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Academic Libraries as Feminine and Feminist Models of Organization

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

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by

Marie F. Jones

May 2008

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Dr. Hal Knight, Chair

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Keywords: Gender, Feminism, Feminine, Women, Organizational Culture, Bureaucracy

## ABSTRACT

### Academic Libraries as Feminine and Feminist Models of Organization

by

Marie F. Jones

Because academic libraries are primarily staffed by women and are relatively autonomous entities in colleges and universities, they offer a unique model of workplace gendering and feminism. This qualitative, ethnographic study examined 3 small college libraries in 3 regions of the United States and explored issues of bureaucracy and gendering in these libraries. Feminist challenges to bureaucracy emerged in the areas of hierarchy, division of labor, competition and collaboration, decision-making, and communication. Feminine practice in the libraries reflected private sphere attitudes toward work (values of community, emotionality, and caring) and an affirmation of feminine roles in the workplace. The organizational cultures of these libraries affirmed flexible scheduling, emotions and friendship at work, and parenting talk and behaviors. The library workers also engaged in an ethic of care for library users and colleagues. Individuals in the organizations expressed motivations for work not based in monetary or status gain and endorsed women's power in leadership roles. The gendering of libraries also placed strong masculinity outside of the norm, creating expectations for men to engage in androgynous or feminine behavior. Overall, the study gives voice to feminine and feminist practice in the workplace.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

While the number of women in the United States work force has doubled since 1970 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004), most women are still employed in a limited number of occupations, primarily service-oriented jobs with lower pay and little room for advancement. Even women's professions—traditionally identified as nursing, social work, librarianship, and teaching—are service-oriented and underpaid. Librarianship is unique among women's occupations in that it is not only staffed primarily by women, but it is increasingly administered by women, as well (Deyrup, 2004). Throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, over 80% of librarians (not library administrators) were women (Beck, 1992). This trend continues into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with recent percentages at 81.7% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003, p. 399). In keeping with sex segregation patterns across workplaces as a whole, women have only recently begun to take leadership roles in library organizations. Zemon and Bahr (2005) indicated that “women represent between 60 and 70 percent of academic librarians and between almost 50 to almost 60 percent of academic library directors” (p. 397). These numbers indicate more gender parity in libraries than in business or other educational communities (Deyrup, 2004).

As I began to think about this study and to read about gendered organizations, I realized that my experience of the library as a workplace has been very different from many women's experiences of their work. The academic libraries where I have worked are relatively autonomous organizations within larger bureaucracies, staffed and administered primarily by

women or feminized men<sup>1</sup>. While funding and some administrative oversight come from outside the library, libraries' internal functions are relatively autonomous. Thus, I believe that a unique organizational behavior and culture have evolved within academic libraries. Because librarians and library workers are primarily female and engage in a stereotypically feminine service-oriented occupation, this organizational behavior may be more feminine and/or feminist than other types of organizations in the world at large.

I am not alone in asking questions about the feminine or feminist nature of libraries. In a recent study of gender parity in librarianship, Deyrup (2004) asked, "Has the organizational culture of academic libraries changed to reflect a feminist or 'woman-centered' agenda?" (p.243). Hannigan (1994), in her call for us to "value women's work in librarianship—valuing what women do" asked, "What is the special contribution that women have made to the profession of librarianship?" (p.300). Hannigan posited that leadership as a whole might be redefined with feminist models in mind, and Turock (2001) suggested that libraries might become "the model for the parent organization" (p.126).

This redefinition of leadership and organization motivated me to undertake this study. Mainstream organizational literature seldom takes into account the experiences of women in the workplace. Feminists have critiqued the canon of organizational literature, identifying theories that implicitly privilege men and stereotypically masculine attributes and ignore or devalue

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<sup>1</sup> A feminized man is able to communicate and associate comfortably in a feminine environment by taking on certain feminine behaviors, but he does not necessarily eschew all masculine behaviors and actions. He may or may not be what Bly (1990) called a "soft male," because he may move between or balance masculine and feminine roles as needed. As such, he is not necessarily effeminate, but is, at minimum, more androgynous than stereotypically masculine.

women and stereotypically feminine attributes. Mumby and Putnam's (1992) analysis of Simon's theory of bounded rationality, J. Martin and Knopoff's (1997) discussion of Weber's work on bureaucracy, Acker and Van Houten's (1999) critiques of the Hawthorne studies and Crozier's study of French bureaucracies are just a few in the field.

Only a small number of women have had an impact on organizational studies. One of the earliest was Mary Parker Follett (Follett, 1940, 1951, 1974, 1995, 1998) whose ideas of egalitarian community and interrelatedness were antecedents to contemporary theories of situational and servant leadership, but little influenced her contemporaries in the Scientific Management School. Starting in the early 1950s, Joan Woodward (Flanders, Pomeranz, & Woodward, 1968; Woodward, 1960, 1965) was the first to formulate the "technological" approach to organizations. More recently, Rosabeth Moss Kanter's work explored issues of empowerment, change, and participative management (Kanter, 1972, 1973, 1976, 1977a, 1977b, 1983, 1989). Most pertinent to this study is Kanter's work on gendered opportunity structures and individual's experience of organizations (Kanter, 1977a; Kanter & Stein, 1979; Millman & Kanter, 1975).

My experience brings me to suggest that libraries can offer a counterpoint to the prevailing masculine theories of organization. What if one were to look for woman-centered models of organization in librarianship? Might my profession offer a re-visioning of organizations? It seems commonsense to look for models of feminine or feminist workgroups in a profession where most workers are women and where women hold a significant number of leadership positions. Graves and Powell (1982) pointed out that, given the opportunity, women leaders might arrive at different conceptualizations about leadership than men. Might it be that women in librarianship have taken this opportunity? Without as many male-female power

differentials in the system, but also without conscious feminism at its root (as with many organizations discussed in the literature), might a more purely organic model emerge? Despite the lack of conscious feminism in our organizations, I see the profession of librarianship to be feminist in nature. Pritchard (1994) compared the basic ethical and philosophical tenets of feminism with those of librarianship, including “a concern for clarity of language; for access to services and information regardless of social or economic category, or topic of inquiry; and an awareness of the importance of context in understanding questions and organizations” (p.42). These tenets lie at the very roots of librarianship, and the practice of librarianship may have come to be feminist for its workers.

I am not making an essentialist argument. Reducing gender to a set of fixed traits unnecessarily simplifies the complexity of gendered social experience and limits analysis. I do not believe that men are essentially masculine and women are essentially feminine, or that women’s organizations are inherently better than men’s organizations. However, I do believe that in workplaces where certain behaviors and activities considered feminine are devalued and others are that are considered masculine are valued, that feminine activities are likely to be “disappeared” (Fletcher, 1998, 1999). Conversely, that which is deemed feminine may have a chance to be more freely expressed in a setting primarily populated and at least partially controlled by females. I hope, with this research, to give voice to alternative ways of being in the workplace that might inform the discourse about organizations and how they best function.

#### Statement of the Problem

In this study, I explored the gendered structure of academic libraries for possible models of organic feminine and feminist organization. These models are “organic” in the sense that they grew naturally out of organizational culture rather than being theoretically imposed, as was the

case in consciously feminist organizations described in the literature review. As I worked through the data, I initially defined “feminine” in relation to private sphere attitudes toward work detailed in the literature review and on stereotypical attributes of femininity in Western society, particularly that of white, middle class Americans. I also defined “feminist” as woman-centered practices that confront the gendered nature of traditional bureaucratic organization with gender-conscious patterns and empowering practices. While these definitions generally held true throughout my research, I always held in mind that they were not mutually exclusive classifications, nor were they fixed definitions. As the data played out, the definitions settled into two streams of thought: that of feminist confrontation of traditional roles and hierarchies, and feminine and “woman-centered” feminist affirmation of traditional roles.

#### Research Questions

- In what ways are the libraries included in this study feminine organizations?
- How is femininity manifested in the organizations?
- What gender ambiguities or contradictions exist in the organizations?
- What explicit or implicit feminist principles are at work in these organizations? How are they implemented?

#### Significance of the Study

Fletcher (1998) identified gendered assumptions of work life that ignore feminine experience as being problematic not only for women but also for men and for organizational effectiveness. Theories that ignore women’s experience have resulted in narrow understandings of organizational phenomena. Harding (1986) suggested, “First we often have to formulate a ‘woman-centered’ hypothesis in order even to comprehend a gender-free one” (p. 138). This



study will attempt to give voice to ways of working that are invisible in the dominant masculine organization. Librarians may be uniquely able to give voice to feminine ways of working because they have not been as squelched by working in a masculine-dominated workplace.

### Definitions of Terms

Gender – a set of patterned, socially produced, distinctions between male and female, masculine and feminine (Acker, 1992). Individuals “do gender” in a complex set of “socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). These assumptions about what it is to be “woman” or “man” have generally been differentiated from biological sex, but even biological sex has been problematized by deconstructive analyses. People may behave, either in specific situations or as a whole, outside of their sex category, thus gendering a situation outside of their sex category.

Sex - a way of categorizing people according to biological differences (i.e.sex organs or chromosome typing). People may be biologically both male and female, or may be biologically one sex but engage in activities of the other gender. Individuals are assigned by others to a sex category based on societal-defined gender symbols (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Female-intensive profession – a profession, sometimes called a “semi-profession” (because masculine definitions preclude “women’s work” from being “professional”) in which females numerically predominate. Harris (1992) coined the term “female-intensive” in preference to “female-dominated,” because, at the time she wrote, women worked in libraries, but men administered them. Although the numerical incidence of women in library leadership is much higher now, I still prefer the term “female-intensive” and use it throughout this document.

Feminist - A worldview that is woman-centered. For the purposes of this study, feminist practices are those that confront the gendered nature of traditional bureaucratic organization with

gender-conscious patterns and empowering practices. An overview of feminist streams of thought influencing this study appears in the literature review.

Feminine organization – An organization in which the culture, symbols, and activities of the group supports stereotypically feminine gender roles or private sphere perceptions of work (see Table 1, p. 30 ). Based in Western culture, primarily that of the United States, these stereotypes do not take into account other cultures’ perceptions of femininity. In addition, the feminine organization is one that subverts the hegemony of masculine organization described by Acker (1990, 1992). The organization may exhibit either or both of these traits at any given time.

#### Limitations

As with any qualitative study, the results of this research cannot be broadly generalized to multiple settings. With a limited number of organizations studied, it cannot provide an overview of library organizations as a whole, nor academic libraries, specifically. This study was limited, also, by the lens through which I, as primary researcher, view the world. As a feminist, with a bent toward radical, socialist, and poststructural feminist schools of thought, my worldview tends to value the feminine, to devalue bureaucracy, and to enjoy the kaleidoscope of shifting meanings in life (and, as a part of life, in work). Finally, this study was limited to examining predominantly white, middle class and “pink collar” workers, because libraries are not only gender segregated, but also race and class segregated workplaces.

#### Overview

This chapter has introduced the research proposed for this study. Chapter 2 offers a literature review of the theoretical frameworks that informed my thought, including specific streams of feminism and their influences on organizational literature, as well as information about librarianship and other female-intensive professions. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology

used for the research. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the findings of the study. Chapter 4 concentrates on the organizational structures and the feminist challenges to bureaucracy in place in these libraries. It also explores the tension between bureaucracy and feminist ideals present to a greater or lesser degree in each of the three libraries in this study. Chapter 5 discusses issues of gendering the library. That is, how library workers practice femininity at work, through blurring the binary of public and private and normalizing feminine behavior. Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation, drawing together the ideas set forth in the previous chapters.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation draws on a broad variety of interdisciplinary work, adding a small thread to a tapestry of information sources from feminist studies, organizational studies, communication studies, the sociology of work, and library science. The following literature review describes some of the writing that helped to shape my thoughts about librarianship as a feminine and feminist profession. It begins with an overview of the feminist streams of thought that influence my own views, feminist influences on organizational theory and practice, and the feminist theory of gendered organizations and the private/public dichotomy. From there, I examine the organizational literature on female-intensive professions and the experience of women working with other women and then move on to discussions of women in libraries, specifically.

#### Feminist Theories: Radical, Socialist, and Postmodern

This dissertation owes its theoretical roots primarily to the stream of feminist thought known as radical feminism, with influences of socialist feminism and poststructuralist feminism. According to Calàs and Smircich (1996), “Radical feminism is ‘radical’ because it is woman-centered” (p. 226). Growing out of the new left, civil rights, and anti-war movements of the 1960s, radical feminism envisions a new social order where women are not subordinate to men (Calàs & Smircich, 1996). Tong (1998) divided radical feminism into two strains: radical libertarian, which posits that gender is separable from sex and that androgyny is a goal of feminist activity; and radical cultural, which rejects the goal of androgyny, replacing it with an affirmation of feminine traits and an emphasis on the values and virtues culturally associated

with women. This study is grounded primarily in the radical cultural camp, taking the path of radical feminists who emphasize the positive value of qualities identified with women: “interdependence, community, connection, sharing, emotion, body, trust, absence of hierarchy, nature, immanence, process, joy, peace, and life” (Jaggar, 1992, p. 354). Although negative feminine traits also appear in the results of this study, the connection to feminine radical values in the workplace grounds this research in radical feminist theory.

This study is also grounded in socialist feminism. Growing out of the earlier political movements of the 1960s, socialist feminism emerged in the 1970s in an attempt to synthesize Marxist, psychoanalytic, and radical feminisms (Calàs & Smircich, 1996). With its emphasis on work and production issues and its synthesis of other feminisms (Tong, 1998), socialist feminism provides a natural basis for any study of women’s work. According to Calàs and Smircich, its aim is to eliminate both private and public systems of oppression based on sex, gender, race, class, etc., and thus transform social relations. Socialist feminists have also explored the historical separation of workplace from home and the resulting sex segregation and gender structuring in the contemporary workplace. Acker’s (1990) socialist feminist analysis of gendered organizational structuring deeply influenced the design of this study and is thoroughly discussed in the Gendered Organizations section, below.

