. I don’t know what religion he was, United or something, and he said
he wanted to be buried in uh, no he was Anglican and he wanted to be
buried in the Mount Pleasant cemetery cause all the talkers that worked
to Job’s were buried up there and he said, “Probably someone might come
along and put a flower on my grave” ....Every year I puts a flower on his
grave. (chuckles) I liked Maurice, I got along with him.

CH: Oh, I didn’t mind him either. (laughs)

PH: Poor Maurice...

CH: I used to say every...

PH: Yeah, poor Maurice, he came down this day and he said, “Pearl, “he
said, uh, “there’s some sweaters,” he said, “and that there belong to
myself and the wife. Nice to be workin at the berries with it, nice and
warm.” He said, “your Dad is not workin he said and I know” he said,
you, you haven’t got what you should have, so” he said, “here.” Brought
in this box of stuff, was a little fox stole there and, I said “yeah, sure, I’ll
wear that up to the fish plant.” (laughs) So when I dug down in the box,
there was this seal skin vest,” and I said, “he didn’t mean to give that
away, surely. There’s no way he meant to give that away.” So I ran and
asked, “in the box you got your sealskin vest. Oh my Lord,” he said, “I
was lookin for that an couldn’t find it.” “Well,” I says, “you can have it
in the morning” and I brought it up to him. (laughs) I, I could get along
with Maurice.

MP: That’s good.

PH: He wanted me to go in service with him and I wouldn’t do it.

MP: In what?

PH: Wanted me go in service, workin for him, you know...

MP: Oh, o.k.

PH: ...and, uhm, he was goin away, wanted me to stay with his wife. And
Mom said, “You knows you’re gonna do it.” And I says, “No I’m not, I’m not goin workin with Maurice Job Taylor.” So anyway, Mom had me convinced, she says, “You know, you’re gonna go.” So I didn’t know how to get out of..bye and bye, I had this ringworm come on my neck, and I rang her. And I says, “I got a ringworm on my neck, I can’t go to work for you.” (laughs) Got out of that one.

MP: Why didn’t you want to go? How old were you then anyway?

PH: I was only...15, 16, 17 somewhere round there. There was no way I was gonna work with him down Forest Road. Uh-huh..walk down there in the mornings, no way...no.

(Hunt TS92:110-111)

Not for the first time is Taylor represented as occupying multiple subject positionings in a worker’s story. With the telling of the “flower” story, Pearl remembers Taylor’s gift of a box of used clothing for her family, and the mixing of wanted with unwanted goods. She situates his gift in light of his knowledge of the cold berry cleaning conditions in her workplace, and his intimate knowledge of her family economic circumstances. The inappropriateness of some of the clothing for work, and classed nature of it - the fur stole for example - provide yet another instance for laughter at the expense of Taylor. That Pearl remembers her careful inspection of the box and her caretaking of Taylor’s goods reinscribes him as deficient and in need of careful attention.

It may have been this mutual caretaking relationship that prompted Taylor’s request that Pearl “go into service with him.” In this account, Pearl’s mother wants her to take up this position with Taylor, but Pearl resists by using a ringworm outbreak as her reason for refusing. Pearl constructs this refusal as a straightforward case of it being too far to walk each morning from her house in Fort Amherst to Forest Road, an upperclass neighbourhood even then. It is indeed, about six kilometres or more to walk. I wonder why Pearl chose to say she had ringworm, since this was a contagious disease.
thought to be contracted from unclean conditions. As a working class young woman, would this disease not constitute Pearl as unclean and impoverished? While this would certainly accomplish her aim of avoiding the domestic work in an upper-class household, it also had the potential to constitute her as lacking respectability as a working class woman. As Skeggs (1997) notes, the body and bodily dispositions “carry the markers of social class” (82). How might this positioning of herself as an unregulated, working class female body have (re)fashioned her in the eyes of Taylor and his wife, Jean?

Interestingly, although Pearl is a member of the inter-related “Family Compact” which also includes Alice and Daisy, this story does not form part of the constellation of narratives I hear from them. No-one else tells me of this gift box of clothing, or of Pearl refusing to go into service with the Taylor family.

“HAVIN’ A FEW WORDS”: RELATIONS BETWEEN WOMEN WORKERS

Women workers not only negotiated their relations with male management and co-workers, but also with each other. They brought their histories and connections into the workplace, where other struggles were enacted. Mary Dillon recalls a confrontation with a co-worker and the forelady Sheila Brazil in which Mary is ordered off the Job Brothers premises. In this rather startling story of co-worker harassment and the eruption of violence in the workplace, potential for divisions and tensions within class and gender categories is well illustrated.

MD: Then there was one time, me, me and one of the girls was havin a few

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8 My own “experience” of this constitution of identity through illness when I was a young teenager resonates for me here. In the late 1950s, I was confined at home for three weeks with a severe case of ringworm, and remember a feeling of inadequacy and embarrassment when I finally returned to school.
words and the forelady at the time, Sheila Brazil it was then, and Sheila says "O.k. you're fired." Says, "All right boy, go fill your coat," she said. I said, "Yeah, good enough." I went upstairs and put on me coat and I started walkin down the stairs, she met me and she says, "Mary come here I wants ya." I said, "What's that now?" "Go back to work, girl," she says I, "I heard what was goin on," she said, "go back to work." "All right boy!" I took off me coat, still had me hat, still got me uniform on (laughs) You put me...(laughs) went on back out through the door, went to work right. (laughs) She said, "You son of a you know." (laughs) Cause I was hopin she'd hear what was goin on, cause one of the girls was after, she, actually what happened one of the girls threw the knife at me.

LC: Oh.

MD: That's what happened, right. So I got mad and threw mine back. (laughs)

LC: Oh dear.

MD: Cause we were..you know what I mean, cleanin up the fish more or less you know.

LC: Trimmin, yeah...

MD: Trimmin, right. Now I mean I didn't throw it at her to hit her but I just give her the shock you know what I mean. You're not goin to do that to me and get away with it right. But I got caught see.

LC: Uh-huh...

MD: She didn't.

LC: So what was that about? I mean, that, what was she, what were you angry at her for?

MD: She was, she was, she was just one of those hard tickets right, an you know she started, more or less she's runnin the girls down, sometimes she'd get mad and run the girls down and say everything to her and stuff like that right, you know.

LD: You were afraid of her see...

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9 Story et al define "hard ticket" as an intractable person; a hard case. One example describes it more fully: "Anyone who was constantly getting into trouble, fighting frequently, or playing practical jokes was referred to as a 'ard ticket." Note that the definition is unstable and slippery, moving as it does from slightly menacing behaviour to joke-playing behaviour.
MD: Everyone was some afraid of her, right, cause she was a hard ticket right. So I got poisoned with her so I said she’s not gonna pin me to the wall you know.

LC: Yeah...So the union didn't involve themselves in any of those..

MD: No, no, no that was it then, that was over. Two of us were made apologize to each other an.."You better work together now or," like forelady said to her, she said, “if not,” she says, “you're goin,” said to her, “She's, you're the one started it, I knows all about it now.” Cause the girls told her see. So she came back ta tell me to get down and go to work right. I was hopin she’d find out so I just kept me coat on over me uniform right (laughs).

LC: Don't get too ready to leave!

MD: No, right, I was takin me time. (laughs)

LC: Yeah...interesting. So did, was that generally kinda the way things happened? If there was a disagreement it would be settled just sort of on the spot?

MD: Yeah, ya try...yeah, yeah, yeah. You wouldn't try to put on, more or less you wouldn't hold no grudges right. You sorta just...

LC: Yeah..

MD: ...try to settle it there right. Between yourselves an that was it.

LC: So nobody, nobody would ever kind of go to the next union meeting and say, you know, I have this problem and...

MD: No, no. No you just sorta work it out yourselves right.

LC: Yeah.

MD: Now maybe some didn't right, but like I said, uh, sometimes you know like I always found we always worked out, had a few problems and worked them out right. The same one then bought me lunch for a whole week then right. (laughs)

LD: (not clear)

LC/LD: (laughs)

MD: Every, every time I went out to go get me lunch and I'd go over and I'd, say you know, get me lunch, and, “Mary you don't pay for it all.” And
I'd say, "Oh yeah, gee that's nice." (laughs) Whole week right. But what it was, she, she didn't want to get in, cause she knew I was gonna probably be just as bad as her. Like I said right, so, so we settled the disagreement, anyway she worked it out right. So that was more or less...

LD: (over MD) Ya hadda fight just like today...

MD: ...the policy right.

LD: Ya gotta fight for your rights.

LC: Yeah, you had to stand up for yourself?

LD: I don't mean fist fights, just you know, argue it out you know. I'm right and you're wrong or..your right and I'm wrong or whatever.

MD: Yeah, we just, I mean, that was it, that was the end of it then, that was, that was the end of the line right. Sorta just happened to pick on me I guess. She, she was the type to pick on whoever she thought was soft enough, she could pick on.

LC: Yeah, yeah.

MD: Right. So I started thinkin, sure I'm not gonna let her away with it you know. Thinkin I won't be owned by that, that's stupid right...

LC: So with this particular individual have picked on other people on the line?

MD: Oh yeah, she used to pick on odd one, this one, that one so, you know, eventually she stopped it then, right.

LC: Yeah.

MD: Ye get like now, ya get some...

LD: (over MD) Troublemaker we used to call em (laughs)

MD: ...ya get, sometimes ya get a crowd, ya get one tough one in there and, uh, they'll pick on everyone that they can pick on. Even in school ya find that right, you know, and unless ya stands up to that one person, you're gone.

LC: Yeah...

MD: You're (not clear), you know and this was it right. Now I mean I never, ever come home, never told another or nothin like that, what
happened in the plant, left in the plant. You know, that kind of a way right.

LC: Yeah. Did uh, did other women treat it that way as well do you think?

MD: Well there was a couple of em yeah. Couple of em there they got fed up on her too like, so like I said, they weren't gonna take no more from her and I said “No boy,” I said, “that's it,” right. If we gotta gang up on her we're gonna gang up on her. (laughs) Not waitin around (laughs)...

LC: Did you find...how did you find workin in the plant generally?

MD: Didn't mind really boy you know. Like I said, I mean the bunch were all good like you worked with an...

(Dillon TS95:97-101)

Mary's last sentence here performs a remarkable transformation of the previous three pages of narrative. She effectively disrupts the story of tensions and violence in the workplace she has just recounted to me. It is as if the knife-fight never happened, and all was quiet and friendly at Job Brothers.

In this narrative Mary produces a rather heroic storyline describing her challenge of harassment and bullying by another woman worker at Job's. Mary positions the woman, who she does not name in her story, as a “hard ticket,” one who constantly picked on other women on the fish processing line, and uses threatening gestures to control others. In true heroic narrative style, Mary does not act until provoked, when the bully chooses to “pick on” her. A physical struggle ensues.

This is a story of the privatized and individualized settling of accounts among workers. Management is characterized as unable or unwilling to address the workers’ harassment. The union is not consulted or involved in the solution to the problem. Mary, and later in the story, other women as well, decide to “gang up” on the disrupter to end the harassment for all the women. The story shifts in the telling from Mary as hero to the careful planning of a small group of women who wished to confront the bully - the collective action of women working together to solve a problem in the workplace. In this
narrative, however, Mary takes a leadership role, and alone physically challenges the bully. This action has definite repercussions which Mary appears willing to accept. When Mary is fired for the fight, “the girls” come to Mary’s aid, telling the forelady the details of the struggle. Thus Mary is vindicated, the firing is revoked and Mary returns to the job. She had not removed her uniform or headband after her firing, hoping that she had not lost her job. In this small turn in the narrative, Mary suggests the importance of the job to her, and the cost she might have had to pay if the other women had not collectively supported her to the forelady.

The forelady, Sheila Brazil, is constituted here as a strong and fair woman, taking action and yet not unwilling to change her mind on the issue. She enforces apologies on both sides and uses her own threat of firing to keep the bully in line.

In a way, Mary chooses to occupy her own “hard ticket” positioning in this narrative. This is not a soft, feminine, vulnerable image Mary creates. She produces herself as well able to take care of herself in a knife-fight, willing to challenge another difficult worker, and to risk being fired from Job Brothers for her actions. Skeggs (1997) observes that categorizations such as class and race cut across the categorization of gender. She argues from her own work that women produced “performances” of femininity appropriate for specific sites and situations. These productions were “tactical deployments” which worked to protect women’s investments in the moment and the site, and which “gained cultural approval and validations,” thus, maintaining their respectability (115). In Job Brothers, solving your own problems, and a willingness to stand up in a difficult situation and support others in the doing were valued. In addition, Mary likely ensured that no other woman (or manager?) would harass her in the workplace.

Ultimately, the “bully” is produced as acquiescing to Mary’s superior position.
in the plant and among other workers. In Mary's storyline, the vanquished offers tokens to the winner in the form of lunches for a week in the canteen, because Mary says, "she knew I was gonna probably be just as bad as her." Mary asserts a strong moral line on this sort of event in the workplace. That is, she does not tell anyone outside of the job what goes on in the workplace - "what happened in the plant, left in the plant."

Interestingly, although Leo strongly opposed Mary's conduct regarding smoking on the street, he verbally supported her in this narrative production. Leo points to a strong discourse of individual rights which underpins Mary's narrative. He frames the narrative as one of standing up for yourself and your rights in the workplace, whether this calls for arguing for your opinion or more. As Mary says, "that was more or less the policy" at Job Brothers. They situate this story and Mary's solution in the larger terrain of the world in general, insisting that there are "troublemakers" everywhere and you have to defend yourself against them.

In re-reading this narrative against the LSPU Minutes of July 30, 1949 (see Chapter 7), I wonder if this is one example of the "actions of some members of the union at their place of employment" to which the LSPU Executive objected?

For Ettie Evans Norman, disputes were rare at Job Brothers. She says that was "...some rough talk...[by] those that needed their mouths soaped," but she avoided any connection with them in the workplace. There "...might be a little argument between girls," but Ettie down plays this as much as Mary Dillon appears to enjoy telling stories about such disagreements between workers. Ettie says she "stayed away from that" if possible, refusing the positionings of "troublemaker" and "hero," but sustaining respectability for herself (Norman TS95:3-4).
UNIFORMS

Regulation of women's bodies in the plant included the imposition of specific uniforms and headwear for the women workers. In the newspaper pictures, women weighers and packers wear uniform smocks and headscarves covering most of their hair. At no time are the men shown wearing uniforms or formal headgear in the handling of fish. The black and white photographs show women wearing a light-coloured overdress and headscarves or bandannas as they work at weighing, wrapping and packaging. Hairnets with plastic headbands do not appear in the newspaper photographs.

For fish packer Margie Tulk, working at Job's was "sometimes cold...[because] I was right by the cold storage doors." Women were expected to wear uniforms while on the processing lines handling fish products. Gloves for their hands and uniforms consisting of a green smock, rubber apron and a little hairnet with a plastic headband were provided by Job's "when you'd be right into the fish" (Tulk TS95:2-3). Under the uniforms, women piled on sweaters and long pants in order to try to maintain body heat while standing in the cold areas of the plant.

Resistance to company regulations of dress could take many forms, overt or more subtle. The headbands and nets worn by the women were one site of resistance to the control of the plant. The hairnets were to be worn in a specific manner while in the plant: covering the hair completely, with the headband sitting at the front of the hairline. Nevertheless, Margie Tulk told of how women adjusted the position of the head covering to suit themselves. It was usually worn sitting further back on the women's heads than deemed acceptable to Job's management (Tulk TS95:3). Indeed, after my conversation with Joan Donegani in Montreal, I received a xerox copy of a black and white photograph of women working on the wrapping and packing line. Joan is not certain when the photo was taken, but clearly the woman working in the foreground is
wearing the headband and haimet midway back on her head, exposing the front half of her hair just as Margie Tulk had described to me (see Figure 2).

At their home in Montreal, Joan Donegani and her husband Mike and I sat around the dining room table, looking at mementoes of her work at Job's. They showed me old black and white photographs of some of Job's women workers and these worked to structured our conversation about workers and uniforms. Mike pointed to the photograph in his hand and directed us to the uniforms in the picture. It was a picture of Joan sitting on rock or concrete abutment on the Southside Road. She identified the location as Ford's Hill, near the plant. Joan is dressed in a wrap-around style of “smock” dress, with her coat on overtop. She's also wearing a haimet and small cap set back on her head.

MD: Here they are in their uniforms, Joan is that one?

JD: Ah, yes uniform used to wear, we had...yeah we used to have that...We had to wear those things on our heads. We used to have to go home for lunch so we never really had time to...so we went home, we had lunch and came back... That's how we dressed...We had to wear the uniforms.

LC: It looks like a sort of a wrap-around smock like thing...

JD: Yeah, it was wrap-around. You tied it and then you had where the, the, the, uh, net and the uh, plastic thing on top I guess for decoration, I don't know. You had to have your head with that, covered. You know.

(Donegani TS94:1-2)

To maintain the tidy appearance “equal to that of any good cook in a spotless kitchen” described on page seven of the Daily News, February 19, 1949, Job Brothers supplied the uniforms to the women workers. Joan Donegani remembers the process by which the smocks were kept clean and in good repair.

Oh, Sue (King) used to give us the smocks and they, they'd send out to be cleaned, and uh, you know, we were, we were changed in, once a week or twice a week and uh, she, Sue would give em to us...they would, they would have them dry-cleaned. We didn’t. I don't remember doing the cleaning and they used to give us a clean smock and uh, you know.

(Donegani TS94:62)
While the women workers wore uniforms and had them cleaned by Job Brothers each week, male workers such as filetters, skinners and so on were not supplied with, nor were they expected to wear, uniforms of any sort. Filetters wore large rubber aprons over their own clothing - heavy sweaters, pants, traditional cloth caps and long rubbers. Ironically, the same women plant workers whose uniforms were supplied to them, went home to wash the fish-saturated clothing of their brothers, sons and fathers - male workers from Job's.

Whether a woman wore a company uniform or not on the job, something else remained outside of the workplace as a marker of her employment and social status - the smell of fish. Nancy Vinicombe Baird was very conscious of her summer work packing fish and working the Job Brothers canteen in the early 1950s. She remembers well riding the street car to and from the plant and how “people’s nostrils would flare” at the smell of fish on her clothes when she joined the other passengers. Nancy’s sister, Marie, lasted only a couple of days working at Harvey’s fish plant because she couldn’t stand the smell of fish. She found other employment at a grocery store in Shea Heights (Baird, personal communication, November 1995).

Although not part of an official uniform for women, waterproof boots and extra clothing worn under the smock uniform were important in Job’s workplace. Water and “slub” covered the floors of the plant, making it treacherous underfoot and the cold from the storage area chilled the workers through.

JD: Well you had to wear rubbers on our feet, like rubber boots or something and, but, when we went out we took them off. But, uh, we had to keep out feet so they wouldn’t be soakin wet...and we just wore the uniforms they gave us and stuff over our hair and things like that. Other than that, uh, but we had to make sure we had a sweater or something underneath because it could have, would have been cool.
LC: Uh-huh. Did you have gloves or anything, handling the fish or?

JD: No...I don’t remember having gloves. (Donegani TS94:33-34)

Thus, the women’s uniforms were markers of gender and the division of labour in the fish plant, and of social class outside the boundaries of the plant. They were a site of resistance of, or negotiation between, the women and the plant rules, by virtue of the way the women wore the headband and cap to suit themselves rather than the dictates of management. Lastly, the uniforms may be seen as one of the many ways in which Job Brothers produced a particular, gendered, “spotless,” “streamlined,” and modern public image of its workplace, its workers and its product.

DIRT AND DANGER: WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE PLANT

Workers’ narratives contest the public newspaper depictions of Job Brothers plant as clean and modern. Leo and Mary Dillon, for example, create together a very different image of the plant. In this conversation, they draw in the very structure of the plant, the temperature variations in different sections of the plant and the steps they took to adjust to the working conditions. They are not in agreement about working conditions, however. The severity of low temperatures is contested here. Who worked in the coldest plant areas, women or men? Masculinity and femininity become contested discourses here. Mary differentiates between sections of the plant in her analysis of the working conditions there. She suggests the section where the women worked wrapping and packing fish was colder than the section where the men worked filleting fish.

The wrapped fillets were placed on racks and loaded into the blast freezers which quickly froze the fillets. The racking and loading work was handled by men. Leo refuses Mary’s contention that the women’s worksite was cold as, and more miserable than, the
men's. Leo measures the depth of chill in the air by the number of sweaters he wore to keep warm. Both heavy labour and capacity to work in the deep cold of the blast freezers were, for some men, markers of masculinity. Here Leo describes the working conditions of the plant - the wind blowing, and seawater splashing up, through holes in the floor.

LD: Because they had holes, even in those, in the floors right?
LC: Yeah?
LD: And the water, sea water's in underneath it.
MD: Oh yeah, see the water rushin through.
LD: So when the, the...the wind'd change, the gush of wind'd come up. You, had to put the, sometimes we used to get boxes and put, steel boxes and put over the holes where, cut down the drafts.
MD: Actually upstairs was the colder part. When ya thinks about it.
LD: Yeah but down where the filleters were it was cold boy.
MD: Yeah but upstairs seemed to be cold too and miserable...right...
LD: ...(over MD) in the freezers it was some cold...
MD: ..Yeah, it was miserable too right.
LD: Then we also had uh, the, the steam heat like we did from the heaters.
MD: Cause you always had to keep your sweaters on and stuff like that right. To keep warm.
LD: Yeah....I used to have 2 and 3 sweaters on...
MD: Yeah to keep warm...
LC: Did Job's at any time supply clothing or boots...
LD: No...
LC:...or gloves or hats or anything?
LD: The, the, the paper hat and the gloves and ya hadta buy your own rubbers.
MD: Oh yeah...

LC: So, you wore your own clothes..

MD: Yeah, yeah...anything you bought, you bought it yourself, right.

(Dillon TS95:95-96)

Earlier in our conversation, while Mary poured coffee for us, Leo talked about the cold of the cold storage area where the men worked. Interestingly, Leo did not work in this area himself, yet produced this narrative in an authoritative and knowledgable manner. He assumed the authority to recount this story to me on the basis of his witnessing the events he then developed in his narrative.

LD: ....Sure it was freezing in the winter down there.

LC: (laughs) That right?

LD: Y-e-ss! Because ya had the big old rubber apron and ya had yer rubber boots on and ya had maybe two or three pairs of, or four pairs of socks on, keep your feet from freezin to death right. An uh, they uh, ya hadda cap and glove and ya had boilin water, used to warm your hand that way. Heave it down the boilin water.

LC: Oh, where was the water? Was it in...

LD: In the, in the pipes right?

LC: ... (not clear) [exchange of coffee cups]

LD: ...in the pipes right. In the pipes...

LC: Uh, sorry...when you say in the pipes, what do you...

LD: Water pipes.

LC: In the water pipes.

LD: Yeah, hot water pipes. Cause they had to have hot water see for upstairs, cleanin the pans...you know like the big sheets of pans, be with say, the one pound in it uh, the chlorine and hot water and everything to sterilize everything right.
LC: Right, yeah... So, uh, did you work in the cold storage area then yourself?

LD: Uh, no, but you could see it all.

(Dillon TS95:41-42)

Leo constructs a fascinating picture of the negotiation of masculinity at work in Job Brothers plant in this narrative. A man deals with hard work and freezing cold by various means: excess clothing and hot water from the water system in the plant. His insistence on the depth and strength of the cold, and the importance of the situating of men in the coldest work environment points to how Leo identifies himself with this masculine work, even tho' he did not work in this area of the plant himself. He positions himself as a man, and fashions his identity as masculine, in and through his telling of this work and hardship.

Cutting fingers, hands or arms was not the only danger for women in Job's fish plant. Narrators spoke repeatedly about a range of hazards that they faced: ammonia leaks from the refrigeration units which forced the evacuation of the plant and the disposal of fish and berry products in process at the time of the leak (Hiscock TS87:9; Hunt TS92:58-59); slub, water and slime on the floors of the plant causing treacherous walking conditions (Dillon TS95:40); the risk of slipping and falling on the stairs running between floors and work areas in the plant (Dillon TS95:91); of receiving shocks from aging or poorly kept machinery in the fish processing line (Donegani TS95:31-32); of falling through holes in the plant floor where the sea could be seen moving below, or being chilly all day from the drafts blowing upward (Dillon TS95:95); finally, the long-term risks, such as arthritis, associated with working

10 Little (1994) discusses ammonia leaks and the experiences of workers at the Fishery Products International plant Catalina in 1984. She identifies ammonia leakages as a "significant chemical hazard" which can irritate workers' eyes, damage corneas causing blindness, irritate air passages, cause pulmonary edema, or may result in chronic bronchitis or emphysema.
continuously - “year in and year out” - in damp, wet and cold environments (Hunt TS92:70-71; Kittinger TS94:4-5; Hiscock TS94:2-3), surrounded by “plenty of flies” (Hiscock TS92:105).

Pregnancy was constituted as a health concern by management at the plant. For Daisy Tucker Hiscock it was important not to let Job’s management know of your condition, especially if you needed your job. Her opening statement implicitly constitutes two groups of women - those who did not work after pregnancy and those who did. There was no maternity leave for women in the 1940s.

DH: Oh, forget it...Well, uh, you, well if you worked, certainly I, I didn’t work after when I got pregnant. But if you were pregnant, you did, and you needed your work, you dare not tell them you were pregnant. You hid it as long as you could. Yeah, because soon as they found out you were pregnant and it was dangerous, the floors’d be slippery or something, you had to give up work.

MP: Oh...so it wasn’t like a written rule but you knew that you...

DH: Oh, no. Yeah, yeah. (Hiscock TS92:83)

Daisy was even more firm about the consequences of pregnancy for paid work. If you were pregnant, you were expected to leave the fish plant floor. She produces an image of danger about the plant itself, the slippery floors and the knives for her constitute a risk that shouldn’t, and generally wasn’t taken. Interestingly, Daisy herself worked while she was pregnant with her first child. Her narratives do not contain any reference to an altered work environment or tasks during her pregnancy.

That’s right, yeah. At that time, even up to now, uh, when you’re found out you’re pregnant you’re workin in that plant you gotta leave, so dangerous. You know, floors are slippery and your handlin knives and you know. So anybody that’s pregnant they’re not gonna let in the fish plant. Now I don’t know anybody who....and I don’t think that’s changed. Now, it could be, but at that time, no. (Hiscock TS94:32-33)
Here Daisy extends her analysis of the dangers of the plant, and the primacy of motherhood over economic concerns into the present day, arguing that “even up to now” women would be restricted in their fish plant labour during pregnancy.

Helen White Picco describes the concern of one person, Maurice Job Taylor, for her as an individual blueberry worker. Helen usually worked in the office, doing payroll and so on, but in the fall, she was required to monitor and record the berry production.

In fall I did the blueberries. I had to wear a coat and gloves. I was three weeks at it. M.J. Taylor didn’t want me to do work over there because I was pregnant, 'fraid I might fall or something...[S]ometimes he brought me home, give me a ride.

(Picco TS95:4)

Taylor’s expression of interest in Helen’s health is touching, but many readings of his actions are possible. His actions construct specific work at Job’s as both gendered and hazardous to women. In this narrative, women (and the unborn child?) are constituted as needing protection from danger. While Helen is not fired from Job Brothers, she is confined to particular kinds of work.

Taylor’s paternalistic attitude toward a pregnant woman was double-sided. While Helen was given a ride in Taylor’s car after work rather than walking the distance to her home, she was restricted in the type of work she could do in the plant. It isn’t clear whether this also restricted her wages. Helen’s work was already taxing enough and her wages did not always reflect the hours she put in at the plant. She was paid on a salary rather than an hourly rate - about thirty-seven dollars a week. She wasn’t paid overtime, however, even though she worked more hours when fish was being processed. She was required to work “a lot of nights in case someone got hurt in the plant. Somebody had to be there to call the taxi, get them to the hospital or something” (Picco TS95:4).

This appears to have continued during her pregnancy as well. Helen had no recourse to the LCSWU for support or assistance in changing her working conditions and wages. Even
though she is listed as the LCSWU's Treasurer for many years, Helen firmly stated that she was not a member of the union, so was not eligible for assistance in negotiating her working conditions.

Secondary historical literature addressing the issue of paid industrial work and pregnancy reveals different approaches taken by employers and by women workers themselves. Sugiman (1994) notes that in General Motors car plants in the early 1950s, pregnant women were routinely discriminated against. They were not hired for work because they were pregnant: in the language of the company, when the women had a "physical defect" (127). Women employed in the textile industry in Ontario generally worked through their early months of pregnancy, but "most women quit at four and a half months, citing propriety." They did not want to be working when they "looked like an elephant" (Parr:1990:89). It is not clear whether the mill manager/owners had a policy about pregnant women working in their operations.

Axes of difference cut across this issue as well. Age and economic status may have shaped how women saw remaining at work during pregnancy. Sangster (1995) notes that older women, who had already borne children and perhaps returned to work, tended to see leaving after pregnancy as the appropriate response to a woman's condition. Companies monitored the health of newly-married women in particular, to detect early signs of pregnancy. Younger women, working post WW II, were routinely asked about their marital status and family plans. In some factory work, there might be health and safety concerns for pregnant women: use of chemicals, heavy lifting for example (237-238). Certainly, in Job Brothers plant, the less than spotless workplace, the cold, dangerous ammonia leaks, and long hours on their feet might constitute risks for pregnant women. Managers did not always move women to other work, however. No other narrator spoke of being assigned different work during pregnancy. Helen's closer
working relationship with Taylor, in the same office space, may have forced him to take notice of her condition.

INERT WOMEN AND MOBILE MEN

Interesting observations of the gendered construction of specific work can be made on the basis of the narratives and the photographs of the workplace. Work, spaces, bodies are clearly gendered. Public images, through newspaper photographs consistently represent women weighers, packers and wrappers at Job Brothers as sitting down at tables and conveyor belts while at work. The product moves to them, they perform a task and the product moves on: the women workers do not move with the product. They remain in place, largely together, in specific sections of the plant. The male workers, however, are always shown standing or moving around at their work as they off-load, fillet and trim the fish, and load the freezers (ET:April 17, 1948:8-9 and DN:February 19, 1948:7). The men transport the product; they move with the product from one section to another in the plant. This gender-differentiated representation presents an image of movement and activity by male labourers in different sections of the plant and of female passivity and stationary work patterns.

Control of technology was also men’s domain. Not only did men operate the “heavy machinery,” they also repaired and maintained the plant equipment (Kittinger TS92:94). Les Hiscock and his brother Brian repaired hazardous ammonia leaks, maintained freezers and other equipment, and Max Stevenson was a mechanic who repaired filleting and skinning machines and the conveyor system. Technology like the skinning machines, used in the 1950s, would be run so hard to process the incoming fish that they would overheat and need repairs, or a fish would be caught in the blades and the machinery would have to be dismantled, cleaned out, and reassembled, men sharpened
knives used by fileters and trimmers (Dillon TS95: 25-26, 113, 48). In this work, men moved about the plant as well, tending to problems.

Although women and men may have sometimes worked in adjacent areas of Job's plant, physically they occupied the space very differently. They perform different jobs in those spaces, and they accomplished gender differently there as well. According to Cockburn (1985) there is an important link between mobility and inertia of bodies in the construction of masculinity and femininity in the workplace. Cockburn discusses the construction of notions of masculinity in and through the physically demanding "manhandling jobs" that men do and the control and operation of machinery (100-108). While the narrators in this study do not explicitly valorize either mobility or inertia in their work, they do observe that women stand or sit, and that men move or shift things physically in the plant. These are part of the gendered definitions they produce in, and of, their work. This observation is a familiar one regarding women's and men's labour and the geography of a workplace. Mobility is an important marker of the gendered organization of space, and the division of labour in the workplace, and of the boundaries between femininity and masculinity. Moreover, this organization is obscured by our very embeddedness in it, by the way it is reinscribed and naturalized daily by the division of labour. It is easily overlooked or taken for granted as the way it is or always has been, or it may be seen as unchangeable by the participants or by an organization like a union. The women narrators from Job Brothers did not discuss this organization of gender and space as an issue to be confronted or changed.

In the next chapter, the blueberry processing line is a site of contested and contingent constitutions of femininity and masculinity, as well as class. We can see the
women and men workers of Job Brothers as complexly constituted and constituting subjects in and through the talk of selected workers - a few of the women who worked processing blueberries and some of their partners.
CHAPTER 6

BLUEBERRIES, MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

I guess it was a woman's job I 'spose, pickin dirt outa berries.....

Pearl Hunt TS92:120

INTRODUCTION

In the narrators' stories of working at Job Brothers, the blueberry processing line is a site of fragmented and contested moments of gendered discourses. As in the fish processing line, blueberry work was gender-divided. Women loaded frozen berries into the hopper to be spread on the conveyor belt. They separated, cleaned, culled and packed berries. To do this, they stood on either side of the belt, reaching across to pick out rotten, crushed or green berries, and twigs, leaves and dirt of all kinds from the passing line of berries. They lined boxes for holding berries, packed the frozen berries in boxes or cartons, placed “hot wrap” around the packages and made them ready for storage in the chilled room. Men loaded the berry boxes into the cold room.

On the berry line, work, spaces and processes are gendered, and masculinity and femininity are actively constructed in and through ordinary daily practices and discourses. Gendered work meant gendered wages, with women paid less than one-half the wages of male workers. There are affectionate feelings expressed by the women about the collectivity and solidarity with other women at Job's, about the limits of management authority and surveillance, and its potential for subversion by the women. The pleasure of fashioning oneself as a subject who acted in the face of injustice and arbitrary actions may be read in some women's narratives.
WORKING AT THE BERRIES

Blueberries were cleaned, packed, frozen and shipped from August to November. This cleaning and packaging process was women's work. According to Job's financial reports from the Board of Directors Minutes, blueberry processing seldom made a profit for the company from the 1930s through to the early 1950s (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. Of Mtgs., July 24, 1944; Reid TS95:10). Weather conditions leading to poor crops of berries and the lack of pickers to supply Job's, particularly during WW II when employment in other occupations was higher, and better paid than usual in Newfoundland, are cited in the Director's Minutes as reasons for the poor economic showing in blueberry sales (MHA, Job Bros. & Co. Ltd. Fonds, Min. Of Mtgs., September 1, 1942, June 10, 1943, August 14, 1945; Overton:1999:44-45).

Processing of blueberries for export was not the central function of the Job Brothers Southside plant. Nevertheless, this work filled the days of several women between August, when the berry crop was picked and shipped from all over Newfoundland to Job's, and October. In November the cleaned and frozen product was shipped out of Newfoundland to markets in the United States and England. According to Ches Janes, various products were made from the berries when they arrived at their destination, including jams and dyes (Janes TS92:36).

Helen White Picco worked principally in the office on the Southside between 1950 and 1954. She worked there full-time for two or three years, doing general office work, helping with payroll every Wednesday, ordering supplies for boats and so on. Helen left the office work when she had her first child and then returned as a summer replacement worker in the office and fall supervisor of berry work for two years. She remembers that the berries would arrive at Job's plant frozen and "clumped up together" so would have to be separated and cleaned, culled and packed before shipping in
five pound frozen packages. Wearing a heavy coat and gloves, Helen would keep track of
the number of boxes processed by the workers (Picco TS95:2,6).

Helen says that only five or six women were assigned to do the berry processing
work each year (Picco TS95:6). Indeed, of the nineteen women I talked with during the
course of my research, only eight told me they had ever worked on the blueberry
processing line. This number included Helen herself who did not clean or pack berries.
Some of the women worked on the berry line for very brief spells, perhaps one or two
fall periods, while some worked at the berries every fall, shifting from their place in
the fish processing and packing lines to do so.

Working at the berries, as the women phrased it, meant standing, in frosty air,
for eight hours a day beside the conveyor belt, a line of "girls" on each side of the belt,
picking over frozen berries with bare hands, with only occasionally breaking for lunch
or to use the bathroom (Kittinger TS92:97-98). They wore extra heavy winter clothing
to fend off the cold, and rubber boots were brought from home to keep their feet dry
"[B]ecause the floor was watered down all the time with cold water. We were standin in
that..." (Kittinger TS94:30). A photograph of the workers taken outside the cold storage
area in about 1945 shows women and men bundled up against the cold and crowded
together, laughing. The women wear heavy coats and headscarves, some with additional
scarves around their necks.

Women's reactions to being chosen for berry work vary considerably. Alice
Kittinger did not see berry work as a good job, but positions herself here as a chosen
worker, one who will do the work others refuse. She accomplishes the hard labour in the
company of other Battery women. Perhaps working with these women, well known to
her, made the job more palatable. They were taken off their regular work processing
fish and worked at the berries from August or September to November.
AK: Yeah. But, uh, yeah, that was very hard work. Nobody liked to goin to the blueberries, so it was me and Daisy and my sister-in-law and her sister and couple from the Battery used to go in...Jessie couldn't go in there.

LC: No? What, what would, what would the workers do then, uh, during the berry season? Would they continue...

AK: Well they just picked so many of us out of the fish plant to go out into it and uhm, they'd pick the same girls every year, you know. Cause the rest of the girls didn't want to do it!

(Kittinger TS94:29-30)

Working at the berries was constituted as women's work, both by themselves and by the men. The women stood, and as Daisy Hiscock remembers, they'd "pick out the unripe berries or twigs or leaves" as the stream of berries passed in front of them (Hiscock TS87:15). The berries arrived at Job's deeply chilled to preserve them until cleaning and packing were completed. The berries were loaded out of a large hopper and into a sifter. In our conversation about working at Job's, Daisy Hiscock remembers the blueberry line well.

DH: They had a room out here and the room, they'd have a divider. In, in, one end of the wall they'd have a chute and inside the men'd be breakin up the, takin the boxes, berries that were frozen, out of the boxes, putting them in, in a holder and then they had a big sifter and one had to stand up high, you know cause the sifter was on an angle and uh, there'd be a girl underneath and a girl on top. And the girl, well we used to change around, an hour for hour, and the girl on the bottom would put her hand in through into, in and scoop out the frozen berries, put em up to this other girl and she'd throw 'em in the sifter. Then they'd come down on a conveyor belt and there was so many girls on each side of the belt and they were pickin out bad berries, like, you know, unripe berries and dirt, whatever and then they go back and they'll be, go into another box and there'd be somebody down there to take that away and nail em up and put em out in the cold storage again for, uh, they'd go to the consumers.

LC: So where the conveyor belt was, would that have been just outside the cold storage area?

DH: Oh, yes, but was just as cold because you had the opening and cold air was coming in and I don't know but it wasn't worse because you were gettin the drafts all the time. But it was in the cold, well, just what, it
was in the cold storage room. But you know, there wasn't as much frost on
the outside as it was in where the berries were kept.

LC: Still you'd get a lot of draft..

DH: Oh, yes, yeah. Can you see yourself pickin out berries, with nothing
on your hands? Frozen berries, hummp!

(Hiscock TS94:2-3)

Daisy points to a co-operative work process on the berry sifter in this passage. The
work of hauling freezing berries down into a bucket, and then lifting and emptying the
bucket into the sifter for the initial cleaning of the berries was hard work. So the women
shifted work roles, "well we used to change around, an hour for hour, and the girl on the
bottom would put her hand in through into, in and scoop out the frozen berries, put em
up to this other girl and she'd throw em in the sifter" (Hiscock TS94:3).

Mary and Leo Dillon began comparing thoughts and memories about working on
the berry line in our conversation. Between them, Mary and Leo construct the line
process for the berry work, with each taking up, challenging or reinforcing the
narrative of the other as the conversation goes on.

MD: Well, like we, only, I used to stand up on the, on the, the line as we
used to call it an...

LD: They had a big net, wasn't it?

MD: No, like, like a belt.

LD: Yeah...

MD: Like a belt used to go down this, and they used to dump the
blueberries...

LD: It was made outa net like you know..

MD: ...dump the blueberries on it, right. It was, it was like a belt, that's
all, like a, may have been a net, I'm not sure, it used to go along there
right. We just pick out the green ones and the leaves and the rotten
berries as it passed right.
LD: (?) was the head over that too.

MD: You know, be all the frozen berries. You have em all frozen see, then you just heave em on the net right.

LC: Uh-huh...And where did they go?

MD: And then they went down then. Then they went down to the boxes, like, they used to box em up then see.

LD: Wooden boxes.

MD: Right

LC: Wooden boxes?

MD: Yeah. Mr. Baggs'd be there. Mr. Baggs used to be there right. And he'd be watchin (laughs). He'd be watchin cause every now and again you'd pick a great big blueberry comin along, and he'd say "Ah-ah, for the box" (laughs). He was a queer hand right. "Don't eat the berries, you're eatin our profit!" (laughing)

LC: (laughs) Right...there goes your wages!

MD: You just stand up on a stool, like you know....Just watch for the blueberries. I worked down there 2 winters I went down at the blueberries, I say comin on the winter time.

LD: Cold down there too.

MD: Oh, blueberries, freezin down there...

(Dillon TS95:62-64)

Mary takes the lead in describing the line and the work processes. She is most interested in conveying her description of the flow of berry line, and the cold working conditions. Leo, in turn, both challenges and affirms Mary's talk. Leo interjects and gives specific details of the technologies involved in the berry line by stressing the use of a net belt rather than a solid conveyor belt and the use of wooden boxes. He also focuses on the man in charge as a particularly relevant detail. Technologies of production and hierarchy of responsibility and surveillance are important meanings for Leo in this conversation. Mary also positions management as important in her storyline, but she does so in the
specific form of Mr. Baggs, “a queer hand” who conveyed through humour his supervision and watchfulness over the workforce on the berry line. Mary’s memory of his words when challenging women eating the good, plump berries off the line - “Don’t eat the berries, you’re eatin our profit!” - conveys an identification and alliance with management to maintain “our” profit margin. In Mary’s telling, however, these words are spoken ironically, and with good humour as she remembers the less than effective admonition.

Cecil Hunt describes cleaning the berries as “unskilled work,” requiring no particular training, in his conversation with Michelle Park in 1992. In this excerpt, Cecil positions women, including his wife Pearl, as less valued labour because she requires no skill or training to accomplish the task expected of her on the berry line. Pearl conforms with his positioning here.

CH: Anybody could do it, no skill involved.

PH: Ummm.

MP: But, uh, there was, did you have to go through a training period or something?

PH: Just go in and go to work.

MP: Just go in and go to work. So who showed ya, the person next to ya?

PH: That’s right.

MP: The person next to ya.

PH: Whoever’s there first told ya what to do.

MP: Yeah. So it wasn’t like say a supervisor or someone from management... came?

PH: Well we had a boss there but he’d say, now ya knows what ya gotta do, so go ahead and do it. (Laughs)

(Hunt TS92:50-51)
In this excerpt, Michelle and Pearl take up the discursive field offered by Cecil when he names blueberry work as unskilled. Pearl's brief answers and use of words such as “just” in describing the work constitute this activity as straightforward and simple. I wonder why Pearl does this? Why does she agree that her work is configured as less skilful and valuable than Cecil's work? Pearl suggests the male boss' attitude to the berry work also reflected Cecil's description of it as unskilled. Little, if any training was thought to be required, for it was expected that women knew how to do the work. The cleaning of berries is traditionally work done by women in the household. In this gendered assignment of work roles in the plant, the division of labour follows that of the home - women perform the preparation and cleaning work. In the following conversation, Pearl Hunt and Michelle Park call upon a discourse of domesticity and women's work to make meaning of this gender division of labour in paid work outside the home.

MP: Is there any reason why men didn't do it? Why they chose women to do it?

PH: I guess it was a woman's job I 'spose, pickin dirt outa berries (laughs)...

MP: Why...it was a type women's work, that women would be used to?

PH: That's right, it wasn't too hard right.

MP: Yeah. Like what you do in the house.

PH: yes, right...clean your berries...

(Hunt TS92:120)

For Pearl, berry work “wasn’t too hard” and thus, was a suitable job for women. An interesting turn is taken in this conversation with Michelle Park when Cecil Hunt suggests that the men would not do berry work because it is not “physical” labour. Definitions of masculinity, and by implication, femininity, begin to emerge in this
conversation.

CH: I imagine the men wouldn't do it.

MP: Why not?

CH: Wha?

MP: Why not?

PH: That's cause they're m-e-n!

CH: Not (not clear)...

PH: They were men!

CH: It wasn't, uh, physical.

MP: Yeah, ummm. And the pay wasn't as good.

CH: That's right.

PH: (laughs)

CH: When you're workin on the shore years ago, you had to be strong or else you didn't get by with a lot of it.

(Hunt TS92:120-121)

Here, a binary opposition is established between masculine and feminine types of labour. Cecil Hunt declares that men would not work on the berry cleaning line, that the work was not physical enough to be considered “men's work.” In this discourse of masculinity, Cecil equates strength, and active, physical labour with masculinity and working in the longshore. He links longshore work with the idea of strength when he says “you had to be strong,” and having the capacity to handle the work required of you as a man, working as a longshoreman. In this linking, berry work becomes a job that an LSPU man would not perform, nor would he be asked to do the work. It is, as Pearl states, not a job for “m-e-n.” Being male ensures they will not be expected to do the work.
In contrast, women's work is constructed by women and men as not requiring physical strength. In Pearl's words "it wasn't too hard," even though the women working on the berry line had to stand for many hours each day on a small stool, in the cold, and perform repetitive body movements to pick dirt, leaves and unfit berries off the conveyor belt.

The gendered nature of the berry cleaning work is echoed in comments by Ches Janes. Ches' father, Billy Janes, was foreman over the cold storage area. Ches did not work at cleaning the berries, remembering that "my father didn't want me there" (Janes TS92:5). The intergenerational discursive production of gender and gender divided work is seen here. Men did work in the berry processing, but the jobs they performed were quite separate from those of the women. Men generally handled the dumping of frozen berries into hoppers at the head of the line and the boxing of cleaned berries at the end of the line (Hunt TS92:54-55). Heavy lifting of buckets of frozen berries and use of tools for sealing the berry boxes was men's work.

Ches Janes remembers the huge capacity for production if the growing, picking and shipping conditions were right. He says "[T]here was, uh, one year there we had over 65,000 boxes of blueberries; 68 I think to be exact" (Janes TS92:36). This high production level, with some variation in the number, is also remembered by Les Hiscock, Daisy's husband, in a conversation with Susan Williams in 1987.

LH: We had 64,000 boxes up there one year. Cleanin em. The women did.

DH: Huh, weren't slow were we!? (Laughs)

LH: You weren't fast either!

DH: In how many months, now Les. That was only a couple of months!

LH: Oh about 2 1/2 months pretty much. Round there.
DH: Yeah, that’s right. Not a year! (Laughs)

(Hiscock TS87:15)

In this interaction, Les teases Daisy about the pace of work performed by the women in order to produce 64,000 boxes of blueberries. Daisy grounds her assertion that the women “weren’t slow” by pushing Les to agree with her assessment of the time it took to do the cleaning and packing work. For Daisy, the magnitude of the women’s efforts to produce the record berry quantities is key in her remembering of the work they did together on the line. As in previous narratives constructed by Daisy and Les Hiscock, intimacy and teasing humour is central to the production of the narrative.

The sociality, and solidarity, produced by women working collectively on the berry line is reinscribed in and through women’s talk together. Pearl Hunt remembers well the close physical relationship of one woman to another, and the “good relationship” this proximity and conversation produced at work.

PH: You could still talk back and forth to each other. Girl on this end, girl on that end, one here and one there, maybe one there... (indicating 2 sides of the belt)

MP: Oh god, have a five-way conversation...(laughs)

PH: Ye-s-s.

MP: That musta helped work...

PH: It did. Like I say, it, it was good relationship at work, right? It was really good.

MP: So did you find it monotonous or...?

PH: No I didn't. I don't know anybody else, but I didn't. I enjoyed it.

(Hunt TS92:69)

As Cockburn (1985) found in her study of women and men working in gender stratified jobs in a mail order warehouse in England, women valued being “[A]mong your own kind” where “you can talk your own talk, be yourself” (105). Pearl says
working with other women on the berry line was not at all “monotonous” for her. Daisy Tucker Hiscock also crafts an account of the berry line that produces a solid collective worker identity. Unlike the fish processing line, where each woman had to pack a separate load of fish and an individual woman’s pace could speed up or slow down the whole line, the berries came at a steady rate and “...everybody worked together....and there’d be no time that’d be all done” (Hiscock TS92:100-101).

Pearl and Cecil Hunt, who met when Pearl worked on the berry line and Cecil in the plant, remember together the speed of the berry cleaning line as they explain to Michelle Park the responsibilities of the women workers on the line. The work was cold, as the line was located just outside the freezers in the cold storage area. Like Daisy, Pearl remembers the rhythm of the work, an hour in the cold storage area, fifteen minutes outside in the relative heat of the plant to warm up, and then back into the cold storage area for another hour of berry cleaning. Pearl lined the berry boxes with paper before they were packed with berries. She worked at the end of the berry line, just before the berries were stored in the cold storage area.

PH: In, uh, in the coldstorage I lined boxes, picked the dirt out of the berries, stuff like that.

CH: Was the fish called cold storage? Although you worked packin for coldstorage...

PH: We were packin for the coldstorage.

CH: ...but you wasn’t in the coldstorage.

MP: ...in the coldstorage...

PH: No, no. The men were in the coldstorage, only so many.

CH: But now when it come to the berries...

PH: ...we were in coldstorage.
MP: O.k. So fish the women weren't in the coldstorage, but with the berries they were.

CH: No, they were doin coldstorage work (emphasis in tone)...gettin money for coldstorage...but they weren't actually in it.

MP: Ah, that's how it worked...

PH: Though in the chill room was very cold. (Hunt TS92:41-42)

Here Cecil Hunt differentiates between men's work and women's work in the berry operation. Men, he argues worked inside the cold storage area, while women worked outside. Earlier in their conversation with Michelle Park, Pearl and Cecil debate the temperature of the cold storage areas and the chill room outside of which the women worked. Cecil says the chill room was about -10 or -12 degrees fahrenheit, while some of the cold storage areas, the "sharps" he calls them, could go to -45 degrees fahrenheit (Hunt TS92:26-27). A scale of coldness is conveyed in this comparison, and thus, the women's work area can be said to be less cold than other areas, undercutting women's contention that their work was arduous because of physical working conditions. The implication of this differentiation is that men were expected to do work under greater hardship than women. Several minutes later in their conversation, Cecil returns to this emphasis on work location and environment when he describes the boxing of berries.

As Daisy Hiscock pointed out earlier, the pace of the berry line was slower and easier than the fish processing line. Women could talk together, have a laugh, and still get their work done easily. There was still a "quota" to be met of 50 buckets of blueberries to be processed each hour. Pearl, working as a box liner, describes to Michelle Park how the berry line operated as the women moved in and out of the cold room trying to stay warm. Each hour, the women would get a fifteen minute break to stand in the warmer areas of the plant.
PH: ...Like, on the berry buckets, we put out fifty buckets of berries an hour right. Then you’d go out for fifteen minutes, out in the, the heat. And you come back in again you had fifty more buckets. Then be somebody on the buckets, I’d have to have fifty boxes lined...so...

MP: O.k. So it was like you had to get your job done for the next person so you were responsible for keepin up the pace.

PH: Yeah, yeah. Like the girls on the berry buckets they put down fifty buckets of berries an hour. The girls on the conveyor belt’d pick the dirt out of em and I’d have the boxes lined for them to put the berries in.

MP: Now fifty buckets or boxes an hour, was that a fast pace, did you have to hurry to get that done?

PH: Not too bad...

MP: Umm, but, so it was comfortable...

PH: But you only made sure you put the fifty buckets down...(laughs) no more (laughs)...you’d have em all complainin. (coughs loudly)

(Hunt TS92:51-52)

Pearl points to an informal arrangement negotiated among the women working on the berry line, and the management of Job’s, by which the women actively participated with the management of Job’s in the co-regulation of production flow. At the same time, the women asserted control over the speed of the line, and thus, their work, and kept their daily workload manageable. The women controlled the pace of blueberries passing in front of them on the conveyor belt line by restricting the number of buckets of blueberries poured down the hopper in the cold storage room at the start of the conveyor belt. The women worked together to process the berries quickly and smoothly, but maintained the fifty bucket limit through informal pressure on the others in the berry line. Dumping more than fifty buckets of berries onto the conveyor belt line would bring protests from your co-workers; dumping less than fifty buckets could incur the interest of management.

CH: The way it was comin out of coldstorage for them, put the boxes of
berries on the machine. It was on one end there was a hatch there like in the wall, and they passed, the berries'd come down and in there.

MP: Berries come down the hatch, o.k.

CH: Into the buckets...

MP: ...to the buckets...

CH: ...and up and they were all dumped in the machines. And the machine goin around right.

MP: Oh, to clean them? The machine goin round...?

CH: Yeah, it clean so much...

PH: It come down for em to go down conveyor belt. Then they (the women) picked the dirt out of em and them and then they (the berries) came down to the boxes where I was to.

CH: Now, there was me in the coldstorage...open the boxes as they came in and put them out of the cold for the machine. Then on the other end of the machine there'd be another room in there with men in there, and the berries that come in, come in to the boxes. We used to take the boxes out, put the paper down in side them and put the cover, uh, nail their covers on. And then, when the boxes, covers nailed on there'd be a couple of more guys...

PH: Puttin em on...

CH: ...puttin the metal straps round with the machine and puttin two boxes of blueberries together. And they stuck em together. So that's the way they'd go out then, two boxes together.

(Hunt TS92:52-53)

We can see here the gender division of labour in the blueberry processing line. Cecil again emphasises the work of men in the cold storage area. He uses that to differentiate between men's work and women's work. The men were inside the cold storage where the berries were kept chilled, they poured the berries into the hopper, and they worked at the other end of the conveyor belt, hammering the wooden lids on the berry boxes. Then the men used machinery to bind the boxes with metal straps into bundles for shipment. Lastly, the men hoisted the heavy boxes onto high stacks of boxes. Cecil is adamant in his
conversation with Michelle Park that women could not do this work. Masculine strength was required and the physical ability to work in cold conditions inside the cold storage area.

CH: No!

MP: Women couldn’t have done it.

CH: No, no because the, like, I used to be in the cold storage...

PH: Today they might.

MP: Ummm, kick up a stink. (laughs - PH coughs)

CH: ...storin up boxes. Ya had maybe ten or eight piles, storin up boxes...

PH: ...Store em up high and that...

MP: Oh, so you’d need to be a lot stronger for that..

PH: Yeah...

CH: And ya had ta be quite strong at it...Uh, uh, put it this way that the young fellas today had to work they’d drop dead...

PH: Well...

MP: They wouldn’t put up with it...

PH: No.

CH: ...especially the longshore...

PH: No way..

CH: They’d never do it. 

(Hunt TS92:55-56)

In this passage, Cecil and Pearl also assert their abilities to work hard and not complain, unlike how they perceive younger workers would react to the cold, tiring work. The construction of the work they did as “hard,” “cold,” “tiring,” and as requiring strength and endurance enables the Hunts to set themselves apart from workers in today’s
marûetplace. It brings to their narratives a meaning of strength of character and endurance in which they have much pride.

Pearl Hunt introduces another discourse into her husband’s discussion of women’s abilities to work as he had at Job’s. Pearl’s discourse resists Cecil’s equation of masculinity with strength. She suggests that, “today they might” do the work that Cecil had performed at Job’s - that women might take on the jobs and perform them as well as men. Michelle Park picks up this resistance to Cecil’s discourse of masculinity and suggests women “might kick up a stink” if they were refused work in the coldstorage area. Immediately, Pearl shifts her position to support that of her husband’s assertion that “young fellas” would not do longshore work today. Cecil has turned the flow of talk subtly away from the challenge imposed by Michelle regarding women’s work and on to the physical inadequacies of young men, thus dispelling the potential for disagreement on the issue of women’s work.

Daisy Hiscock remembers differently the work of women in the blueberry processing. She sees the work of women as hard and cold, even if they were not inside the cold storage area. Rather, she emphasizes the handling of the frozen berries and the efforts women made to keep warm working in the cold, drafty work area for eight hours a day.

DH: The men were what we call right in, in the main cold storage, but now, we used to take the berries out through a chute in a bucket. And there’d be a, a woman down on the bottom passing it...now this, this sifter was high and this woman, the woman would pass up a bucket of berries to the other lady. In the mean time you were standing right long side it, the plug we, we called it, and all the frost was coming out on top of you. And we worked in there for a, half an hour with our bare hands...

MP: No gloves...

DH: ...no gloves, freezing and we’d come out when the half hour was up we’d come out and uh, we call it get a warm up for ten minutes. By that
time you were full of condensation so then you went back in the frost again. And we went to work at nine o'clock in the morning and we got off at one o'clock for lunch, we went back two o'clock and we worked til six. So that was only while the blueberries were in season... (Hiscock TS92:1-2)

Alice Hunt Kittinger suggests some further health and safety concerns the women faced in the berry line. In the cold, the wet floor became “frosty,” and, as Alice says, “…you had to be very careful on the floor cause you could slip you know, hurt yourself” (Kittinger TS92:97). Mary Dillon also remembers the dangers of stepping onto the slippery floor around the conveyor belt. She says, “Yeah. You know, you had to be careful, cause like I said, the blueberries were slimy, if somethin got on the floor or somethin, you know like down in the frost down there right. Every time you opened the freezer, the frost’d.. (gestures a pouring out of frost onto the floor)” (Dillon TS95:64). Frost-covered, slimy, and wet floors were an everyday occurrence for the women of Job's. They also had to contend with the uncertain footing of standing on small wooden stools. Pearl and Cecil Hunt recount to Michelle Park the purpose of the stools.

PH:...They had little, little stands made for us to walk, keep a, stand on, cause we were walkin in water all the time.

MP: So you weren't walkin in water?

PH: No. You'd walk in it if you had to go around but you had these stands, wooden stands, to stand on.

CH: They had the wooden stands...

PH: And then you step off it and you're in the water like you know. (Hunt TS92:59-60)

These stools were used on the berry processing line and in the fish weighing stations. Mary Dillon remembers standing, balanced, on a short stool or “the box” as Mary called it, a couple of inches off the wet and frosty floor (Dillon TS95:64). The stools were not easy for all the women to stand on. Indeed, Cecil and Pearl Hunt together remember the
problems associated with standing on these stools.

CH: Your wooden stand in the uh, we'll say a wooden stand that wide right...(gestures the size of about ten or twelve inches)

PH: Yeah....

CH: ...and be a board here and a board here. But always it seemed there, there was a worker couldn't stay on the wood.

PH: Couldn't stay on it see?

CH: And...then we just took two pieces of two by four across this way...

(Hunt TS92:60-61)

In this telling, Cecil describes the men building larger stools or boxes for the women to stand on at their work. This theme of repairing and maintenance work in Job Brothers plant being done by men is a recurring one in women's and men's narratives. Men repaired machinery and equipment when it broke (or was broken) down (Dillon TS95:25; Hiscock TS87:32; Hiscock TS92:10), sharpened knives for the fishers and trimmers in the plant (Dillon TS95:48) and so on. The training of women workers on various machines was conducted by men as well. For example, Jessie Earle Thomas remembers a "young man named Sid" helping her learn the pace of the skinning machine (Thomas TS94:17), and the Americans, Benatti and Carrari, from A & P Tea Company trained women on the fish processing machines they brought to Job Brothers (Kittinger TS94:28).

OPPOSITION TO WORKING THE BERRY LINE

Although the women narrators performed a variety of tasks while in Job's employ, not all chose, or were chosen, to work on the berry processing line. Joan Donegani, who started working at Job's in about 1946 when she was fourteen, remembers wanting to be chosen to work at the berries.

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JD: No, they had, I just, I was never hired, I, I've seen it done but I've never worked at it, you know. I think Violet and Cynthia (King) did but uh, I didn't. I would have liked to, but I didn't.

LC: Oh yeah...how did they, uh, pick...

JD: Well, I guess they, they picked the girls they want to do it and so they were picked and I wasn't. I wasn't a berry...(laughs)

LC: (laughs) You weren't a berry, weren't a berry person...

JD: No...

LC: Do you have any, uh, sense of, uh, what they were looking for in the blueberry workers or why you wouldn't have done it?

JD: No, I, I think uhm, Violet might have been there before me working, so maybe they took the older, uh, older employees who were there longer. I have no idea what their, what their uh, wanted or uh...

LC: Yeah.

JD: I know that I didn't...I would have liked to have worked there but I never did.

(Donegani TS95:52-52)

The process of decision making by the management of Job Brothers as to which women would work on the blueberry processing line, and which would not, is not available in Joan's narrative. Perhaps this process was never obvious or consistent enough for women to understand and address for themselves. Instead, Joan makes sense of not being asked to work on the berry line by reference to age and experience. Her friend, Violet, older and with a longer record of work with Job's does work on the berry line. Joan constitutes herself in this narrative as a young, inexperienced worker, perhaps positioned by her employers as such, and thus not ready for the berry processing line. Joan's speculation that Job's was interested in older, longer employed women working at the blueberries is challenged by the narrative of Pearl Hunt. Pearl remembers the start of her working life at Job Brothers in 1941. She began by working at blueberry

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processing when she was just twelve years old. Her mother tried to oppose her working at Job's, but Pearl went down to the plant with her older sister and cousin.

...right. Dad brought a list of paper down. He said, anyone wanna go to work at Job's....at the berries, and Mom said, "No, we're not goin," and I said, "I am goin." So we went... my sister Vera, myself, Daisy [Hiscock] and all of us went there and uh...

(Hunt TS92: 2-3)

In remembering her hiring at Job's, Pearl constitutes herself as resisting her mother's wishes and asserting her own independence by accompanying her relatives to Job's for work.

At this point in their conversation with Michelle Park, Cecil Hunt re-directs the talk away from Pearl's experiences of work as a young girl and onto pictures Michelle had taken along to her meeting with the Hunts. Cecil begins to identify the men in the picture - the executive of the LSP Union of which Cecil was a member for many years. Pearl takes up the storyline offered by Cecil and addresses her talk to the contents of the photos. Several minutes later in the conversation, Pearl deliberately returns to the story of her first job at Job's. This is a direct change of topic, one that Pearl controls. She again begins to tell about her time at the berries.

PH: Anyway I went to work to Job's. Couldn't reach the berry-belt.

MP: (laughs)

PH: Gandy Coombs, the fella in that picture said, "I'm gonna get a block and tackle and stretch ya." Anyway we worked there. I used to be on the line, boxes and different things down there. But I liked it.

CH: You know it was the best work that they could do.

PH: Yeah. I liked it.

MP: Yeah? At the berries?

PH: Yeah...

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CH:...at the longshore...during the war.

PH: ...Yeah, berries and the fish...yeah.  
(Hunt TS92:4)

Although small in stature, and young compared to women she worked alongside, Pearl asserts her pleasure in the work at Job's. The teasing comment from her male co-worker (and perhaps supervisor) is remembered well, and it implies attention given to her in her work. At Michelle's query, Pearl expands her statement about liking the work to include all of her work at Job's, not just the berry line. Pearl seems to be speaking here directly to Michelle as their line of conversation runs parallel to that of Cecil. Cecil asserts that longshore work was the “best work” that “they” could do during the war. It seems here that he is not referring to women workers in this statement, as women were not considered to be doing longshore work, nor do narrators verbally categorize women’s work in this way. He continues in this thread of conversation during the next few pages of transcript, turning the focus of the conversation from Pearl’s work to his own and the physical demands of male longshore work. The importance of Pearl, and her work is undercut by this gendered elision.