Finally, postmodernism influences my own epistemology and therefore the nature of this study. There are multiple strands in postmodernist theory, generally influenced by the French poststructural movement (Cixous & Clément, 1986; Derrida, 1967/1976, 1967/1978, 1998; Irigaray, 1977/1985, 1982/1992, 1984/1993; Lacan, 1975/1988, 1966/2004). Unlike the radical and socialist feminist theories discussed above, poststructuralism questions “positive knowledge” as we know it, in a move toward destabilizing the idea of objective knowledge (Calàs &

Smircich, 1996). In practice, theorists of this school “interrogate the ontological and epistemological claims of modern theories: their foundationalism, essentialism, and universalism” (Calàs & Smircich, 1996, p. 235). Poststructuralism questions many of the claims of feminist theory, including the articulation of a “privileged knowing subject (e.g. women’s experience; women’s standpoint) [or] an ‘essential feminine’ and a general representation of ‘woman’” (p. 235).

According to Fletcher (1999), poststructuralist inquiry calls attention to the relationship between power and knowledge and considers this relationship a central object of study. The production of knowledge, then, is an exercise of power, where powerful voices assert a set of rules that govern what is considered “true.” Fletcher pointed out that one goal of poststructural inquiry is to disrupt the relationship between power and knowledge by bringing “subversive stories” into the discourse. These stories can take the form of personal accounts of members of a group whose voice has been silenced and whose experience has not been counted as knowledge. This alternative, perhaps contradictory, version of reality thus disrupts the knowledge-power link (Fletcher, 1999). For Tong (1998), the postmodernists’ view of women as “Other” allows women to “stand back and criticize the norms, values, and practices that the dominant culture (patriarchy) seeks to impose on everyone” (p. 195). Through language, which is no longer inextricably tied to reality (and therefore “truth”), each individual constructs his or her own knowledge; even that constructed knowledge is fluid over time (Tong, 1998). Thus, in this worldview, ambiguity is embraced while positivistic knowledge is both denied and undermined. Although this study primarily focuses on the notion of “femininity” and “feminism” as constructed in a positivistic duality of masculinity-femininity, it also attempts to disrupt the knowledge-power link by offering an alternative reality of work organizations.

Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) suggested that it is possible to tread this line between postmodernism and positivism, being suspicious of postmodernism's efforts "to undermine any notion of grand theorizing and at the same time to see it as providing possibilities for feminist critique and practice" (p. 83). They postulate that feminism might even negotiate "a relationship between the emancipator ideals of the modernist, Enlightenment grand narrative on one hand, and postmodern appeals to local knowledge and multiple voices and truths on the other" (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004, p.82). Thus, in this study, I identify positivistic gender dualities but also explore how individuals experience gender in various, sometimes conflicting, ways. Ambiguities of femininity may, therefore, further disrupt the masculine/feminine duality.

### Feminist Theory and Feminist Organizations

While early liberal feminist organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW) adopted traditional bureaucratic and top-down management styles, radical feminists of the late 1960s developed alternative organizational structures that departed from traditional models to reflect egalitarian feminist values (Carden, 1974; Freeman, 1975; Hole & Levine, 1971). Subsequently, a number of studies detailed the experiences of implementing feminist principles in organizations and analyzed their successes and failures. These studies included examinations of feminist rape crisis centers and homeless shelters (Matthews, 1995; E.K. Scott, 1998; Scott, 2005); battered women's groups and shelters (Ahrens, 1980; Arnold, 1995; Epstein, Russell, & Silvern, 1988; Ferraro, 1981,1983; Murray, 1988; Pahl, 1985; Reinelt, 1994, 1995; Rodriguez, 1988); health organizations serving women or minority populations (Morgen, 1994, 1995; Schwartz, Gottesman, & Perlmutter, 1988; Simonds, 1995; Thomas, 1999; Ward, 2004); women's activist organizations (Barnett, 1995; Eisenstein, 1995; Gottfried & Weiss, 1994; Leidner, 1991; Mendez, 2002; Sealander & Smith, 1986; Whittier, 1995); lesbian, gay, bisexual,

and transgender activist organizations (Baker, 1982; Ward, 2004); local feminist political organizations (Reger, 2002, 2004); and for-profit businesses and unions (Castelberg-Koulma, 1991; Cholmeley, 1991; Farrell, 1994, 1995; Loe, 1999; Lont, 1988; Seccombe-Eastland, 1988; A. Taylor, 1988; Wyatt, 1988). A radical and antibureaucratic bent of feminist practice manifested itself in varying degrees of strength in these organizations, with empowerment underlying all of their reported aims. Some experimented with new models of organization that were influenced not only by feminism but also by the collective and anarchist movements (Ianello, 1992). Others combined bureaucratic and participatory styles in order to deal with outside pressures or size constraints (e.g., Farrell, 1994; Leidner, 1991). A few radical-identified feminist organizations even consciously worked in bureaucratic structures in order to meet “real life” concerns (e.g., Eisenstein, 1995; Rodriguez, 1988).

Postmodernism provides another theoretical approach with which to examine organizations, although little research has appeared at the intersection of poststructuralist and feminist studies. Most recently, Dixon (2007) expanded the domination-resistance reading of Foucault to include exploration of voluntary and non-task related relational constructs of organizational life. English (2006), however, is one of the few who examined feminist organizations through this lens. She used Foucauldian analysis to analyze learning in ten non-profit feminist organizations. While there seems to be little overlap between radical feminist organizational and poststructural studies, Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) provided a strong case for the overlapping interests of these two sometimes oppositional frames of analysis. This intersection of the two frames influences some of my analytical style in the results of this project.

Radical feminist thought has also influenced forms and practices of organizational theorizing. These feminist theorists started by looking at the lives and experiences of women in



order to create feminist visions of basic organizational concepts such as work, career, and management (e.g., Fagenson, 1993; Fletcher, 1998; Fletcher, 1999; Tancred, 1995). This work creates grounded theory based in actual individual experience, and is the stream of feminist research that most closely resembles this study's methodology.

### Gendered Organizations

This study is based, in part, on a body of literature that contends current definitions and assumptions about work, success, and competence in organizations are not gender-neutral. That is, most peoples' work lives implicitly value masculine aspects of work and the people (mostly men) who tend to work that way, while those who work in other important (feminine) ways are devalued.

In *The Feminist Case against Bureaucracy*, Ferguson (1984) pioneered the idea that bureaucracy places managers, workers, and clients in a subordinate position that enforces subordination, dependence, and powerlessness. Acker (1990) extended and amplified this position, explaining that organizational structure is not gender neutral because assumptions about gender underlie the essence of organizations. Abstract jobs and hierarchies assume a disembodied worker. Yet, based on the assumptions made about the worker's relationship to procreation and paid work, it is clear that the body is actually male. Acker discussed five interactive processes that gender organizations:

- 1) "Construction of divisions along lines of gender--divisions of labor, of allowed behaviors, of locations in physical space, of power" (Acker, 1990, p.146);
- 2) "Construction of symbols and images that explain, express, reinforce, or sometimes oppose these divisions" (p. 146);

- 3) Interactions between gendered individuals in the organization, including patterns of dominance and submission;
- 4) “Gendered components of individual identity,” (p.147) including choice of appropriate work, language use, clothing, and presentation of self;
- 5) “Gender is implicated in the fundamental, ongoing processes of creating and conceptualizing social structures” (p. 147).

Gender, therefore, is an element in the creation of organizational logic that underlies the assumptions in most work organizations. Written and unwritten work rules, contracts, job evaluations are all part of these processes. Acker clarifies how the disembodied "job" and its place in the abstract notion of a hierarchy is an implicitly gendered concept. The exclusion of sexuality, emotions, and procreation from the abstract concept of "worker" removes women from the workplace, either explicitly, or by rendering them powerless, reinforcing the disembodied self.

Although Acker’s argument may sound like a mere metaphor for bureaucracy, a large stream of research has since shown the applicability of her theory. The discussion in this field primarily took place in the 1990s, with recent shifts to more integrative explorations of gender, race, and sexuality in the workplace and to a more intertwined notion of “struggle” (Fleming & Spicer, 2008) rather than dichotomies of power and submission.

Gendered processes and practices may be either overt or deeply hidden in seemingly gender-neutral organizational functions (Acker, 1994; P.Y. Martin, 2003, 2006). Gender is a central component of power and domination in the workplace, sustained through social interactions that enact dominance and submission (Acker, 1990, 1992, 1994; Cockburn, 1991; Game & Pringle, 1983; Hall, 1993; P.Y. Martin, 1996, 2001, 2003, 2006; Smith, 1987; West &

Fenstermaker, 1995). The devaluation of nurturing and caring skills means that jobs emphasizing these private sphere skills are also devalued, considered “woman’s work” and therefore paid less than production-oriented jobs (Acker, 1989; England, 1992; Gibelman, 2003; Guy & Newman, 2004; Hogue & Lord, 2007).

Symbols, images, and ideologies legitimate inequalities and differences and lead to the gendering and racializing of organizations (Acker, 1990, 1992, 1994; Billing & Alvesson, 1993; Gherardi, 1995; Mills, 1988, 1995). The image of the ideal organizational member, the strong leader, or the organizational hero is often that of forceful white masculinity (Aaltio-Marjosola, 1994; Kanter, 1977a; Stivers, 1993; Eagly, 2007). Daily acts like ordinary masculine conversation (West & Zimmerman, 1987), decision-making, leadership, self-promotion, and joking (Collinson, 1988) when accepted as a norm, enable the masculine gendering of an organization (Ashcraft, 1999; Marshall, 1993; B.O. Murphy & Zorn, 1996).

Identity-making processes (e.g., choice of appropriate work, use of language, style of clothing, presentation of self as a gendered individual) also contribute to organizational structuring along gendered lines (Acker, 1990; Hearn & Parken, 1987; Hearn, Sheppard, Tancred-Sheriff, & Burrell, 1989; Reskin & Roos, 1990; Sheppard, 1989). Researchers have explored the contradictory expectations for feminine and corporate behavior (Jamieson, 1995; Wood & Conrad, 1983; Eagly, 2007), finding that women are caught in a double bind between being feminine and being a strong worker, in the eyes of both supervisors and subordinates.

Finally, organizational logic deeply imbedded in culture and bureaucratic forms reflect gendering processes. Recruiting and promoting practices reinforce occupational sex segregation and keep women at the lowest levels of the organization (Acker & Van Houten, 1999; Cockburn, 1991; Collinson, Knights, & Collinson, 1990). When the organizational hero is envisioned as

forcefully masculine, evaluation systems reward those traits and ignore feminine assets (Collinson & Hearn, 1996) contributing to the “glass ceiling” (e.g., Connell, 2006; Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987) and gendered opportunity structures (e.g., Collinson & Knights, 1986; Leidner, 1991b; P.Y. Martin, 1996). A number of researchers have explored issues of sexuality and sexual harassment in workplaces (Deux & Ullman, 1983; Gruber & Bjorn, 1982; Lerum, 2004; Loe, 1996; Spradley & Mann, 1975; Strine, 1988; B. Taylor & Conrad, 1992; Welsh, 1999; Williams, Giuffre, & Dellinger, 1999; Yount, 1991). In general, men and women socially construct each other at work through gendering practices that affect women’s and men’s work experience and impair women worker’s identities (P.Y. Martin, 2003, 2006). Martin asserted that attention to the practicing of gender in the workplace can produce insights into the creation of inequalities based on gender.

On an ontological level, Tancred (1995) pointed out that the entire field of the sociology of work is built on a gendered premise that excludes reproductive and domestic work, ignores the private side of the public-private divide, makes invisible gendered organizational rules, buries sexuality, and belittles skills that are considered feminine or female. Her argument brings feminist dialog into mainstream sociology, challenging some of the deepest assumptions of the field.

Exploring the feminine point of view, Fletcher (1998, 1999) documented the silencing, or “disappearing”<sup>2</sup> of “behaviors that are associated with the feminine, relational, or so-called softer side of organizational practice” (Fletcher, 1999, p.3). These behaviors are devalued even when

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<sup>2</sup> Fletcher’s (1998, 1999) use of the transitive verb “to disappear” implies agency in order to make a clear distinction between being invisible and being disappeared.

they are in line with organizational goals and objectives that fit the rhetoric of teamwork, collaboration, and learning. Therefore,

the result is that organizations adopt the rhetoric of change—moving, for example, to self-managed teams—but end up disappearing the very behavior that would help make the change work, such as recognizing the effort involved in helping a team work together effectively (Fletcher, 1999, p.3).

Fletcher’s work is particularly interesting because she looked not only at the behavioral patterns of women in the workplace but looked at the reasoning behind those behaviors, in what she called a “feminine logic of effectiveness” (p. 3).

Ashcraft (2000) connected feminist theorizing on organizations and bureaucracy with systematic examination of an actual organization, looking for the consequences of bridging the gap between the private and public spheres in the workplace. She challenged purist feminist theorizing about organizations including assumptions about the role of emotionality and sexuality in empowering working relationships. She offered, in its place, a pluralist theorizing that explored how organization forms might be grafted together toward innovative, enabling alternatives. Ashcraft (2000, p.352) called for research that can “question ‘pure’ models of feminist organization and develop theories that foster empowering practice.” Might libraries offer this kind of opportunity for theory-building? If libraries are organically feminine/feminist in nature, then they might offer just such an opportunity.