Ettie Evans Norman remembers refusing to work on the berry processing line during her time at Job’s. In our conversation, Ettie links her departure from Harvey’s processing plant on the other side of the harbour to their processing berries. She firmly states, “I wouldn’t work at the berries...didn’t want to go pickin’ no berries...don’t want to work at it.” Ettie considered this work unsuitable for her because people working on the berries were “not my company.” She thought them a “rough crowd,” “from the Battery and places like that” (Norman TS95:2). Ettie constitutes particular work at Job’s (and Harvey’s) as unacceptable on the basis of workers' behaviours, and then explicitly ties these behaviours to specific geographic locations in the city. The workers'
places of origin are used as social markers to inscribe on them an inferior status, lacking proper conduct and therefore respectability. Thus, behaviours are tied to a class position lower than Ettie constitutes herself as occupying. These co-workers are undesirable companions in Ettie's fashioning of her life.

As Helen White Picco recounts, women's health could be used to justify a woman's exclusion from the berry line. She remembers opposition to her supervising the berry line when she was working while expecting a child. "Maurice Job Taylor didn't want me to do work over there because I was pregnant, 'fraid I might fall or something" (Picco TS95:4). The slimy, slippery and frosty condition of the floors in the cold storage area where the women worked at the berries was a potential site of danger for women.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS: THE MEANINGS OF CLOSENESS

From the late 1930s through to the plant closing in 1967, women and men worked together at Job Brothers. According to Ian Reid there was considerable "family interconnectedness" in the plant - daughters, sisters and mothers worked alongside fathers, sons and male cousins. He observed "...I don't know whether I should say this or not, but a lot of these people came from the Brow...(distinct pause).. and they're just like that (crossing fingers to indicate closeness)" (Reid TS95:28). For Reid, this closeness had social meanings and material consequences. It could make hiring new workers fairly straightforward as a pool of people already existed and could be easily tapped, but hiring from that pool had repercussions as well. In the mind of the manager, Reid, some of these results were good and some not so good.

IR: Oh I think you just, the word went out that, that, I remember uh, when I moved over the Southside I wanted to get a, a new secretary so I sort of said to somebody, do you know anybody around who's...25 minutes the phone rang [clears throat].... And this girl phoned me, she, she had a commercial course and she came down and she lived up on the Brow and
uh, so I hired her and she worked for me long after the plant was closed. She worked for, uh, Ayre's and she worked with me at uh Reid Newfoundland Company. [Name of woman]. Great girl, great girl. But that went out. You see, they wanted a, somebody from the Brow and [name], I can't remember her maiden name, she lived up on the Brow.

LC: So when you say they wanted somebody from the Brow...

IR: Sure!

LC: Can you explain that one to me?

IR: Well they wanted to keep everything they could, control of everything they could, up in Shea Heights.

LC: The, the workers, or...

IR: Yeah. The workers.

LC: What, tell me about that. I haven't heard that sort of expressed (not clear)

IR: Well, I don't, uh, well, a lot, as I said a lot of the people came from up there and uh, the more people that came from up there the more sense of sort of belonging, uh, and uh, you know when we had these strikes and things like that there were, that's where they all came from...

LC: Uh-huh, so there was a kind of community solidarity...

IR: Yeah...

[Edit]

IR: Yeah, I mean somebody, Jack Yetman'd say, "I think we need 3 or 4 girls," and gee, next morning there were about 20 down there! (laughs)

LC: That right?

IR: Well you see it was good money!

LC: Yes...

IR: And steady.  

(Reid TS95:35-37)

Reid cites good money and steady work as the reasons why any young woman, in
particular, would take employment at Job Brothers. As we have seen in earlier chapters, women had many other reasons for seeking work there including job availability, proximity to home, and knowledge of the work and the people. Family and friendship ties were important to many of the narrators. For example, the solidarity and closeness Reid speaks of - knowing everybody - was important to Daisy Hiscock’s returning to work at Job’s. For Reid, positioned as he is in this narrative as manager of Job Brothers Southside fish plant operations, solidarity of workers could mean problems for his management of the plant as well. He makes sense of this solidarity in an adversarial manner when he cites a “sense of belonging” as a force in strike situations at the plant. So for workers, solidarity could be a positive thing, a chance to gain employment and feel comfortable in the workplace, while for management, such close relations could provoke deeper problems in managing the workers.

One of the outcomes of gendered work arrangements in both fish and berry processing was the mixing of women and men in the workplace. Husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and cousins all connected at various times, for various narrators in the Job Brothers plant. Frank Sainsbury, who worked in the cold storage area in the mid-1940s, met his wife Joan Hicks at Job Brothers in about 1946. Joan worked for Job’s throughout the war, and until they married in 1947, she was a weigher and a forelady. Her father and her brother worked at Job's as well (Sainsbury TS96:60-62). Mary Dillon’s brother, Dick, worked outside at Job’s, and Suzie Scott’s father and three nieces were employed there as well. Alice Kittinger earlier described her father as working at Job’s, as did her brother Cecil. Pearl and Cecil Hunt were one couple who met at Job Brothers. Cecil worked as a longshoreman, processing seals, loading and off-loading coal, and handling fish in the coldstorage area. It was in the much-contested cold storage area that Pearl and Cecil met.
CH: And see, this is how I met her.

MP: Oh! Oh I see, so met across some berries.

PH: (laughs) Workin at the frozen berries.

CH: Took her to the pictures...

MP: Mrs. Hiscock sayin she counted up 20 people who met, met up down there, or 20 couples anyway...

PH: Yeah, that's right. Twenty couples yeah. (Hunt TS94:55)

With opportunities for heterosexual liaisons in the plant, whether on the berry line or in the box loft, regulation of women's bodies in the workplace was also a family matter. Women recount experiences with familial patriarchy operating to regulate them in the workplace. For Pearl Hunt, the familial atmosphere she liked about the plant could inhibit her relationships with others around her. Her father attempted to regulate her interactions with men in particular, advising her as to who was acceptable to speak with and who was not.

PH: I used to hear Dad say, "Now don't go near this one, don't go near that one, cause they're hard cases." And I said, "Dad, you know, they're nice people." And he say, "I don't trust. This one's a skimmer, that one's a skimmer, you know." "Well," I'd say, "there's none of that where we're to Dad."

CH: Did he tell ya the same with me? (laughs)

PH: (laughs) Often, often...I didn't listen. (Hunt TS92:118)

What was acceptable to Pearl was not acceptable to her father. Cecil Hunt received the same stinging criticism as the other men working around Pearl. Cecil observes that many of the men worked together at different times as longshoremen, so knew each other through those workplace relations. He adds, however, that he "never knew that she existed," until he met her in Job's plant, even though he had worked with many of the
Tucker family (Hunt TS92: 118-119).

Daisy Hiscock was embedded in a complexity of relationships inside the plant, relationships that reached well beyond the boundaries of Job's. In 1992, she represented this complexity to Michelle Park.

DH: Yes. A good many up there met their match. Yes. I met my husband there and, oh, I was namin', trying to name em up the other day and I came to twenty pairs...

MP: Really? An like fathers and children and...

DH: Oh yes, fathers and sons and daughters and mothers too! Not too many mothers, at that time because if you had small children usually the mother stayed home. And uh, it worked that way.

(Hiscock TS92:8-9)

Remaining home with young children was certainly the "way it worked" for Daisy. Social expectations about marriage and children, rather than paid labour, as women's role were obvious to Daisy. Marriage was to be sought after, and prohibitions were well known - stigmatization as an "old maid," and marginalization in the community could be the result of choosing another path. Daisy remembers that, "...if you weren't married when you were seventeen or eighteen you were an old maid. That's right..." (Hiscock TS92:90). Daisy Tucker married Les Hiscock just before her twentieth birthday (Hiscock TS94:46). Once married, a young woman was expected to leave her paid labour to concentrate on domestic labour: caring for her new husband, her home and children.

That's right yeah. See at that time there wasn't that many married women that would work. Cause usually we were young people, you know, single girls, few married women. But like when I got married, when I left, when I got pregnant, and I left work and uh, after I was goin back, me and my husband, we just sat down and talked about it. Certainly we had a, we always talked, whatever was goin on, any plans, nobody done anything on their own, we talked it out right.

(Hiscock TS94:31)

Many women ceased work at Job Brothers once they had their first child. Others
continued to work there throughout their married lives. Still others left when the
children began arriving, and returned to Job Brothers only after their children were old
enough to attend school or other child care arrangements could be made to cover the work
hours. Daisy Hiscock left work when she had her first child, remained at home until the
last of her children was older, and then returned to Job Brothers. She accomplished this
against the wishes of her husband Les, however.

DH: ...After when my children, after my, after I was married and I had
my, my, my family and they were reared up and I said, told my husband
that I was goin to work and he said, "No you're not," I said, "Oh yes I
am." He said, "If you, if I sees you down on Job's wharf when I, when you
are walkin on, I'll walk off." And I said, "Well, buddy, tch, 'spect you'll
be walkin off cause I'm goin to work." And he said, "No you're not." And
anyhow, I phoned the boss [Jack Yetman] and he told me to come down and
go to work and I got, my husband got up and went to work and I got up, got
ready and went to work. And he didn't even know I was workin till he came
up on the floor and saw me up in the plant. But he didn't go, he didn't walk
off the floor.

MP: Why did he not want you to, not want you workin? Did he want you to
stay home or?

DH: Eh, yeah, I, I think what it was, at that time, if you were married,
and your wife worked, uh, it was a, you were like downgraded...you
know...But, like I, I said to him you know, I said, you know, it was silly
for me to stay home worryin about bills when I could be out helpin.

[edit]

DH: But now if my children were small, there, there was no way I would
do it.

(Hiscock  TS92:110-111)

For Daisy, the practicalities of raising her family and keeping them fed and clothed was
paramount. The reproduction and maintenance of a middle-class family formation was
not as important to her as earning money for the family.

DH: ....and my children were big and we had responsibilities. We were
after gettin a house and I couldn't see, I couldn't see the logic in me sittin
home after twelve o'clock all my work was done, worryin about bills and
not doin anything. Didn't make sense to me. And he was o.k. after. [laughs]
LC: He came home at the end of the day. [laughs]

DH: That's right, he never even said, "Now I told ya." See, he knew that was the wrong word to say to me. Nobody tells me do it. I wouldn't mind talkin it out but don't give orders...

(Hiscock TS94:32)

Juggling paid labour and domestic labour was a common occurrence for women at Job's. In 1987, Daisy and Les talked with Susan Williams about the difficulties of managing paid work and domestic labour at the same time. Here Daisy produces herself as a hard worker, determined to maintain her household and work at Job's despite her husband's objections. Les was not to see the effort it took for Daisy to fashion herself as the competent homemaker.

DH: Well no I took 5 or 6 years off with my, with my two children, when they were small, until they got big enough. I guess well one was eight, and one was nine, then I went back to work for a year. Yeah...

SW: Were they in school, how did ya...?

DH: Yeah, they were in school, yeah.

SW: Musta been a bit rough workin those long shifts tho'...

DH: Oh-h, was it ever...

SW: ...cause of the kids.

DH: I used to get up in the morning, at 6 o'clock, my husband'd be gone because he was workin, he used to go to work 6 o'clock. And I'd get the children up, get their breakfasts, and make the beds and, and, get them ready for school, get em off to school, and, when my husband was workin nighttime, when I'd get home 11 o'clock I'd do wash, work a week's wash, and when he'd go to work in the morning, before I'd get the kids up, I'd go out and hang out my clothes. And the woman in next door, he didn't know what was goin on, and the woman in next door to me used to take it in off the line before he'd get home and, and if it rained she took it in for me. And when he, and then while that night then, when he'd be back to work again, if I was off on the Saturday, it'd be usually on a Saturday night, I'd iron that clothes and put it away and he did never did know how his clothes got cleaned.
LH: (snorts)

DH: Because he didn’t want me to go to work in the first place and I wanted him to know that I could do it, the two things...(laughs)

LH/SW: (laughs)

DH: But one day he come home and saw all the clothes on the line and wondered how it got there. So I had to explain how for all them years all what I was doin. (laughs) Yeah, and ya done your housework and everything else besides that. But was hard goin for a while.

SW: No automatic washer...

DH: No. Wasn’t automatic. I had just an old wringer washer.

LH: Rough scrubbin board with it.

DH: No I didn’t! I done that when I was younger. (laughs)

SW: So what did you do, where did the kids go after school then, if you were workin long...some long hours.

DH: Yeah, well the woman next door used to keep an eye out on em, and, and, uh, my daughter, well she was, she was the oldest and she, you know I taught her how to cook and bake and whatever, you know, so she was able to come in and look out to them and provide a home.

(Hiscock TS87:28-29)

The burden of responsibility for maintenance of the home was shared with Daisy’s neighbour, a version of community support for each other in Fort Amherst. Ultimately, however, the intimate, internal workings of the family home such as meal preparation and baking are maintained by Daisy’s daughter, not Les. He does not seem to share in responsibility for this work. Through Daisy’s construction of this period of her life, we can see the discursive production and generational reproduction of strictly gendered roles in the home, serving a middle-class, perhaps a “respectable” working-class standard of family life. Further, the social geography of Fort Amherst, and perhaps a sense of gender, familial and community obligations actively supports Daisy in her
negotiation of domestic work and paid labour.

Although Mary and Leo Dillon met outside of Job Brothers plant, they worked together at the plant after they were married in the late 1940s. Like Daisy Hiscock, Mary understood the place of women in her community of Shea Heights. The inter-generational message Mary received from her own mother was that a woman's place was at home with her children. Mary is clear that women knew that was their job after marriage. She remembers thinking “Well, now I'm getting married, I guess that's where I'll be” (personal communication, October 1995).

Through the 1950s and 1960s, Mary and Leo had seven children, and they found managing the demands of money and family time to be very difficult. For the first few months after the birth of Mary and Leo’s first child in the mid-1950s, Mary’s mother took responsibility for child care. She was “getting on in years,” however, so Mary made the journey from Job Brothers plant to her home in Shea Heights twice a day, arriving at lunchtime to check on both her mother and her baby. For the next three children, Mary chose to remain at home, concentrating on domestic labour. By the early 1960s, however, Leo’s pay did not cover the expenses of running their expanding home, so Mary returned to work the night shift in Job’s canteen, while Leo worked the day shift on the wharf. Child care responsibilities were shared by Leo and Mary, with the help of a teenaged baby sitter (M. Dillon, personal communication, October 1995).

MD: Yeah, just one summer I did the night shift that's all. That was, that was 1961, right. I done the night shift right.

LD: And I was on day shift.

MD: Yeah well that's when I was on...

LD: (over MD)...so I'd be here, the babysitter'd be lookin after the
children, but I'd be here sleepin so if there was anything wrong, she'd have to wake me up right.

(Dillon TS95:105)

Leo does not mention the physical maintenance of the home as a priority, nor does he ever describe his part in that work. Being present for the babysitter, while still getting his night's rest appears to have been the main objective in these arrangements. Mary’s desire to be home with her children underlay her dissatisfaction with the child care arrangements she had to make during those years. The message of gender responsibilities learned from her mother - a mother should be with her children and raise them - organized and supported a division of labour in the home emphasising the male breadwinner role for Leo. Men were to work outside the home, provide for their family, while women were to maintain the house and family members. Gendered subjects were constituted by, and were constituent of, gendered space and divisions of labour in the fish plant and the home.

Daisy Hiscock and Pearl Hunt were the only narrators to mention the number of couples meeting at and marrying from Job's. Relationships and sociality have meaning for these women in and through these narratives. As I noted earlier, the overlap of stories among Daisy, Pearl and Alice is more marked than with other narrators. Their marital and kinship ties, as well as the geographic proximity of their homes to each other during their work years at Job's may account for the fixing of a constellation of narratives which have been reinscribed by their telling over the years.

Pearl Hunt liked the close relationships of the plant, the atmosphere there “brought families closer together and your work, you know you're workin with people....Like everybody knew everybody...” (Hunt TS92:57-58). Close personal relationships, or the possibility of them, may be linked to the rapport between some of Job's workers. Daisy Hiscock points to the fun of the workplace in her narrative, they'd
"laugh and joke, long as you got your work done you know....sing a song and everything. We used to make up songs... (Hiscock TS92:98-99). Pearl, who was related to both female and male workers in the plant describes with glee in her voice some of the tricks played at the end of the run on the berry line.

PH: But, uh, like when we worked at the berries we used to love for the end of it right.

MP: End of your shift or the end of the berries?

PH: End of the berries.

MP: Why?

PH: [laughs] Well...play tricks on the men. Take their hats, nail em on the wall, take their shirts, nail em on the wall. [laughing] Let em get who did it. That was fun, we used to have some fun.

(PH) (Hunt TS92:22)

Pearl constitutes herself in her narratives as both playing jokes and having jokes played on her. She is both the subject and object of the tricks, and constitutes herself as victim and co-conspirator. On the berry line, a male relative played a memorable trick on her.

PH: Yeah, Uncle Dick almost got fired at that. (laughs)

MP: How?

PH: How?

MP: What, not strong enough?

PH: No! (laughs) Well he got me...uh, he got me, he strapped me in a box. (laughs)

MP: Go on!

PH: Put my hands up for a berry box and they hauled me on the conveyor, put me in a box and strapped me into it. (laughs) The bell went for 15 minutes and I couldn't get out. I can see Jack Yetman now.

(PH) (Hunt TS92:53-54)
The berry line was a site of much joke playing but the fish packing line provided opportunity for fun as well. Rubber bag packaging designed for vacuum packing fish could be used in a variety of ways, including against the men. Pearl describes the bags as being like "condoms," and that the women "...used to fill up them bags and get up on a height and fill em with water. (laughs)....Drown, drown the men (laughs)" (Hunt TS92:29). Margie Tulk's narratives focussed specifically on this packing line and the fun she had there. "Girls at the packing, that's the crowd that had the fun. Cause they were all together, you know" (Tulk TS95:7). Gendered spaces in the plant provided the opportunity for women to organize; the women could talk throughout the day and plan jokes together. Margie had no other family working at Job's but to her "it was a desirable place to work...I loved it...Loved to get up and go to work in the morning." At Job's "you knew everyone," and they were "all friendly" (Tulk TS95:2). She says she "...never used anything as an excuse, you know, to stay off" (Tulk TS95:7). In her short narrative, Margie constructs a workplace that is a comfortable and "steady" place to be in her life. She emphasizes only positive images of Job's, and of her dedication as a worker. At that time, Margie's husband was ill and she did not have much social life outside of the plant. This may contribute to her positioning Job's as a principal site of pleasure in her life at that time. Margie fashions a unitary and fixed discourse about Job's workplace and the work there. She positions many of the other women in the plant as feeling the same about their work.

As in the fish processing operation at Job's plant, women's (and men's) remembrances of the blueberry processing are mediated by their relationship to the production line and to other workers. In their talk, women identify and name the work of processing blueberries as cold, tiring, and sometimes heavy labour, which they do cooperatively together. Male speakers, in contrast, describe the work as "unskilled" and
produce physical demands and definitions of specific work as constituents of femininity and masculinity. Berry work is not masculine according to Cecil Hunt because it does not require strength and endurance to perform it well. Masculinity is defined here through work that is a challenge, something enjoyed for its demands on physical capacities. The implicit opposite is the work of the “other” - unskilled, repetitive and undemanding - women’s work. When women have trouble with the working conditions - standing on the stools for long hours each day for example - men come to the rescue, building additional sections onto a stool to make standing more tenable for the woman worker. Identity positionings such as age, marital status and pregnancy influence the work available to women in Job Brothers plant.

Complex constitutions of Job Brothers fish plant as a site of work are produced in this chapter. For some women narrators, Job Brothers fish plant is a site of intimacy and connection with others - family, friends and loving relationships. Workers are bound up in a web of interconnectedness in the plant: they characterize the workplace as being a family-like setting. For women who have few or no family members or friends already working at Job’s, this construction of family-like setting is disrupted and refused. For Ian Reid, “family” and connections provide a basis for identity positioning and alliances among workers to the potential detriment of management control over the workers and the plant.

For some of the women narrators, familial relations and a sense of community within the Southside plant compensated for the low wages they received for long hours, repetitive work, in cold, wet and difficult working conditions under the ever-watchful paternalistic eye of Job’s management. Even an enjoyable workplace did not fully compensate workers for the gender inequity of wages, however.
GENDERED WORK, GENDERED WAGES

Work on the blueberry processing line in the early 1940s earned women about ten cents an hour until they were given a raise of one cent an hour around 1942. At fish processing, women earned eleven cents an hour with a raise bringing them up to fourteen cents an hour around the same time, “and you worked like a slave to get that” (Hiscock TS92:3). In keeping with the discursive construction of blueberry processing work and women’s work in fish processing as “unskilled” and “women’s work,” is the equation of men’s work with higher wages. Although this statement is made earlier by Michelle Park, both Cecil and Pearl Hunt agree that women were paid lower wages for doing berry cleaning work than LSPU men were paid for the physical labour they performed in the plant. A look at the formal written labour agreements negotiated after World War II confirms the gendered inequality of wages for both fish and berry processing work in Job’s plant, and elsewhere on the waterfront, since these agreements covered all sites worked by the LSPU men. The Agreement between the LSPU and the Newfoundland Employers’ Association Limited (NEAL) covering 1947-1948 confirms the vast difference in wages for women and men (PANL, Nfld. Board of Trade, MG 73, Box 50, file #4, n.p.). Casual labour employed in the plant, always male and members of the LSPU, were paid seventy-four cents an hour for day work, while women, not members of any union at this time, were paid half the men’s wages per hour - thirty-two cents per hour for day work. There is no difference in rates of pay between fish processing and blueberry processing noted in the contracts at any time.

Pearl and Cecil Hunt disagree over the rates of pay for women in this conversation with Michelle Park in 1992. Pearl states the rates were about the same while Cecil argues that women made more working at blueberry processing. The shifts in the narrative suggest moves to coherency and unity between Pearl’s story and Cecil’s
story. Ultimately, Pearl used the argument that workers were paid more if they worked “in the frost” to rationalize and smooth over the narrative disruption between herself and Cecil. She is employing the understanding that, in general at Job’s, male workers made more pay when they worked in the cold rooms.

MP: ...So were you, were the women makin more in the cold storage than she would say in the fish plant or would the wages be the same?

PH: They’re around the same...

CH: Yes, she would make more at berries than fish...

PH: How much more...not very much more.

CH: Well, it wasn’t a lot then.

PH: Yeah.

CH: Two cents would be a lot.

MP: A lot, yeah, put it all together. So you’d make more at the berries than the fish...

CH: (not clear)

PH: Yeah you were in the frost, you made more.  

(Hunt TS92:42)

Wage rates were higher for night work - eleven o’clock at night to eight in the morning - however, there are no hourly wages listed for women after eleven o’clock, commonly referred to as the late night period in the contracts. The women narrators speak about working at night, but generally their work finished by eleven o’clock. Men often worked around the clock when the fish was running, loading and unloading boats, handling frozen fish and so on. Indeed, testimony contained in the 1935-36 Royal Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Sea Fisheries constitutes long hours and endurance as another component of a specific discourse of masculinity implicated in longshoremen’s work. Michael Coady, President of the LSPU in the late 1930s, asserts
the importance of strength and endurance in being seen as a productive worker and a good LSPU man. Coady testifies, "[A] Newfoundlander or a fisherman can easily stand two nights work without sleep and can work steadily. Very often I have lost two nights sleep working and felt nothing the worse for it." Later in his testimony in response to a question about the long hours of work for longshoremen, Coady replies, "[I]f a man can’t stand a few nights and a couple of days [of steady working], he is no good" (PANL, GN 6, Royal Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Sea Fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador other than the Seal Fishery, 1935-36, Testimony of Michael Coady, pp. 289, 311). This construction is also implicated in the overall discourse of the hardy Newfoundlander, well able to stand up to hard work. It may be heard to echo the editorial statement of the Daily News of June 13, 1980 (cited in the previous chapter) where “grit and determination” and “spirit and spunk” are hailed as markers of particular forms of masculinity and worthiness in Newfoundland men.

For late night work in the plant in the late 1940s, longshoremen were paid one dollar an hour. Rates were also higher for work performed during meal hours and on Sundays. Again, casual male labour in the plant was paid one dollar and fifty cents per hour for these time periods, while women received less than half the men’s hourly rate - sixty-four cents an hour. Whenever shifts of work were used in the plant, workers were guaranteed forty-eight hours of work in a week. Men were to be paid thirty-seven dollars for each forty-eight hour week, however, following the trend already noted, women were paid only sixteen dollars per forty-eight hour week. In all of these rates of pay women were held at wages which equalled only half of the rates of pay for men (PANL, Nf. Board of Trade, MG 73, Box 50, file #4, n.p.).

The Seventh Annual Report of the Newfoundland Employers Association Limited records that this agreement between the LSPU and NEAL was the first formal labour
agreement negotiated between the two parties (PANL, Nf. Board of Trade, MG 73, Box 50, File #7, n.p). It set in place a gendered wage structure that was to remain unequal for many years to come. It is also interesting that in the written agreements from 1947 to 1954, the men's work in cold storage is broken down into separate categories of work and pay rates, while women's work has no such internal differentiations listed. This categorization of men's work increases over the years, with greater differentiations and specificity produced over time, while women's work remains narrowly categorized throughout. In 1947, men's work is categorized simply as "casual labour in the plant" and "casual labour about the premises," but by 1953-54 these two categories are joined by five other: wheeling fresh fish into the plant, checkers, weighers, filleters, skinners (PANL, Nf. Board of Trade, MG 73, Box 50, File #4 and MG 73, Box 65, File #6). Throughout this seven year time period, the one word - "women" - stands for (and obscures) the diverse and detailed work women performed at Job's. In and through this narrow, tightly defined and feminized category "woman," so visible on the printed contract page, women are placed in a subordinate subject position by the LSPU and NEAL. Workplace discourse, particularly that of male LSPU workers, regarding what counts as skill, knowledge, hard work, and who is positioned as a "qualified worker," is reinscribed daily in talk and ordinary practices at Job's. The discursive production of the category "woman" organizes the very material workplace as the practices accomplish the discourse.

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1 See further PANL, Newfoundland Board of Trade, MG 73, Box 50, File #4 (1947-48; 1948-49); MG 73, Box 51, File #5 (1949-50); MG 73, Box 53, File #16 (1950-51); MG 73, Box 62, File #4 (1952-53); MG 73, Box 63, File #6 (1953-54). The agreement for 1951-52 has not been located.
ASKING FOR A RAISE

Women were not uniformly content with the wages or working conditions at Job Brothers over the 1940s. Some individual, sporadic attempts were made to secure small raises, less intrusive and better supervision, and improved working conditions in the years prior to the formation of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union. Daisy Hiscock recounts one telling experience of her cousin Bernice when she approached Maurice Job Taylor, asking for a raise.

DH:...Lots of times, least thing at all, somebody'd be gone and couldn't get back. And you know we could never figure out why. Now for one thing, my, (laughs)...before we had the union my cousin, uh, well all of us, there was five or six of us coming from down here [Fort Amherst] and my cousin said, “Well I had a strange dream last night.” “What'd you dream?” “Dreamt I got fired.” We all started to laugh. And in the meantime we were all the way up, and we were sayin, “Now boys we gotta go look for more money today.” (laughs) And in the mean, I was, I wasn't in at the berries that day, I was out washin pans. And, oh, they were all, yes, they were all in agreement, they were gonna go look for more money cause they were froze to death there you know. So, in my, my cousin, she was like myself, she was a go-getter, didn't care. So she, she went to the crowd, “Are you gonna come behind me?” “Oh, yes, we'll go behind ya.” So, Maurice Job Taylor walked in the plant, in that, in the place where the berries were and she walked up to Mr. Taylor, “Good morning Mr. Taylor,” she figured everyone was behind her, but they weren't. And she said she wanted a raise and when she looked back, nobody there. And she got fired. And, I, I was out in the, in the, in the shed washin pans and I seen her comin out and she was laughing to kill herself. I said, “What are you laughin at?” “I got fired,” she said. And I couldn't believe it. But see, where, you had no resources, you had to go along with it. Because you didn't have any, you know....

LC: Would, uh, Taylor, Job Taylor, fire her himself?

DH: Oh, yes. Told her, “Get off the premises.” (laughs) Nothin, you know, no back doors, no... “Get offa the premises,” that'd be it.

LC: Really direct! (laughs)

DH: Oh, yes. Oh yeah...Although he was nice. We all liked him, you know. But I guess in them days, I mean, to let women join the union, that was
openin their Pandora's Box. Because, you know, the merchants were all against unions anyway and to get the women to join? (laughs)

(Hiscock TS94:16-17)

Daisy recounts this story as though it were a self-fulfilling prophecy; the dream presaging the reality. Contradictory and complex messages are contained in this narrative: it may be read as a moral tale, a warning not to count on women to support you at a critical moment; the importance of having "resources," in this case other women and perhaps, a union, behind you when challenging injustice in the workplace; that injustice in a single workplace can be linked to larger meanings in the world, in this case, the economic and political positioning of the merchant class in women workers' struggles for equity. Daisy links Taylor's negative response to this larger world, not allowing him responsibility for her cousin's firing. In this way, she is still able to remember him as "nice," as someone likable, rather than as an adversary.

Alice Kittinger remembers her attempt to get a five cent an hour raise from Maurice Job Taylor in about 1946. She remembers the wage differences between women and men and frames her narrative as one of seeking equitable wages. She positions herself in this narrative as the key figure in achieving a raise for women workers, being the bold woman who speaks up to ask for more money.

Well, with the fish plant it was different, I, I didn't like the way they were treating the girls. We were all girls then. The women were doin the same work as the men but we were gettin paid a lot less. Ten cents an hour we were gettin, you can imagine, so, uh, before we started the union, I said to Jessie, "I'm goin down and see did Maurice Taylor, see if he can give us another nickel." She said, "You, he can fire ya now." I thought, I don't care. So I went down and uh, Daisy came with me a couple more girls and uh, I said "Mr. Taylor, how bout given us a five cent raise?" "Do you think you're worth that?" I said, "I think so." And, uh, he said, uh, "Well let me think about it," he said. There was only a few girls there then and, uh, he came up a couple days after and he said, "You got your nickel."

(Kittinger TS94:15-16)
Alice describes herself and the other women as “girls” in this segment, referring here I think, to their younger ages and relative inexperience with this sort of action. It may also be a way of situating them in the eyes of management, as “girls,” and so not to be taken seriously. The use of the word “girls” to describe women of almost any age was, and is, fairly common in Newfoundland speech. Indeed, women use this word to describe themselves often. Interestingly, Alice shifts her language use in the next sentence, perhaps for my benefit as I continually name the female workers as “women.” A few sentences later, she slips back into the more common, and perhaps comfortable to her, usage of “girls.”

She situates this intervention around wages as before “we started the union,” underscoring her singleness in speaking, and her lack of protection should management choose to fire her. Solidarity and collective action are presented here, too, as Alice remembers other women accompanying her to talk with Taylor. Unlike Bernice’s experience, the women stand with Alice, supporting her action and words. It is a simple and short conversation as Alice recounts it. She remains firm in the face of Taylor’s challenge as to the worth of women workers and their labour at Job Brothers, and is victorious on behalf of all the women. Alice secures a five cent an hour raise for them. In the final sentence, Alice undercuts her carefully constructed accomplishment by suggesting that they got the raise because “there was only a few girls there then.”

This narrative works in concert with a previous recounting to Michelle Park of the same incident. In this telling, Alice’s cousin Daisy figures more prominently and actively in the story, and more details of the conversations are produced. In 1992, Alice was rather more colourful in her description of the confrontation with Taylor. The event is also situated differently in time, now occurring in light of the firing of Daisy’s cousin, Bernice.
AK: ...got fired, yeah. So that's, all of us worried but me. But, uh, I said, "Mr. Taylor, you know we work's our butts..." I was gonna say my ass off but I said, "You know how hard we work." And I said, "The long hours," I said, "How would you like to work for that little bit of money you're given us?" And uh, Daisy said, "Yes," she said, "come on Mr. Taylor," she said, "we need a little raise. Not much, we're not asking for much." I said, "No, a nickel'd do." And uh, he said O.k ya got it.