#### Private vs. Public Work

One duality that pervades feminist analyses is that of public sphere and private sphere work (Fletcher, 1998, 1999). This social construction divides the world into two separate, gendered domains that arose with the transition from agrarian to industrial modes of production, separating the workplace and the home. These spheres are traditionally assumed to be separate but complementary, but may actually be ordered domains, where the public is valued over the

private (Fletcher, 1998). In the public work sphere, the dominant individual is assumed to be male; in the private family sphere, the dominant individual is assumed to be female. One outcome of the traditional separation of the two spheres is that the knowledge production in each sphere proceeded independently from the other, resulting in two separate discourses and sets of “truth rules” related to work (Ferguson, 1984; Fletcher, 1998; Game & Pringle, 1983; Harding, 1986). In this way, women participating in the private domain created a discourse that differed from that which men simultaneously constructed in the public domain. When individuals cross over between domains, they carry with them the discourse rules of their original domain, which are considered inappropriate in the opposite domain. Thus, when women entered the public sphere workforce, the dominant masculine narrative of the public domain essentially silenced the feminine narrative that arose out of the discourse of the private domain. As a result, commonsense definitions of work in the private sphere seldom include rationality, cognitive complexity, or abstract thinking, while public sphere work ignores community, emotionality and caring (Fletcher, 1998). Table 1 delineates some of the differences in “truth rules” about work that have evolved in each domain.

Table 1.

*Public & Private Sphere Rules* (Adapted from Fletcher, 1998, p.166)

<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>
Work is something you have to do.	Work is something you want to do.
Money is the motivator.	Love is the motivator.
Work is paid.	Work is unpaid.
Rationality reified.	Emotionality reified.
Abstract.	Concrete, situated.
Time span defined.	Time span ambiguous.
Output: marketable goods, services, money.	Output: people, social relations, creation of community, attitudes, values, management of tension.
Context of differential reward leads to focus on individuality.	Context of creating a collective leads to focus on community.
Skills needed are taught; work is considered complex	Skills needed are thought to be innate; work is not considered complex.

## The Gendered Nature of Librarianship

### *Sex Segregation*

Although sex segregation in the United States has declined since the second wave women's movement of the 1970s, Queneau (2006) found that the workplace remained gendered in 2002, so much so that "about a third of women (and men) in 2002 would have had to change occupations for the occupational distribution of men and women to be identical" (p. 685). In addition, out of 13 occupational categories Queneau examined, "8 were gender-dominated in 1972 compared to 7 in 2002." Librarianship, with over 80% female workers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003, p. 399), is part of this sex segregation demographic.

Anker (1997), an economist, provided an excellent overview of the explanations for sex segregation, reviewing the literature in this field up through the late 1990s. In addition to non-economic feminist and gender theories, discussed earlier in this literature review, Anker described three types of sex segregation theories pertinent to librarianship: neoclassical and human capital theories, institutional and labor market segmentation theories, and the dual labor market theory. As Anker described them, neoclassical and human capital theories show how labor supply and demand issues lower the number of women hired in masculine-intensive fields, primarily because women are considered less desirable as employees due to supposed lack of pertinent education, and intermittent work records. Thus, there is less opportunity for women to enter these fields. Another neoclassical theory Anker discussed is the compensating differentials model. This model posits that women prefer occupations (such as librarianship) with good working conditions, fringe benefits, and family benefits. In order to work under these conditions, women are willing to accept lower salaries. The second group of theories Anker described were the institutional and labor market segmentation theories. Among these, statistical discrimination theory was based on the assumption that there are differences, on average, that make men better employees than women, and that employers simply hire those workers who are statistically better in order to avoid incurring costs of recruiting, hiring, and training. The final theory Anker described is dual labor market theory. This theory posited a primary labor sector (characterized by relatively high wages and benefits, high skill levels, opportunities for training and promotion, job stability, a high commitment to work, good working conditions, and labor activism) and a secondary sector (characterized by an absence of these traits). In this theory, primary sector jobs are held, for the most part, by men, while secondary sector jobs are held by women.



Applying the dual labor market theory directly to sex segregation in libraries, Luck (1991) found that the library she studied could be divided in approximate accordance with dual labor market theory, and that the workers employed in the primary sector were predominantly male, while those in the secondary sector were almost all female. However, many characteristics of the women in the secondary sector did not fit those that dual labor market theorists attribute to those who work in the secondary sector. These women had a high commitment to work, an intention to remain in their jobs, a desire for responsibility, and positive attitudes about work. They entered the secondary sector in order to fulfill domestic commitments. In addition, the part-time workers in the library were considered very important to the library organization as a whole, contrary to labor market theorists' expectations. The work was skilled, and highly valued, but simply had a reduced number of hours. In keeping with labor market theory, however, part time workers had little access to promotion and therefore seldom moved to primary sector positions.

### *Sex Segregation and Professionalization*

In studies of the development of professions in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, historians paid little attention to female-intensive professions, undoubtedly because they were not considered true professions, but “semi-professions” subordinated because of gender ideology (Manley, 1995). Yet a substantial number of women worked in these fields:

In 1920 about 640,000 women were teachers, 145,000 women were nurses, 27,000 were social workers, and 14,000 were librarians. The proportion of women in these fields ranged from a high of 97% in nursing to a low of 60% in social work (Brand, 1983a, p.391).

The first analysis of the influence of gender on professionalization in a woman's field was Garrison's *Apostles of Culture* (1979), but this book can be said to fall into a group of “blame the women” materials that identify the cause of the profession's low status as being caused by the preponderance women in the profession and feminization of work roles (Hildenbrand, 2000).

Although the “blame the women” analyses tie in with dual market theory, they concentrate on negative aspects of women in professions and assert that feminization of work roles is somehow natural to women. Brand (1983a) pointed out that, early in the 20th century, public acceptance of sexual stereotypes could have been a strategy for increasing work opportunities for educated women, even while members of the profession might privately negate stereotyping. Library history and practice might well be full of such subversive subtexts.

In the field of occupational sociology, early research into female-intensive professions, such as R.L. Simpson and Simpson’s (1969) pioneering work, emphasized that the female-intensive so-called “semi-professions” were more bureaucratized than men’s “full professions.” They emphasized women’s compliance with orders given by male supervisors and attributed this organizational difference not only to women’s compliant dispositions but also to their lack of long-range ambition. Later studies explored the power relationships in male-led female-intensive professions and organizations and women’s conformity to group or leader persuasion (Cooper, 1979; Eagly, 1978; Eagly & Carli, 1981). Other researchers (Grandjean, 1979; Marrett, 1972) found less evidence of centralization within this type of organization. Hearn (1982) pointed out that little notice was taken of the “professions” being male-intensive, as that gender demographic is taken for granted in patriarchal culture. He noted that attention moved away from Simpson and Simpson’s initial concern about bureaucratization to the question of power within the organization, after Kanter (1976) redirected the argument to focus on the impact of hierarchical structure on the work behavior of men and women (Hearn, 1982).

Hearn’s (1982) primary argument defined professionalization as a patriarchal process, showing how men moved into female-intensive professions to make them accepted as fully professional. Hearn stated that the professions and semi-professions had a significant role in

maintaining and promoting patriarchy. Indeed, Hearn's point that "patriarchy is concerned with the control and accumulation of the creativity, labor, and energy of women by men" (p. 186) is well taken. I can easily understand how librarianship can be said to give its feminine energy to feed the hunger of the larger patriarchy and how stereotypically feminine behaviors can be seen as the complementary role of the masculine stereotype. On a more individual level, however, I am interested in how libraries as individual organizations conspire to subvert the patriarchy through daily feminine practice. While femininity in its stereotypical forms may be part of the patriarchal model, truly valuing those forms when put into practice in the public sphere is not. I also note that health and social professions dominate Hearn's discussion, and I posit that librarianship may not fit his model as well as the other "semi-professions." He mentions librarianship only once, and then as almost an aside—"Even librarianship is seen as its fullest development when serving men, in universities and other 'places of learning'" (Hearn, 1982, p. 192).

### *The Experience of Sex-Segregated Work*

Two types of literature explore the experience of people in female-intensive work-groups. The first group focuses on the experience of men in female-intensive professions (e.g., Heikes, 1992; Hickey, 2006; Lupton, 2000; Piper & Collamer, 2001; R. Simpson, 2004; Williams, 1989, 1995). This research sheds light on gender dynamics in society as a whole because even when men are in the numerical minority, they hold certain kinds of power based on gendered assumptions about authority and careerism (R. Simpson, 2004). Yet studying men in female-intensive professions before researchers have thoroughly explored women's experience in these settings seems to me to be yet another symptom of patriarchal influences on the culture at large.

The second thread in the literature explored the experience of women working in same-sex groups. Gutek and Cohen (1992) found that women who worked in female-intensive work settings had very different experiences from women in mixed-gender groups, in female groups that serve men (such as cocktail waitresses), or in predominantly male groups. The researchers found that those who worked in female-intensive work-role sets were not likely to feel the interpersonal impact of sex role spillover because they had minimal contact with men at work. Although no librarians were included in Gutek and Cohen's interviews, it seems plausible to apply their findings to librarianship. For example, there may be sex role spillover in terms of professional status (e.g., librarians as clerical workers), but librarians are not expected to fit gender roles in terms of sexual attractiveness. In fact, librarians may be de-sexed through stereotyping in order to control the power inherent in the role of knowledge-keeper (Radford & Radford, 1997).

Lerum (2004) examined sexuality and sexualized banter among predominantly female workers in two settings (a restaurant and a strip club), concluding that the sexual particularities of individual workplaces should be interpreted as one of many cultural features, reflective more of organizational conditions than of static sexual symbolism. She found much sexual bantering among women, as well as between women and men, and postulated that the bantering increased camaraderie among the workers, although banter at the strip club was more often associated with a power dynamic than among the more equal restaurant workers.

Studies of clerical workers also shed light on the dynamics of female workgroups. Gwartney-Gibbs and Lach (1994), for example, looked at workplace dispute resolution and found that standard grievance procedures seldom effectively manage "personality conflicts," that are more often reported by women, but do handle the types of rule-related grievances reported by

men. Such systems can therefore support or maintain employment inequality between the genders.

Contemporary studies of women working together sometimes deconstruct a negative attribute associated with women. Pringle's (1988) *Secretaries Talk* studied the experience of secretaries in Australia, including a chapter on "bitching" and relationships. Similarly, Hafen (1995) explored women's "gossip" as a form of relational conversation.

Finally, Shakeshaft's (1986, 1989) writings about a "female organizational culture" in the field of education is more closely akin to the work of this study. Her work focused primarily on the work of administrators, pointing out the differences in the daily activities of male and female administrators and how this creates a "work environment that is qualitatively different for women than it is for men" (Shakeshaft, 1986, p. 117). Shakeshaft synthesized a number of studies of gender in educational administration, identifying the relational and leadership traits that female superintendents and principals exhibit. Elsewhere, Shakeshaft, sometimes with co-authors Nowell and Perry (1989a, 1999; Shakeshaft & Nowell, 1984; Shakeshaft, Nowell, & Perry, 1991; Shakeshaft & Perry, 1995), critiqued masculine theories and practice in educational administration, and explored the strengths of feminine models of educational administration, especially in the areas of relationships, teaching and learning, community, and communication. Shakeshaft and Perry reported that women administrators "spend more time with people, communicate more, are concerned more with teachers and marginal students, and motivate more than do men....Building community is an essential part of a woman administrator's style" (p. 18)

### *Librarianship and Feminism*

The history of women in librarianship began with Melvil Dewey recruiting "college-bred women" into his training program in the 1880s, offering them a fulfilling and socially acceptable

career, but warning them that the top library positions would go to men (Vann, 1978). Much feminist research in library science is in the field of women's history (e.g., Bartle, 2001; Beck, 1996; Brand, 1983a, 1983b; De Gooijer, 1997; Goetsch & Watstein, 1993; Heim, 1983; Hildenbrand, 1996, 2000; Jenkins, 1996; Kerslake, 2007; Maack, 1998; McCook, 1998; Olson, 2002; Simon, 1994; Stewart, 2006; Vandergrift, 1996), documenting the monumental work of women in the field and the sex segregation that put men in positions of authority. Historical analyses of the professions of librarianship and teaching have shown that women were originally recruited into these fields because of their "unique talents" and the supposed similarity of work roles to that of the private sphere (Brand, 1983a).

In addition to women's history, recent feminist discourse in the field of library and information sciences has primarily focused on collection development, book reviews, and text analysis (e.g., Allen, 2006; Childers & Martin, 2006; Crawford, 2007; Gilroy, 2007; Gottschalk, 2007; Ingold, 2007; Kuykendal & Sturm, 2007; Pettinato, 2007). These materials support librarians' goal of filling "gender-inflected" (Ingold & Searing, 2007, p. 299) information needs: "Firm in the belief that information is power, librarians embraced their responsibility to empower women to be full citizens and whole persons" (p. 299). Beyond this category, a search of the library literature does not fully reflect the gendered research in the field. As Ingold and Searing pointed out, "Questions of gender are often subsumed (and at worst diluted) under broader discussions of multiculturalism and diversity" (p. 299). In addition, the study of gender has shifted from second wave feminist studies to broader questions of masculinity (e.g., Clatterbaugh, 1994; Elmore, 2007; Hickey, 2006; Piper, 2001) and studies related to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people (e.g., Hill, 2007; Ho, 2007; McDowell, 2000; Schrader, 2007). Nonetheless, notable feminist studies have recently appeared in the literature,

including Olson's work on organization of information (2001, 2007) and Broidy's (2007) exploration of the politics of library instruction.

More closely akin to the subject of this study are gender-based leadership, management, and organizational studies in the library literature. Over the years, a number of articles based in theories of difference between men and women stress the positive aspects of the feminine culture and values of women librarians (Kaufman, 1993; Maack, 1997; McCombs, 1989; Turock, 2001; "Women in the library profession," 1971). These works tend to emphasize collaboration and nurture in libraries and women's leadership styles, but take an essentialist perspective of womanhood that might limit women to feminine behavior and roles. More recently, Valentine (2003) provided a basic overview of the literature of gendered management and organization, and emphasized the idea that "a combination of styles and an understanding of gender and cultural influences is preferred" to a single "masculine" or "feminine" management style (p.133), indicating a shift in the literature away from difference and toward diversity.