MP: Oh!

AK: We had no union then see, just me and Daisy on our own.  

(Kittinger TS92:42)

Again Alice positions herself as unconcerned with the possibility of being fired for asking for a raise. The shift in how she tells, and what she tells, is evident here when Alice disrupts her own storyline to adjust the language she used in her conversation with Taylor. Here, she calls on the hard work, long hours, and low wages of women at Job's to support her demand for more money. Daisy, standing with Alice, speaks in this version of the story as well. Acting together, they convince Taylor to give them a raise.

There are many nuances of meaning and slippages in accounts visible in and through these different narratives. The pleasures of work, including the collectivity of women, and of particular women such as family and close friends, may be heard. There is also great pleasure in "remembering" specific moments, even those resulting in job loss. Daisy speaks with humour in the "dream" story even as she recounts injustice and unequal treatment at Job Brothers. Alice, in particular, has a deep investment in remembering herself as a woman who "stood up to them," who could summon the support of other women and sustain that support through difficulties with Maurice Job Taylor. That this story was told and re-told indicates the strong meaning it has for her in the production of identity at given moments.
“THE MEN’S UNION”

A feature of Job Brothers fish plant as a workplace was the uneven unionization of the workers. All male workers at Job’s belonged to the Longshoreman’s Protective Union (LSPU). It was, in effect, a closed shop. Women workers, the fish and blueberry processors, employed in the cold storage area, and office workers such as Helen Picco, were not unionized.

The LSPU was a strong union with a long history on the St. John’s waterfront. The LSPU was formed in 1903, as the Steamboat Labourers’ Protective Union, amidst demands by waterfront working men for higher wages and shorter work hours. With the successful negotiation of wage increases for men loading and unloading ships on the docks, the re-named Longshoremen’s Protective Union set about to organize non-skilled workers in mercantile premises along the waterfront (White:1937:102). By 1914, the LSPU represented some 3,400 male workers and was a powerful force on the waterfront. By the 1920s and 1930s, LSPU members were the highest paid labourers in St. John’s (Gillespie:1986:35).

As Gillespie (1986) points out, the image and renown of the LSPU “springs from its longevity and feisty character.” Members included what Gillespie called “the peasants” of the waterfront workers, those earning little for their hard labour - wharf labourers, cullers, barrowmen, fish packers, stevedores and all their helpers (32). By drawing all these workers into the union, the LSPU achieved a “waterfront monopoly” and could dictate terms of work and wages to employers (Gillespie:1986:33). William Breen, an LSPU member from 1930 onward, executive member for many years, and finally President of the LSPU from 1956 to 1964, remembers how this monopoly operated in favour of the male workers on the waterfront.

...I brought about our first agreement with the employers, we never had
one up to 1939...the president, whoever he was at the time just called a meeting, they'd probably make a new rule or an amendment and the next day they'd go down and say to the employer, “Look, this is a new rule we passed last night,” and he'd have to go along with it. But they were fabulously powerful...they had a delegate on the waterfront and he'd go down and whatever he said was law. ² (MUNFLA, Breen, Hattenhauer Coll., 1967:16)

According to Brian O'Neil (1980), the LSPU worked actively to benefit the membership by holding “night schools for ‘labouring boys’, and they sponsored card games once a week as a fund-raising project to help the city’s poor,” as well as holding a weekly lecture series with “prominent” speakers, the first of whom was J.R. Smallwood. (O'Neil: 1980:22; CNSA, Coll. 040, LSPU Executive Meeting Minutes, LSPU Minute Book 1.09, 1949-50).

The LSPU were also mindful of the development of the union movement as a whole. During the late 1930s, the LSPU made a successful push to organize other workers such as seamen, carpenters, stevedores, municipal workers and customs officers (Will:1994:371). Executive members of the LSPU met with and travelled to other union locations such as Carbonear in support of union activities (CNSA, Coll. 040, LSPU Minute Book 1.05, 1945-47, Nov. 12, 1946). The LSPU often loaned its large hall to other unions for organizational meetings and during strikes. The Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union held its founding meeting in the LSPU Hall and continued to meet there until the 1960s. As O'Neil (1980) notes, between 1939 and 1949, the LSPU “militancy and interunion solidarity during that period of union strength was often demonstrated (23). William Breen (1967) states the LSPU position clearly.

Well, we worked with all of em [unions] on a fraternal basis you know, if they wanted any help, because we were in a position to give it at the time

² This approach is also described by Michael Coady, President of the LSPU, during his 1935 testimony to the Royal Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Sea Fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador other than the Seal Fishery, 1935-36, p. 306. See Archival Sources section.
and ah, any small union that was struggling along we gave them all the help that we could. We gave them the use of the hall if they wanted it and we, ah, gave moral support or backing, not too much financially but in, ah, physically we helped them you know. Ah, there was the Working Ladies, there was Transport and Allied Workers, they belonged to the Trade Teamsters outfit, we helped them a great deal in organizing that...Lending the hall, going on helping to organize the truckmen and different things you know. (MUNFLA, Breen, Hattenhauer Coll.:26)

In the late 1930s, the LSPU supported the organization of, but did not join, the newly-founded Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council (Gillespie:1986:35, 77). The LSPU also supported the labour actions taken by other unions, however. For example, during the railway strike of 1948 the LSPU refused to handle the cargoes carried by railway boats, thus pressuring the employers to settle with the railway strikers.

In the early post-war period, the waterfront, work and labour negotiation patterns were changing. Fish companies were moving firmly into the fresh fish processing sector with the support of the Commission Government. Technological developments were being introduced to the waterfront - trawlers, off-loading equipment and so on, which meant decreasing the labour intensive aspect of this work and thus decreasing the number of longshoremen employed on each job. With the development of new processing technologies for fish plants, the employment of women workers in fish processing increased. The gendered division of labour in plants and the work women were expected to accomplish was reorganized under the new technologies. Salt fish and brine freezing processes, formerly men’s work, were on the decline and the production of fresh, quickly frozen fish products were on the rise. Women workers were hired to perform the new processing and packaging techniques.

As well, following the lifting of the Warner Inquiry’s fixed labour regulations during war-time, labour-management relations were changing (MUNFLA, Breen, Hattenhauer Coll.:17). The LSPU began negotiating formal written contracts with the
Newfoundland Employers Association Limited (NEAL). Unlike the past, when the LSPU simply informed the employers what changes were to be made in the labour agreements, employers now presented a more unified front. Yearly contract negotiations took place with representatives of NEAL in the Board of Trade offices. Breen (1967) notes that the first agreement was signed in 1946 and the LSPU Executive Minutes confirm a settlement between LSPU and NEAL on “wage rates” in November 1946 (CNSA, Coll. 040, LSPU Minute Book 1.05, Special Meeting, November 3, 1946). In December, 1946, the LSPU Executive met with women cold storage workers from the waterfront and in early 1947, the LSPU begin to include “women” as a category of workers in their contract negotiations with NEAL. Then in February 1948, the LSPU “assists” in the formation of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union. How this was organized and who it served are open questions in this study.

In the next chapter, I examine the multiple histories of women workers of Job Brothers, and their quite different ways of remembering the formation of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union. For some of the narrators, the union formation is remembered as a significant event in their lives, but for others, it is a more ambivalent experience. Although the accomplishment of the LCSWU formation had material consequences in the lives of some narrators, for other women it is less important than their daily labour and the social relations of the workplace.
CHAPTER 7
FORMING THE UNION: ALTERNATIVE READINGS/DISRUPTIVE STORIES

To me, to me it didn't mean nothing to me. Pearl Hunt, 1992

"It's a beginning." I said, "Yes, it's a beginning" Alice Kittinger, 1994

Ah, yes, that, that woulda never worked, not in the Longshoremen, it wouldn't have worked... Ralph Martin, 1994

I guess it did something, don't know, as I say I couldn't say what, but uh, I'm sure it helped. Joan Donegani, 1995

We're just as good as you are now, to the men. We felt just as important as the men then. At that time. You know. Yeah. Ummm. Regards of anything...I'm telling ya boy! Daisy Hiscock, 1994

INTRODUCTION

The December, 1946 minutes of the Longshoremen's Protective Union Executive Meeting record that the newly elected Executive and President Leo Earle decided
to ask the Delegate [Jack Squires] to invite several of the more prominent Ladies connected with Cold Storage work, to meet the Executive of this Union to conduct preliminary discussions re the formation of a Cold Storage Workers Union, the suggested joint meeting to be arranged for after the New Year as soon as possible. (CNSA, Coll. 040, LSPU Minute Book 1.05, 1945-46, Executive Meeting, December 23, 1946)

Two months later, on February 23, 1947, an Executive meeting was held at the LSPU Hall in downtown St. John's. Perhaps out of consideration for the women attending the meeting, it was held on Sunday afternoon, the time used by the LSPU Executive to hold special meetings. It was one of only two special meetings held by them in the previous four months. The LSPU minutes record that

At this meeting a deputation of eight ladies from the different Cold Storage plants were received by the executive with the intention of forming a Ladies Cold Storage Union. After much discussion it was decided by both parties to stay any action until later in the year when the plants get working full time again.
It was definitely decided that if at any time the Ladies should decide to form a Union they will not affiliate with the Federation of Labour, but will make an agreement with the LSP Union. (CNSA, Coll. 040, LSPU Minute Book 1.06, 1946-47, Executive Meeting, February 23, 1947)

Unfortunately, this is the only reference to the meeting with the women fish plant workers. It is a sparse clue: no names are mentioned, no discussion recorded. The politics of organizing on the St. John’s waterfront are discernable, however. The ebb and flow of fish processing is seen as a hindrance to organizing; few women work during the winter months at this time. In 1947, the deep-sea trawlers, which would soon begin to supply fish year-round to Job Brothers, are not yet in service. Women processors are laid off in the late fall of each year when fish is scarce, and rehired in the spring when inshore fish, caught by local small boat fishers and banking schooners become available. Thus, the spring and summer seasons are better times for signing up women union members. The parties at the meeting decide to wait until the fish plants, and the women, are working full-time in the spring.

As well, the LSPU attempts to protect its waterfront monopoly by ensuring that the “ladies,” should they decide to organize sooner, do not affiliate with the ten-year old Federation of Labour.\(^1\) The LSPU consistently refused to join the Federation, assured the LSPU was powerful enough to stand on its own (Gillespie:1986:101). In this passage, the LSPU Executive contains and regulates the efforts of the women cold storage workers to organize by discouraging the possibility of alliances with other union organizations. Indeed, it is fully one year later, February 8, 1948 that the founding meeting of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union is held in the LSPU Hall, under the auspices of and

\(^1\) Also known as the Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council (NTLC). Interestingly, other plant-based unions did exist at this time, and did affiliate with the Federation of Labour. The Fisherman’s and Workman’s Protective Union of Burin, organized on February 1, 1947, joined immediately. This union had both male and female members, with the women working largely in fish plant packing (CNS, Gordon Inglis Collection, 1994).
with the active participation of the LSPU President, Leo Earle, and the LSPU Delegate, Jack Squires.²

What brought about this LSPU interest in talking with the women cold storage workers remains somewhat cloudy. This “story” of organization was the one I was searching for when I began this study. How did the women of Job Brothers fish plant organize to form a women-only union for themselves? In contrast to the approaches taken in many of the historical and sociological studies I discussed earlier, the accomplishment of this work of unionization, and its outcomes, is not one story but many.

As I talked with the women and read newspaper accounts of the day, I found that the stories of the formation of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union (LCSWU) are multiple, sometimes vague, and often contested and contradictory. They unsettle the notion that the women and men who actively participated in this moment produce a unitary and coherent “history” of the formation and workings of the LCSWU.

The Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union is an organization few remember, and some deny ever existed. Indeed, when I asked the narrators about the formation and practices of the LCSWU, I was met with a wide range of reactions: talk about friends and work relationships, silences, chuckles or, sometimes, statements disavowing any memories of, or knowledge about, the union. This refusal occurred with some of the potential women narrators when we talked on the telephone; they asserted that they were never part of a union. In one case, the denial of the union came from the husband of a potential narrator; he expressed outrage that I would think his wife had anything to do

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² The delegate, sometimes called the walking delegate, was like a union steward. He walked the waterfront on a regular basis, visiting each operation where LSPU workers were employed, and dealing with any problems that arose between management and workers. He brought the power of the union with him and narrators report that Jack Squires often settled disputes in short order.

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with a union organization, or a fish plant for that matter. Yet, according to the LCSWU Minute Book, his wife had been President of the LCSWU from 1952 to 1963. I encountered several such male gate-keepers in my search for former Job workers and LCSWU members.

The erasure of the life and work of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union reached into Job Brothers management as well. Former Southside Road plant manager Ian Job Reid told me during a telephone conversation early in my research that "...the LSPU did all the bargaining for [their members]. But that there was a separate women's union, I have absolutely no knowledge, uh, cognisance of it at all" (Reid, November 23, 1994). My notes show that Ian Reid repeated this sentiment firmly on December 3, 1994 in another brief conversation with me - "never heard of a women's union."

Subsequent to this conversation, Ian Reid telephoned a former secretary from his days as Managing Director of Job Brothers and manager of the Southside operation. He reported back to me that Mary Mercer, from the Southside Road herself, had "never heard" of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union (Reid, December 7, 1994). A year later, Reid offered this exclamation as we walked into his living room in preparation for our tape-recorded conversation: "You could have knocked me over! I never heard of them!" (Reid, October 3, 1995). I had assumed that, as plant manager, Reid would have regular encounters with the LCSWU and, therefore, be a "good source" of information about the union-management relations in the plant. Clearly I was wrong.

As well, the public history accounts from the local newspapers produce a very different understanding of the women workers at Job's and other fish plants on the waterfront, and of the processes of LCSWU organization. Not surprisingly, these public accounts present an organization springing into life fully-formed and operational, without any tensions or problems. Needless to say, this public history is only a partial
and incomplete crafting of accounts.

Faced with these, to me, multiple and surprising responses to my interest in the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union, this chapter might reasonably be titled "What the narrators said when I asked them about the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union." It is sometimes less about the formation of the LCSWU and its operation, than about the way women remember particular, isolated moments, and relationships they had with each other at that time.

I begin by looking at the narrators' stories of the formation of the Ladies Cold Storage Workers' Union and relations with the Longshoremen's Protective Union. I then "double back" to re-read, layer and "troublen" those stories.

TEXTUAL STORIES OF THE LADIES' COLD STORAGE WORKERS UNION

Minutes of Executive and membership meetings of the LCSWU are sparse. The first years of the LCSWU records - 1949 to 1951 and 1953 have not been located. The Minute Books of the LCSWU record meetings from 1953 - five years after formation - up to 1967, when the union ceased activities after Job Brothers fish plant was closed. While covering nearly fifteen years of union activities, the minutes themselves take up only fifty pages of the LCSWU Minute Book. On average, the handwritten minutes of meetings held at the LSPU hall in downtown St. John's are about ten lines in length. Often the Minutes list the officers present, note the dues paid at membership meeting, the opening and closing times. No mention is made of who is in attendance, except when a

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3 See Center for Newfoundland Studies Archives: Ladies Cold Storage Workers Union, Collection 040, LCSWU Minute Books 5.03.001, 1953-1971; Roll Books 5.01.001-5.01.003, 1951-1967; Dues Collected 5.04.001, 1960-1963. The discrepancy in the end date of the LCSWU Minute Books (1967 vs. 1971) is accounted for by the observation that the books were used by others to keep bits of records not applicable to the LCSWU. Likely these are notations pertaining to the LSPU.
member is proposing a new member for joining.

There are a variety of meetings recorded in the LCSWU Minute Book, however. Quarterly meetings for the general membership were held in March, June, September and December on Sunday afternoons from three p.m. to five p.m., and appear to have been used for paying membership dues, the issuance of cheques for expenses incurred on behalf of the union, and the joining or rejoining of women members. Interestingly, new members entered the fold by being proposed for admission by another member, and then being voted on by the membership in attendance. This organizational form of induction parallels the one used by the LSPU. Executive meetings seem to have occurred infrequently from 1953 onwards; only two are recorded, both held in May 1953 after the Annual General Meeting. I can only speculate on what this absence might point toward. There may have been separate Executive meetings earlier in the life of the union, while later, Executive met before or during the Quarterly meetings. Minutes of these meetings may not have been kept, or they may not have survived after they were recorded.

Newspaper notices show patterns of LCSWU meetings. Notices of general meetings were placed in the Saturday editions of the Daily News, usually the day before the meeting was held. These notices indicate that meetings were advertised monthly throughout 1948, usually during the last two weeks of the month. From 1948 to 1953, no Meeting Minutes of any kind are available for scrutiny. This gap in documentary records hinders particular readings of the formation and early years of the LCSWU.

The Annual General Meeting was held every year, usually in May at the LSPU Hall on Sunday afternoon. Brief reports on the meetings appeared in the Daily News after each of the meetings (see DN: May 14, 1949; May 17, 1950; May 22, 1951; May 12, 1953). Election of officers for the coming year, scrutinized by representatives of the
LSPU such as Ralph Martin and Jack Squires, and payment of small yearly executive salaries (at least from 1953 onward) are noted in the LCSWU Minute Books. The newspaper coverage carefully notes the public thanks extended by the LCSWU to the LSPU for their "kindness," "cooperation," "support," "help," and/or "loyalty" throughout the preceding year. Aside from these moments, little of the life of the LCSWU is present in these records. There is no record of grievances, discussions or business other than dues paying. The records are curiously empty and unsettling.

As I read these documents, I thought about a story told to me describing early meetings of the Jubilee Guilds, a women's voluntary organization established in 1934. To be officially recognized as part of the larger Jubilee Guilds organization, women in small rural branches were expected to follow a set structure (President, Vice-President and so on) and format (welcome, minutes, treasurer's report, social activities, skill development and so on) for their monthly meetings. This agenda was fixed by others from outside their outport communities and had little relevance to women in the community. The women in one community met every month, carried out the format and structure but did not make it their own, simply re-read the original "sample" training minutes, gave the same reports and so forth. The point of the story was to underscore the foreignness of an imposed, fixed and formal meeting order which the women carried out, but in which they did not have a deep investment (Cullum:1993a; 1993b). With this in mind, one reading of the LCSWU Minutes is that the union format, structure and constitution, all modelled directly on the LSPU, had little relevance for the women of the LCSWU and so only minimal recording was done. Literacy may have been a factor here as well since many of the women workers who became members of the LCSWU had little formal education, some having left school in grade two or three. The women may also have decided not to record any of their discussions, preferring to keep such knowledge to
themselves. Finally, familiarity with each other, and with the actions of the LCSWU executive and members, may have ruled out any need for detailed records. Information was communicated on the shop floor, and as Pearl Hunt noted, if you wanted information about the meeting, all you had to do was ask (TS92:93).

The Roll Books recorded in alphabetical order the members' names, often their ages, and dues paid. These records run from 1951 to 1967, while Dues Collected records cover 1960 to 1963. Dues for the early 1950s appear to have been about fifty cents a month, rising to about seventy cents a month in the late 1950s (CNSA, Col. 040, Roll Books, 5.01.001, 1951-1958; 5.01.002, 1959-1963). Dues were collected both at the meetings, and in the Job Brothers plant office, usually on Thursday after Wednesday payday, by Helen White Picco. She recorded the dues paid and turned the money over to the current President of the LCSWU. If dues were collected at the meetings, Helen banked the money directly. At Quarterly meetings, over $250.00 might be recorded, more than half of which was collected in the workplace. Helen Picco performed this work from 1952 to 1963, even occasionally taking minutes at the meetings as well. Yet, when I asked her about the meetings, she told me she was not a member of the LCSWU but simply acted as Treasurer for all those years (Picco TS95:6). As she worked in the office, not in the cold storage area of the plant, she may not have been a member of the union. Further, Helen told me that she left Job Brothers in 1954 because she was pregnant and not well, having worked there for four or five years. She did not return to Job's. The union records, however, show Helen being "re-elected" to the Treasurer's

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4 Dues were collected in the Fisherman's and Workman's Protective Union of Burin as well. The women of this union objected to paying what they considered high dues, considering the low wages they received for work. The Minutes of this Union show a Sister Mrs. J. Isiacs [sic] as taking responsibility for dues collection in the packing areas of the plant (CNS, Gordon Ingles collection, Fisherman's and Workman's Protective Union of Burin, Minutes of February 5, 1950). Women may have done other organizational work earlier, however, there is a gap in the Minutes between September 1947 and February 1950.
post in 1954, and receiving the yearly “salary” for Treasurer - seventy dollars - in 1955. As well, her name continues to be listed in the Minute Books as Treasurer until 1962 (CNSA, Coll. 040, LCSWU Minute Books, 5.03.001, 1953-1967).

This account raises a number of issues about the histories extant in narrators’ stories, public accounts such as newspapers, and in union records. The flexibility of union membership operating in Helen’s story and the union records disputes other narrators’ accounts of Job Brothers being a “closed shop” for women workers after the formation of the LCSWU. Indeed, Madeleine Janes saw this aspect as a powerful benefit in belonging to the union, because only women who were union members could be hired to work at Job’s. Thus, she said, there was, “more work with the Union,” and competition for jobs was less (M. Janes TS95:1). The pool of women workers was known to Job’s and to the other women already working there.

Reading LCSWU documentary records and narrators’ stories about getting employment at Job Brothers suggests that once a woman was hired for work, her name was put forward for union membership by another LCSWU member. Not belonging to the union does not seem to hinder women being hired to work at Job’s. The Minute Books do not indicate whether any women were refused membership in the LCSWU, or lost job opportunities because of this refusal. Indeed, Job’s appears to have been a “closed shop” for women workers only in the sense that all women employed for cold storage work became LCSWU members after hiring. Perhaps in this way, possible tensions between unionization and a “closed shop” policy, and a hiring policy linked to family or community membership were avoided.
THE FIRST MEETING

The Ladies Cold Storage Workers' Union met for the first time on Sunday, February 8, 1948. The Daily News duly reported "the formation of a union by the female workers in the two city cold storage plants" in a short column on February 9, 1948. The unnamed union, it reports, was organized as "the outcome of a petition sent by them to President Leo Earle of the L.S.P.U. in which they requested his assistance and advice in their efforts to become organized" (DN:February 9, 1948:3). Daisy and Les Hiscock, in a conversation with Susan Williams in 1987, together remember the early gatherings of the LCSWU. Note that Daisy does not remember the name of the union at this point and her husband, Les, supplies the full name for her. He is part of remembering for her. She is adamant, however, about the intensity of the struggle to organize, and the gender awareness and analysis which shaped their early concerns.

DH: Ya had ta fight to get into the union. Cause they didn't know how they were goin to manage it with the women and, uh, the men and the women. But then, uh, uh, when they did form, what's it called? Uh, Cold storage..

LH: Ladies' Cold Storage Workers.

DH: Ladies' Cold Storage Workers. Yeah. Just called it, called a meeting and got everything formed you know. And uh, and like if, if anything went wrong and you didn't, you know, you wanted to get, see into it, well you could get somebody with you and you could call for a meeting and then they'd have to get all the union members together over in the LSPU Hall and, thrash it out. You know. Yeah, that's the way it was done.

(Hiscock TS87:11-12)

Even fifty years later, Suzie Scott is firm in her memory of the reason she was interested in the union formation - better wages. Attending meetings, and listening to union talk led Suzie to stand for Vice-President at the founding meeting. Suzie's daughter, Virginia Brophy adds her comments as well.

SS: Then, uh, we went for more money. Weren't gettin paid enough. We were doin men's work, like you said and we weren't gettin enough of
money. So we said we, Jessie Earles said she would, uh, form a union and that's what we did.

LC: Uhhuh...

SS: We had no trouble.

LC: No?

SS: No.

LC: Do you remember how it got started? Did you just talk it up or?

SS: Oh, yes, we used to go and talk to one another about it. And when we go in lunchtime, Jessie'd talk about it. I didn't do much talkin about it.

LC: No?

SS: No-o...

LC: Did a bit of listening?

SS: Oh, I did the listening and then we had to form for President and...Vice President and a whole different like...

LC: Do you remember how you got to be Vice President?

SS: Oh...

LC: How did that happen?

SS: No one else'd take it. (laughs)

LC: (laughs)

VB: (laughs) That's how a lot of things happen!

LC: Yeah, right. That sounds familiar doesn’t it, yeah. Do, do you remember that first meeting where you're all elected? Can you describe it to me or tell me what you remember about it?

SS: Yeah, what I remember about it.....yeah..well we all went over the union Hall, one Sunday. We used to have meetings on Sundays, two o'clock. Sure Dais coulda told ya that! And uh, we used to sit down and inform you and say do you want to take dis, do you want to take dis one, do you want to take dat one, you know. You had all the things on the table, you have to come up an pick out a, a piece of paper. Ya say no..just like now, the men
now, and ya go, they say no we’re not gonna have that, we’re not gonna have this. That’s all.

(Scott TS94:15-16)

Suzie constructs a straight-forward story of her involvement in the LCSWU, a story that in many ways downplays and diminishes her involvement in, and commitment to, the union. While it may well be accurate to suggest that “no one else would take it,” her willingness to assume the Vice-President position for the first year points to an active engagement in the production of new subject positionings - unionized worker and union leader. Despite (or because of) my expressed concerns about a workplace with fluctuating tensions around the unionization, and possible threats from management, Suzie refuses my concerns. She aligns the organization and work of the women’s union with that of the men’s union: information is given, ideas discussed, choices made and voted upon by the members. Desires for equality with the LSPU men may be read in several of the women’s narratives about their unionization, especially as expressed through the material objects accompanying unionization such as union cards and buttons. More will be said below about the discursive production of these objects.

The Daily News description of the founding meeting of the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union includes the statement that “their employers thought it would be to the advantage of the women to form a union from which any grievances or recommendations would be able to emanate” (DN:February 9, 1948:3). Some narrators produced a very different picture of the interest of Job Brothers management in their union formation.

In 1992, Daisy Hiscock interpreted management’s intentions for Michelle Park.

MP: So did any of the women, like you know, were they afraid being fired if they formed a union?

5 On meeting dynamics and women’s election to leadership positions in a voluntary organization, see Porter (1985).
DH: Oooh, yes! Everybody was, but they wouldn’t let their feelings be known. A few did, but....

MP: Did anyone, like, you know, in management or any of the bosses ever, like, make it known to ya, you know, if you formed a union, you know, your jobs could be lost?

DH: Oh, yeah, but you see they wouldn’t come to ya face and tell ya. They’d start a rumour. (laughs)

(Hiscock TS92:87)

In Alice’s telling, Maurice Job Taylor singles her out for a measure of intimidation. Alice describes Taylor as approaching her father, a “good union man,” to find out who was involved in starting the union idea in the plant (Kittinger TS92:22).

AK: ....Maurice Taylor he did, he said to my father, he said, “I bet you any money Bobby,” he used to call him Bobby. He said, “I bet you any amount of money that Alice was in on this.”

MP: (laughs)

AK: My father said, “I don’t know who's in that...” and, “Yes you do”....“Alice was in that one.”

MP: But did they think it was a good idea for the women to get in the union?

AK: Well Maurice Taylor didn’t like it, you know cause it was gonna cost him more money but, uh, all the women wanted to get in on it. Cause like they said, we were down we weren’t gettin nothin. We’re workin hard, l....I went..I used to go to work eight o’clock at night and work till eight the next morning.

(Kittinger TS92:19-22)

Several readings are possible in and through these narratives. The legitimacy of the women’s workplace grievances and concerns about management anti-union pressures are strongly asserted, while the “justness” of forming a union, with its attendant public and collective form of worker resistance, is held in tension with the privatized response of some of those involved in supporting the initiative. For example, Alice’s father, Bobby Hunt - the “good union man” - protected her in the face of Taylor’s challenges
regarding her involvement in the union. Forms of familial paternalism co-exist with the collectivism of unionization here. This privatized and individualized engagement with Job Brothers management over a variety of worker issues appears to continue even after the formation of the union (Dillon TS95:91; Mary Dillon, personal communication, October 19, 1995).

For Alice Kittinger, the founding meeting was a very contested space. When I talked with her, she focused on her support of Jessie in convincing the other women to join the LCSWU.

Well, there's not much you can describe, just that, uh, the women were all arguing with theirselves, with each other, some wanted to join, some didn't and, and me and Jessie was talkin and Jessie said, I don't think we're gonna get the union going and I said, "Yes we will." I said, "You get up and talk to em." So Jessie called the meeting to order and she started talkin and the women were hemmin and hammin, they said. "No, we [don't] wanta loose our jobs," and all that, you know. But, Jessie, we had to do some talkin, talk em over. They were, didn't want to lose their jobs. That would scare em...

(Kittinger TS94:43)

Alice had less to say about the Monthly or Quarterly meetings of the LCSWU. When I asked her about the contents of the meetings, she positioned the women as “happy” and by extension, less involved in the union meetings after some of the aims of the women workers in forming the union - wage raises, better hours, and better working conditions - had been accomplished.

LC: What sort of things happened at those meetings once the union was formed?

AK: Well, wasn't much of anything, it's just that, that when we got the more, more money and that you know and our hours were cut down and that, they were all happy then so there wasn't much goin on there, it was just tryin to get it started. They were all scared of losin their jobs, you know.

LC: Would women bring up uh, you know, grievances or issues from you know...
AK: Oh yes, yes, if anything went wrong, uh... Maurice Taylor got, got the tail end of it because he was always foolin around and you know, and the women didn't like it. The women used to complain about him. So at the meetings and they start bringin up the, explainin that Maurice Taylor did this and Maurice said that, and, you know little piddly things.

LC: And what would happen?

AK: Well, Jessie'd just said, "I'll have to have a talk to him," you know and Jessie'd talk to him. We don't know what Jessie'd say but he'd cut it out for a while you know. But little things like that used to torment the women. Lot of the women hated Maurice Taylor, really hated him with a passion. But, I could say what I liked to him and get away with it.

(Kittinger TS94:43-44)

This narrative is intriguing for it implies that Jessie negotiated directly with Maurice Job Taylor about workplace issues and grievances. Later in this chapter I discuss some possible implications of independent LCSWU actions such as these and the reactions of the LSPU to them.

"EVERYBODY HAD A CHANCE TO SAY"

Getting detailed information, impressions, constructions of the LCSWU meetings from the narrators was difficult. Each narrator's comments do position themselves and others in relation to the LCSWU, however. Daisy Hiscock consistently represents herself as an engaged and active member of Job Brothers and the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union, producing details and images that are more easily grasped than those of some of the other narrators. Does this make Daisy a "good subject" for my research? Through the inclusion of such details in her stories, does she position herself as a "good union woman," and "good worker" for both myself and Michelle Park? There is a tension here for me between worrying about having "enough" details of the LCSWU to "tell a story," and over-constituting the union in my rush to fix the LCSWU more firmly in public.
consciousness and Newfoundland women's history.

In 1992, Daisy recounted for Michelle Park the physical arrangement of the hall, the organization of the LCSWU meetings, and the participation of women members in the meeting discussions. Working conditions, in the form of dealing with male vulgarity, is highlighted by Daisy as a main issue.

MP: What were the meetings like? Was it more like the executive sitting up and talkin'...or did the women participate...

DH: Oh a lit, uh, whatever, the, the, the executive was up to the table and, uh, the union members were in the audience and stuff was brought to the floor and everybody had a chance to say whatever they had to say.

MP: Oh, yeah...so did the women, you know if they had any complaints...

DH: Oh they were very vocal. I'm tellin ya, I was one of them. [laughs]

MP: What sort of stuff would come up?

DH: Everything....Yeah, everything...work and, and vulgarity on the floors, you know, like....just one certain boss. You know, sayin things to the women and...

MP: Did anything ever come out of it because of...

DH: Oh yes he was tamed down a bit..

MP: Oh, yeah...

DH: Yeah, yeah..

MP: Do you think that woulda happened if you didn't...

DH: No.

MP: Oh, that's good...

DH: Although now he was a very nice man. You know...but, uh, and he'd do anything in the world for ya. But he had this thing...tch..about you know, a vulgar mouth...

MP: Yeah, it's uncomfortable...
DH: ...right...and his actions like you did, you didn't know, you know, if you went in the washroom, be into the bathroom...certainly I would never use toilet up there anyway...but you know, if you went in the bathroom you, you didn't know when he was gonna come in and go in the cubicle. You know, I mean that's not, that wasn't called for...

[edit]

MP: So was there a lot of that or just that one?

DH: Just the one. Lots of jokes up there now, dirty jokes (laughs)

MP: Women didn't mind that...

DH: Not at all...no good for em. But I mean it wasn't a joke that would put ya down...it was you know..

MP: All in good fun...

DH: Yeah...all in good fun.

MP: Tamed him down anyway...But, uh, like before say you had a union, would you ever have any way of complainin about stuff like that or gettin anything done?

DH: Well you could complain but...sometimes...

MP: What would that do....

DH: ...you'd get it worked on. More times, mostly you didn't. (Hiscock TS92:91-93)

Troublesome working conditions are elaborated here by Daisy. She includes male vulgarity, unusable toilets, and dirty jokes in the list. Avoiding the bathrooms in order to avoid surveillance is clear, but avoiding the toilets because of their condition must have made some women, including Daisy, very uncomfortable physically during the long hours standing in the cold air. Women's complaints about male vulgarity or dirty jokes were not always successful in curtailing the men's offensive talk. As Daisy points out, before the union was in place, “Well you could complain but... sometimes....you'd get it worked on. More times, mostly you didn't” (Hiscock TS92:93).
One reading of Daisy’s narrative on this point is as a somewhat veiled discussion of sexual harassment of women in the workplace. She describes explicitly the use of vulgar language directed at women by one male boss, however, she implicitly suggests that male co-workers use of “dirty jokes” and other practices was also prevalent. Daisy also presents an alternate understanding of the joking relationships with male co-workers in the plant. She differentiates between a joke that would “put you down” and one that wouldn’t, one that was in “all in good fun.” Perhaps this distinction was important to women’s comfort levels and relationships in the workplace, because, as Daisy suggests, women had to cope with such talk because it was “no good for em” to mind it.

Although Daisy does not name the offensive practices levelled at women workers by the male boss as sexual harassment, it may be because most women did not have an easily accessible language to name what was happening on the shop floor. Even when the concept and language became available to women, it was not always easy or comfortable to call upon. Little (1994) reports that forty years later, in the Catalina fish plant, women struggled to address sexual harassment by a foreman. Although no formal grievance of sexual harassment had been filed in the plant, Little was told of repeated instances. One woman left her plant job, only to be forced to return a year later due to unemployment. The offending foreman resumed his sexually oriented treatment of her. When several women complained to the plant manager, his response was to “psyche them out” by insisting the women repeat the foreman’s foul language. The women found the “process of objecting more uncomfortable than enduring the harassment” so they simply returned to work (Little:1994:n.p). As Daisy also suggests, it was easier to develop a deaf ear than try to address the problem by challenging the plant managers. With the complaints brought to the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union, however, the
women were able to exercise more control in the workplace and “tame down” offensive harassing male behaviour.

Not all LCSWU meetings addressed serious problems or struggled with complex issues. Rather, Daisy Hiscock constitutes a hierarchy of meetings - ones that were serious and ones that were not. The “serious” meetings were those addressing women’s concerns, grievances, or a possible LSPU strike situation. There was a union mechanism whereby individual women members could call for a meeting to address a specific situation or problem.

LC: What would be a serious meeting?

DH: Well, I guess'd be a strike, something like that. Probably somebody got fired or, you, you stood behind em...well that's one thing, you had somebody standin, you know, you had, you had co-operation.

LC: Would the, for instance, say somebody had a grievance, would it be talked about there, in front of all the women or would it...

DH: Well, if the women had a, had a grievance, the women called their own meeting, their own meeting.

LC: Yes...the women spoke...

DH: Yeah, yeah, oh yeah they talked up. And then the, the President would go back to the employer.

LC: So would Jessie go herself then with the grievance?

DH: I don't know...(pause) I, I guess she would yeah. (Hiscock TS94:14-15)

While Daisy is not clear about the consequences of airing a grievance at a union meeting, she invests Jessie with the personal and organizational authority to correct any situation on behalf of the members. As the President of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union, with her position backed by the powerful LSPU, Jessie is constituted by Daisy as being able to gain access to the employers with her concerns. Ralph Martin constructs this
access to management as being a result of the LSPU support, since employers often tested
a “fledgling union,” while women narrators see the need for male support as indicative
of a lack of respect for women and their work (Martin TS94:25; Kittinger TS94:56).

The non-LCSWU member/Treasurer, Helen Picco also represents the meetings as
contested ground, where there was “lots of arguing.” Helen also interrupts the notion
that all the LCSWU members understood what was happening at the meetings. She
remembers that “it was over my head,” and that this constrained her investment in, and
knowledge about, the union and its work. She says she “never knew much about it,” even
though she acted in the capacity of Treasurer for many years. She stated that the women
workers wanted “certain things,” but she was unable to name any particular issue
(Picco TS95:7).

The LCSWU meetings are constructed as lively and contested by Ettie Norman as
well. Ettie refused to attend any meetings, believing that, “you’d go to those meetings,
there’d be a racket” (Ettie Norman TS95:4). Her investment in the union appears to
have been slight. She had worked at Job Brothers for seven or eight years before the
formation of the LCSWU, was about thirty-two years old, and married with children
during this time period. She proudly remembers her energy for work, saying that Mr.
Lundrigan, a foreman at Harvey’s fish plant where she worked prior to Job’s, had told
her, “You’re like a man the way you’re throwin that [frozen salmon] up” (3). Ettie’s
narratives produce her as a hard-working woman who enjoyed work immensely. Her
final comment to me as I left her apartment was, “I’d go back to Job’s if they were open
now” (4).

Geography as a social marker may be at play here, in a negative way. Ettie noted
earlier that she was unwilling to be part of the rough crowd that processed blueberries.
The women working in this group were generally from the Battery areas - Fort Amherst
and the North Battery. Ettie's coupling of union meetings with "a racket" may also indicate her linking of the women from those areas with the Ladies Cold Storage Workers' Union, and thus shape her refusal of the union. Perhaps this class stigma limited union support by some women in Job's fish plant.

For Joan Donegan, who was sixteen when the union was formed and meetings were held, the social relations of producing an identity in keeping with the meeting, and the other young women, was of utmost importance. That meant a new coat. Other memories, of the Executive, issues and meeting content were not very important to her.

JD: Well only thing I remember. (laughs) This is going to sound silly! Going to the uh, uh, meeting and everybody bought, wore a new coat and, and bunch of em went to the same store and they were all wearing the same coat. And that, we laughed at the whole thing but other than that I don't remember, uh.. Used to be at the Union Hall over, and we'd go Sundays for the meetings. I only went to one or two.

LC: Do you remember any, what they did at the meetings? What did you do?

JD: Well, we just sat and listened. They'd talk and I think a couple of times they had like, men from the, the men's LSPU, they came and they would speak but what they talked about I don't, I have no idea.

LC: Uh-huh. Uh, did members, uh, women members raise issues from the audience of what, how did that happen?

JD: Not that I can remember.

LC: Uhm, do you remember who was the Executive? Do you remember anything about them?

JD: No. I remember you mentioned that woman's name but that's the only one I can think, I remember her. Yeah. I don't know who else there was...I don't know.... As I say I went to a couple of them and then just, as I said, we were only young and all ya did was just sat and giggled so...(laughs) Crazy.

[Edit]

LC: Yeah. Did the Union have any impact on, on you at all at that time?
JD: No, I don’t think so. At the time I don’t think so. It might have but it didn’t register to me anyway.

LC: Uhmm, on the phone I think you said something about umm, something like the Union was there so we joined.

JD: That’s it you had to be in, a member of the Union uh, to, to work you know and so we just joined to pay our dues and that was it...If you wanted to work you had to be in it.

(Donegani TS95:25-27)

The importance, and the meaning, of LCSWU membership for Joan lay in the unalterable fact that you had to be a dues-paying member of the union in order to work at Job Brothers.

For some women, the new and unprecedented experience of unionization is deployed as part of the reason why they were not interested in attending meetings. Madeleine O’Reilly Janes, who was about eighteen years of age when the LCSWU was formed, commented that she “can’t recall” the start of the Union at all. She “wasn’t really interested at that time like, uh, that was the first union I was in and the uh, you know I didn’t go to too many of the meetings, probably two or three” (M. Janes TS95:2).

LCSWU meetings did not seem to contain any time for socializing or developing friendships or contacts within the union itself. Joan Donegani did not socialize with other Job workers very much, and the union meetings did not provide an opportunity for it either. As Joan observed, “yeah, that was it. And you had your meeting and you’d go home”(Donegani TS95:44-45).

For others, the union and its meetings were of little importance at that time. Marital status, or the prospect of being married shaped Pearl Hunt’s involvement and attitudes toward unionization. Pearl’s subject positioning was about to change in a time-honoured and respectable way - marriage. She wasn’t very interested in the organization because she was about to marry Cecil Hunt and leave her work at Job Brothers anyway.
She went to “two or three” of the monthly meetings, feeling that “ya had to attend, right” (Hunt TS92:87-88).

Just basically the executives that I think was on, up at the table, yeah. We just sat and listened....I went to one or two, probably three. Was boring. I didn't go. (laughs) (Hunt TS92:89)

Pearl's very instrumental approach to the LCSWU and her membership in it reflects, in part, her status as a married woman, not necessarily requiring the security of work at Job Brothers. While she was interested in knowing details that might affect her economic situation, there were other avenues to learning about the union efforts on wages in particular. She acknowledges that, “[T]o me, I didn't pay any attention unless we had to, uh....Unless directly affecting your dinner you'd listen....You'd go see about it.” Asking for information from other workers or the Executive who worked alongside in the plant was another way to learn of union plans. Pearl suggests that some of the discussion was not always clear to her. The newness of the organization and women’s participation in it may have affected understanding for Pearl stated , “[I]f twas over your head, twas over your head, you know.” Nevertheless, information could be acquired on the processing room floor (Hunt TS92:92-93).

Communication of complaints, problems or grievances could also be done during work hours, either on the floor or in the lunchroom. Alice Kittinger remembers Jessie as attentive to workers concerns and available to them for discussions about work.

Well she used to work...she was workin on the machine and anything they wanted to find out they'd go over and ask her. And they said Jessie'd see ya after at lunch...oh, o.k. You know, if anything they wanted to know or anything they didn't understand, they'd go and they'd say, “Jessie we'll see ya at one, talk to ya up in the lunch room later.” “O.k.,” she said....she worked with us so we could go to her....She was right there on the machine and when she'd be off she'd, she'd go upstairs and we'd go up to the lunchroom and anything the girls wanted to find out then they ask her. And
she always had our union book with her....to answer the questions. Little book...

(Kittinger TS92:40-41)

Mary Dillon remembers this process, not because she made use of it, but because she saw others discussing union business at work.

So if you had any complaints, I mean you could tell em that durin lunch hour. Know what I mean, that kinda way right....But like I don't ever remember ever, like I say, ever having complaints, just more or less you worked an you know so that was it right. And where there was some complaints, you sorta sat back and let someone who knew more about it go ahead and deal with it....Right? You know what I mean?....If someone said, "O.k. now we shouldn't be workin this many hours," or somethin like that, or someone else got more hours than us or... ah, what the heck, boy, and they'd go on and probably talk then right. You know, that kind of a way, right? You know. So whatever, then they'd solve whatever it was and then you just got your hours and that was it right. Things like that right. Never seemed to be any problems in it, really were, you know, I can't say there's too many problems. I, I don't know if anybody had problems that mighta went to em because, uh, if someone stayed to talk to someone bout the union like you sorta went on, mind you own business and went on, back to work right. You know, that kind of a way. Like now I suppose they all stick around and.....

(Dillon TS95:93-94)

So in Mary's memory, workers' concerns about assigned work hours stands out as a protest that might be taken to the union. Mary, who was involved in tensions with other workers, including a knife fight on the processing room floor, refuses to accept the category I have supplied - complaint - to describe her experiences of dispute settlement at Job Brothers after the union. Mary's approach to work - what happens in the plant, stays in the plant - extends to her relations with the union. This is reinforced by her observation that you “mind your own business” regarding situations. Another worker's grievance or concern was not your affair. The privatizing of worker concerns remains in Mary's approach, rather than emphasizing the solidarity of unionization. She does not look to the union to help her solve difficult situations she might encounter. Thus, she has no complaints, or substantial memories of complaints, to the union.
"TO MANAGE THEIR AFFAIRS IN A PROPER MANNER": LSPU DISCIPLINE

The LSPU, however, had complaints early on about the leadership and operation of the women's union. In 1949, the Annual General Meeting is advertised in May, however, the six months between June and November show no notices in the Daily News. The absence of these notices immediately raises questions about the operation of the LCSWU, relations in the plant, and workers' commitments to the union, to name just a few. The absence of notices does not mean the union was not meeting; it may indicate that word of mouth advertising was drawing the members out, or that notices were placed in Job Brothers premises rather than the newspapers.

A new executive was elected in May 1949, with Ralph Martin presiding over the elections. He remembers that "Jessie Earle ran but she got defeated you know." (Martin TS94:65). Jessie Earle was elected to the Vice-President position instead. The records shed no light on why Jessie was not returned as President: perhaps there were tensions surrounding her leadership of the LCSWU. The women narrators do not provide accounts of this time either. The lack of newspaper announcements may point to LCSWU general organizational issues. Meetings might not have been held during the summer months. In December, 1949 a pattern of quarterly, rather than monthly, meetings is established, and these continue through to at least 1954. The break in announcements in the Daily News may, in part, point to this shift from Monthly to Quarterly meetings (DN:1948-1954).

Reading the records of the LSPU across this same time period raises many more questions about these non-events. There is a perception of organizational problems and struggling leadership in the LCSWU, as read through the minutes of the LSPU. The July 30, 1949 Minutes indicate that three Executive members of the LCSWU were in attendance by special invitation from the LSPU Executive. The minutes record the
displeasure of the LSPU Executive at the “inefficient” handling of LCSWU affairs over
the previous months. The Minutes read, in part,

...the President stated that the Executive of the L.S.P.Union are of the
opinion that for the past several months the affairs of the Ladies Cold
Storage Workers Union are not being handled efficiently by the Executive.
Various instances were quoted by the President such as the working
button system not being properly handled and at Executive Meetings only
one Executive officer being in attendance, also the actions of some
members of their Union at their place of employment was commented
upon, the President further stated that if the Ladies Cold Storage Workers
Union was to continue and be successful, then it was the duty of the
Executive to manage their affairs in a proper manner. Also to encourage
the members to adhere to the rules and regulations as laid down in the
Constitution of their Union (CNSA, Coll. 040, LSPU Minute Book 1.09,
1949-50, Executive Meeting, Saturday, July 30, 1949).

After “lengthy discussions” of an unstipulated nature, Jack Squires “agreed to act as
Delegate” for the LCSWU and the Executive was instructed to formally request by letter
“the services they think they shall need in the future” from the LSPU. The “Ladies”
then left the meeting and the LSPU carried on with their own men’s concerns.

The LSPU Minutes note “several months” of problems in the LCSWU leading up to
their intervention. This points to issues arising early in the life of the LCSWU, during
Jessie’s tenure as President. What might these have been? While the LSPU minutes list
issues such as use of the working buttons, conduct of women workers at Job’s and the
Executive members of the LSPU, it is not clear from the records what specifically
concerned the LSPU Executive. Questions remain for me as to what might have been
happening here. Were the women not performing the union in the way the LSPU thought
they should? The LSPU Minutes comment negatively about the “actions” of some LCSWU
members in the workplace. This suggests to me that LCSWU-management relations were
not running too smoothly. Was this because women objected to management tactics such
as timing work and surveillance of workers? As I noted earlier, Jessie Earle Thomas
may have spoken directly with Maurice Job Taylor about surveillance issues. Was this
direct negotiation one of the problems the LSPU saw in the LCSWU? Did this action
undermine the control of the LSPU in Job Brothers plant? In July, the LSPU Delegate,
Jack Squires, took on the task of acting as Delegate (union representative) for the
LCSWU as well. Did the intervention of Jack Squires in the women’s affairs curtail the
LCSWU women’s actions or expressions of grievances directly to Job Brothers
management? Were women’s voices marginalized and silenced here?

The LSPU also complains about Executive attendance at meetings. Were the women
of the LCSWU seeking to make the union work for them in the context of their busy lives,
therefore minimal Executive attendance at routine meetings? Perhaps the structures and
regulations of the LCSWU - such as the union Constitution - were foreign to the women
and thus, less important to them than workplace issues such as wages or working
conditions. The newly elected LCSWU Executive - three of the five were new to their
positions in 1949 - may have been ill-equipped to produce an appropriate public
version of a “good union” and “good union members” according to LSPU criteria.
Perhaps the public version, the one the LSPU would see, was not working for the women.
There were no other meetings noted between the LCSWU and the LSPU until two years
later.

In 1951, LCSWU Executive members are again present at the Executive Meetings
of the LSPU. This time, the President (Doris Miller) and the Treasurer (Mary Squires)
are noted as discussing with the LSPU Executive “the Proposals from the Employers
Assoc., pertaining to Cold Storage operations under the jurisdiction of the LCW Union. It
was decided that the Executive of the LSP Union would act as the bargaining agent for the
LCSW Union during negotiations now being held with the Employers Assoc., regarding
working and wage conditions” (CNSA, Coll. 040, LSPU Minute Book 1.10, 1950-52,
Executive Meeting, April 24, 1951). The inclusion of this in the Minutes is worthy of examination, because the LSPU had been negotiating women's wages since 1947. Why is this noted in the Minutes now? In these negotiations, it appears from the LSPU records that the employers, Job Brothers, were seeking to have the "female help" come to work at ten o'clock at night rather than the current eleven o'clock time. LSPU Minutes record that this is "not agreed to" but no reasons are given. Ultimately, after much discussion noted and alluded to in the Minutes, the membership (with no mention of the women present) voted to accept a straight nine cents an hour wage increase for all LSPU members. A final note in the Minutes is disquieting, however. The Minute reads: "[B]efore adjourning the president made it known that the female workers in Cold Storage plant had been offered a six cents per hour increase." There is no discussion recorded among the men, and no record of the women's comments on this lower wage offer, assuming they were still present at the meeting. It is not clear to me why this particular meeting called for the attendance of the LCSWU, especially when the contracts negotiated with the Employers Association from 1947 forward show the LSPU negotiating in the name of the women workers. Perhaps the prospect of altered work hours, rather than normal wage increases propelled the meeting.

While informal relations between women and men working at Job Brothers existed before the LCSWU was formed, a more formal relationship, between the two unions rather than between individuals, was created after 1948. One reading of this new relationship is that it was paternalistic on the part of the LSPU, and that it focused on both protection of the women workers as "unionized workers" and as "women," and control over their union and activities as we saw in the 1949 example above. Were restrictions on women's conduct in the workplace, and the structuring and policing of "their" union the price of LSPU protection and consideration in contract negotiations?
What did the women gain through the LSPU negotiating their wages and working conditions?

GENDER, THE LSPU AND WOMEN’S WAGES

For Pearl, what “affected your dinner” was important. The main goals of the women forming the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union were to achieve better wages and working conditions. Specifically, they wanted wages they considered to be on a par with their labour, and an end to the surveillance and regulation of their bodies in the workplace. Negotiating any change in management practices was not always easy, however. The women felt the repercussions in the workplace.

LC: When, when uh, uh, when you were coming up to get a new contract or get a raise or, better conditions....

AK: Oh, it, we’d have bite all our hands then with Maurice Taylor.

LC: Yeah? Why was that?

AK: Maurice is always, he didn’t want to start the union in the first place, but, uh, he had no choice, he had to go along with us. So, uh, we had a little bit of trouble, you know, but, we all, all worked out in the end.

LC: Uh-huh. Would Jessie go with the LSPU negotiators to ...

AK: Yes...

LC: ...negotiate, like was she...

AK: Whenever she....

LC: ...did she sit in on that?

AK: Whenever the men went, she went. I, she was with them you know, Mr. Squires and Mr. Earle and that. She’d go with em. Cause she was tryin to learn about the union anyway. So this how she learnt, from...him.

(Kittinger TS94:44-45)

It is not at all clear from documents, public accounts, or narrations how negotiations were carried out on behalf of the women workers at Job’s. Ian Reid told me that the LSPU
conducted all the negotiations related to the cold storage sector of the industry with the Cold Storage Committee of NEAL. No women were involved in these negotiations, which Reid described in very masculine language as a “knock 'er out, drag 'em down” process (Reid, November 23, 1994). Indeed, the formal contracts cover all aspects of longshore and cold storage work, and are signed only by the LSPU President, Leo Earle and Secretary P.G. Whelan, and occasionally witnessed by the Delegate, Jack Squires. No women's names appear in, or on, the contract documents between 1947 and 1954.

What did Jessie learn through her work with the LSPU members? Where did she use this knowledge? What sort of wages and conditions did the LSPU negotiate for the women of the LCSWU? The narrators are in approximate agreement on the wages they were receiving prior to the formation of the LCSWU. Generally ten cents to twelve cents an hour for fish or berry work is cited as the base amount (Hiscock 92:3; Hunt TS92:8, 35; C. Janes TS92: 23). Daisy Hiscock remembers the slight raises given to the women between the early 1940s and the late 1940s.

That was, uh, well, that was, I'd say that was in the 40s, '42, round there, yeah. And we kicked up a stink and we got one cent raise - eleven cents an hour. And out in the fish plant we started off with eleven cents an hour, then it went to fourteen cents an hour and you worked like a slave to get that. And you'd go to work at nine in the morning, you'd work all day, eh, after your break, your, your, your meals and, uh, then six o'clock, you'd have another meal you'd go back to work and you'd work till eleven o'clock six days a week. If you were lucky you got off a Saturday night. So...

(Hiscock TS92:3)

Eventually, the women received an additional three cents an hour for overtime (Hiscock TS87:11-12). Pearl Hunt remembers a large increase in wages for the women when they formed the LCSWU, and the LSPU began negotiating women's wages and working conditions under their regular yearly contract negotiations with NEAL. In a conversation with Michelle in 1992, Pearl and Cecil Hunt together remember the wage rises.
PH: When we joined the union we got twenty-seven cents an hour.
MP: From what - ten?
PH: From uh...
CH: Round fifteen, was it?
PH: Fifteen cents to ....
MP: ...to twenty-seven...
PH: To twenty-seven.
MP: At the one shot?
PH: Ummm. Worked up yeah.

(Hunt TS92:84)

According to the early contracts covering the women workers, their wages rose slightly higher than Pearl and Cecil suggest. As we shall see, the women’s wage rates under the LSPU were standardized at about half the rates for LSPU male workers, tied to the wage rates for the LSPU, and became part of the systemic inequality faced by women workers.

Interestingly, the LSPU had begun including women as a category of workers in the Cold Storage section of their contracts as early as May 1947, four months after their initial meeting with the women cold storage workers and fully a year before the women formed the LCSWU in February, 1948. In the May 1947 contract, the undifferentiated category “women” was inserted into the LSPU contracts with the waterfront employers. This closed and fixed category did not reflect in any way the differences in work pace, skill, seniority, or working conditions existing between fish and blueberry processing. “Women” were to be paid thirty-two cents an hour for working from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and thirty-seven cents an hour for work between 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. Meal hours, Sundays and special holidays were to be paid at roughly double these rates - sixty-four cents an hour flat rate. The contract also states, “Whenever shifts are used and a
guaranteed pay of forty-eight hours per week is given,” women were to receive sixteen dollars for the forty-eight hours of work. These rates are in excess of what the women remember receiving, almost double the rates they were earning prior to the LSPU interest in them, and came certainly earlier than the formation of the LCSWU (PANL, Nfld. Board of Trade, MG 73, Box 50, File #4, Agreement between the Longshoremen’s Protective Union and The Newfoundland Employers’ Association Limited). It makes me ask why the women became involved in the formation of a separate union organization, when they were apparently already under the auspices of the LSPU in contract negotiations regarding wages. Even after the establishment of the LCSWU, working conditions in general, other than the stipulation of pounds of fillets per hour to be packed by women, were not formally included in the contracts, unlike those of the men.

The Minute Books of the LSPU show a Special Meeting, held on Sunday, April 25, 1948, three months after the formation of the LCSWU, and a year after the women’s inclusion in LSPU contracts. In the brief minutes recorded that day is the following statement:

The President further stated that the newly formed Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union had no affiliation with the LSPU, but it had our moral support and the LSPU Executive had been requested by Ladies to seek an increase in wages for them...this matter have been taken up with the Employers during our discussion and the following agreed: Women employees shall be paid the following rates. All women from 9 a.m. To 6 p.m. - not less than half General Labour rate paid members of the LSPU or thirty-nine cents an hour; from 7 p.m. To 11 p.m., forty-four cents and hour and from Midnight to 8 a.m., LSPU holidays, Saturday nights (6 to midnight), meal hours, and holidays - seventy-seven cents per hour. (CNSA, Coll. 040, LSPU Minute Book 1.06, 1946-47, April 25, 1948)

Here, again, the organization of politics within and between the unions may be seen. President Leo Earle is careful to have on record that the women workers are not members of the LSPU. The statement confining women’s wages to “not less than half
General Labour rate" signals the gendered inequality of wages that was to persist in contracts signed by the LSPU Executive on behalf of its members well into the 1950s. Up to the spring of 1954, women's wages never exceeded 60% of the lowest wages paid to men in Job Brothers fish plant. A closer examination would show, I think, that this inequality remained constant throughout the life of the Job Brothers plant.

I raised this idea of unequal wages based on gender with Alice Kittinger. I stumbled into the question, not wanting to denigrate the women's efforts to secure better lives for themselves.

LC: It seemed, it seemed, uh, when I looked at the uh, agreements, the contracts that the LSPU signed and would have covered the cold storage workers as well...uh, that women were still, uh, they weren't getting as much money as the men.

AK: Which they weren't no. Even, what Jessie says, "It's a beginning." I said, "Yes, it's a beginning," but, uh, that still didn't seem fair to us because the men were, uh, every time we got a 5 cent raise they got ten. You know still gettin more! And uh, like I said, "Jessie, it's a start."

LC: Were you able to talk to the LSPU executive about that, you know?

AK: Oh, Jessie did. Jessie did. I don't know what went on, Jessie, I don't know if Jessie remembers, I don't remember what went on but, uh, Jessie I know used to talk to Mr. Squires and Mr. Earle. Because anytime we had a, a disagreement on the job, after we formed the union, we used to have to call up Mr. Squires to get him to come out, settle an argument, you know.

LC: He was the delegate?

AK: Yeah, yeah.

LC: Did he generally come?

AK: Yes, he came all the time. Whenever Jessie'd call him, he came.

LC: Did he settle those disputes in a particular way?

AK: Yeah he settled...no he just, just went and talked to the people in the office and he'd come up an he said, "O.K., Jessie, everything's o.k." And that was it.
LC: So it was a matter of kind of sorting out the union and the, and the employer.

AK: Yeah, yeah, come down, talkin to the people in the office and he'd come up and he'd say, "Everything is o.k. Jess. Continue on working." That was it.

LC: He covered the whole waterfront?

AK: He covered the, the Longshoremen's Union and he also helped us. Cause, you know the men in those days were too chauvinist, you know that. And if Jess went down and argued with Taylor or anyone else in the office, you know that was, "Well we don't have time, you're a woman," you know. Such chauvinists in, in those days (chuckles). More'n they are today.

LC: So was it important to have that male...

AK: Oh, yes...

LC: ...support?

AK: ...that's why Jessie said, "No good for me to go talk," she says, "I'm gonna call Jack." So...Jack Squires'd come down and he said, "I'll, don't worry, I'll talk to em." Come down and talk to em and he come out and say, "O.K. no problem."

LC: So, was being supported by the LSPU...

AK: Yeah...we were. Supported by the men and the delegation, you know.

LC: Was that important, that kind of...

AK: Oh yes, it was to us because lots of time men wouldn't talk to women, see. Wouldn't be bothered with women.

LC: How did other men in the plant, the other workers, feel about...

AK: They were, they were great. They welcomed us all with open arms...all the men were good.

(Kittinger TS94:55-57)

Once again, examining Alice's narrative alongside of the LSPU minutes of July 30, 1949, another reading of the intervention of Jack Squires into the affairs of the LCSWU is possible. Alice's conception of Job Brothers management as "too chauvinistic" to deal
with women and their grievances means that Jessie required the intervention of Squires in order to get attention for the women's concerns. Perhaps Jessie raised questions that the LSPU did not want to pursue such as gender inequities in working conditions, surveillance, and wages as well.

If the men welcomed the women workers of Job Brothers with open arms, why did the women not join the LSPU? If the LSPU Executive kept a close eye on, and exerted influence over, the actions and practices of the LCSWU members, at work, and in the running of their union affairs, why remain a separate entity? Why were the women of Job's not simply absorbed into the LSPU, as full members, or organized into a "ladies' branch" as had been the practice with other large male-dominated unions earlier in this century? Perhaps there was a distinction made by the men, between women as sister workers at Job Brothers, and as sister union members. Working together in the fish plant may have been one thing, accepting women as LSPU members with full voting rights, privileges and benefits, quite another.6

As I discussed in Chapter Two, the Newfoundland Industrial Workers Association (NIWA) of the early 1920s saw the creation of an auxiliary branch for women as a viable option. A second model, and different, is that of the Newfoundland Protective Association of Shop and Office Employees (NPASOE) where women and men apparently had equal membership in the same union organization. How was the LCSWU model different? How has each of the women constructed different meanings of their unionization efforts and its outcome?

Alice Kittinger saw herself, and the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union, as being

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6 For interesting discussion on the struggles of women and men in the same white-collar union see Creese (1999). Creese (1988) examines the "heterogeneity, contradictions and conflicts within working-class experiences" as essential elements of the "making of classes" (122). See also the records of the Fisherman's and Workingman's Protective Union of Burin (CNS, Gordon Inglis Collection).
one with the men in the Longshoremen’s Protective Union. She constructs an equal but separate argument in her narrative, suggesting Jessie Earle Thomas sought the separate women’s union structure.

LC: Did you think of yourself as being in a separate union from the men?

AK: No.

LC: No?

AK: We always, we always thought we were with the men. The men helped us start it though, that’s what I believe.

LC: Uh-huh. Is there a reason you didn’t just join the LSPU?

AK: No, see we were, we, uh, wanted to be separate from the men and Jess, that’s why Jessie figured you know, if we went with the men...

(Kittinger TS94:46-47)

Daisy Hiscock also connects the beginning of the LCSWU to the male LSPU workers at Job’s, and she positions Jessie Earle Thomas as a main instigator of the women’s union talk. In this passage, Daisy holds in tension different conceptions of the unionization: the unitary, undifferentiated grouping of the women workers and the LSPU men “as one” in their work at Job’s, and the gender-conscious knowledge that the LSPU members “were men” and that the women “wanted to form our own women’s union.” Although Daisy equates women’s work with men’s work in the plant, she also uses the word “just” to modify the notion of women’s work as equal.

DH: (laughs) Yeah, well, uh, when we worked on Job’s premises, the LSPU, the men, they were in a union and they had the LSPU behind em. And, they were doing more or less the same kind of work as we were only, uh, they were on the wharf. Cause most of em were in the plants, and we just packed the fish and they cut the fish and they froze the fish and whatever. And, uh, so we wanted to join the union and who else could we go to but the LSPU because we were intertwined anyway. So Jessie Earles, and, uh, so, got together and we started talkin and we decided sure, try it. So Leo Earles, no relation to Jessie a tall...he was President of LSPU...so, uh, that’s how we come to uh, join up. Like we were as one anyway. Yeah.
LC: Yeah. I mean, the LSPU was purely a men's union at that time...