Although recent international studies mirror earlier United States feminists' interests in librarian status, motivation, and career path (e.g., Amekuedee & Adanu, 2006; Murgai, 2004; Ogunrombi, Pisagih, & Udoh, 2002), empirical studies about gender and librarians are relatively rare. In one notable exception, Boon (2007) explored management roles of women librarians and identified four prominent archetypes: Mother/Caregiver, Researcher/Detective, Visionary Leader, and New Professional. Jungian archetypes are one way of understanding the roles people play in the workplace; that of Mother/Caregiver is a strongly feminine role that relates to the mothering and ethic of care sections of Chapter 5 of this study.

What library literature lacks is in-depth analysis of our library cultures through the lens of feminism or gender studies. In 1994, Hannigan called for a radical shift in library and

information science curricula, pedagogy, and research. She argued that one of the elements of this transformation was “recognizing the ways women have been absented and devalued in librarianship” (p. 298). More than a dozen years later, this study aims to make present femininity and feminism in librarianship and to fill this gap without restricting women to the feminine role.

### Conclusion

Studies of organizations abound in sociology, communication, business, and women’s studies. However, mainstream studies generally ignore the feminine, while feminist studies concentrate on women in the more common male-dominated workplaces. Case studies of feminist organizations, on the other hand, examine organizations that were consciously built on prescribed feminist principles and experimental in nature. Women have staffed successful libraries since the late 1800s and have held upper-level administrative positions in libraries for the last few decades. This study gives voice to feminist and feminine practice in academic libraries, where library staff members do not consciously choose these practices but they have arisen out of the history and culture of libraries.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

My overall objective in undertaking this study of library organizations was to identify patterns of gendering within those organizations and to generate theory from an exploration of the gendered nature of libraries and the experiences of library workers. Although there is substantial theory on masculine organizations, no such theory exists about female-intensive organizations. Similarly, there is theory that posits how a feminist organization *should* be constructed, but no theory that shows a feminine or feminist organization that might have organically evolved in a female-intensive profession.

Quantitative methods have generally dominated the field of library science. In the search for “professionalism” and “scientific” methods (both masculine concepts), librarians have avoided the “softer” qualitative methodologies. Hannigan (1994) suggested that librarians “make greater use of ethnographic research approaches that have proved successful in other disciplines” (p. 307). Hannigan and Crew (1993, p. 29) also proposed a feminist paradigm of research for library and information science, emphasizing that “multiple ways of knowing,” and “bottom-up research” are both important and useful ideas to incorporate into our work, as is feminist standpoint theory.

Ely and Meyerson (2000) described gender in organizations as “a complex social process enacted across a range of organizational phenomena, from formal policies and practices to informal patterns of everyday interaction” (p. 590). Because the phenomena are complex and imbedded in organizational culture and practice, gathering data from a variety of sources was the most appropriate method for teasing out meaning. Rosen (1991) proposed organizational ethnography as an appropriate method within administrative science. According to Rosen,

organizational ethnography, which concentrates on the culture of people within a work organization, is a more focused area of study than most ethnography, which looks at people in everyday life and their general culture. Ethnography “provides a context of meaning upon which to hang pieces of action” (Rosen, 1991, p.7). Rosen also emphasized that organizational ethnography can focus on a specific aspect of organization (e.g., organizational control, or in my case, gender) as it is a part of the system as a whole.

Harding (1987) denied that there is a distinctive feminist method of inquiry, describing feminist research as having “alternative origins of problematics, explanatory hypotheses and evidence, alternative purposes of inquiry, and a new prescription for the appropriate relationship between the inquirer and her/his subject of inquiry” (p. vii). While some of these questions are more epistemological than methodological, the interconnectedness of epistemology and methodology is fundamental to feminist discourse. Despite there being no single feminist method, Skeggs (2001) described ethnography as providing “an excellent methodology for feminists, with its emphasis on experience and the words, voice and lives of the participants” (p. 430).

For all of these reasons, this study used ethnographic field methods to explore library organizations and organizational culture, focusing on the gendering and feminism. Ethnography, which originally evolved within the discipline of cultural anthropology, began as a method in which researchers lived with groups of people whose lives were very different from their own in order to study divergent cultures. Among the originators of intensive field research of this type were British anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, physician-anthropologist-psychologist (MacDonald, 2001). In the United States, fieldwork can be traced to the sub-group of sociologists at University of Chicago, known as the ‘Chicago School’ of ethnography, with its

connections with research on social problems and social reform (Deegan, 2001). Contemporary ethnography is primarily practiced in anthropology, sociology, education, and cultural studies (Skeggs, 2001). Skeggs defined ethnography:

Fieldwork that will be conducted over a prolonged period of time; utilizing different research techniques; conducted within the setting of the participants, with an understanding of how the context informs the action; involving the researcher in participation and observation; involving an account of the development of relationships between the researcher and the researched and focusing on how experience and practice are part of wider processes (p. 426).

Yet she also allowed room for ethnography to “mean different things when it emerges in different disciplinary spaces” (Skeggs, 2001, pp. 426-427).

This study took the form of a focused ethnography sometimes labeled microethnography. In this method, specific questions allow the researcher to spend a shorter amount of time immersed in the field gathering data than in classic ethnographies (Roper & Shapira, 2000). Primarily, the idea of gender will limit this study. Using gender as a lens from the outset of the study allowed me to focus the research and reduce the necessary immersion period from years to weeks.

Unlike the phenomenologist, the case study researcher, or the grounded theorist, who primarily depend on interview and documentation and only use participant observation to augment this data (McCall & Simmons, 1969; Roper & Shapira, 2000), the ethnographic researcher primarily depends on the participant-observer role, taking part in activities of the organization and observing organizational culture in its natural setting. Because ethnographers study real-life situations as they occur in their natural settings, they observe and interact with a whole system of culture, not isolated, unrelated incidents or behaviors. Ethnography not only looks at what people say about what they do but also what they actually do; it looks at not only

what they do, but the nuances of how they do it, what they say they about it, what others say about it, and what the participant-observer thinks about it. Thick description allows depth of analysis that neither quantitative research nor single-source qualitative research (i.e., interview) can provide. Roper and Shapira (2000) described this process as follows:

To understand a culture in its totality, the ethnographer strives for a holistic perspective that captures the breadth of activities, knowledge, and beliefs of the group under study. In addition, the information is contextualized by being placed within a larger perspective (p.3).

### Site Selection

Before beginning this research, I purposefully sampled academic libraries. In order to create a sample pool, I distributed a filter survey in a variety of venues. I emailed cover letters and surveys to library directors at all women's colleges in the United States with at least 10 library staff members. I sent a similar message to two American Library Association (ALA) email lists aimed at feminist librarians: the Feminist Task Force of the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT/FTF), and the Women's Studies Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL/WSS). In addition, I hand-distributed paper surveys at the annual meeting of ALA in sessions for library directors and in the sections of the organization in which I am involved (SRRT Action Council, ACRL Distance Learning Section). I sent or hand-delivered other surveys to librarians I know personally or who were recommended by others who completed the survey.

I received 44 completed surveys. From these surveys, I selected institutions that best fit the following criteria:

1. All libraries must have predominantly female faculty and staff, with female or feminist-identified deans or directors.
2. All libraries must be in academic institutions.

3. Libraries may be mid-sized or smaller. No Association of Research Libraries (ARL) institutions will be included, as those are likely to be too large for ethnographic research in a limited timeframe.
4. If possible, at least one library should be at a traditionally women's college.
5. If possible, at least one library should have a self-identified feminist dean or director (might be one and the same as the woman's college).

Of the 44 initial surveys, I selected 9 that seemed most promising and contacted those directors by telephone. From this smaller pool, I identified 3 libraries that were most appropriate for the study and I scheduled approximately 1 month per institution for my site visits, from the end of August through mid-December 2006. Unfortunately, before data collection began, the site I had scheduled for the third site visit dropped out of the study. Because this institution was a women's college, I identified another women's college to take its place during the same month. This replacement site subsequently dropped out of the study while I was collecting data at my first site. At this point, I sent another round of surveys to library directors at women's colleges and received one more response that fit well. That site visit took place in February 2007.

#### Description of Sites

The three data collection sites that I finally chose complement one another while fulfilling the needs of the study. All three had directors who identified themselves as feminists. All of the directors also happened to be female, although one of my alternate sites had a male director, so this was not a primary consideration in site selection. The libraries were all at liberal arts colleges with predominantly female library staffs of 10-50 employees. Each was located in a different region of the United States.

I have given each of the three sites pseudonyms to protect the identities of the institutions and the study participants. The names refer to the historical makeup of the student body in each institution. “Blue College” is an elite, formerly all-male, Eastern school. Of the three sites, it had the most hierarchical nature. With nearly 50 people working in the library, “Blue College” was the largest of the three sites. “Yellow College” is in the West, and has been a co-educational institution since its founding. It is mid-sized of the organizations, about half the size of Blue College. It is the least hierarchical of the three organizations, with an active team structure. “Pink College” is a women’s school located in the Southeast. It had the smallest staff of the three, at about a dozen people, but the highest percentage of men on staff. The small staff size encouraged collegiality at all levels, but structural and procedural hierarchies were in place.

#### Epistemological Considerations

An epistemology is a theory of knowledge. It answers questions about who can be a ‘knower’ (can women?); what tests beliefs must pass in order to be legitimated as knowledge (only tests against men’s experiences and observations?); what kinds of things can be known (can “subjective truths” count as knowledge?) and so forth.... Feminists have argued that traditional epistemologies, whether intentionally or unintentionally, systematically exclude the possibility that women could be “knowers” or *agents of knowledge* (Harding, 1987, p. 3).

This study took an epistemological stance that privileges “everyday” women’s knowledge, but emphasizes that this is the knowledge of individual women, not “the woman” as a monolithic knowable entity. I therefore used data collection strategies (described below) with this end in mind.

#### Feminist Ethical Considerations

Although feminist authors generally view ethnography positively, they have nonetheless raised serious questions about the relationship between researcher and participants, based on the history of “us” studying “them” (Sanger, 2003), which privileges the researcher and sets up a

power relationship between researcher and participant. After reading much debate on the topic, I have concluded that such privilege is unavoidable in research of any type, but participant-observer research seems to even the field more than other types of “expert” inquiry. E. Murphy and Dingwall (2001) suggested that issues of autonomy and self-determination could be addressed by sharing the research purpose with participants early on and throughout the study, but they problematized this participation, pointing out that research questions shift throughout the research process and that outcomes may shift away from initial research ideas.

I used the process of obtaining informed consent as the point to address these issues with participants. As I expected, I found that the sharing of process with professional academic librarians and many other library workers was an easier task than E. Murphy and Dingwall indicated. Through working with research materials and researchers, many of the library workers were familiar with ethnography. I also found that I could successfully use library research as a metaphor for shifting research questions in the face of emergent data. Not every participant was as clear as I would have liked on these issues, but most were, and I certainly made every effort to draw them into the process during our informed consent interaction and in following conversations. Member checking at the end of the writing stage also engaged them in the outcomes of the research and allowed us to discuss more of the process.

I also addressed power issues by following E. Murphy and Dingwall’s (2001) edict that researchers should treat both those with power and privilege and those who lack overt power even-handedly. Behaving justly to all participants does not obviate cultural critique, but does allow every level of the hierarchy to have a voice in research. One way that I determined to be even-handed in this study was in my choice of focus. Under the influence of socialist feminist theory, I decided that focusing primarily on leadership in organizations would give short shrift to

those not in leadership roles. Therefore, this study focuses on organizations as a whole system, rather than leadership, one part of that system. I also made sure that I interacted similarly with all levels of staff, not differentiating between professional and paraprofessional. I interviewed and spent time with directors and lowest level staff alike and gave equal credence to all participants' viewpoints.

### Data Collection Strategies

I spent around a month at each site, collecting data using a combination of participant-observation, "thick description" fieldnotes, feminist interview and informal conversation, document analysis, audio recording, and photographic techniques. At each site, I adjusted my hours based on the schedules of participants, spending an average of 30 hours per week at the libraries and in social interaction with library staff members. I recorded fieldnotes for a total of 64 days, with 74 individuals participating in the study.

Throughout the process, I incorporated feminist practices into my data-gathering techniques, actively listening to participants while maintaining my own awareness of power differentials and minimizing those differentials where possible. Ultimately, I tried to fit Harding's (1987) description of feminist researchers who "listen carefully to how women informants think about their lives and men's lives...[and] observe behaviors of women and men that traditional social scientists have not thought significant" (p.2).

### *Participant Observation*

Four levels of involvement are generally recognized in participant observer research: participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and observer (Burgess, 1984). Like most ethnographers, I moved back and forth among these levels but spent most of my time being a participant-as-observer or observer-as-participant. The levels fall on a continuum from most



involvement with the participants (participant only) to no involvement with the participants (observer only). An ethnographer collects most information in the middle ground of both participating and observing, with one or the other taking precedence depending on the situation (Roper & Shapira, 2000). Participant observation involves the “interweaving of looking, listening, and asking” (Lofland, 1979, p. 109). Thus, conversations are ad hoc interviews (see Interview and Dialog, below).

My level of participation ended up varying between organizations as well as from day to day. Although I offered each library to work at any task they wanted to assign me, only the smallest of the three libraries accepted the offer. At Pink Library, I worked a few hours at the circulation desk and at the reference desk. This difference was appropriate because the size of the staff and layout of the library building limited the number of informal interactions and meetings I could observe, so working with individuals at reference and circulation allowed me access and conversation that would have otherwise been unavailable. In addition, as the project evolved from site to site, my level of observation shifted from very thick fieldnotes of every interaction to less dense notes that recorded information that I considered most important to the study. I adopted this strategy following Roper and Shapira’s (2000) assertion that it is appropriate to ignore some aspects of the environment in order to pay special attention to particularly pertinent pieces of information.

### *Feminist Interview and Dialog*

“The central concerns raised of and by feminists’ ethnographies include: the relationship between the ‘knower’ and the ‘known’; for example, power, objectivity, reflexivity, and polyvocality” (Sanger, 2003, pp. 29-30). Although the knower-known relationship is important in all aspects of feminist ethnography, the researcher has the most influence over this

relationship in the interview and observation portions of data collection. All of the interviews I conducted for this study were conversational in style and egalitarian in concept. The reflexivity of my fieldnotes helped me to keep in mind the relationship issues and to evaluate how well a particular interview style worked. Sanger (2003, p. 33) pointed out that in any interview, the participant has the ability to render the researcher quite powerless by refusing to speak or refusing to speak “accurately.” However, most feminists seek to make an interview less about who has power over whom and more about engaging in research as a joint endeavor between the interviewer and the interviewee.

My interview style evolved over the course of this study as I adjusted my methods based on the needs of the libraries I visited. Early on, I realized that my plan to have many informal conversations with individuals in their offices was not very practical. Although I did visit with participants at their desks, and had these informal interactions every day, I found that I needed to have conversations with people outside of their work areas, especially those who shared offices or worked in large open spaces. I also wanted to disrupt normal workflow as little as possible, so I found it necessary to make appointments to have conversations of any depth with anyone. Because I had private office space assigned to me in each library, I invited people to come to my workspace for these conversations. I followed a very flexible semi-structured interview process, using informal interview guides to speak with 55 of the total 74 participants. In the largest two of the three libraries, I chose key individuals to interview; in the smallest library, I spoke to every participant in depth. The interview guides I created were individual for each conversation, with a few standard topics that emerged over time. In this way, I was able to tap into the unique knowledge of each participant on certain subjects while asking universal questions about friendship, balance between work and home, and gender in the workplace that emerged within a

few days of beginning these conversations. Because the venue seemed to make the interviews more formal, I recorded the conversations, with participants' consent. Nonetheless, these interviews were very diverse and conversational, lasting anywhere from 1/2 hour to 2 hours. Every conversation digressed broadly from the interview guide as I clarified or followed tangential details to find out more about the person. Much of each interview was devoted to simply making a connection with the person, facilitating more informal conversations and interactions.

Informal conversations were the second type of interview that I conducted throughout the research. This informal dialog furthered my participant-observer role as I gathered information. Inextricably intertwined with the observation process, conversational interview took place in offices, in library public spaces, in staff lounges, social outings, and at meals. In general, these interviews occurred on an *ad hoc* basis, anytime I had a conversation with someone in the field.

I structured both types of interviews to focus on “dialogue between the researcher and researched, an effort to explore and clarify the topic under discussion, and to clarify and expand understanding; both are assumed to be individuals who reflect upon their experiences and who can communicate those experiences” (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1991, p. 140). In keeping with the exploration aspect of interview, Oakley (1981) suggested that interviewing should be a committed, egalitarian process, much like a conversation with a friend. Shared experience is said to be an asset to the feminist researcher (Riessman, 1987; Roseneil, 1993), and my library experience did make conversation easier. Indeed, I think that the main flaw of my interview style was that I talked too much about myself when my experience mirrored participants' stories, just as I do in conversations with friends. Sometimes my verbosity helped put people at ease; at other times, it may not have allowed people the space to share as much as they might have. Daily

reflexivity helped me to identify this flaw in my style and to moderate it somewhat with later participants. Nonetheless, all of the conversations, whether in interview form or informal interaction, had “a great deal of give-and-take in the discussion, rather than a traditional interview that follows a strict interview schedule in which the researcher speaks only to ask questions and draw information from the interviewee” (Sanger, 2003, p. 31).

### *Document Analysis*

In each library, I gathered a variety of documents. Before going to my first data collection site, I gathered and analyzed the libraries’ web pages. At each site, I obtained organizational charts (See Deyrup, 2004 for a gendered examination of organizational charts). Electronic documents of various types proved quite useful. I was added to each library’s organizational email distribution list or was sent copies of email communication. Blue Library’s course management site provided a rich history of committee minutes and shared documents. Yellow Library’s photo gallery on a popular social networking website and internal library wiki provided insight into organizational culture.

It is common for ethnographies to use such written documentation as an additional key to organizational insights. Hammersley and Atkinson (1993) provided a list of questions I used as a guide when looking at this documentary evidence:

The presence and significance of documentary products provides the ethnographer with a rich vein of analytic topics, as well as a valuable source of information. Such topics include: How are the documents written? How are they read? Who writes them? Who reads them? For what purposes? On what occasions? With what outcomes? What is recorded? What is omitted? What is taken for granted? What does the writer seem to take for granted about the reader(s)? What do readers need to know in order to make sense of them? (pp. 142-143)

### *Audio Recording*

I recorded most of my semi-structured interviews and some meetings as a memory aid and for more exact transcripts. All recording took place with the consent of the participants;

other than interviews, I selected a limited number of events and conversations to record. I limited my use of recording when I experienced how particularly reticent or unnatural people could be when recorded and how cumbersome the consent process. I realized early on that fieldnotes I made immediately after any exchange were detailed and accurate enough to satisfy my research needs.

### *Photography*

Although a whole field of ethnography relies heavily on visual images (see Schwartz, 1989), I only used photography as a memory and coding aid, providing instant documentation of settings that would require pages of description to capture in words. I took digital photographs of libraries, offices, and workspaces to provide concrete representations of the physical environment. Individuals gave written consent for me to take pictures of their offices. I did not take any photographs of the participants. I used these photographs to contextualize my observations, but I did not reproduce or mention these photographs in the following chapters.

### *Fieldnotes*

My fieldnotes consisted of various types of material: thick description of observed events and people; detailed notes of conversations with and among people; ongoing interpretations, analyses, and ideas for further avenues of inquiry; and my personal monologue about the experience of researching. In the field itself, I used a combination of written notes, audio notes, and memory aids to keep track of events and observations. During breaks from field work, and each evening, I typed up more formal descriptions using the template in Appendix A. Roper and Shapira (2000) identified the importance of structuring observation guidelines “after spending enough time in the field to learn what is important” (p. 86). My initial template worked

well for me throughout the research, but it was a very open structure allowing for shifts in data-gathering without any change in format.

While some sources suggest keeping separate diary and observation notebooks, I chose to keep both personal notes and research notes in one file. Practically, this allowed me to maintain a tidy system of notekeeping with one entry per day; theoretically, it fit my sense that the personal and the methodological are part of an inextricable whole. I maintained standard conventions in fieldnotes in order to make the notes understandable to other readers.

I also sporadically kept a personal journal during my research jaunts. I did not expect that journal to become part of the data, but have since found it a useful addition. Pertinent portions of that diary are included in my research database.

#### *Anonymity*

During data collection, I gave all participants pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Names in interview transcripts, and fieldnotes, always used the pseudonym, which is simply a first name. I kept lists that included both the real name and pseudonym at my private residence at all times so that no participant could accidentally find out another's pseudonym.

In writing up the results in chapters 4 and 5 of this document, I found it difficult to maintain individual's anonymity from coworkers while simultaneously providing data rich enough for outside analysis. Generally, direct quotations are followed by the participant's pseudonym and library in brackets. In cases where this information is missing, I felt that the attribution would somehow reveal the participant's identity. If, in some cases, attribution seems ambiguous, it is because I erred on the side of protecting participants.

### *Reflexivity*

“Reflexivity involves an explicit discussion of how the self effects and is effected by the research and writing process” (Sanger, 2003, p. 36). I employed a section in my daily fieldnotes for reflection and self-analysis in order to facilitate conscious reflexivity. This section not only analyzed the effects of the research on myself and myself on the research, but it was also be the place where I explored the successes and failures of the day’s work, to help me refine my research strategies throughout the process. The aforementioned personal journal was also a vital outlet for reflexivity. Often, that journal more strongly portrayed my thoughts on the research than my formal fieldnotes, which made it an important addition to the body of formal data.

### *Biases*

From the outset of this process, I was explicit in how my experiences and biases inform the research. I have always worked predominantly with women. Every job I have had has been in a library (discounting a month-long stint of moonlighting in a shoe store). For me, work has never been a world of disembodied workers boxed into bureaucratic niches. My coworkers menstruate, juggle childcare and eldercare, experience menopause, fight with their partners, and, most of all, help each other through both life and work. Of course, not every woman or man I have worked with is comfortable with this intermingling of life and work, but it is the norm of my experience.

Let me also make it very clear that I love my work and am proud to be a professional librarian. Although I am as technically adept as any librarian who is not a systems specialist, I am not an information scientist. I am a librarian. I am a librarian because that title brings with it a rich history of women providing service (not subservience) and fulfilling a vital educational and social mission. I believe that the strengths of my profession might be a model for other types of

organizations and that these strengths have been largely devalued or ignored in the past. This experience and these assumptions inform my work and my techniques for exploring my research questions.

It turns out that my past experience colored this research in unexpected ways. I realized that it is very difficult to tease out gendering in an organization that feels like home to me. Some of the counter-dialog of masculine and hierarchical elements in these libraries came out of the data simply because it is easier to identify anomalies than it is to see the norms when the norm is one's own culture.

### Data Analysis Procedures

The process associated with understanding ethnographic material is an inductive one in which themes in the data emerge both during data collection and afterwards. I analyzed this data through a process that teases out emergent themes through content analysis. Roper and Shapira (2000) described this process as divided into four intertwined activities: coding, sorting, generalizing, and memoing. I used ATLAS.ti (1993-2008) software to assist in the process of coding, sorting, memoing, and generalizing. I selected this program specifically designed for qualitative data analysis because it has the ability to analyze non-textual data (e.g., photographs and audio recordings) and has a non-hierarchical mapping structure appropriate to my epistemology and cognitive style. Early on in the process, I used my fieldnotes, both in the reflexive/reflective portions and contextual notes in the day's description, to memo my thoughts. ATLAS.ti also has a function for creating and coding memos, which I used throughout the coding and analyzing process. These memos then provided the groundwork for idea generation that ultimately led to generalizing. Initially, I used a simple method of moving codes written on Post-It Notes around on walls or large sheets of paper. Once I input all the data into ATLAS.ti



and I grasped the software's intricacies, I used the mapping functions to construct the theoretical linkages that ultimately appear in the following chapters of this dissertation.

In the section on reflexivity, above, I made clear some of the culture and gender assumptions with which I approached this research. These assumptions, among others, were part of my awareness as I gathered, analyzed, and shared the data. According to Harding (1987), this shared awareness places the inquirer in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter. "That is, the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint" (p.9). This process of locating the researcher's bias in the research report itself opposes the traditional method of (masculine) scientific objectivity that denies biases that nonetheless exist. When readers know the researcher's bias, they have the freedom to arrive at contrary hypotheses about the influence of researcher bias, or about the outcomes of the inquiry. When placed in the frame, the researcher is no longer "an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests" (Harding, 1987, p.9).

#### *Trustworthiness of the Study*

Because the ethnographer is as much research instrument as researcher, critics of the approach raise questions of objectivity. Yet, objectivity implies the existence of a positivistic external world where knowledge is constructed independent of human perceptions. Objective knowledge would therefore be free of the distorting bias of the individual knower. I have come, through the years, to believe that poststructural approaches to knowledge describe the world more accurately. True objectivity in social science research is simply not possible, as individuals construct their own knowledge and act in keeping with those constructs. Therefore, social science research, in my worldview, must take into account the subjective influences that

construct social experience, while stepping back to observe with some measure of objectivity in order not to drown research insights in researcher biography. It must explore not only the “what” of experience, but the “why,” the “how,” and the “who,” always aware of the lenses through which the researcher experiences the world. Subjectivity implies the personal, individual, and emotional aspects of human perception and knowledge. Ethnography is “neither subjective nor objective” (Agar, 1986, p. 19), as it acknowledges subjectivity while stepping back from the setting to offer objectivity. Therefore, the verification of data and issues of validity and reliability are very different in ethnographic and other types of qualitative research than they are in the quantitative paradigm.

Validity relates to the representativeness of the data and the truthfulness of its interpretation. It is, according to Kirk and Miller (1986), “a question of whether the researcher sees what he or she thinks he or she sees” (p.21). Despite some feminists’ criticism of validity as based in a masculinist concept of objectivity (e.g., Stanley & Wise, 1983), I find merit in using the term for methods that give the research project an internal logic and for those that make it possible to apply the results outside of the individual realities of these three libraries. This study relied on two kinds of validation, each a form of triangulation: designing multiple procedures to collect data on the same content (Roper & Shapira, 2000), and cross-site analysis. Use of multiple procedures is an integral part of ethnographic methodology, as the ethnographer casts a wide net over time, gathering vast amounts of data using a variety of methods. Part of the process is to double-check the material learned in one source against other sources. In this study, I began with observation as my main method and then interview emerged as a strong second to that source of information. Each method that I used--observation, interview, document analysis, and photography-- provided corroboration of or challenge to each other method. When sources

seemed to contradict one another, I revisited my analysis and often checked with participants on their perceptions of particular phenomena.

Similar to data-type triangulation, gathering data from multiple sites provided a way of validating data gathered at individual locations. According to Miles (1983) “One of the major reasons for doing a multi-site study [is that] idiosyncratic aspects of the site can be seen in perspective and self-delusion about conclusions is less likely” (p. 128). I had anticipated more uniform results between sites than actually emerged, indicating that the multi-site method was a successful tool for this project. Chapters 4 and 5 provide comparison and contrast between the various sites, providing richer information than any single site could.

Reliability refers, in part, to the degree of consistency with which observers assign elements to the same category (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Roper & Shapira, 2000; Silverman, 1993). Roper and Shapira (2000, p. 83) emphasized that “scrupulous attention to recording concrete...descriptions of events and verbatim accounts of conversations and interviews in fieldnotes allows others to substantiate your interpretations.” Silverman (1993) indicated that using standardized conventions of fieldnote writing improves reliability because notes are then accessible to outside readers. Schultze (2001) added that self-reflexive accounts of the context in which fieldnotes were produced, including the researcher’s personal and cognitive processes, also improve reliability in that they make explicit the researcher’s subjectivities.