DH: Yeah...ummm.

LC: Were there any reasons you remember that you didn't, kind of, just join the LSPU rather than a separate whole union formed that was allied with the LSPU?

DH: Yeah, but see the LSPU was long, Longshoremen's Protective Union, well, that, they were all men and at that time I 'spose the men didn't want the women, I don't know. (laughs) I can't remember them ever sayin, you know, you're not going to join us because you're women. But, I, I guess we wanted to form our own women's union.

(Hiscock TS94:8)

Daisy represents women's diverse, skilled and knowledgable work in the plant as “we just packed fish,” while in the same breath constituting men's work as various and more important than women's work. She sees it as logical (and appropriate?) for the women to turn to the LSPU as, in her view, they were “intertwined” in the workplace already. Again the phrase “we were as one” is used to constitute an equality between workers. Two discourses collide here. How can women workers, positioned as subordinate to men in the workplace, also be constituted as equal? What sort of equality is Daisy remembering?

In accounting for the organization of a separate women's union, Daisy is clear that the first consideration was what the men of the LSPU did not want - women in their union. Looking back, Daisy “guesses” that the women wanted to form their own union. The language use here is interesting, pointing toward the importance of men's wishes in the LCSWU formation and away from the desires of the women. In this narrative, the power of the LSPU to shape the formation of the LCSWU is apparent. Questions again: if the LSPU had not acted to govern the formation of the LCSWU, would the women's union have come into being; would the aspirations of the women workers been suppressed by the Longshoremen's Protective Union?
ALTERNATE READINGS

Different readings are possible concerning the interest of the Longshoremen's Protective Union in the formation of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union. Alice Kittinger offers one interpretation: Leo Earle saw the possibility of more money in women's union dues coming into the LSPU (Kittinger TS92:19). Other readings of different documentary and oral accounts suggest more layered and complex workings. Change in the leadership of the LSPU may well have been an important factor in this moment. The LSPU Minute Books point to the organization of the LCSWU as one outcome of the leadership of Leo Earle. In 1946, Leo Earle was elected to the position of President in the LSPU along with an entirely new slate of officers. In subsequent years they instituted a new accounting system for the LSPU, established the Longshoremen's Union Insurance Board, a group insurance scheme for members, new rules for membership, proposed educational talks and an educational scholarship for children of LSPU members. During this same period, Earle led the LSPU in successful strike actions for more pay, met with women workers at Job Brothers and began including their work and pay rates in LSPU contracts from 1947 onward, and negotiated healthy pay raises for the male membership of the LSPU in particular (CNSA, Coll. 040, LSPU Minute Book 1.05, 1945-46, June 1, 1946; October 14, 1946; November 17, 1946; November 3, 1946; LSPU Minute Book 1.06, 1946-47, May 4, 1947; Martin TS94:20-22).

Earle’s experience and skills gained while working longshore on Job’s wharf in the mid-1920s after leaving school, and as an agricultural field worker developing farming prospects with the Department of Natural Resources under Commission Government during the 1930s and early 1940s, led him to stand for President of the LSPU in 1946. Ralph Martin produces Leo Earle as a strong leader of the LSPU in his conversation with
Leo died a number of years ago. Leo was a good hand, Leo was a, well he's one of the ones that brought the Union back as far as I'm concerned you know, he...When he took her over there was a...(sighs) a lotta men owed, owed (laughs). They didn't have their, their union dues paid and all this sort of stuff so he got up after everybody, he had everything else saved and that was like that an...He was there for a number of years and Leo was a man that could talk you know. He could talk to anybody no matter who it was and he, he got his...views, views across. He was a member of the [City] Council then too you know.

(Martin TS94:19)

Under Leo Earle's leadership, the organizational structures of the LSPU were more formalized and regulated, and the work of the union expanded. Ralph points to the tangible material benefits gained for male LSPU members as well, including a large wage increase and the creation of restrictions on membership in the LSPU.

RM: Well, he, he got, he got the wages increased, I mean he got a, a, I forget now the first time, in the first contract he signed and everything else..I think he got the, (not clear) maybe .15 or .20 cents an hour or something more which was a good, which was a big increase to us then at that time you know. And uh, he put in some other rules and everything else you know that, uh, built up the Union.

LC: Yeah, I had a sense from the minutes that, that the Union kind of gets tightened up?

RM: That's right oh yes. When he, well, uh...we'd, uh, also gotta close our books see he closed our books.

LC: So restricted entry to the Union do you mean?

RM: In other words you, you, you had to make an application for to join the Longshoremen's Union. See one time it's just a case of go down and get nominated, oh yes...yes, and you were in the Union. But ya had to make an application, then it's up to the executive..if they accept ya or not. The executive of the union, and if the executive said no, they won't accept ya that was it now, and they didn't have to give no reason. Uh, but there, I mean if there always a lot of fuss and everything on people come down and ya didn't have to give no reason, but there it is...I mean we had to close our books we had too many men into it. And the work, wasn't the work (coughs) We had enough men for to do the work....

(Martin TS94:20-21)
During the 1940s and 1950s, men seeking work on the St. John's waterfront were required to be members of the Longshoremen's Protective Union. Thus, membership control of the LSPU meant that the union also controlled which men worked on the waterfront, and how many men were available for jobs there at a given time. The union was able to maintain, theoretically at least, a tighter, more regulated pool of men for waterfront work and LSPU members were virtually guaranteed jobs.

Leo Earle remained President and Business Agent of the union for two terms, resigning from the LSPU in 1956 when the membership repeatedly voted down the contract negotiated by the Executive (Martin TS94:58). The Minutes provide some hints of the issues under debate: the right of the negotiating committee to sign a contract with the employers without first receiving support from the LSPU membership, and the details of the new contract such as the loss of 2 men from gang size, apparently in lieu of gaining time-and-a-half for work carried out between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m. were two main issues noted. The membership present at this meeting forced a vote on the contract, resulting in the overwhelming vote against the new contract (CNSA, Coll. 040, LSPU Minute Book 1.13, 1955-56). Earle and most of the other Executive resigned in light of the vote. Earle joined the new provincial civil service, working in the Department of

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7 Gang size refers to the number of men employed to perform specific work on the waterfront. Gang appears to be used a rather generic term to refer to a group of men. For example, a hatch gang is a group of men hired to work unloading and loading a vessel. A “single” gang is not less than twenty-one men according to the 1947-48 contract for general cargo vessels. Six of these men work in the hold, and the remaining men handle the materials being loaded or unloaded. A “double” gang is 32 men.

8 Of 566 votes cast, 481 voted to reject the new (and already signed) agreement, 69 supported the Executive and the new contract and 16 votes were “in dispute.” An interesting side note is the presence of J.J. Campbell, President of the International Longshoremen's Association of Halifax and ILA Representative for Eastern Canada at LSPU meetings through June and July. The Minutes record his strong views on the contract under negotiation, views which do not appear to match those of the local LSPU Executive. The vote may have been influenced by his presence.
Mines and Natural Resources, eventually becoming manager of the Farm Loan Board. After Confederation in 1949, Earle served on the Labour Advisory Committee focusing on development of new labour laws for Newfoundland as well. The six man committee recommended a new Labour Relations Act and Minimum Wage Act, a revised Workmen’s Compensation Act and Trade Union Act for the new province. Earle was also elected to St. John’s Municipal Council, where he served from 1949 to 1957.

Another reading of the LSPU Minute Books constitutes the organization of the LCSWU as an attempt by the LSPU Executive to maintain control over the rapidly changing waterfront and its workers, the containment of women workers, their work and wages. The work of the LSPU reinscribed and confirmed gender boundaries on the waterfront, secured and legitimated specific expressions of masculinity, and affirmed men’s male breadwinner status in the family. The LCSWU formation may be seen in light of the expansion of LSPU influence on the waterfront in an era of changing employment and technologies as well. In the post war period, male-dominated salt fish production declined and more women were being hired to process fresh fish. Thus, the workforce was gradually shifting. Also, the development of new fishing technologies such as draggers and trawlers which could be loaded and unloaded by mechanical means pressured the LSPU to keep a tight rein on employers’ hiring of male workers. With the increase of women workers, and the threat to gang size on the wharf work, the LSPU executive may have wanted to secure dominance of the waterfront through the organizing of the women workers, their wages and working conditions.

Some narrators’ accounts suggest that the LSPU, and the men working alongside the women in the plant felt a sense of solidarity with the women workers, who after all, were workers on the waterfront. Of course, an added incentive for support was that the women stood to earn more money if their wages were raised through unionization and
negotiations under a union, and fathers, husbands and so on saw the benefit in such a result (Hunt TS92:85; Scott TS94:20; Hiscock TS92:85, 129). In effect, securing higher wages for women also increased the collective family wage through the women's contributions to their parents' household income.

Ralph Martin suggests that LSPU could be beneficial to the women fish plant workers. He positions the LSPU as commanding a measure of respect from employers that the women themselves could not expect to receive. The men in the LSPU could "stand up" to the demands of management at Job Brothers.

RM: Oh they [LSPU] give a lotta uh, support to em [LCSWU] yeah...Course I mean, they see was a...it was a good thing for them to have that behind em because, uh....well some of the bosses or somebody else say just had a fledgling union and they just tryin to get up well, if any uh, dispute anything come up well they'd, they'd more or less try to ignore em you know but when they had the Longshoremen behind em well of course they had to give em more respect you understand...

LC: Yes...

RM: You know what I mean?

LC: Yeah. I guess it was good on both sides...

RM: That's right....

LC: I mean the longshore could also say, well we, you know they could count on them in a potential strike situation ...

RM: That's right...

LC: ...and other things too...

RM: ...ummm, yeah.

(Martin TS94:25)

There is tension in the two accounts produced here in our conversation. Ralph's account produces a subordinate and dependent subject positioning for women workers at Job's, and constitutes gaining respect for their work as contingent on being allied with the male
Here women are categorized as an undifferentiated group, bearing a unitary identity rather than as a constructed category which is cut across by multiple axes of difference. He does not acknowledge how different subject positionings occupied by different women might shape their experiences of the workplace and the union differently. For Ralph, the backing of the LSPU is positive; for women such as Daisy and Alice, who actively sought the LSPU support, the narrowing of choice and circumscribing of their interests by the LSPU may have presented quite a different story. For Jessie, as the first President of a union whose power in the workplace may have been diminished (or increased) by the control of the LSPU, the experience may be even more painful to remember. The new LCSWU Executive of 1949 may have found the reprimands of the LSPU Executive and the subsequent intervention of Jack Squires discouraged and undermined their own effectiveness at Job’s. It appears to have done little to strengthen women’s place on the shop floor. Certainly, the containment of women’s wages to half that of men’s did nothing to alter the subordination of women in the workplace.

When I suggest that the LSPU also benefitted from an alliance with women workers at Job’s, Ralph is much less voluble in his response. While he briefly agrees with my suggestion that the LSPU could count on women’s support in difficult labour times, he does so without conviction. For Ralph, the power of the LSPU to garner respect on the waterfront is the important issue. He is less convinced of, or concerned about, what the women workers of Job Brothers can bring to the LSPU. In his account, Ralph glosses over and obscures the many and various tensions between the LSPU and the LCSWU. This reproduces a version of LSPU/LCSWU stories that eliminates disputes, hides opposing goals, and inhibits a contentious reading of those histories.

Certainly one outcome of the LSPU presence on the waterfront was the

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organization, in and through the formal labour contracts with the Newfoundland Employer's Association Limited (NEAL), of a gendered elaboration of the work and wages of men in relation to those of women working in the plant. By reinscribing the gendered organization of work on the waterfront, the LSPU protected male access to jobs, reproduced the notion of the male breadwinner, and kept wages for men high. For men, the LSPU was more than an instrument for achieving wages, benefits, job protection and working conditions for themselves. It was also a convivial social space where particular forms of masculinity were constructed and played out. As we saw above, masculinity and femininity were constantly under negotiation in the workplace.

In our 1994 conversation I asked Ralph Martin, former Vice-President of the LSPU, why women didn’t join the LSPU directly. He struggled to find a way to make an “appropriate” meaning for me in light of my interest in the women’s work. I can see we both circle around a possible “answer” in this narrative, using laughter to soften the conversation.

RM: N-n-oo, I, I don’t think that, that, they, uh, that they [LSPU] were really satisfied for to take em in as...full-fledged members of the Union. They figured it was better for em to be on their own you know. That uh, (laughs) I don’t know how to put that now!

LC: (laughs) Uh, I wondered if it was because it was all women and the longshoremen were, you know, all men! (laughs)?

RM: No, it wasn’t a case of that but they [LSPU] figured that there might be...might cause bit of trouble an that you know, that they figured it was better for them to look after their own affairs and then they’d give em their...as much help as they could but uh, they [women] better plan to look after their own affairs than to be members of our or have a say into our Union [narrator’s emphasis].

LC: Uh-huh...?

RM: Do you understand? You know...

LC: Uh, ye, yea-ah....right...I think I do...(laughs)
RM: (chuckles) Yes...that's right..

LC: O.k. Uh, uh, wha, is it that, just so I can be clear, is it that, uh, there was some concern that uh, if women were members of the LSPU that others in the membership wouldn't necessarily greet that, uh, with open arms? That, that there would be some problems, uh, with women being members of the Longshoremen...am I hearing you right there or...?

RM: Yes, in other words you mean..would they be members and then in other words if we called a meeting of the Union they could be there to have a say in the Union...

LC: Yes, yeah, as full members.

RM: Ah, yes, that, that woulda never worked, not in the Longshoremen, it wouldn't have worked...

LC: Yeah...

RM: ...you know, cause I mean uh, there'd be things come up that they, they [women] couldn't, they didn't understand anyway, you know, they wouldn't understand it anyway if it was workin conditions and everything else on boats, the like of that you know. And they wouldn't understand it. I mean all their, their work was I mean, all they ever done was the fish work and you know the packin of the fish and..and the like I, it's just that was their work.

LC: D'you think the men, the men members of the Longshore would have objected to the women being....

RM: I don't know...

LC: Uh...

RM: ...I, uh, that's something I never thought of to tell you the truth...(chuckles)

(Martin TS94:23-24)

Here, Ralph’s narrative comes as close to speaking gender inequality out loud - naming it - as he ever does in our entire conversation. The men of the LSPU would not accept women into their union, would not allow women status as “full-fledged” union members, nor would they share benefits such as insurance, pensions or mortality
benefits. The women would not have a say in "our union" (Ralph's verbal emphasis). He reiterates that women as full members "...woulda never worked, not in the Longshoremen..." Women are seen to not understand the workings of a union or the work of longshoremen - "they didn't understand" - so they should not, indeed, could not be full members of the LSPU. If women could not understand men's work, how then could the male LSPU Executive understand the tensions and pleasures of women's work sufficiently to advocate for them? This was not a question that was asked in 1948. Ralph calls upon a discourse of masculinity to construct his arguments for women's exclusion from the LSPU: women are positioned as less than men in the workplace, as doing less skilled work, as being less valuable and thus, worth less pay.

What place is there for women in a discourse constructed to enhance the position of men? Longshoremen prided themselves on a very tough, hard-working masculine identity positioning, produced in part, through their labour on the waterfront. They also saw themselves as "taking care" of the women, on the shop floor as fathers, husbands and brothers, and in contract negotiations for women's wages. While Ralph refuses my gender/power analysis, he reframes it in a rather moralistic way - "it was better for them to look after their own affairs" - in a tone that is parental and paternalistic. They, the men, would be there to guide the women along. This paternalistic role suited a discourse which called for a form of dominant masculinity.9

Ralph's chuckle at the end of this passage is like the smile on the protagonist's face at the end of Minette Walter's novel, The Sculptress. It is a smile that suggests the story is not quite as you suppose, that other readings are possible in a conversation you thought you understood.

9 According to researcher/historian Jessie Chisholm, analysis of longshore work and the production of masculinity is recent. Until now masculinity has not been problematized (see Proceedings).
"JUST LIKE THE MEN"

If the LSPU men did not regard the LCSWU women as "one" with them, some of the women certainly did. The equality they espouse was, and is, embodied for them, in and through, the material objects associated with their unionization - union membership cards and dues buttons. As with most unionization experiences, physical objects function as discursive signs of membership and commitment. The LCSWU, like the LSPU, had union membership cards and dues buttons, and some of the narrators specifically mention them as strong mementos that they have kept for all the years since they belonged to the LCSWU (Hunt TS92:99-100; Kittinger TS94:59-60).

The card appears to have been a permanent item made of cardboard with the member's names on it, but the buttons were renewed or replaced every time a woman paid her dues. The men of the LSPU also had the same form of dues button, which they wore physically on their lapels, to proclaim their membership in the LSPU, and to display the fact that they had paid their most recent set of dues, so were eligible for waterfront work. The women were given the buttons, and valued them, but none of the narrators wore them in the same manner as the LSPU members.

The women's dark orange dues button was about 2.5 cm across, with a pin on the back. The face of the button had the union name across the top curve, and the city name along the bottom curve of the circle. In the middle the year appeared, accompanied by the names of the three months which were covered by the newly-paid dues, for example July, August, September. A number completed the button information (Bert Riggs, CNSA, 1996). I have been unable to establish the significance of the number on the button. That the women did not discuss it, or did not know the significance of the number now, indicates it may have had little importance to many of them then, or now. Alice is
an exception, for she remembers the button well and it has deep significance to her as an embodiment of memories and pride (see below).

Pearl Hunt describes having the union card as having “the same as the men.” This is an oft-repeated phrase amongst the related women - Daisy, Pearl and Alice. It forms another story in the constellation of narratives I spoke about in the early chapters. For them, in particular, these items have a totemic quality, signalling their participation in the organization.

LC: Yeah. Are there any things in particular that stand out as you think about the union or working at Job’s. Uh, you know about being in a union or being a union member...does anything that you think about?

AK: No, just that we were so proud when we first got our union card. I still have that somewhere in the house....

LC: Do you?

AK: ...(smiling) but where to find it I have no idea. But, uh, I still have the first union up to Bishop's and that but I don’t remember now where I put it. You know I keep things. I was like a pack rat. Always keep things and hid em away. But I don’t remember now but I remember how proud we were when we got that. And the little union buttons....it was just little round button with LSPU Hall on it you know. And it was great, we were so proud to wear that you know....and uh, it would show that we were in the union. We were so proud to wear that you know. And my little card, just an ordinary piece of cardboard, but it was, was great. First one.

(Kittinger TS94:59-60)

For Alice, the union card was a precious reminder and signifier of times past. Valverde discusses the importance of material objects such as these for the production of discursive relations. Cards and buttons are not only items with messages or names on them, but rather “intrinsically meaningful objects” whose use value embodies other meanings (1991:10, 38). The LCSWU dues buttons, for example, were markers of dues payment having been made, signifiers of a member in good standing with the union, and, for some women, a “proud” recognition of their union status. There is a different
connotation of "respectability" associated here with the union button. The narrators imply a gaining of respect as a worker when they obtain the buttons. This is not the same form of respectability as that gained by their production of "proper" femininity and sexual conduct however. Instead, it signified a different subject positioning, one embedded in their paid work lives. The button also provided a receipt of sorts, should proof be required that a woman had joined the union. Without it, women could not get a job at Job Brothers (Hunt TS92:38).

For Pearl, the union card had an instrumental significance, it was something that came with LCSWU membership and "[F]ar as I'm concerned it was only a...you're in the union, that was it. You had a union card. So...") (Hunt TS92:94). Pearl maintains she never had a button because she left Job's before they were put into use (Hunt TS92:37). Later on in her conversation with Michelle in 1992, Pearl describes the cards and buttons as "same as the men...something they had" (Hunt TS92:98). Again the embodiment of meaning is linked to equality with the LSPU men.

It is significant that the three narrators who remember the most about union cards and buttons are the three women who are related by kinship and marriage. In Chapter Three, I discussed the reading of themes and stories commonly held by Daisy Tucker Hiscock, Alice Hunt Kittinger, and Pearl Tucker Hunt. I called these commonly held narratives and themes "narrative constellations." While the women do not always produce the same understanding of the same themes, they do share a common repertoire of themes. For example, they hold different views of the value of the LCSWU but they do have a conception of value attached to the LCSWU. This speaks to the sociality of memory, the coalescing of moments into histories through repetitions and re-tellings.
CREATING A UNION, MAKING MEMORIES

The narratives about union formation were not what I expected to hear, in part because of other narratives women told which detailed the material and social relations in Job's fish plant. In previous chapters, I discuss these conditions. Given the issues and problems the women and men talked about - the pressure of a fast work pace, surveillance of women and the regulation of their bodies in specific gendered spaces such as on the line and in the bathrooms, the imposition of gendered moral codes regarding smoking, sexuality, and liaisons between women and men in the workplace, conflicts between women workers, on-going tension and disputes with management over work practices, and women's knowledge about fish and fish packing, disparity in wages between the female and male LSPU workers and so forth - I assumed that the formation of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union would be a significant moment in the lives of the women workers at Job's. In my conversations with the narrators and subsequent analysis of that talk, however, I was puzzled by what I named at first a "lack" or "gap" in women's narratives about the LCSWU. After considerable re-examination of the transcripts I realized that the formation of, and participation in, the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union itself was not necessarily key in remembrances of their time at Job's. For most, it is not central to the meanings they fashion today about their lives and work. Workplace organization, pace and skill of work, and relationships with bosses and other workers produced greater intensity and detail of talk and personal analysis in the women's narratives. Thus, placing discussion of the LCSWU near the end of the thesis reflects the relative place of the union in narrators' conversations with me.

Different subject positionings shape and influence the narrators engagement with the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union. Age, marital status, kin and friendship ties, employment opportunities, economic status, and geographic proximity to the plant, and
thus, location in the social geography of the area, position each woman narrator differently in relation to the union and the importance of its formation. The intersection of multiple subject positionings shape each woman’s life differently. For example, as a self-identified “go-getter,” Daisy Hiscock, in her early twenties, living close to the plant, and reliant on it for employment for herself and her husband, Les, spoke at length about the union and the importance of formation (Hiscock TS94:9). She frames her response as one reason why other women were also interested in forming a union, summoning authority for her statement by the use of “we” rather than “I.”

LC: Did you ever talk about what, uh, the union meant to you, to each other...?

DH: Well yes, because that was talked about before we joined. And, uh, like I said we wanted somebody behind us so that, you know, the least thing at all you couldn’t be laid off or you know...Lots of times, least thing at all, somebody’d be gone and couldn’t get back. And you know we could never figure out why...

(Hiscock TS94:16)

For Daisy, protection from the mystifying and possibly fearful, process of being fired or laid off as a worker was a significant reason to be part of a union. Yet in narrator’s stories, including Daisy’s, their vulnerability as workers is not a predominant theme. Rather, the solidarity and strength of workers, and their ability to stand up for themselves verbally is emphasized.

For other women with whom I spoke, the idea of a union, or being a participant in one, was unimportant. Mary Dillon remembers little about the union formation and activities, even though her narratives about Job’s workplace and relationships with other workers are rich and varied. Mary was a teenager when the LCSWU talk began. She positions herself as outside the sphere of the women’s union talk on the grounds of her age and understanding of the issue.
MD: Cause you're young and foolish, see all yer, all yer, yer, yer doin then was just gettin your few dollars and spendin it and ya weren't even payin no attention ta....Cause like I said if that was on like when I hurt me back, if that was now..you'd be to the union right off the bat. I didn't. I just went on to the boss....And he said well, that's it..that was it for me then, that's all, you know...

LC: Yeah...

MD: Right, cause it's, it's obvious I didn't understand enough about it! 
(laughs)

(Dillon TS95:91)

These two responses represent the wide range of engagement and interest the women workers produced in conversations with myself and Michelle Park in 1992. There are many other stories of course. When viewed as a connected series of histories, they constitute a fluid continuum of engagement with the LCSWU, varying with the issues under discussion, with the age of the narrator at the time, their marital status and so on. Their stories dispel the conventional binary categorization of women's interest in unionization as being one of engagement or disengagement.

"WE LEFT IT ALL TO JESSIE"

Alice Kittinger, Daisy Hiscock and Suzie Scott position Jessie Earle Thomas as key in the formation of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union. In particular, Alice consistently mediates her involvement with the LCSWU through her close friendship with Jessie Earle. They met at Job Brothers in about 1947.

AK: I know she was older than me...because of, see what, she get a little sister, Jessie and Jessie said yeah...I was her little sister, she told me.....She was tall too, you know....right tall and I'm so short. She'd take me by the hand, "Come on Alice." But it was good to see her.

MP: So did you meet her at uh, at Job's?

AK: Yeah, when she came to work down at Job's....they brought her up, put her on the seat next to me, and said, "You teach that girl how to wrap the
fish," so she sat longsile me....that's where we become good friends....I often wondered what happened to her you know....You, you do wonder don't ya?

MP: Uh-huh, after you know people for so long...

AK: Yeah, and we were so close...

(Kittinger TS92:12-13)

Alice begins to construct a story of their relationship here. She understands the foundation for their friendship to be based on their early and close working arrangements, positioning herself as teacher and Jessie as pupil from the very beginning. Alice introduces the idea of difference here too, by emphasizing the safe elements of age and physical height as identity markers. A maternal, protective relationship of sisters is summoned forth by Alice as a way to constitute her relationship with Jessie - the older, bigger sister taking the hand of the younger, smaller girl is a compelling image. While these themes or ideas may not be completely formed or present, in my reading of Alice's narratives about Jessie, this closeness is of paramount meaning to her.

In the following discussion with Michelle Park in 1992, Alice recounts, and constructs in the moment, an early conversation between Jessie Earle Thomas and herself about the possibility of forming a union. While I had expected to hear exciting stories of the formation of the LCSWU, what it was like to work at Job's and relationships with others in the workplace, Alice's narrative of union formation is told through, and mediated by, her relationship with Jessie Earle Thomas.

AK: She was sittin to the table and, and uh, I said, she said, "Why don't we start a union?'' I said, "What union can we go in to?'' There wasn't many to choose from then.

MP: That's right..

AK: And, uh, she said, uh, "Well the longshoremen got one," and I said,
"Yeah but do you think they'll take the women?" (short laugh) And she said, "I don't know but..." so I said, "Why don't you call my Father? Call my father up and uh, we ask him about it." And he said, "Well," he said, "Let me get ahold to Earle, Mr. Earle."

MP: Leo Earle, oh, yeah...

AK: So he went and he called Leo Earle and he, Leo said, "Tell em I'll be down shortly and we'll have a talk." So Leo came down and Jessie and, we were all sittin down...

MP: Was this at work then, or, at home...?

AK: Down at work, it was after, our work was over with and we got to talkin with Leo Earle. Come down and he got talkin with Jessie and uh, Jessie said "We'd like to get into union." So he said, "O.K. I'll help ya all I can."

MP: Great. So he didn't have to be persuaded then?

AK: No. He, more for him see, more money comin in. (Kittinger TS92:18-19)

In this workplace conversation, produced here by Alice, two young women speculate about forming a union for themselves. Alice sets up Jessie Earle as an key figure in this conversation. While Jessie is positioned as initiating the idea, Alice constitutes herself as pivotal in reaching out to the LSPU. In this passage, Alice represents herself and Jessie as being aware of other unions, and the absence of any other women's union, at that time. She also produces a gendered analysis of unions and their constituencies, asking Jessie if women will be taken into the male LSPU. Eventually, they call upon Alice's family network to make the connection to the LSPU. Alice's father, a long-time LSPU member and worker at Job's, is credited with making this connection for the women.

Alice describes their efforts to contact the LSPU as supported and facilitated by her father. Through this gesture, Alice begins to develop the unspoken idea that male family members and co-workers supported the women's efforts to unionize. Leo Earle,
of the LSPU, is represented as eager to meet with them, and willing to help the two young women. Interestingly, Alice does not position Leo Earle as being interested in the women workers for their own sake or for the sake of organizing another union. Rather, she sees an economic motive - "more money comin in" - at the heart of Earle's interest in helping the women workers. This statement by Alice prompted me to look more closely at the financial records of both the LCSWU and the LSPU for any sign of LCSWU dues being directed into the coffers of the LSPU. While the records are admittedly partial and incomplete, I could find no suggestion that this transfer of monies took place. The Treasurer for the LCSWU, Helen Picco, did not indicate that this was the case either.

Alice's provocative statement remains open for consideration.

Daisy Hiscock remembers that organizing for the first union meeting was accomplished rather quickly, and often took place in the lunchroom at the Southside Road workplace.

I don't think it took very long. (laughs) As regards to gettin together and talkin about it...I guess, uh, we had a lunch room and everybody'd be sittin round eatin their lunch and I guess that's where it all came up, round the lunch table, you know.

(Hiscock TS94:8)

Physical geography of Job's fish plant is once again an organizing feature in women's stories and lives. The lunch room or canteen, which operated throughout the year after the Second World War, is mentioned by the women narrators in particular as a gendered site of eating and socializing for the women workers (Donegani TS95:27; Dillon TS95:111-112). They talked about young men - "girl talk," played cards, and occasionally sang songs (Thomas TS95:24-25; Scott TS94:35). During the war, most workers brought their own lunches, but from the late 1940s forward, hot lunches were available to the workers in the canteen (Dillon TS95:112; Picco TS95:6). Margie Tulk remembers most women stayed in to lunch, bringing their own sandwiches and
purchasing coffee, crackers and cheese and so on at the plant canteen. Some narrators, noticeably those with little expressed interest in the union formation talked of other spaces for lunch and socializing. Although Margie remembers conversations about the union were sometimes held in the canteen at lunch hour, she herself went across the harbour in the Job's boat to get lunch on Water Street (Tulk TS95:3).

The lunchroom was both a classed and gendered space. Class and the hierarchy of the plant was expressed materially in the organization of meals. During the 1940s and 1950s, the male managers of Job Brothers plant held Wednesday luncheon meetings, and were served hot fish meals in the lunchroom. The fish meal, or whatever was left, was available for the workers only after the managers had eaten their fill (Picco TS95:6). A gendered space was produced in the canteen by the physical layout of the room and the uses each sustained. According to Mary Dillon, the lunchroom was divided in half, with men eating on one side and women on the other. In our conversation, Mary makes a point of telling me who passed through who's space in the lunchroom.

MD: Well the men had their own spot! (laughs)

LC: Men had their own spot, yeah.

MD: And the women had their own spot. But the men used to have to come on out through the women and go on over the stairs and go down back to the fish and that, right.

LC: H-h-mm.

MD: We didn't pass through their's, they had to pass through ours. (Dillon TS95:113)

Thus, the lunchroom was a site of organizing and planning for the future women's union. This gendered division of social space, within the workplace, may have facilitated the union talk amongst women workers at that time.

The women's accounts of their thoughts and feelings about organizing the union
are complex. Often they are embedded in the social geography of the plant and the surrounding communities, in their relationships with other women, of whom they remain very conscious. Daisy Hiscock described her thoughts about the union and other women's concerns. Fear of being fired features largely in her narrative, but it is the fears felt by others, not Daisy herself. Here, she sets herself apart from other women in the fish plant, describing herself as “a go-getter” who, by implication was not afraid of losing her job. She positions herself in opposition to other women whom she characterizes as “afraid” of being fired for their participation in a union. This is not confrontational opposition, however. Rather, Daisy legitimizes women's concerns for their jobs by recalling the economic context of the women's lives.

LC: How were women feeling generally, how were you feeling about forming...?

DH: Oh, well, I'm a go-getter anyway. I was all for it. But there was a lot, that were afraid, uh, afraid to start the union, try it. Because they were afraid they, they were gonna be fired, or lose their job and I mean that's all they had to depend on. And at that time, we had no union so we had nobody to fall back on. But, the men said that they would stand behind us, so, if any of us were fired I guess the men would go on strike. But it didn't come to that.

LC: In the end you supported the men's union.....

DH: Well we always did, too. Yes. Yeah.

(Hiscock TS94:8)

My thoughts in this conversation with Daisy are driven by the public newspaper account of the union formation that I had read. This account placed a petition soliciting LSPU support in the forefront of the rationale for LSPU support and early organizing efforts. The article quoted LSPU President Leo Earle as legitimating the LSPU response by citing the women's petition for assistance. Wondering if the petition was being used to obscure the LSPU's interest in controlling all waterfront labour, I asked Daisy about this
petition. Her response took our talk in a different direction altogether, one which I had not anticipated.

LC: Uhm, was there a petition or, I mean, was it kind of, somebody phoned up Leo Earle....

DH: Well, we left it all to Jessie. And Jessie Earle organized it and then we called a meeting and, you know...yeah.

LC: Did Jessie work with anybody else? At that time?

DH: I think before she came over to Job's, I think she worked with Har, Harvey's. I'm not sure, but I think she did. But she married an American after and moved away. I would love to be able to talk to her, get in touch with her, but I wouldn't know who...Now her, her family's name were Earles and, uh, they lived in around Mundy Pond I think and I think they were the only black family in Newfoundland. But that didn't make no difference to us. She was one of us, right.

LC: So there was no kind of feeling of....

DH: No. No, no.

LC: So how did she come to be the one to take the ball and...

DH: Well she was go-getter too. (laughs)

LC: Did she go by herself or was there ...

DH: Oh, I don't know, I don't know if she...I, I can't tell you that now because it was so long ago. But, I think now the way, I'm not sure....I think'd be, you know, she'd go, probably make an appointment to see somebody, I don't know how it was done, now tell you the truth.

(Hiscock TS94:8-10)

Daisy positions Jessie Earle as the detail organizer of the LCSWU, and the other women, including herself, as setting up the first meeting. When I ask if Jessie worked with "anyone else," I meant, did Jessie have help with the organizing effort. Daisy reads my question very differently and moves our conversation in another direction, one that raises the issue of Jessie being a "woman of colour," a member of the "only black family in Newfoundland."
The naming of race in the narrators' storylines touches on one of the key conceptual issues in this thesis. How do we know, and name, experiences and relations in our lives, especially those of power and difference? In the next section, I begin to tease out some of the complicated questions around racialized identities in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the discursive "resources" available to produce these subject positionings which circulate through the narrators' stories.

RACE AND IDENTITY

Daisy produces a fragmented narrative about Jessie's life and her family, drawing on geography to position the family socially and economically. Mundy Pond, the home of other Earle families, but not Jessie's, is offered as a possible site of Jessie's home. Mundy Pond is today an area with much social housing, and a homogeneous white population. In the 1940s, it was a white working-class area of the city, noted, as was Shea Heights, for the toughness of its residents.

For the first time in any narrative, Daisy uses the word "black" to describe Jessie, but immediately glosses over the significance of her statement of identity marker by firmly telling me that race was not a subject position of importance to her or other workers. Having named colour as a marker of difference, Daisy moves quickly to restore a picture of solidarity of women workers at Job's by asserting that Jessie "was one of us." Difference is obscured, but, of course, remains very present in our conversation. Daisy does not even let me complete my next question - one that heads in the direction of difference having meanings - before she responds emphatically "no." Her refusal to engage with the topic of race, indeed, her shutting down of that thread of conversation stands out for me here. When she is able, by virtue of my next comment, to shift to a strong, positive statement about Jessie - "she was a go-getter too" - Daisy draws Jessie
and her “blackness” into a protective, but closed circle with her, for Daisy is a “go-getter” herself. It is an subject positioning she occupies and values highly.

In 1992, Daisy’s conversation with Michelle Park touched on Jessie’s attributes as a leader. Neither Daisy, nor Michelle refer to race, but “otherness” may be read in this text by virtue of the language used and the care being taken to present Jessie in a positive light. Daisy positions Jessie as the ideal president for the union - a woman liked by all, comfortable in public, a good worker - all respectable attributes for strong leadership.

DH: Jessie was one of the girls....You know, she, uh, there was no bigotry. You know?

MP: Yeah, that’s what you were sayin before.

DH: Yeah, she was one of the girls.

MP: And so did she, like, you know, for her to be chosen President did she, you know, was she a good speaker?

DH: Oh yes, yeah, and, uh, uh, she, she, she had, she used to mix with the public a, she was a singer...

MP: Right.

DH: And she had, uh, a lot of experience in the public. So she could speak where we would feel embarrassed but she didn’t. Yeah....She had the feel, she had the appearance of authority.....You know, yeah.

MP: So people would see her and listen to her?

DH: Yeah, yeah, that’s right.

MP: So, she seen as a good worker...

DH: Oh yes, oh yes, yeah. 

(Hiscock TS92:125-126)

Here, Daisy legitimates Jessie’s leadership role by referencing her life both outside, and inside, of the fish plant. Daisy suggests that Jessie’s “public” life as a singer gives her a
comfort level not necessarily felt by the other working-class white women, and her reputation as a "good worker" situates her as respected. Closely following Daisy’s assertion that "there was no bigotry," this legitimation seems rather defensive. Michelle has heard Daisy position Jessie as "one of the girls" before, and she comments on this reiteration of race as a theme. Daisy’s superficially benign positioning of Jessie as just like the other white "girls" at Job Brothers, effectively erases difference and produces the women workers of Job’s as a homogenous and unified group. The heterogeneity of the group, their diverse and fluid subject positionings, even without considering race as a theme, is obscured by Daisy’s comment as well. The identities of the white women at Job’s have foundations in race, but this account refuses race as a self-description and subject positioning (Frankenberg:1993; Gregg:1991:124-125).

The discourse hovering inside Daisy’s talk is one of "sameness," and denial of difference. Frankenberg (1993) places this particular expression of racialized discourse within what she calls a "discursive repertoire of ‘race cognizance’ " in the United States. She refers to this historically specific "sameness" discourse by its popular name - "color-blindness." By reconceptualizing this discursive operation, and renaming it as a "double move toward ‘color evasiveness’ and ‘power evasiveness’," Frankenberg highlights the evasion, denial and obscuring of the racialized social and political processes at work in our everyday lives (15, 268). For Daisy, this discourse allows her to make sense of her experience without formally "seeing," acknowledging or accounting for race. The additional positioning of Jessie as a "good worker" is used to buttress her right to a leadership role in the LCSWU.

A discourse of race emerges in Alice’s narratives as well, especially regarding her friendship with Jessie Earle Thomas. Alice asserts her close relationship with Jessie was different from the relationships Jessie had with other Job’s workers. An
exclusiveness of friendship between Alice and Jessie is threaded through this narrative. Alice demonstrates her lack of "prejudice," and strengthens her assertion of closeness, by describing other women at Job's as standing off from Jessie, of not being "close to her." By placing these observations next to each other in her talk, Alice constitutes other women at Job's as being prejudiced, and as standing off from Jessie because of racial differences.

Unlike other narrators, Alice uses the language of race, employing colour - whiteness and blackness - as identity positions. This may be, in part, because Alice lived in the United States in late 1950s and early 1960s, during the days of school desegregation and racial conflict in America. She may have been exposed to very different attitudes about racial difference. Certainly, the discursive production of racialized identities and difference was/is expressed in more distinct language and processes of naming than in Newfoundland. Alice justifies the use of this language on the basis that they used it to name each other in private conversations. Thus, here, Jessie is employed to authorize Alice's positioning of herself. Alice's narrative begins here with a similar assertion to that of Daisy - a disclaimer of prejudice based on race.

AK: I, I had no prejudice, see...

MP: Yeah, that's the good thing, Mrs. Hiscock told me the same thing....that's good.

AK: Yeah, I never prejudice...now the rest of the girls stood off from her, like, you know. They backed her up in the union but they weren't close to her...

MP: Yeah, yeah...

AK: So uh, she used to say, "You don't mind bein with me and I'm black?" and I said, "What's, what's colour?" I said, "I'm white, so how do you do blackie..." and she said, "How ya do whitey!" That's the way we, the way we always clowned around like, you know.
MP: (laughing) Yeah.

AK: But, uh. The rest of the women sorta stayed to theirselves, you know. Know when you’re young and...

MP: Yeah, ya don’t know...

AK: But me, I had no prejudice.

MP: That's good.

AK: Same when I lived down in the States, I didn’t have any prejudice.

MP: Yeah....(not clear)

AK: You know, well we never, we weren’t reared up to that.

MP: Yeah, why judge people...

AK: Were we? We weren’t reared up to judge other people...

MP: Or religion or...

AK: Mom didn’t care about religion. She used to come up and have her lunch with me up to my house, cause I was, lived closer and uh, Mom’d say, “Come on in Jessie, find what ya can to eat,” she said. So Jessie become part of the family.

(Kittinger TS92:13-14)

Alice’s discussion of her friendship with Jessie Earle is framed by what I have come to call “a discourse of niceness” in which Alice works through language to harmonize and erase differences between herself and Jessie based on race, while at the same time employing and deploying that discourse to underscore the absence of “prejudice” within herself.

The words Alice uses repeatedly in the next narrative - “sweetheart,” “sweet” - emphasize Jessie’s identity as a woman, while at the same time placing her safely within a non-threatening position as a woman of colour. As noted earlier, race informs subject positioning (Skeggs:1997:98). Historically, women of colour (other than
white) have carried significations as “other” and “dangerous.” For Jessie to be repeatedly described by a range of narrators as gentle, sweet, quiet and so on suggests both their and her efforts to normalize or naturalize her as a woman. Jessie’s production of herself in this way may have helped her “pass” in the homogenous white society of St. John’s. While Michelle moves to a discourse of difference in her observations of Jessie’s unique position in Newfoundland as the “only black one,” Alice remains firmly situated in a narrow discursive terrain which down plays difference and stresses their close relationship.

AK: Yeah, because me and Jessie were close. The other...women didn’t have much uh, you know but black girl...comin in there and she was the first black...

MP: Oh was she?

AK: Yeah, no she was the only black one.

MP: So she musta stood out then.

AK: Oh, she was a sweetheart. I loved her.

(Kittinger TS92:54)

Alice resists Michelle’s statement regarding Jessie’s uniqueness, choosing instead to disrupt the notion of difference and replace it with one of sameness. This is the second time in her transcribed conversation with Michelle that Alice speaks directly of Jessie and their relationship. This time, familial relationships are drawn into the storyline, with parents taking up the children of the other family.

AK: Jessie was very outgoing, very sweet.

MP: yeah?

AK: You know, if you were her friend she’d do anything in the world for you.

MP: Yeah?
AK: Oh, that she was. But, uh, yes she sorta adopted Mom...

MP: Yeah? (laughs)

AK: And her father adopted me.

MP: Ah well (laughing). All in the family eh?

AK: Yeah. Ah but she was, she was real sweet.

MP: So it like, she had more education, is that...?

AK: I think so yes.

MP: She went to school for a while longer?

AK: Yes, she even talked like I say, an educated...

MP: She was a good speaker, was she?

AK: Yes. She very good speaker. And, uh...

(Kittinger TS92:14-15)

Here, Alice employs the word “sweet” on two occasions to describe Jessie. “Educated” and “good speaker” are used only after Michelle’s prompting. Perhaps Jessie’s kindness to Alice, or her acceptance of Alice as recounted in this storyline is the central meaning of it for Alice. Perhaps the public presentation of a woman of colour must gloss over a stronger subject positioning for her. The “specialness” and intimacy of Alice and Jessie is doubly inscribed in the relationships of each young woman to a parent of the other. Both are “adopted” in a cross-gendered way - Jessie by Alice’s mother, Alice by Jessie’s father.

Later, in this same conversation, Michelle turns the discussion to the thoughts and reactions of the LSPU men to Jessie. Again, Alice positions Jessie as a good communicator, and well educated, key attributes in dealing with the men of the LSPU. The implication here, as I read it, is that Jessie could command more respect from them than Alice herself.
In this narrative, Alice positions Jessie as an educated women, an education all the more powerful because it was acquired outside of Newfoundland. The “exoticness” of such an education fits with Jessie’s otherness as constructed by Alice. Throughout Alice’s narratives, her own subjectivity and identity interplay with her positioning of Jessie as educated, articulate and smart. Alice, in turn, fashions quite different subject positions for herself in her narrative: not as well educated, not as well spoken and so on. She also positions herself as the main support and friend to Jessie, however, stressing Jessie’s “positive” attributes. This approach to race, and Jessie, was common to other narrators as well.

That said, an explicit public discourse of race and racism does not seem to be operating, or even available to the women narrators in our conversations. Most of the narrators remembered Jessie, if only sketchily, but few commented on racial differences when speaking about her. Rather, the women focused on acceptable and “positive” differences - Jessie’s skills, personality and education. No one indicates that
they remember her because she is not white and so stands out among the genetically homogenous population of St. John's. Her uniqueness is stressed in other ways.

Particular, historically situated racialized discourses have, and do, operate in Newfoundland, however. During the Second World War, the presence of large numbers of black American soldiers and sailors meant the possibility of more frequent contact with residents of St. John's. After the war, American servicemen remained in Newfoundland, working from the their bases established here under ninety-nine year leases. In 1950, a "secret and confidential" letter from the Attorney General of Newfoundland was sent to Major General L.P. Whitten, head of the U.S. Army base at Fort Pepperell in St. John's. The subject of the letter was a response to a confidential enquiry by the U.S. Army "as to the attitude the Newfoundland Government would take were coloured troops to be stationed in Newfoundland..." The Attorney General wrote, in part,

We have no coloured population in Newfoundland and, consequently, no group with which such troops could advantageously associate. Our local population will, therefore, have no alternative but to either associate freely with your personnel or else ostracize them. Certain levels of society here would undoubtedly mix with such troops and as a result I feel that we would be up against problems of racial inter-marriage or the influx of illegitimate children of mixed breeding which might create a very serious problem for us in future years. (PANL, Margie Chang Collection, MG 364, Box #1, July 28, 1950 letter to General Whitten from Attorney General)

In short, the Newfoundland Attorney General felt it would be unwise to allow different and possibly dangerous people, in this case "negro" men, to come to Newfoundland. He considered that such an action would "jeopardize very happy relations presently existing by introducing a new element of possible friction" (PANL, Margie Chang Collection, MG 364, Box #1, July 28, 1950 letter to General Whitten from Attorney General). In this atmosphere, I have to ask if Jessie's life was doubly marginalized, as a female member of a marginalized and relatively unwelcome group, despite the politeness
of the Job women. This acceptance/non-acceptance is an expression of a "local, fragile and situationally specific" form of racism (Frankenberg: 1993:238).

Race acquires, and requires, a language which varies with historical development and geographic location. Thus, what is possible to be spoken in the absence or erasure of discourses of race? Is not "absence" already a discursive construction? What are the effects of absence or erasure of race? I am on tricky ground here. The language narrators have available to them to talk about race may limit how they are able to speak. The idea of openly noticing someone's "colour" is offensive: pointing out or discussing difference becomes impossible under the circumstances. The discourse available to most of the narrator's here seems to be one of polite "niceness," one which keeps questions at a distance.

Little analytical work has been done on race discourse and practices in Newfoundland. I do not propose to explore this complex area in detail here. Rather, through rough illustrations that may over-simplify a long and difficult colonial history, I point to some interesting question to be pursued.

There is a varied discursive history of race and ethnicity in Newfoundland, as different, but overlapping discourses have circulated around these concepts as well as those of nationality and religion. Discourses of ethnicity have been linked historically with class - upper and middle-class English Protestantism vs working-class Irish Catholicism, for example. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) argue for the separation of ethnicity and race as analytical categories, even though they may be closely linked in their operations and effects politically and in everyday life. They suggest that ethnicity, broadly defined, "involves belonging to a particular group and sharing its conditions of existence." They see race as only one way by which the boundaries of these groups are created, thus separating "those who can and those who cannot belong to a particular
construction of a collectivity or population" (4). Biological or physiognomic difference linked to the idea of inherited group traits are often used to inscribe difference. In this study, narrators, including Jessie Earle Thomas herself, use “colour” to signify difference. Some of the narrators, Alice in particular, also use education and public presentation of self as distinct and formidable markers.

Anthias and Yuval-Davis understand racisms as multiple systems of signification and expression, cut by other axes of difference. Discourse and practices of racisms may be varied: “modes of exclusion, inferiorization, subordination and exploitation that present specific and different characters in different social and historical contexts” (2). Thus, they argue, racism must be explained by considering other processes of class, gender, state formation and nation.

As we saw in the letter from the Attorney-General of Newfoundland, state formation in Newfoundland is implicated in discourses and practices of racism. Prior to Confederation with Canada in 1949, a long history of engagement with local native and aboriginal peoples may be read. When Newfoundland joined Canada, efforts to incorporate aboriginal peoples under the Federal Indian Act came to nothing. Local folklore, perhaps based in a particular statement or action of the time, suggests that the new Premier, Joey Smallwood, insisted to Canada that there was no need for such incorporation of peoples as different since “we are all Newfoundlanders here.” The long struggles of the Newfoundland Mi’kmaq,10 Innu and Inuit peoples for recognition underscores the lack of language and concepts to take up issues of race and racism, as well as concerted attempts by governing authorities to exclude and suppress peoples based on racialized identities.

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10 See Wetzel (1999) for an interesting and illuminating discussion of the work of the Federal and Provincial governments in suppressing the “very identity and existence of the Newfoundland Mi’kmaq” during Confederation.
The discursive history of race in Newfoundland and Labrador, combined with narrators' histories and my own careful negotiation of questions shaped the discursive resources available to the narrators. I suggest that the constrained language of race employed by the narrators is rooted in the material relations of their/our lives and the discursive social relations in which they/we were, and are, embedded.

"LET'S HAVE A TALK TO 'EM"

How much race is implicated in narratives about Jessie, and the formation of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union is not entirely clear to me. Discourses of race are not fully formed, talk is circumscribed by the narrators, ideas are not completely emergent. Certainly for Alice and Daisy, Jessie's exotic otherness is seen through her heightened education, her public persona as a blues singer, and her comfort with the public eye. Jessie's difference is embodied in these experiences. Perhaps her difference also constituted her expendability? Who else among their number at Job's plant would they ask to spearhead the unionization efforts? Particularly if job loss was a threat for the organizers?

AK: Well, Jessie came there and Jessie started talkin about it, and uh, so I said, "Well, let's get the women all, at lunch time, myself and the, their all together. Let's have a talk to 'em." So, uh, when lunch came round we had an hour for lunch, so we started, Jessie started talkin. She said, "How would you feel about if we could start the union." She said, "I'm not sayin we can, but she said, if we could get it started, what, how would you feel about joinin the union?" And the women said, "Well sure." Know? Well, "What would we get?" Jessie said, "Get more money and we could get better hours." Cause we used to work, Job's, I used to go to work from eight in the morning til eight at night and then we'd switch over and go to work from eight at night and work til all night. That's double shifts. And she said, "We'd get lot better hours," she said, "and more money." So all the women agreed, they said, "Yes let's try it." So that's how I got my father get Jack Squires and Mr. Earle together and we all went over and had the meeting.

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LC: Were women concerned about joining the union in terms of...

AK: Uh, some were...were scared because they didn't know, uh, if they would have job the next day or not you know. Some were women were very scared of losing their jobs. And I said, “You can't be fired for startin a union.” And, uh, lot of em believed that, they did you know. They were against it. But then, Jessie talked round, Mr. Squires, Mr. Earle came and started talkin to em. And uh...

LC: Did they, did Squires or Earle come actually to the plant and talk to you?

AK: No, they came to the meeting...

LC: To that meeting, o.k.

AK: ...to the meeting union. And, uh, they asked would they like em and Jessie said, “Yes,” she'd want em there to explain to the women about the union, how it worked. So, uh, they came to the meeting and, uh, they started, the women got up and asked questions you know. “What, can we lose our jobs?” And, uh, he said, “No, I don't think you could lose your job for startin a union.” But they didn't know what a union was, see. It was the first union for women to start. So, uh, they all came and said, “Alice do you, what do you think?” I said, “Well I'm gonna take a chance,” I said, “I'd rather be paid for what, what we're doing than not,” you know. And, uh, so they all came along with me and...They didn't know Jessie so uh, they used to ask me you know. Jessie said, “No,” she said, “if you feel better talkin to Alice,” she said, “go ahead, Alice knows about it.” she said. So, uh, they used come talk to me and I said, “Ah, let's give it a try.” I could, got nothin to lose, only our jobs. And I said, “Lots of work out there to get.” In those days there was you know. So, uh, we all talked em into it and they came with us. And that's how we started the union.

LC: Did, uh, women from other cold storage plants join?

AK: Yes.. Over on the north side....But Harvey's fish plant, they were right across from each other, see. One southside, the one northside. So, uh, the girls startin callin up me and Jessie and, askin us, and talkin em into joinin too with us. That's how Harvey's came with us.

LC: Did they come, uh, to your, to the meetings? So whenever...

AK: Yes, they started to come to the meetings and they listened to Jessie talk....so they all came.

(Kittinger TS94:36-39)
This expanded account by Alice is intriguing, particularly where the participation of other women cold storage workers is concerned. It raises many questions. While the newspaper account highlighting Jessie Earle Thomas as “Woman of the Week,” for her union presidency, predicted the membership of the LCSWU would soon rise to two hundred and fifty members, and quotes Jessie as saying “we have the support of the two cold storage plants in the city,” there is no indication that other women joined the LCSWU (ET:March 06, 1948:10). Most of the other narrators do not remember women from Harvey’s Cold Storage plant joining the union. Unfortunately, the LCSWU Roll Books do not indicate the presence of other women workers.

Alice situates the formation of the LCSWU in an awareness of the social, economic and political terrain of the late 1940s. She suggests that the argument that there is “lots of work” for women is a deciding one. She positions herself as central to the persuading of women, and as a risk-taker in being willing to “take a chance” on unionization. She also indicates that she herself is aware of their place in history, being the first women’s union in Newfoundland to be formed. In other narrative moments, Alice shapes this awareness very differently, saying she did not realize the importance of this union until Michelle told her of its historic place (Kittinger TS94:52). The talking and thinking about unionization at Job Brothers took place over about a one month period in early 1948 (Kittinger TS92:24).

“WELL NOW YOU’RE TELLING ME SOMETHIN’ ”

Narrators such as Daisy, Alice and Suzie credit Jessie Earle Thomas with the initial formation of the union, talking to other Job’s women in the lunch room during breaks to interest them in forming a union, enlisting the support of Leo Earle and the LSPU and so on. Jessie was the first president of the LCSWU from 1948 to 1949, and the
vice-president for three subsequent years, 1949 to 1952 (CNSA, Coll. 040, LCSWU Minute Book, 1953-1971, 5.03.001).

Alice’s wistful narrative of being close to Jessie and of losing touch with her over the years after they both married and moved to different parts of the United States, set me up to expect a similar account from Jessie Earle Thomas. This was not what I heard, however, during my conversations with her, as her narratives of this time are partial in the extreme. Jessie does not remember this period of her life, or these events, in the same way as the other narrators. She has left memories of Joe Brothers and the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union behind her.

During my conversations with Jessie, carried on by telephone as she lives in California, she told me of her life and work since the 1950s. Much of that life has been far removed from St. John’s and fish plant labour. An interesting moment occurs in our talk, as I begin to tell Jessie of the organization of the LCSWU and the meetings. She illuminates the moment for me as the researcher, by disrupting our talk and pointing out the story is “going the other way.” That is, I am positioning her as actively engaged in a moment in her life that she no longer recalls. My investment in hearing a story from her is clear in this narrative passage, as I pursue a number of angles to tease a satisfactory (for me) narrative account out of her. In effect, I am seeking her authorization of the moment as the subject and object of my research. It is a disquieting moment for me.

LC: Can you tell me what you remember about starting the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union?

JT: Not a thing.

LC: (Laughing) not a thing!

JT: Not a thing (laughing)
LC: Do you remember if you talked, uh, to other women about it first or?

JT: I don’t know sweetheart, it’s been so long ago, I don’t know how it started, when it started or why it started.

LC: Right. Do, do you remember how you got to be President?

JT: (laughing) I don’t even know that! I guess cause no one else wanted it or no one..or whatever.

LC: Uh-huh. Do you remember anything at all about the meetings. Uhm, you know the Sunday afternoon meetings that you had?

JT: Say what now?

LC: Can you remember, uh, any of the Sunday afternoon meetings that you would have had with the union? I gather that, uh, from the, looking at the records, that the uh, the women’s union met uh, just about once a month on Sunday afternoons at the LSPU Hall. and I wondered if you could remember anything about those meetings?

JT: Uh, no I don’t, don’t remember a thing of it. What, did you say some kind of hall?

LC: At the, sorry, at the Longshoremen's Protective Union Hall, uhm, it was big hall, it’s a big hall downtown here. And the Longshoremen were, uh, the union that the men in Job Brother factory belonged to. They were, uh, they were Longshoremen’s union and then, uh, you women, uh, organized as Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers. Uhm, so I guess you used the hall that the Longshoremen had for your Sunday meetings. That’s what it looks like in the records you know.

JT: Oh. Well now you’re telling me somethin that I...

LC: (laughing) Yeah...

JT: ...either don’t know or didn’t remember.

LC: It’s goin back the other way now!

JT: Yeah, it’s goin reverse.

LC: Uh, do you remember how long you were President? Do you remember anything about that?

JT: Not, not a thing, baby. I don’t even remember bein President.  

(Thomas TS94:19-22)
I was confused by this turn of events, and curiously embarrassed on Alice’s behalf. I did not relish telling her that Jessie did not remember her, or the LCSWU work, at all.

I am also conscious of the language Jessie has been using in our talk. There is a familiarity in the words. They echo Alice’s words in describing Jessie. Is a “discourse of niceness” operating here too? Jessie calls me by different names, “sweetheart,” and “baby” here; “baby,” and “honey” elsewhere in one of our conversations (Thomas TS94:28, 13). In this passage, Jessie does “not remember” the LCSWU, her work in its founding, or her four years as President and Vice-president. In this “forgetting” and in her use of diminutive familiarities, Jessie undermines my “will to truth” and coherent knowledge in her stories. Is Jessie also a “declining subject” as I discussed earlier? She opens up questions about her competence as a subject (and object?) of my research, and of me as a competent researcher, able to make sense of a narrator’s story.

WHOSE STORY IS IT?

Moments productive of a satisfactory and coherent narrative about the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union are apparent in the some of narrative transcripts with which I am working - my own and those generated by Michelle Park. This will to a coherent narrative is generated by both the narrators and the listeners, together, in inter-subjective moments. Skeggs (1997) discusses these moments in her work as well (31). She points to Walkerdine (1988) as a source of analysis of this production and organization of knowledge, arguing that the “will to power” and desire for the “mastery of knowledge” lies at the heart of such a push for coherence. Skeggs sees this as a “lack of reflexivity,” and as a product of her “desperateness to understand the infinite number of things that were happening around me.” Problems of representation in
research, such as these, continually force ethical and writing dilemmas. Both Michelle Park and myself found ourselves caught in this fearful tension between containment and lived contradictions. As Skeggs notes, this awareness made her more conscious of the "many contradictions held together on a daily basis and how searching for coherence is an impossibility, an ideal and a fantasy" (1997:32).

Alice Kittinger recounted to Michelle Park in 1992 how the women began to develop their idea of a union for women. In that conversation, Michelle brings forward a copy of a public newspaper account of the founding meeting of the LCSWU from the Daily News of February 9, 1948. In this passage, Alice begins to shape her own telling of the early stages of union formation to conform to the written, public account being held up by Michelle. Alice suddenly interrupts Michelle's story of locating the newspaper article with the clear statement, "we all signed a paper." This brief, but firm telling conforms Alice's narrative with the public account. Michelle affirms and supports this turn in Alice's narrative by reference to the written, public account - "[Y]eah, it's right there." Thus, between them, Michelle and Alice construct a narrative that "fits" the public account, accomplishes a unified narrative, and constitutes Alice as a "good subject," able to produce a story that may be read as coherent, in line with other, especially public, documentary sources, and thus, "real."

AK: Yeah, yeah, ya can't read it.

MP: Yeah that's the worst thing about those copies.

AK: They're dark.

MP: Yeah, because that was taken from, they got all the old newspapers from that year

AK: Oh, yes...

MP: ...they got them all put on these big reels and (not clear)
AK: Oh yeah.

MP: So I read them all from 1948...

AK: Yeah, we all signed a paper.

MP: Yeah, it's right there. (not clear)

AK: What is that (sounds of paper rustling)

MP: (reading) ...enthusiastic meeting....Did you go to that meeting?

AK: Yeah.

MP: Yeah?

AK: Oh yes.

MP: Was there a crowd there?

AK: Wherever Jessie went, I went.

MP: (laughs)

AK: Yeah, it was a very large crowd there.

MP: What was, were the women excited about it or did they have to be persuaded, or?

AK: No. everyone of them signed that petition. They wanted, because they were, we were workin for an nothin. (Kittinger TS92:19-22)

In this telling, "the story" of the initial stages of LCSWU formation becomes fixed and thus, closed to inquiry. If the narrator and the print sources "agree" what more is there to ask? Two authoritative sources have converged, and to read this moment in a more fluid and open way becomes very difficult. It requires unpacking the work of plain talk between two women before the discursive operation of the talk can be seen.
WHAT MEANINGS ARE MADE?

The women of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union differ as much in their meaning making about their work at Job's, their membership in the LCSWU and the Union itself, as they do in the histories they produce of their lives and work at Job Brothers. Pearl Hunt is definite that the union had no impact on her working life.

MP: So what do you think like, you got outa being in the union?

PH: Nothing, I wasn’t there long enough. [Laughs]...To me, to me it didn’t mean nothing to me.

MP: So was it more just the membership organization or was it...

PH: That’s all...as far as I go...

(Hunt TS92:93-94)

One clue to the meaning of the union to Pearl may be the length of time she was a member. Pearl joined the LCSWU at its formation but remained at Job Brothers for only a few months afterward. Perhaps she did not have enough time on the job for the union to benefit her significantly in wages or working conditions. Thinking back to an earlier narrative, Pearl observed that the only time she attended union meetings was when it affected her “dinner,” when her wages were the subject of discussion.

For Alice, accomplishing the unionization was very important, it was an acknowledgement of the hard labour of women at Job Brothers. Once again, relationships with others figure largely in Alice’s memories of that time. She remembers the relationships she had with the “men in the office,” the male management of Job Brothers Southside fish premises. For her, the change in these relationships was a significant marker of the women’s unionization.

LC: Right, yeah. After you were in the union, uhm, did you feel any differently about the workplace or about the work you did?

AK: No, the atmosphere round the men, not the men we worked with, the

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men in the office, they seemed to look down on us more you know. They, they weren't too happy about the union the women started. But, we'd just ignore em. As long as we had our work to go to we were happy. And, uh, that was the main thing. We didn't care what they thought. Crowd in the office anyway.

LC: Did you feel more positive about going to work or?

AK: Oh y-e-s, y-e-s, it was a pleasure to get up in the morning early and go to work, you know. You had to go to work at eight o'clock so, uh, we enjoyed it, more. Cause we were gettin what we wanted like you know.

LC: Right, right...

AK: Felt good for me and Jessie because, uh, I don't know how Jessie felt but I know I felt great. Cause I said now the women are finally gettin somethin for the hard work they used to do you know. (Kittinger  TS94:53-54)

The management structure and hierarchy of the plant did not change, so ignoring them was the only option. Employing the royal “we” and the all-encompassing language of “women” to indicate a unified, shared response to unionization amongst the women workers, Alice again focuses on herself and Jessie as the architects of the union. She sets herself and Jessie apart from the undifferentiated conglomerate of “women” in the plant by speaking about women as if she were not part of that category. Alice emphasizes the importance of, and pleasure in, paid employment for herself, her desire to go to work each day. This pleasure is linked to the formation of the union and “getting what we wanted” through the union.