I have added one new convention to this document in order to facilitate outside readers’ access to materials. I wanted to make it possible for an outside reader to locate quotations in context in the fieldnotes. ATLAS.ti (1993-2008) automatically assigns a number to every document in a research database. Therefore, a unique number was available for each file I included in the research database, from daily fieldnotes to visual and auditory data. ATLAS.ti

refers to each record in the database as a “Primary Document” (PD). I have included, in brackets following each quotation, a PD number as a citation. For direct quotations, except in those instances where an individuals’ anonymity might be threatened, the brackets also contain the speaker’s pseudonym and library. The PD numbers do not indicate chronology in data-gathering, merely the order in which I linked files into the database.

“Member Checking” is another method that I used to make sure that I appropriately incorporated quotations into the final report of the research. I emailed quoted participants with their quotations and the context in which I used them, asking them to verify the quotation and my use of it. Although I did not receive feedback from every participant (some had left the organizations after my site visit; others did not respond to my repeated queries), nearly every quotation included in this document has been verified.

The member checking process proved to be more helpful than I had anticipated. In my email to participants, I set up the interaction as a consensual process:

Because you are participants in this research, not “research subjects” I really would like your input. I will take anything you send me and incorporate it into my thinking about what I’ve written. This is a process of give and take, where we will discuss our thoughts on the matter and try to come to a consensual decision together [PD360].

The results were excellent. Individuals provided me with feedback on my use of their quotations and the context in which I couched their words. I made a number of changes to Chapters 4 and 5 based on their responses, and I believe that the document is stronger and more true to the participants than it would have been without their help.

In order to increase reliability further, I have shared my work with a peer reviewer throughout the project (See Appendix B). She has a background in both librarianship and feminism and provided much-needed emotional support as well as intellectual reliability. We

spoke of my research periodically during the process and she read my manuscript in one of its later drafts.

### Reporting the Findings

The remaining chapters of this document report the findings of this research, using standard ethnographic conventions. Named individuals are identified by pseudonymous first name, and institutions are called Pink College, Blue College, and Yellow College, as described above. These chapters report findings from each site in context and explore theory based on the interplay of site-specific data and redundancy between sites.

These findings are not only in my own privileged researcher's voice. Instead, I presented a "polyvocality" of people involved in the research (Sanger, 2003). I shared with the reader participants' own words about their experience of gender in libraries. While my voice cannot help but shape the manuscript, the findings are not simply my own; they are the work of all the participants in the study. I hope that their work is as much a part of the final product as mine, even as they are protected in anonymity from the gaze of the reader.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a general overview of the methodology of this study. Microethnography was selected as the most appropriate method for gathering data and presenting findings, as it provides the most systemic analysis of organizational culture based primarily on participant-observation and allows for immersion in an organization. The methodology was carefully constructed based on feminist epistemology and ethics, with attention paid to breaking down researcher/participant hierarchies, while acknowledging that the researcher is nonetheless privileged in the research process. The study examined three libraries that provided different contexts for exploring one set of issues. I spent approximately 1 month in each library, observing

daily work and interacting with 74 participants. I gathered data through methods appropriate to ethnography, with an emphasis on participant-observation and interview recorded in fieldnotes, accompanied by document analysis, photography, and audio recording, with all materials entered into an analytical database. I ensured the trustworthiness of this data through a number of methods: triangulation; use of multiple sites; scrupulous fieldnotes; careful documentation; member checking; and peer review. The next chapters provide the results of this research.

## CHAPTER 4

### BUREAUCRACY AND FEMINISM

Radical feminist theory offers an “anti-hierarchical orientation that aims at healing the breach between private and public life and that rejects bureaucratic organizational forms in favor of a different vision of individual and collective life” (Ferguson, 1984, p.5). Challenges to bureaucracy are inherent in the modern workplace (Bennis, 1993). In this study, I view these challenges through a lens of feminism and raises the question of whether a mainstream organization can offer a feminist challenge to bureaucracy. Academic libraries are part of larger bureaucracies. Although they may be more autonomous than other parts of the institution, they are still subject to bureaucratic rules and structures of the parent organization. Therefore, unlike alternative organizations established with a set of feminist ground rules (e.g., Ferree & Martin, 1995; Rothschild-Whitt & Witt, 1986), these libraries resist bureaucracy while working within its structures. Each library is part of a system that includes college and community and influences the library to challenge or support the surrounding bureaucracy in varying degrees. Organizational structure, decision-making, competition and collaboration, organizational communication models, division of labor, and the public-private split demonstrate a continuum of feminist practice in these organizations.

#### Organizational Structure: Hierarchy of Offices

One element that defines bureaucracy is a structural “hierarchy of offices” (W. Scott, 1981, p. 24). The hierarchical structure of bureaucracy, by its very nature, gives individuals at higher levels of the hierarchy more power than those at lower levels of the hierarchy. Feminism, on the other hand, challenges both hierarchy and power. Ianello (1992) put it this way:

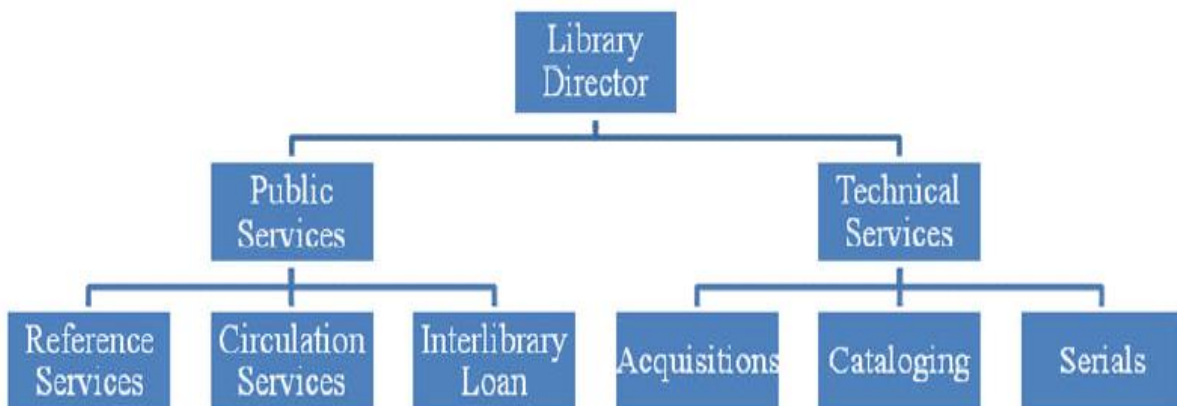
Organizational theory begins from the world as it is, a world in which hierarchies organize all aspects of life. It does not ask whether hierarchies should exist, but simply how they can be run more smoothly. Feminist theory, on the other hand, begins from the world as it ought to be, one in which gender hierarchies have been eliminated; thus it assumes the possibility of fundamental social change (p. xi).

The libraries I visited, in varying proportions, straddle the line between the hierarchical structures of their formal organizations and non-hierarchical feminist ideals. The overlay of hierarchy on those who view themselves and their colleagues as equal, whole persons, can create ambiguity and tension within the organization. These tensions exist to a greater or lesser degree in each of the libraries in this study.

### *Overview*

The traditional hierarchical library organization contains two main functional units, technical services and public services, with sub-units under these units. Public and technical services report, through department heads, to the director of the library. A graphic representation of such an organization follows in Figure 1. All three libraries in this study currently follow this traditional organization, with the addition of other functions in the top level that vary between the libraries, such as special collections/archives, library technology, government documents, separate circulation/interlibrary loan departments, or subject-oriented branch libraries.

*Figure 1.* Traditional Library Organization.





The public services department contains those aspects of the library that patrons see every day. Circulation and reference services are the primary components of this portion of library operations. Individuals in these departments assist patrons in finding appropriate materials, checkout those materials to patrons (for use in or out of the library), keep track of inventory, and keep materials in call number order on the shelves.

Library administration tops the hierarchy and always includes the library director (titled Dean of Libraries, Librarian, or Head Librarian, in different institutions). In small academic libraries like the ones in this study, the librarian generally has one administrative assistant. A library bookkeeper may also work in this same area.

Other library activities take place in different parts of the library structure, sometimes as stand-alone departments, other times as sub-units of public or technical services. These activities include:

- Collection development: the selection of materials to be purchased for the library;
- Budget management: the main aegis of budget generally lies with the director, but collection development, acquisitions, bookkeeping, or individual department budgets may have responsibility over certain aspects of spending;
- Special collections and archives: Special collections consist of rare materials or collections in unique subject sets. Archives are often historical/archival materials from the college at large, but may also include archival items in selected subject areas;
- Departmental libraries: Subject-specific libraries serving particular disciplines on campus;

- Interlibrary loan (ILL): Manages borrowing and lending of materials from other libraries.
- Document delivery: Delivers materials to library users, either physically or electronically. This service is not available at every library and is often a part of interlibrary loan or circulation services.

Within departments, levels of hierarchy vary from library to library. All three of these libraries have a department head structure, placing a professional librarian at the top of departmental hierarchy. Even without this structural hierarchy, the educational background and resulting status of library workers creates a hierarchical division between professional librarians and paraprofessional staff. Professional librarians have master's degrees in some combination of library science and information science (e.g., MLS, MLIS, MIS). In general conversation, library workers call the degree "MLS" although most programs have changed the name of their programs and the degree to incorporate "Information" into the title or have removed the word "Library" altogether. Similarly, the program is often called "library school" even though most programs focus more on information technology than libraries. People who have an MLS degree are the only ones called "librarians" within the profession. Other staff members are variously called staff, clerical staff, support staff, or non-exempt staff. I have selected the term "paraprofessional" to describe these individuals because it minimizes the difference between the two categories. It is not, however, a term currently in regular use in any of the libraries I visited.

A library is comprised of interdependent departments that work together to fulfill the library's mission. The amount of hierarchy varies from library to library, depending on parent organizations and community norms. Blue College Library, Pink College Library, and Yellow

College Library provided cases in which to explore hierarchical structures and tensions between hierarchy and egalitarian values.

*Blue Library: Changing a Culture of Hierarchy*

Blue College Library was the largest of the libraries in the study with nearly 50 staff members. It also had the most hierarchical structure of the three and its culture was the most entrenched in that hierarchy. The sense of hierarchy permeated both the library and the campus at large. Historically, the director of the library was male, and the last director held his position for decades. The senior staff members at the library have also held their positions for decades, many having experienced the institution's transition from an all-male to co-educational student body. The woman who held the position at the time of this research, however, demonstrated a strong desire to move the organization toward a more egalitarian model of decision-making and communication, but her goals may not have included flattening the formal hierarchy. As a whole, the organization is in a shifting space between the desire for a more egalitarian model and the inclination to maintain long-standing hierarchies. Individuals seem to demonstrate both urges simultaneously, and the organization at large reflects this vacillation and ambiguity.

*Formal Organizational Structure*

Blue Library's organization contained the most layers of any of the libraries in this study. Blue Library's organizational chart (see Figure 2) is simplified to make points of comparison with the other libraries. Colors identify whether departments are staffed with professional or paraprofessional workers or a mixture of both.

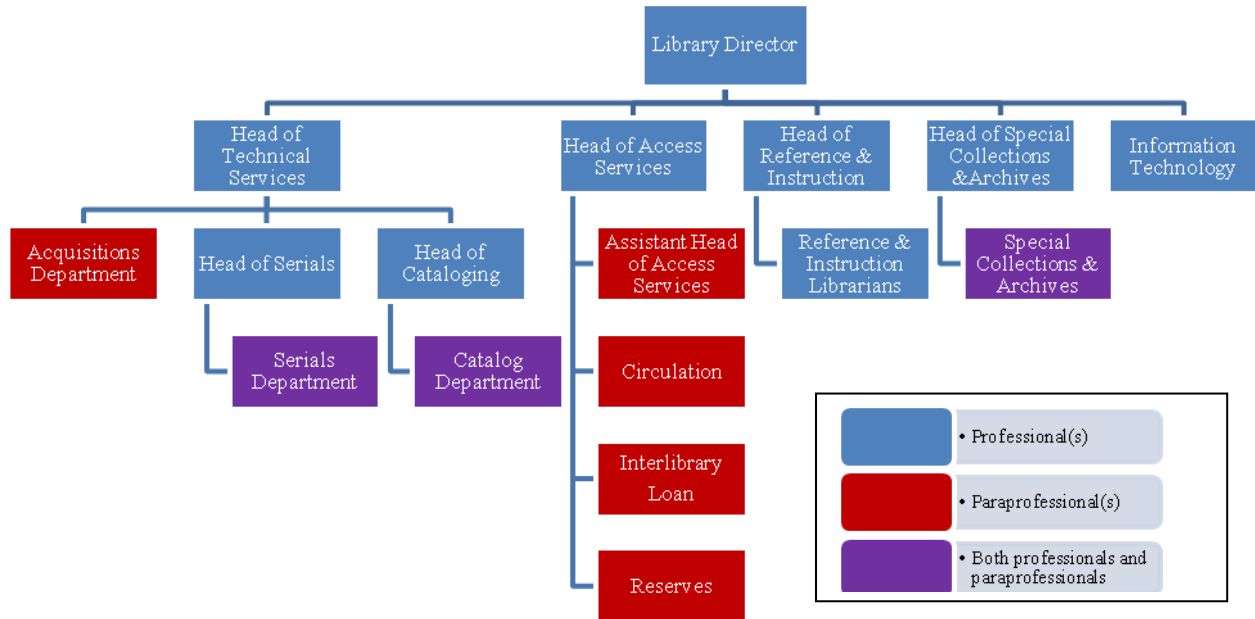


Figure 2. Blue Library Organizational Chart, including professional or paraprofessional identification

Of the three libraries, only in Blue College did professional librarians report to other professionals rather than directly to the head of the library. In the past, dual reports somewhat mitigated the hierarchy of the multi-layered professional reporting structure for professionals in the reference department, who reported both to the director and the head of reference. For example, the web manager reported to the head of reference for her reference duties, but to the library director for her web duties. As a result of recent discussions about the library’s organizational structure, the formal report to the director was dissolved. This portion of the reporting structure was essentially non-functional, as Chloe described those aspects of her job under the director’s supervision: “They’re kind of just hanging out there because [the library director] doesn’t work too much with them” [Chloe, Blue, PD13]. In other words, professionals who have duties beyond those of the department are generally autonomous in that portion of their duties. Working autonomously, these professionals consider their responsibility to be to the

community at large, “and how you know they’re not doing their work is that you...start getting complaints and service problems” [Chloe, Blue, PD13].

In addition to the traditional hierarchical structure, cross-departmental groups functioned to accomplish specific tasks. Most notably, this library had a collection development group consisting of professionals from both public and technical services. The coordinator of this group was not the head of any department. Committees and task forces also tackled specific problems. Although most groups that met in this library primarily involved professionals, under the guidance of the new director, each paraprofessional also held a position on a library or campus committee. In general, these cross-departmental groups helped to create a sort of web or matrix within the hierarchical organization, although the competitive and hierarchical cultural factors of Blue Library impeded the groups from functioning as fully as they might.

### *Considering Reorganization*

During my 1st week at Blue Library, I attended an all-staff meeting the director described as “a follow-up meeting to one where I distributed [an] organizational chart of our place and some other libraries, broke them into groups and had them make their own dream organizational chart” [Director1, Blue, PD1]. Lucy described the process:

[The director is] looking to reorganize. And here’s a good example: She did an organizational session where she threw out to the entire staff “Break up into three groups and think about how the library of the future might be designed here at [Blue College.]” Because she wasn’t clear and she wanted them to brainstorm, people were all over the place....She’s looking for less people reporting to her, not more. So some groups came up with even flatter structures, where basically, every--all 13 professionals would report to her [Lucy, Blue, PD13].

The groups reported the outcome of their work at the all-staff meeting I attended. One group, whom I dubbed the “Power Players” of this organization, consisted of department heads and individuals who had worked for the organization for many years. They made up the main

cluster of the organization's hierarchy at the level below the director. This group did not create a chart. Instead, they created a list of principles for the organization. Louise, a paraprofessional who was not a member of the Power Players group, described its report. Her comments point out the tensions in the library, including the attitudes toward hierarchy and the resistance to change.

And you witnessed part of the problem. The charge that was given to us was form an organizational structure for the library and part of the problem in the library was the first group couldn't come to an agreement, so they did something different. And me...I'm always afraid of making a fool out of myself in front of people who—I don't think that anybody in that room is any better or any worse than I am, but for some reason some people make you feel that you're not as educated as they are and they look down on you—and I'm thinking to myself while Nan's reading the charge, "God, that has nothing to do with what we were supposed to do." And I was going to say, "Excuse me, but that wasn't what we were supposed to do," and then I [thought] no I'd better not, because I might get in trouble. Somebody might say something to me. And then, I'm on my way home and I'm like, "Louise, you should have opened your mouth because everybody felt that." There was such an awkward silence after she was done reading....The majority of people thought it was bizarre.

It's threatening to certain people in that group, I think....This whole thing with the new director, and with new opportunities, an openness and, you know, it's almost like a group of people in this library are like this (hands over her crouched head) and don't come near me, you know what I mean, don't come near me as a librarian, don't come near me as a person, and you get somebody bigger and stronger than them coming (she makes a swooping motion with her hand) kind of opening it up and they're all screaming "Stop!" They don't want to do it. They don't want that change [Louise, Blue, PD15].

Conflict and lack of consensus are ongoing themes in this library. Louise's comments identify conflict as one of the reasons for this group's outcome: "They couldn't come to agreement." Adding credence to the idea that conflict was part of the group dynamic, another participant said that the members of this group "were just barely speaking to each other" [Director1, Blue, PD16] by the end of the first meeting when the charge was given. One member of the Power Players provided additional evidence of the group's conflict, describing their work together in a vitriolic tone:

So instead of doing an organizational chart, our entire two hour discussion was spent on, "If we had a kinder, nicer environment, then people wouldn't care whether they reported

to [the director] or not because they would feel like their voices were heard and they would be treated nicely” [Lucy, Blue, PD13].

Chloe, who was part of the same group, was one of the individuals whose opinion appeared in their report. Her response to my inquiry about the exercise offered a rationale for the group’s outcome:

I think a chart is just extremely premature. I don’t think we’re anywhere near knowing what the chart should look like. I just think the guiding principles are how you would look at the organization, what you’re trying to accomplish, what the goals are, what the process should be. It’s a long-term process and it felt to me that to just hop up with a suggestion, it didn’t feel ready.... But to have a group meet for an hour and meet again for lunch or whatever and have a meeting, I don’t know how thoughtful that could be. There just wasn’t time. I think that when [any organization] does reorganization, “Why?” would be the question.... What are the problems that you’re trying to address by reorganization? And I felt like that hasn’t been clarified [Chloe, Blue, PD13].

The document the group produced called for what Lucy dubbed a “kinder, nicer environment,” offering “suggestions to help move toward a participatory, rather than a hierarchic organization” [PD4]. The document itself indicated that individuals desire a more participatory organization. The document they settled upon gave the following principles under which they would operate their ideal institution:

1. All staff, with or without degrees, can be equally committed to the mission and the philosophy of the library.
2. A library that advocates for the fullest possible participation of staff in service of its mission will not just be doing the right thing, but will create a better, more creative, and more responsive library as well as a more productive and satisfied staff.
3. All employees need to treat each other with respect, and create a climate where diverse viewpoints can be exchanged with civility.
4. Language matters. Words such as facilitator or leader, rather than chair, send a different message about the workings of the group [PD4].

This list highlights the largest points of contention in the library, overall: the clash between professional and paraprofessional and the lack of respect or even “civility” that individuals offer each other in the library. Ironically, contributors to this document were among

those who added to the sense of hierarchy in their elitist treatment of other staff. One group member, for example, used her overseas travels, her education, and academic background as everyday conversation elements; many members at lower levels of the organization indicated that she used these topics to “make herself bigger” [Simone, Blue, PD16] or to put herself above others. Tannen (1994) described this kind of behavior as a masculine “one-up,” a kind of competition common in this library. Another member of the group was one of the most hierarchical in her managerial style, described as “very strict” [Brenda, Blue, PD25], “controlling” [Amy, Blue, PD19; Ellis, Blue, PD20], and “overpowering” [Ruth, Blue, PD23] and was quoted as having said “I believe in hierarchy” [Simone, Blue, PD16] by people who have worked in her department. It appears that there is a tension between the Power Players’ words and their actions, part of the overall conflict between hierarchy and egalitarianism in the library at large.

### *The Culture of Hierarchy*

When I talked to people about the organizational chart exercise, more than one participant indicated that the director’s plan was to have fewer individuals report directly to her. At the same time, “there has been a lot of interest in flattening of the hierarchy” [Chloe, Blue, PD13]. These “competing goals” [Chloe, Blue, PD13] point out the inconsistency of trying to create a more egalitarian workplace while still relying on a rational bureaucratic model for the underlying organizational structure. According to the bureaucratic model, it is more efficient to have fewer people reporting directly to the head of the organization. However, in this library, the organizational structure reinforces a culture that places people higher or lower on the social “pecking order” [Simone, Blue, PD13] based on their place in the organization. The tension



between hierarchical and egalitarian impulses play out not only in formal structures but in informal social constructions, as well.

*Professionals and paraprofessionals.* Louise's comments above about the reorganization exercise emphasize the strength of the hierarchy, socially: "I don't think that anybody in that room is any better or any worse than I am, but for some reason some people make you feel that you're not as educated as they are and they look down on you." As Louise's comments point out, education is the key to the hierarchy of professional librarianship. Fran, another paraprofessional, talked about not only librarians' education, but ranked them against other professionals:

So, sometimes these professionals, pardon my French, overstepped their bounds with certain people and it pisses them off...because, oh they've gone to library school, they've gone to college and library school. And it makes them be upper crust of everything, except being a doctor or a veterinarian or something [Fran, Blue, PD21].

Fran's comments emphasize the hierarchical orientation of the professions. Doctors and veterinarians are more important than librarians. In order to break down the distance between professionals and paraprofessionals, the director of Blue Library has said to the staff, "It's just a library degree. It's just 2 years. We're not talking about metaphysics. We're not talking about medical sciences or law. This is library science" [Director1, Blue, PD16]. Even this statement, although designed to lower the elite, is a statement based in a hierarchical orientation. It says that the library degree is lower on some imaginary scale than other professions. In keeping with this hierarchical orientation between professions, the divide between degreed professional librarians and non-degreed paraprofessionals is strongest at Blue Library than at any of the other three libraries. I believe this divide to be one of the most important indicators of hierarchical thinking in libraries.

At Blue Library, some professionals snub those beneath them on the hierarchy. Said one professional librarian of the dynamic in the library, "The staff have a complaint that some of the

professional staff are not pleasant to them. They're rude. They're haughty. And it reflects on all of us" [Lucy, Blue, PD13]. The moments when individuals did not acknowledge the presence of others were particularly hurtful:

I've had [one] librarian walk past me with their head down. And I say, "Good morning, so and so." You know, "Good morning" or "Oh, hi!" I mean, what's the matter with you? It's a human thing to greet another human being. You don't have to like them. You don't have to agree with them. "Good morning." Can't do that [Louise, Blue, PD15].

I heard one story of a particularly illustrative exchange from a couple of different perspectives. In this vignette, the library director and a paraprofessional staff member ran into each other near the circulation desk of the library. They stopped for a moment to have a purely social conversation, and were interrupted by another professional librarian. The paraprofessional described the scene this way:

[She] rushes over and says, "I'm sorry, can I interrupt?" (It's like, you already have.)  
[To the director]: "Blah, blah, blah blah blah, this person, blah, blah, blah blah blah."  
The director says, "OK, got it."  
[The librarian] starts rushing away...and the director says, "Wait, wait, wait. I was just coming out seeing if someone's going to do lunch. If someone's going to lunch, I could tag along."  
[The librarian] doesn't look at [the paraprofessional], she just looks at the director and says, "Well, oh, yes, alright. You can go with us. Chris and I are going." And then she zooms off [Blue, PD16].

In this exchange, the interrupting librarian never acknowledged the paraprofessional, did not say hello, and certainly did not invite her to lunch with a group of professionals. According to the paraprofessional, despite being "rude" or "awkward" [Blue, PD16], this kind of interaction "happens all the time" [Blue, PD16].

Yet, the professional librarian involved in this exchange seemed quite oblivious to the impression she was making on others. In fact, her comments on her professional colleagues' treatment of paraprofessionals were quite negative. When we talked about the problems between professionals and paraprofessionals in the library, she gave no indication that she had any idea

her own behavior might ever be hurtful in the same way. People who worked closely with this professional talked about her “good heart” [Amy, Blue, PD19] or even “great heart” [David, Blue, PD26]. The subtext I heard in those phrases was that they perceived her as having good intentions that did not always manifest in action.

Break time in Blue Library exemplified the social divisions in this library most strongly. In the technical services department, librarians took a break at 10:15 every morning. Public services librarians did not join this group. They were more likely to go off-campus at irregular times with smaller groups of their professional colleagues.

When I asked the head of technical services about departmental meetings I could attend, she told me that she considered break time as a way of sharing information and conducting informal meetings [Lucy, Blue, PD5]. However, paraprofessionals seldom engaged in these breaks. Each day, the technical services librarians entered the glass-walled break room and closed the door. Lucy told me that they closed the door “to keep noise in” so it would not disturb those outside at their desks, particularly the woman who worked closest to the door [Lucy, Blue, PD10]. Nonetheless, the closed door signaled a closed group.

There was no overt rule that this break time was only for librarians, but it was certainly an unwritten rule of the departmental culture. During one break, Nan, a paraprofessional put her head inside the door and then started to leave. Martina said, “That was short but sweet.”

Nan replied, “It’s all librarians in there!”

Another librarian invited her in, laughing, “We’re so intimidating” (which, indeed, they seemed to be). Nan indicated that she thought they were talking about something of interest only to librarians (in fact, they were) but then joined the group. A few minutes later, another paraprofessional looked in, glanced at the group, and left again. (This last exit might have been

due to my presence in the room as much as the dynamic of professionals and paraprofessionals, however.) [Blue, PD17].

When paraprofessionals feel that librarians exclude them, they become stand-offish in turn:

And then I think...I don't want to be in that company. You realize that that's not where you want to be. It's awkward. You want to be respected, but you don't want to be in a group that doesn't respect you or isn't intelligent enough to respect you. And then it starts to reverse power roles, where you put the librarians below you because they aren't smart enough to know that you are as equal on whatever terms [Simone, Blue, PD16].

This comment from a paraprofessional came after I shared my frustration at encountering barriers in making friends with paraprofessional coworkers in my own library. Her response gives a sense of how social interactions create and re-create hierarchy and the difficulty in having egalitarian relationships once those hierarchical interactions have taken place.

Occasionally, friendships did cross the professional-paraprofessional divide at Blue Library. These cross-over friendships tended to take place only with the lowest hierarchical level of the professional staff. When talking with one participant about her friendships in the library, I asked if any of the friends she mentioned were professional librarians. She replied:

No. Can't cross that line. No, wait a minute! One is. [But hasn't always been.] Well, you know, she and I started out and she and I were in the same position and she was in school. But she's an exception [Louise, Blue, PD15].

As these comments show, the only exceptions to the unwritten rule about friendships between professionals and paraprofessionals were with those who had only recently moved into the professional ranks from paraprofessional positions after attending library school. These people maintained friendships with their paraprofessional colleagues while also being friends with other young professionals. To the paraprofessionals with whom they had been peers, these librarians had not yet become "Other." In fact, a number of the professionals did not seem to accept these

newcomers as full-fledged professionals, considering them junior colleagues, at best, or “relegated to the stupid side of the hall” [Director1, Blue, PD25], at worst.