Joan Donegani’s experience with the LCSWU was limited by her time working at Job Brothers plant, and her age. She was only sixteen, and as she said earlier, her interests lay elsewhere on Sunday afternoons when union meetings were taking place. For Joan, there is a struggle to not deny or refuse the importance of the union for women in the 1940s, but it does not seem to have much meaning in her own life.

LC: Do you think that the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union was a
JD: At the time, I think so yes. Cause you know it, it was I guess it did something, don’t know, as I say I couldn’t say what, but uh, I’m sure it helped.

(Donegani TS95:51-52)

Joan is trying here not to disappoint me I think, expecting that I want to hear her say the LCSWU was beneficial for the women. Perhaps, given my original agenda for this study, she is not far wrong. She falters when she attempts to remember what the union “did,” and in the end, settles for affirming the union’s helpfulness in the workplace. Her personal ‘experience’ does not bear this out, however.

A fluidity of shifting subject positionings was a key feature of Daisy’s life at Job Brothers: from a young teenager to a married woman with children, from her own self-proclaimed shift from a quiet, insecure child to a “full blown agitator” (Hiscock TS92:118).

DH: Well, the important part was that we had the guts to start one. And, uh, like we had more security, the women had security like they never had before, you know. Uh, that stands out. And I, you know, we used to be always wishin we had a union. That’s about it...

LC: ...There weren’t that many women in unions...Did it seem a bit strange to be in a union....

DH: It felt good! It really felt good, you know. Huh, imagine us, first union in Newfoundland, of women, well. You know, we’re just as good as you are now, to the men. We felt just as important as the men then. At that time. You know. Yeah. Ummm. Regards of anything...I’m telling ya boy!

(Hiscock TS94:41)

A discourse of equality rings through Daisy’s account of the meaning of the LCSWU to herself and to other women. This equality is expressed in being as good as the men, and saying this to their male co-workers. This moment in our conversation suggests to me that Daisy experienced a sense of subordination in her work at Job Brothers, a sense that only a positioning as a “unionized worker,” on a par with other unionized workers,
could alter.

In the beginning of this chapter, I included several quotations from narrators in order to produce a particular conceptualization of this chapter. It is not only about the forming of a women's union in 1948. What I have “found”/produced here is a rather different, more ambivalent and nuanced picture of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union and how the women remember it. The narrators' accounts fashion a textured and multi-layered understanding of gender, race and power in Job's workplace, in the relationships between women and men working there, and between the Longshoremen's Protective Union and the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union.

In the next and final chapter, I consider the implications of my readings in this study.
CHAPTER 8
COMING TO REST

Because your writing stops, it does not mean that your thinking is done. Your mind has merely come to rest for a moment...

Dr. Jean Briggs, observation in an undergraduate course, 1989.

INTRODUCTION

Research and writing of this nature can only ever be partial, fragmentary and incomplete. Throughout my project, I have attempted to open questions up, and to keep contradictions, indecision, and ambiguities present in my thinking and writing, however. So the task of producing here a chapter of “conclusions” subverts my approach to this study. I find closure and certainty to be impossible; generalizations fraught. In light of this, I consider this chapter as a “coming to rest for a moment,” a pause to take a breath and ponder what I now think about the production of selves and identities in and through narratives.

I understand narratives to be recounted from many specific social, economic, racial, political and historical locations. I assume the partiality and contingent production of the narrator’s story; it is determined, in part, by the individual’s social location, the conditions of its telling, and by its unfinished, fluid quality. In this light, complexly interrelated issues of subjectivity, representation, identity, history, memory, and how desires and investments shape our subject positionings, present themselves to us as we encounter and explore narratives. This theoretical stance allows for questions about the fashionings, formations, negotiations and refusals of subjectivities/identities.

The themes and ideas discussed in this study are not always completely emergent
in the narratives. The talk of the narrators and myself is not necessarily fully formed as discourse; it is fragmentary, slippery and incomplete. Discourses overlap, embed and are embedded in our talk. Subject positionings and possibilities for actions are opened and foreclosed within these discourses. How these positions and possibilities are taken up and spoken by the people who embody them is another question.

Through this study, I came to concentrate on the lives, histories, stories and multiple subject positionings inhabited by Newfoundland women and men working at Job Brothers from the 1930s to the 1960s. My own notion of my identities and positionings have been challenged (and changed) by my interactions with the narrators. These identities have not been unified, coherent or stable. Rather, they have been produced in complex, multiple, contingent, and contradictory ways, in and through our talks together. The multiple meanings fashioned by the narrators and myself in the layers of our talk are constituent of, and constituted by, the subjects who produced them. The Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union as an organization has receded into the background as narratives detailed the narrators’ material realities - work processes, working conditions, relationships - and illuminated the on-going production of contested, negotiated and shifting identities cut by axes of difference - gender, race, class, age, marital status, geographic location.

EXPANDING A CONSTRICTED EYE/I

As I reflect on my dissertation production, I am reminded of Minnie Bruce Pratt’s essay, “Identity: Skin Blood Heart.” In that wonderful writing, Pratt traces a more complex and layered landscape of her own community, seeing for the first time the production of class, race, gender and a multitude of other axes of difference when she attempts to “expand” her “constricted eye.” She describes learning a way of looking at
the world "that is more accurate, complex, multi-layered, multi-dimensioned, more
throughful" (16-17). While I do not wholly subscribe to the notion that a more
"truthful" view of a small piece of the world can be read in and through my thesis, I do
think that a more complex, nuanced and multiple view can be stimulated by the questions
I have grappled with here.

My journeys and conversations during this work have opened my eyes to a
different landscape than I had known before. It is differently organized by geography and
by intersecting relations of gender, class and race, and differently peopled, in part
because of my alternate and provisional readings, than I had previously understood.
There are running threads that connect events, stories, histories and tellings here. My
meetings with the narrators were all distinct events, yet overlapping, contiguous with,
and connected to each other, all in the same moment. The resulting narratives are often
frustrating, challenging, engaging, and carefully negotiated between myself and the
narrators. Many of their stories unsettle the notion of a smoothly formed "public"
history; they challenge conventional categories of analysis in labour and women's
history and sociology by refusing unitary and totalizing summations of the narrators and
the narratives. Likewise the narrators can be seen to be fashioning themselves and their
stories to "fit" with assumed expectations. The production of a "good subject" for my
research, one who produces a "coherent" story can be read in and through the work of
the narrators. The narrators themselves do not occupy fixed subject positionings in
these narratives. Rather, their identities, their subject positionings, are always in flux,
contingent on the moment and relations of telling.

My questions driving this study began from a very different place. My initial
search was directed at "discovery" and "recovery" of records, documents and stories
pertaining to a piece of the history of women, their lives and work in Newfoundland in
the years following the Second World War. I focused on the women workers at Job
Brothers fish plant and the formation and unionization efforts they underwent in 1948
which resulted in the Ladies’ Cold Storage Workers Union. I asked conventional questions
in the early days of my inquiry: who were the women who worked at Job Brothers, what
were their names, did they marry, who were their relatives, what work did they do,
what wages were they paid for that work, how did they form the union, why, who were
the leaders? While these were and are important questions to pursue, my interests and
questions were shaped by the women’s and labour history, and sociology I was reading at
the time. Perhaps sociologists and historians have focused attention on union organizing
and formation because there are textual documents of various sorts available. Perhaps,
like mine, those studies inscribe the desires of the researcher: union formations and
struggles that confirm women workers as agents of resistance, actively and successfully
challenging relations of power and patriarchy in the workplace. This predilection for the
conventional meant that I emphasized the formation of the women’s union as a site of
heroic struggle and contestation between workers and employers. I was looking for a lost
chapter on women who had battled for their workplace rights, resisted management
control and triumphed in the end.

This was not the story I eventually read in the narrators’ intricate and
compelling stories. Rather, together with the narrators, I have produced here a
different, more ambivalent and nuanced picture of working class women and men, living
in communities on the edges of St. John’s, working at Job Brothers fish plant, and how
they remember their lives. Job Brothers had a long and colourful history on the St.
John’s waterfront, one that included historical shifts in work, processes, and
technologies. It was these changing processes - particularly to fresh fish production -
that opened employment for women in the fish plant. Unlike many historical accounts of
women's labour after WW II, more work for women became available at Job Brothers fish plant post-1945.

Some of the work processes and management techniques formerly thought to be products of the 1970s era of declining fish stocks, were actively used in Job Brothers plant in the 1940s (Neis:1988). For example, at Job’s, women worked at individual work stations, both at fish packing and berry processing, rather than at a communal table. Women also sat at fish packing, rather than standing which has been the case in fish plants in more recent years. Taylorist management techniques such as time and motion studies, close monitoring of output, and individual work quotas were employed in the plant. Maurice Job Taylor himself timed women with a stopwatch, noting which women produced the most efficient packing pace. Not coincidentally, I think, those women were asked to train other women new to the processing lines. For example, Alice Kittinger, who was seen to work quickly and well, trained Jessie Earle on the packing line. In formal contracts with the LSPU, Job’s established quotas on the pounds of fish per hour to be packed by each woman. Women had specific marks and numbers assigned to them, through which their fish packing performances could be checked. In all of these ways, their individual work could be closely monitored.

This fish plant work was gender divided and inequitable in conditions and wages, however. Thus, women entered already gendered work and gendered spaces within Job Brothers fish plant. They were physically monitored, and their bodies regulated in those spaces: work productivity and pace were regulated and timed, bathroom visits carefully observed, women's sexuality was guarded by fathers and brothers working in the plant and by the male management of Job Brothers operations. Competing discourses of gender are employed by the narrators - especially the male narrators - and public accounts of Job Brothers, to buttress the gendered structuring of work, wages and relations in the
workplace. Job Brothers fish plant, for all it’s "modern" technologies, can be seen as a site of contested experiences and contradictory discourses, fluid subject positionings, negotiations, and resistances, and material struggles for equality for women and their paid labour. The differences in accounts are significant both on their own terms and for what they suggest about doing this kind of historical sociological work.

The gendering of labour on the St. John’s waterfront was actively socially organized, in particular by the Longshoremen's Protective Union. Their effectiveness was in organizing and securing wages and benefits for male waterfront labour. The LSPU did not regard the LCSWU as a sister union, rather, they treated the women of the LCSWU in a paternalistic fashion as a daughter union, so to speak, one that needed encouragement to form, guidance to perform unionism adequately, and reprimands when it did not follow the LSPU structures. The work of the LSPU confirmed the gender-divided work at Job brothers, maintained a gender-based inequality of wages, and directed how women should behave in the workplace and conduct their union activities. Their actions and practices on the waterfront and in negotiations with Job Brothers and Newfoundland Employers Association Limited, froze categories of work along gender lines and constrained women's chances to alter their working conditions and wages.

GEOGRAPHY AS MARKER

In this study, I produced a surprising (for me) reading of the documents, records and narratives, one that eventually read difference inscribed in and through the physical landscape. The social and economic histories of the separate, yet connected communities of Fort Amherst, Southside Road, Shea Heights, and areas of St. John’s constituted the narrators in particular and embodied ways. I experienced different feelings about entering each community based on my indoctrination into class relations in St. John’s.
held different, less certain expectations of the diverse areas into which I ventured. Relations of class were very much part of those considerations.

Geography was used as a social marker in the narrators' conversations with me. They described other people, themselves and their relationships by situating them in specific communities. These relationships were mediated by geography, as when Fort Amherst workers knew a great deal about others from their area, but little about Shea Heights workers, for example. The women narrators from each community were generally unable to provide me with names of women from other communities, unless they were related by kinship or marriage.

Gender was spatially and hierarchically organized in and through the social geography around the plant. Not all working-class women in these areas were treated the same. Women from certain areas, such as Fort Amherst, were more desirable as Job workers than women from other areas, such as the North Battery or Shea Heights. This had the direct effect of organizing the lives of women workers at Job Brothers. Women were hired, and assigned specific work, because they came from specific communities. This had complex results. “The Battery Girls,” generally women from the Fort Amherst area, are a fine example of this sort of positioning by geography. While the women in this group were required to stay later, and clean up after other workers had left for the day, they also earned more money by working the extra hours.

Geographic location shaped relations between workers and management at Job Brothers, as well. Ian Reid described the Shea Heights workers as “like this” (with his first two fingers tightly crossed). The close relationships and communications between Shea Heights workers made getting new workers easier for him as he simply had to announce he was looking for a new worker and several would appear for work in short order. Geography also organized workers differently in the plant. Commonly-held
geography provided the possibility for more cohesive class relations between workers, and against management, on the plant floor. The workers, in turn, described the workplace as “like family,” in part because most knew others working at Job’s - family members, friends or other relations. The “family” discourse which circulates through many of the women’s narratives on workplace relations, did not encompass all workers, however. Interestingly, those women who did not reproduce this discourse in their talk were often those who left the plant after only a few years of work there, and had few family members working at Job’s.

Familial patriarchal relations abounded in the plant. Within families with more than one family member, particularly men, working at Job Brothers, regulation and control of women was exerted: fathers attempted to control and contain their daughter’s sexuality through monitoring the women’s relationships with men in the plant, and intervened to protect daughters during the union discussions. Workplace patriarchal relations expressed by Maurice Job Taylor for example, also exerted control over selected women workers. Their work possibilities and personal, heterosexual relationships were monitored and commented on by managers. Some of these same women “benefitted” from these relations by receiving gifts of clothing, newspapers and car rides from Maurice Job Taylor, although like Pearl Hunt, not all workers saw a closer connection to management as an opportunity to be taken.

Geography remains a connecting factor today. Women and men from the different communities remain connected in various ways with their communities and each other, despite community “development” which may have displaced them from their traditional homes. The connectedness of the narrators across time and space is central to how they fashion their stories in this study. Earlier in this study, I described the narratives as akin to the linked short stories of author Alice Munroe, with characters and events
reappearing, only to be differently positioned by the different narrators. In this study, where one narrator's stories come to rest for a moment, for they never truly end, another narrator carries on. Narrators often referred to each other, provided personal names and geographic locations as reference points, and produced each other as co-constructors in the work place and their wider lives. The multiple specifics of fluid subjectivities, time and space partially determines the nature of the narrations.

The narratives were also the site of the intersection of subject positionings fashioned by relations of class, gender, race, age, marital status and so on. In these stories, geography became a social and economic marker, with subject positionings linked to women's conduct, notions of respectability, and class position negotiated in and through geography. Unstable and shifting subject positionings, and the resulting subjectivities that are made possible, point to precarious, contingent and potentially contradictory process and ways of being in the world.

Newspapers, journals and radio features contributed to this shaping of specifically gendered, classed, and raced subjectivities. In the 1940s, Newfoundland was not an isolated island but was embedded in a complex array of social relations. News, information and social commentaries, as well as newspaper features such as women's pages which originated elsewhere reached St. John's. Multiple gendered, classed and raced messages were present in the publications readily available to the women in St. John's area. Traditional notions of domestic womanhood were emphasised: modern homemaking, nutrition, recipes and child care were abundant along with knitting, sewing and cooking projects, grooming tips to attract male attention, and horoscopes. The fashions illustrated reflected a white, middle and upper-middle class economic position and body image for women as they highlighted glamorous clothing. Women were encouraged to improve themselves through columns on language use, simple social
exercises, and quick household tips and repairs, many of which centered on cleanliness and maintenance of middle class decorative standards. Advertisements focused on white women's beauty products, health products, food purchases for the family and children in particular. Some local writing, especially that by Dora Russell, and features and photographs from other countries, including Canada, showed a wider potential for women, however. Careers, active participation in politics and sports were seen as possibilities in these features. Thus, although there was a strong discourse of domesticity prevalent, other multi-layered, sometimes conflicting discourses about appropriate women's lives were contained in local newspapers.

A racialized "discourse of niceness" is spoken into being by the narrators, primarily in their narratives about Jessie Earle Thomas and her leadership of the LCSWU. Whiteness is assumed/presumed throughout most of the stories I heard and participated in constructing during the course of my research. When I attempted to explore "colour," the narrators interrupted my direction with assurances that Jessie was "one of us," and, by implication, she was not different. Within this discourse, to recognize difference based on race was "bad," while to ignore or gloss over it was "good." Verbal images of "sameness," "sweetness," and "gentleness" are employed to produce a safe subject positioning for Jessie to occupy in their memories of her. As Frankenberg (1993) points out, such a discourse situates race as a "secondary characteristic" not implicated at all in the fashioning of selves and identities.

Class relations are constituted in the narratives as well. In particular, Leo Dillon, and more indirectly Cecil Hunt, construct Maurice Job Taylor as lacking the appropriate class expressions for his place in Newfoundland society. For some narrators, there are obvious discursive markers of his class position: his accent, his "Englishness," his "peculiar" dress. Pearl Hunt's stories illuminate the organization of
the discursive practices of class differentiation at Job Brothers, especially in her narratives about the clothing box and refusing domestic labour at Taylor’s home.

REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING: NARRATIVES AND THE WORKINGS OF MEMORY

I have come to realize that we hold very specific understandings of stories and memories. The idea of stories or narrations being developed in an intersubjective, mutually constitutive moment, and therefore, being of a specific content and detail, rooted in that moment, is not how telling one’s story is understood. Rather, in this different setting, telling is an act of collaboration, not an individual process. In this telling, identities are partial, contingent, and in flux, even momentarily. This conception of remembering is at odds with conventional Enlightenment understandings of “truth” and “the real” as being fixed and unwavering foundations of our lives and stories.

I realize as well that remembering and forgetting are social acts, embedded in, and drawing from, our relationships with others. How is it that we remember, or forget? In this case, the very asking of a question stimulated talk, while the viewing of old newspaper accounts and photographs prompted a range of responses: new storylines, greater detail, other tangents. The organizing work of these prompts is visible in the narratives themselves, as narrators reference public accounts and the memories of others in order to “fix” their storyline in coherent relationship with the stories of others. Historical documents, usually documents which the narrator no longer possesses, are constructed as holding the “truth” of an event, if only they were accessible.

Close emotional and physical proximity to others who share talk about a particular moment or event produces a kind of crystallization of accounts among some narrators. I have named this formation “narrative constellations.” Daisy, Alice and
Pearl, related through kinship and marriage, produced narrative constellations where specific events were highlighted even though some details were changed between tellings. An array of stories held in common, like a “community memory,” was visible. Rememberings were nourished, refashioned, rewritten in accordance with the collective, but always centering on the individual. Through these stories the individual and the social were inextricably bound together.

A different take on the notion of narrative constellations occurred to me when I talked with Leo and Mary Dillon. Together, they produced particular stories, of specific events or people. One narrative line was clearly shared by both narrators, each telling certain moments with an awareness of the direction and content of the entire narrative piece. The smooth flow of their interaction (and performance) left me in no doubt that the stories had been told before. The repeated dual performance and storyline are part of the crystallization of “memories” and the production of remembering for Leo and Mary.

Forgetting was also an embodied and social act. Embodied in the sense that age, illness and infirmity undoubtedly had consequences for mental activity. As a social act, how might remembering of an earlier time in one’s life shatter senses of self that a subject has worked hard to produce? In the case of Jessie Earle Thomas, race, class and age positioned her differently than the other narrators in this study. For Jessie, St. John’s was the site of mixed memories, a place of childhood and family, while at the same time a place of learning the word “nigger,” of being forced into fish plant labour because she could not get hired elsewhere at the age of fifteen. The bulk of her life had been lived outside of this place, her life and family concerns far removed from her young womanhood. Her memories of that time had little salience in the rest of her life: no stories were told amongst friends, no moments of events reinscribed or transformed by re-tellings. Her stories were historically and culturally “other” to her family.
Remembering and forgetting are implicated in meaning making for the narrators. Particularly outstanding events were remembered by different narrators, in part, because they happened infrequently, were dramatic or grisly, as in the case of severe accidents in the plant. In this instance, a badly cut arm seemed to stand for and embody a moral lesson on the dangers of fish plant work and technologies for Mary and Leo Dillon.

Shifting historical contexts and discourses which make available to us the language and concepts with which we engage the world also shaped what women and men could say to me. Some discourses, such as those around racial difference and sexual harassment seem to not be fully emergent in the narrators’ talk, not in the 1940s and not today. Certain, historically specific discourses, such as the naming of sexual harassment is more readily available to women today, but was still not deployed by the narrators to name their experiences. Naming, and thus constructing, experiences, subject positionings and identities was accomplished in light of these discursive absences. This, and the points raised in previous discussion in this chapter, raise questions about what “discursive resources” must be available for people to name experiences, produce narratives, fashion and refashion a sense of self, negotiate their lives?

GENDER AND STORIES

One interesting reflection on the narrative content revolves around gender differentiation. At the risk of producing a notion of “sameness” and erasing difference in the narrators’ stories, certain limited generalizations can be made about the narratives with which I worked. As in Sangster’s research in Ontario (1994), women and men told me different stories. Women’s stories were mediated by relationships with others, women and men, in the workplace and domestic realms. Control of women’s sexuality
appeared in stories of paternalism - familial and workplace. Women were watched, monitored and regulated in and through their bodies in ways that men were not. Women talked about the disruption and re-ordering of their work and domestic lives through marriage, pregnancy, and children. Negotiations with themselves, their husbands and Job's management were an on-going feature of paid labour for women. For some of the narrators, maintaining a respectable working-class home was important; they negotiated the many tasks required to keep a household running - cooking, cleaning and washing clothes were particularly mentioned - while obscuring from their husbands the hard work involved in producing such a home. They spoke of encounters with management over surveillance and regulation and some, like Daisy Tucker Hiscock described in detail the contestations over women's knowledge and skill in fish processing: who had the authority to speak and about what subjects, was at stake.

Men's talk revolved around their union, the Longshoremen's Protective Union, and the production of masculinity through identification with, and participation in, specific skills, knowledges and forms of work on the waterfront. To be a man, the labour had to be hard, performed in cold temperatures for long hours. Strength and endurance on the job, and knowledge about and capacity to work with tools, equipment and household repairs were significant markers of masculinity for some LSPU members. Skills and knowledges were deeply implicated in the constitution of working-class masculinity in some stories. For example, Maurice Job Taylor was repeatedly found to be deficient, especially when measured against the standard of household maintenance. Men talked extensively about contestations with management as the site of production of masculinity. In and through descriptions of arguments with foremen, repeated firings, and conversations with Maurice Job Taylor for example, men such as Ches Janes, Cecil Hunt and Leo Dillon fashioned the boundaries of acceptable masculine expression at Job
Brothers, and constituted themselves as appropriately masculine. Women's work in the fish plant was always minimized or erased in their talk: it was "just" women's work. Likewise, women's work in the home was seldom noticed as in the case of Daisy's husband, Les, who never questioned how Daisy managed a spotless home along with her hours in the fish plant. Given this on-going discursive production of women's work in men's narratives, it is little wonder that most of the women I spoke with began by telling me that they had little to say about their work at Job Brothers. Relations of class and gender were actively produced in these narratives.

I do not presume a homogeneity of experiences or histories for women or men in these general statements about narrative content. Rather, I read in the narratives a vast repertoire of discourses, and discursive actions and practices at work in the organization of our talk together. Subject locations and positionings through relations of gender, race, class, age, marital status and occasionally education levels constitute and are constituted by the speakers in our conversations. I include my own talk in this. Meanings are actively fashioned in and through this organization of everyday talk.

In the conversations with married couples, oppositional narratives were also dramatically produced. What women and men thought important to convey to me was markedly different. These conversations were sites of the most active construction of gender relations. Couples recounted stories differently than individuals, with more, and more vivid detail along with turn-taking/turn-disrupting performance styles. Mary and Leo Dillon, Pearl and Cecil Hunt and Daisy and Les Hiscock recounted stories in this manner. All of the couples reminded each other frequently of particular events, confirmed names or dates with each other, and on occasion, appeared to use the other as a repository of "memories" for both of them. For example, in the 1987 conversation between Daisy and Les Hiscock and Susan Williams, Daisy consistently deflects to Les on
the name of the women's union, the hours of women's work, and the number of women on
the line. Les responds with clear answers each time. His is the authoritative voice of
memory.

Notably, when the couples were in conversation with me, the men did not hesitate
to talk about the skills or knowledge women possessed about fish processing, or wages
women earned for their work. This occurred most often around the topic of the Ladies'
Cold Storage Workers Union. Even though we might be talking about the LCSWU, the men
invariably took up the "union" talk as talk about their union, the Longshoremen's
Protective Union, as if no other union existed in Job Brothers workplace. I often had to
reframe the discussion to focus around the LCSWU and away from the LSPU. Women, on
the other hand, seldom actively produced talk about men, their work, or presumed to
talk about the LSPU in the same way. Instead, they talked about their own work, stories
that constituted that work as skilled, difficult, requiring knowledge and experience,
performed under trying conditions, and they recounted stories of actions and practices in
the workplaces that affected them.

In men's narratives, women occupy subordinate positions in the workplace. They
are constituted as subordinate within narratives that set boundaries of what counts as
work, skill and knowledge and who is recognized as a qualified worker, who is authorized
to speak about fish processing. Secondly, women are constituted as subordinate within a
very tightly defined feminized category, literally in the language of the contract
negotiated between the LSPU and the Newfoundland Employers Association Limited, in
talk accomplished by the male LSPU workers, and in the discourses of the workplace,
which situate women as worth less than male workers, as requiring patriarchal forms of
protection in the realms of sexuality and heterosexual relations.

Coherence, within narrations and between different narrations and narrators,
influenced the formation of narratives. "Is that what Dais said?" is asked many times by narrators. The question - Is my story the same as...? - became a pointed interrogation in narrative production. The desire to tell the story, to be a "good subject," becomes visible in these moments. Likewise, the situational moves within narrations to make an individual narrator's stories "fit" together in a more seamless way points to a will to a particular kind of story telling. For example, on separate occasions, narrators "smoothed over" sites of disjunctures within their own narrative, and between other narratives, by saying that perhaps they were not working the day a particular event is said to have occurred. Absence from the scene means there is no personal eyewitness account on the part of the narrator, therefore, a more flexible rendering of the entire account becomes possible. Thus, competing discourses about events are down played or eliminated entirely.

Since I began this study with a focus on the LCSWU, I talked with the narrators about the union and their formation stories. Situating these stories and histories within this study became somewhat problematic. Given how the women, in particular, talked about the union, where should I place this discussion in my study? The more I thought about this question, the more I re-read the narratives, the more convinced I became that the LCSWU histories belonged later in the thesis. In their narratives, women spoke less about the formation stages of their unionization efforts than they did about the work processes in the plant and their relationships with other workers and management. I gradually "heard" this positioning in their stories. The LCSWU carried great meaning for a few of the narrators, for others, the union was not at all part of how they constructed their sense of self then or now. In the end, I suggest that the formation of the LCSWU was not necessarily a glorious moment for the women workers of Job Brothers, but rather, one that was fraught with layers of meaning and contestation as they
attempted to negotiate the tricky waters of both the workplace and the control exerted by the Longshoremen's Protective Union.

SPEAKING/WRITING HISTORIES

I have come to see that this thesis has multiple agendas: the telling of partial, incomplete and contested stories of the work of the women and men at Job Brothers fish plant, and the formation of the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union in the late 1940s; a deconstructive reading of meanings made by women and men narrators of their experiences at Job's plant and in their wider lives; and a deconstruction/examination of these multiple tellings for the discursive production of relations of power in and through the organizing practices of gender, race and class in Job's plant. Thus, I am examining at least two levels simultaneously: the talk produced between us, and the production in the moment of talk.

In these complex readings I look for the intersubjective practices through which our identification with subject positions, memory, community and so forth are organized and, at least in part, accomplished through conversation. I include myself in this examination, for I am part of the intersubjective moments of production of meanings. I also question what the narrators might have meant, intended to say, have "forgotten," or what they choose not to reveal in our talks. I look to see how the narrators and I position ourselves and each other in intricate ways, how we produce particular discourses and subjects in our conversations. In these readings I am working with interpretations of a different order, where questions of desires for and investments in, particular subject positionings become salient. Finally, the discursive "rules" that operate to produce "truth" about the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union and women's relationships to it, as well as who is authorized to speak, and about what, are rendered more observable by
my readings.

These reading approaches allow me to ask questions about the discursive production of subjects and selves, and the work of our everyday talk in the creation, maintenance and shifting of these fashionings of selves and identities. Different readings also allows me to shift the questions that social, labour, and feminist historians and sociologists are asking, and the ways in which we, and they, think about the work accomplished. Finally, in these ways I am able to problematize conventional notions about “experience” and “truth.”

Traditional labour history and sociology approach the notion of “experience” and its recounting unproblematically. Experience is assumed as foundational ground from which accurate, truthful, and transparent telling of the story arise. The language found in texts, documents and records, and as used by “research subjects,” is taken as given, as representing transparently “what happened.” Meaning(s) of events, relationships and stories are assumed to be directly accessible through a data collection exercise that simply requires straightforward interpretation through a given theoretical standpoint. The central meaning, produced through insider knowledge - the story of one who was eyewitness to the event - is assigned a privileged position in knowledge production. The feminist researcher may be assumed to have more clear and clean access to the knowledge of women because of shared gender position with female subjects, or shared class position with others.

In my work, I take narratives by the women and men working at Job Brothers as the entry points for a range of reading approaches and meaning-makings which are provisional, contested and in flux. This sense keeps present for me the acts of creation involved in the intersubjective production of narratives. For women and men actively framed their stories for me, produced specific and particular historically contingent
identities for themselves, and withheld certain tellings from me. They made choices within and sometimes outside of the boundaries I established implicitly by my questions. They actively participated in the production of something that was not a unitary and fixed subject positioning or story, but rather more nuanced and subtle expressions of gender, class and race in and through their talk. This conveys to me a sense of narratives being (re)tellings of historical selves as both subject and object of the tellings.

The narrators in this study actively construct, are agents in, their own lives, but in my work, I look elsewhere to see it in action. In this study, I have looked for the “conditions of possibility” for mobilization rather than the pre-existence of a fixed notion of individual agency. Women and men are not passive or obedient workers at Job Brothers. The occupy multiple subjectivities within discourses, and with those positionings come “conditions of possibility” for action (Butler:1992:13).

Women actively negotiate a number of aspects of their working lives. For example, they negotiate employment at Job Brothers, resorting to the production of alternate forms of identity - manipulating their age in particular - to gain entrance to the workplace. They attempt to negotiate what work they will undertake at Job Brothers, such as in seeking work on the blueberry processing line, and how they will perform work they are assigned, as when Daisy Hiscock challenges the foreman over appropriate packing of fish. They mediate their relationships with management and other workers, women and men: they use humour and joke-playing to adapt to the workplace, and to participate in the dynamics of heterosexual relations there, and they choose to take more aggressive actions, to be a “hard ticket,” when they feel it is necessary.

By moving away from the Enlightenment conceptualization of an individual as fixed and fully formed, and by asking instead what makes social action possible for the women and men narrators in my study, I am able to look at the historical, geographic,
material and discursive social relations that produce conditions for subject making and positioning. It becomes possible to see this activity by human beings as both an individual and collective process. In these historically located, multiple, shifting moments, conditions and meanings shift; possibilities for action fluctuate. Understanding something of the potentiality of these moments for identity (re)formations, and social change has been a goal of this project.

By producing different “readings” of the transcribed narratives and our inter-subjective engagements, I make visible the work of material and discursive practices. It is through these practices that identification with subject positions, memories, communities and so on is organized and accomplished in our conversations together. Gender, class and race, as well as age and marital status intersect in the production of identities in these complex narratives. It is possible to see how we are actively producing the subjects of which we speak, even as we produce our selves in that speaking. A second reading addresses meaning making in and through narratives and inter-subjective moments. The shifts, ruptures, discontinuities and the active work of narrators to produce coherent stories, ones that “fit” with the stories of other narrators are examined. Through these readings it is possible to “see” history in a different way: as an active, albeit fragmentary, construction by and of subjects, identities, events and memories, rather than as the revelation of a “pure” memory of the “real” thing.
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