*Reflection of campus hierarchy.* The division between professionals and paraprofessionals at Blue Library is only one indication of the library’s hierarchical culture. A second indication is the way in which the library reflects the hierarchy of the college. Blue College is a competitive, elite school that prides itself on those traits. Its students are among the nation’s best and brightest, and they go on to become national leaders. Individuals in the library reflect the intellectual elitism of the school, valuing academic pursuits over “technical” and “hands-on” library work. “I think there is some looking down upon [those who do hands-on work], even though...I don’t think it’s deliberate, but I think it invariably comes across in the way people interact” [Blue, PD15]. Deliberate or not, that elitist sensibility causes interactions that create hierarchical culture.

When I asked one participant how this school differed from the other (also excellent) institutions where she had worked, she bluntly replied, “Snobbier” [Dawn, Blue, PD10]. In the library, that sense of being better than other institutions comes out in the oft-repeated phrase, “Blue College is Special.” The library director described this sense of superiority:

[The librarians are] very insulated.... We don’t even look at what other libraries do, we discount, in fact, we make fun of what some other libraries do.... We’re special here at this school. Working reference here is so different from working reference anywhere else [Director1, Blue, PD16].

This sense of “specialness” meant that “it was like pulling teeth being allowed to do bibliographic instruction” [Ruth, Blue, PD23] even for individuals with instruction experience elsewhere. Similarly, the reference department permitted only select librarians from outside their department to participate in reference and instruction. Training for these areas was intense, even for experienced librarians. In fact, one technical services professional who was not permitted to

work desk took a job moonlighting at a local community college in order to be able to continue practicing her reference skills. The Blue Library staff's sense of superiority over peer institutions and coworkers reflects the hierarchical culture of Blue College as a whole.

*Managerial control.* A third example of hierarchy in this organization is managerial, not social. The technical services department of the library operated under a strictly hierarchical model, with direct and clear lines of responsibility from the head of the department, through section heads, to staff members. Lucy, the head of the department, described her management style as having “evolved because of...workshops. When I first came, all I knew was (she pounds her fist on the desk) ‘Because I said so’” [Lucy, Blue, PD13]. Staff agreed the management training workshops she attended have influenced a “softening” [Vivien, Blue, PD21] of her approach, but she still made all decisions and strongly discouraged staff at the lower levels from communicating with one another about work-related issues. Regular meetings did not take place in the department, either. I have already described these meetings that took place “informally during morning coffee breaks,” [Lucy, Blue, PD4] from which paraprofessionals felt excluded. Although Lucy saw herself as being inclusive and participative in her management style, her staff did not consider her a participative manager, although they did indicate that she had “loosened up a lot” [Libby, Blue, PD23]. One of her staff members pointed out that “She's very quick to say no to something the first time” [Ruth, Blue, PD23], and it is difficult “convincing her [that you] need to do things a different way” [Libby, Blue, PD23]. Clearly, professionals or paraprofessionals were not permitted to make independent decisions about their own job roles and were required to obtain permission from Lucy to implement any idea. In addition, these comments indicate that the department head was not open to innovation from below, stifling the kind of participation that she claimed to foster.

*Silencing.* A final indication of Blue Library's hierarchical culture is the silencing of those at the bottom of the formal hierarchy, which emerged in this library's strong themes of "lack of voice" and "silencing." Louise's comments above also exemplify this silencing effect: "And I was going to say, 'Excuse me, but that wasn't what we were supposed to do,' and then I [thought], no I'd better not, because I might get in trouble. Somebody might say something to me." That "somebody" she feared was superior to her in the formal organizational structure. The director of this library also talked about how the staff felt unsafe when speaking in front of the upper level professional librarians:

I think that idea of the safe environment is the thing I hear most often here, is that people don't feel like that is the atmosphere here. That they do feel that people respond to them defensively or dismissively, with a fair degree of regularity. Um, and I heard that when I first came here and I still hear that. It has not, it still is, and I don't know if the persistence is based on, what, I don't know, but I think that's still a strong feeling among some people that it's not safe to talk in front of the management group, that they will be treated, dismissive or critical way and that's a huge risk for some people [Director1, Blue, PD17].

In an organization with a more egalitarian culture, the fear of reprisal would not be part of the equation. At Yellow Library, for example, "We're all pretty willing to listen to each other's disagreements...[whether it's with a librarian or someone on support staff]. That is more true here than in places I've been before... I think in some respects the library is...a bit unique in that" [Shauna, Yellow, PD36].

I observed a number of instances of silencing in the technical services department in this library, where individuals in positions of authority keep those at lower levels from speaking. As I have described, the technical services department of Blue Library was particularly hierarchical, and the head of this department strictly controlled communication between paraprofessional staff, to the point of intervening when staff members ask questions of other staff about those areas where their jobs overlap. The pattern of behavior is discussed in more detail in the section

of this chapter titled “Communication,” but the control she exerted to silence this communication is a classic example of bureaucratic efficiencies that de-personalize interactions between workers and alienate them from a holistic sense of the work of the organization at large.

Although images of shushing librarians are part of the stereotype of our profession, the only literal shushing I observed in these libraries occurred in technical services departments. The department at Blue Library had an unwritten rule about quiet in the department, particularly on the cataloging side of the room. On one of my early days there, I wrote about discovering this rule: “I suddenly realize that no one is talking in this office and they’re giving me looks like I’m really loud and disruptive” [PD10].

The technical services room of Blue Library is large and open, with the head of the department in the only enclosed office, symbolic of her higher status. Everyone else, professionals and paraprofessionals alike, have desks with approximately four foot cubicle walls separating them from one another. Sound, of course, travels well in such a space. As I have previously described, catalogers work on very detailed tasks that require concentration. It is not unreasonable, then, for them to request quiet to perform their work. Said Libby, a Blue Library cataloger, “I would have given, I don’t know, a lot to have been able to have a door to shut. Just a door” [Libby, Blue, PD23].

All three of the libraries I visited had some issue with noise and catalogers, but the response of each was characteristic of the three unique library cultures. When there was an issue with noise from the mailroom bothering catalogers at Yellow College, the director simply had a door erected between the two spaces. It is important to have that door, said Tammy, a Yellow College cataloger, “When you’re doing hard things, with all the activity” [Tammy, Yellow, PD41].



Similarly, Pink College Library had problems with noise in interlibrary loan and the mailroom adjacent to their cataloging office. They handled the problem with characteristic indirectness and humor:

They were promised that they would try to get a door and [the director] did try but because of HVAC problems [they could not do it]...For the first four months [after my department moved into that room], I was an outcast up there because I brought myself and my six student assistants... (whispering) I tried so hard to be quiet (normal voice) but I'm just not... With [the head of technical services], with her working [in an office near both the cataloging and ILL departments], I told her, "If you need to shut your door, if you need to tell us to be quiet, please tell us to be quiet." And...she's pretty chill about telling us to be quiet...She hasn't told us to be quiet, but she'll shut her door and that's when I'm like, "Alright, guys, be quiet."

But you see the stoplight up there...because Scott's [her supervisor] grand idea was to get us one of those 1-2-3 stoplights. I'm like, "Scott, this is not going to work for a group of college students," which is like, "If we get too loud the stoplight goes off." (laughing) It's not going to work. And it didn't. Now it just sits there off all the time...I've been there now for about three years so they're probably used to me. But every once in awhile I'll hear that I was too loud. It goes like this (she gestures circularly), like somebody will tell somebody that I was too loud and I'll hear it [when] it comes back to me from a third party [Maranda, Pink, PD336].

Like these other colleges, the way people at Blue Library dealt with the catalogers' need for quiet reflected on their organizational culture. Rather than recognizing individual differences in the need for quiet and sharing a frustration with the physical layout, the participants in Blue Library treated it as an edict from higher levels in the hierarchy, "Yeah, you're not allowed to laugh and you're not allowed to talk across [the cubicles]" [Dawn, Blue, PD10]. The phrase "allowed to" indicates the top-down paternalism typifying this organization. Similarly, Louise interpreted the call for quiet as part of the split between professionals and paraprofessionals: "I think the problem is that it's only directed at staff people, not librarians, and librarians can laugh as loud as they want and talk as loud as they want, and staff can't" [Louise, Blue, PD15]. Professionals, then, are perceived as having more freedom as part of their higher rank in the hierarchy.

Responsibility for the edict of quiet was even shuffled all the way to the top of the organization's hierarchy. My fieldnotes continue from that first moment I realized how quiet the room was and how loud I seemed:

I lower my voice, and ask about the quiet. Simone says that it's left over from the last library director, and that the idea is "if you're talking, you're not working," but for [this director], "Happy people do more work" [PD10].

### *Tension Between Hierarchy and Egalitarianism*

Another element of Blue Library's culture that emerged in the data is the contrast between past hierarchical leadership and present leadership that espouses egalitarian ideals. This contrast provides an element of hopefulness about the prospects of creating a more egalitarian, participative culture under the new leadership. Nonetheless, ambiguity and tensions emerge in the elements that simultaneously encourage flattened hierarchies while perpetuating hierarchy.

Although the Blue Library director talked about "trying to create something that's more participatory and collaborative" [Director1, Blue, P24] in the organization, some individuals perceived her as saying one thing and doing another. "[Our director is] saying we're in a group to consult and make things together, but then she's perfectly capable of saying, this is the way it is" [Simone, Blue, PD16] said one participant. On the other hand, the director told me "It's almost like they don't believe me" [Director1, Blue, PD24] during her attempts to make the library more participative. "It's, like, they don't get it....Like being on another planet in a way. They think they are doing what I think they should be doing, and they're not" [Director1, Blue, PD24].

During my visit to Blue College, one meeting's agenda consisted of department heads discussing participative management. The meeting and responses to it provide one example of the complex responses to moving the organization toward a more egalitarian model. Clearly, the director of the library supported the idea of incorporating participative management into the

library. However, she chose to have a campus facilitator lead the meeting, in order to make the atmosphere less of an executive edict and more of an open forum for discussion. The facilitator began the meeting with the following open-ended conversation starter:

[Your director] and I have been having some ongoing conversations about...potential things that we could do here within the library. So I thought it would be helpful to potentially have a further conversation about [participative management] as we sort of thought about what direction we might go in if we were going to do anything in the library [Facilitator, Blue, PD17].

The meeting that followed was tense and awkward. Early in the meeting, long silences followed the facilitator's open-ended questions. Body language of some participants indicated resistance. Many sat with arms crossed and made no eye contact, while one person even closed her eyes and apparently fell asleep. One person challenged the handout the facilitator used as a basic outline of leadership trends:

I think...your schematic diagram is a setup, actually, because I think workplaces have gone in the direction that you say...and whether we mean it or not, there's kind of a negative, positive poles in this. And I would be with Vivien to say that life can't be that simple. I think that there are changes in all workplaces and certainly Blue College, the library, has reflected those assumed changes because there's been a change in the workforce. Um, and I think it's as much a change in the work force as it is a change in management....And I think to talk about it in leadership trends is to, is to somehow make it more schematic than it needs to be. Because I think workplaces, preparation of people, expectations, all those things are radically different. So to say it's a management change...is to sell other people short and therefore I'm not willing to sign on to that schematic, either/or paradigm that you're putting here [Carole, Blue, PD17].

Interestingly, although the tone and content of this statement was confrontational, challenging the very underpinnings of the workshop the facilitator was outlining, the words and the argument acknowledged changes in the organization as a whole while discounting leadership's role in those changes, especially "To say it's a management change...is to sell other people short." The comment is, therefore, simultaneously anti-hierarchical, placing the power for change in the hands of the members of the organization, and anti-participative, in that she was resisting the

basic tenets of the workshop. Such contradictions underline the ambiguity surrounding hierarchy and egalitarianism in this library.

Later, I talked with people who participated in the meeting and found that each had a very different interpretation of what went on. The woman who seemed to doze off in the meeting and appeared to me to be the most resistant said, “I experienced it as the environment being slightly coercive” [Blue, PD19]. For her, the subtext of coercion clashed with the stated goal of egalitarian participation, part of the ongoing theme of dissonance between word and action. “Cooperative action can’t be coerced. Let us come together to address other issues and come by it naturally” [Blue, PD 19]. Other participants at the meeting indicated that lack of response came from a lack of trust between the professionals at that meeting. At the meeting, Vivien said, “I don’t know that this is exactly a safe environment,” [Vivien, Blue, PD17] indicating that the members of the group do not trust one another in order to speak openly. Trust is a key element in collaboration (Mishra, 1996), and distrust is one of the factors in the competitive elements of this library.

The current director of Blue Library has made structural changes to reduce the hierarchy and “reduce the ‘Us and Them’ scenario,” [Director, Blue, PD16] but elements of cultural hierarchy still undercut those efforts. Staff members at all levels of the organization hold positions on committees, a fact that was not true under the former director. However, “often staff [were] placed on committees but did not have a voice -- or were not heard if they spoke” [Zelda, Blue, PD364] despite the director’s encouragement to the contrary. Still, slow progress may be underway, as in the case of Zelda, who told me a story of one of her committee appointments. She said that at first she thought she had been deliberately passed over when individuals were chosen to contact faculty about a particular issue, but then later,

A list of names was passed around for additional contacts - I read the names on the list to myself and said to the group – “I know all these faculty by name - I'm glad to talk with anyone of them - so everyone choose from the list and I'll take the names on the list which are left.” I was left with three names to contact - and I did so” [Zelda, Blue, PD364].

I do not know whether it was her own initiative that enabled her to take a more active role, or whether the committee chair's attitude changed. Nonetheless, the staff member seemed to feel more hopeful about the possibilities of full participation under the current director's leadership after her experience with this committee.

Participative elements do coexist with hierarchical elements in Blue Library. Chloe characterized the library's structure as being a “hybrid” because “we have a hierarchy but we also work in teams” [Chloe, Blue, PD15]. Relationships within certain groups of professionals are particularly egalitarian. For example, the reference department functions more as a team than as a hierarchical body, although elements of both appear. Smaller groups of professionals, such as ad hoc committees, even function on an entirely non-hierarchical basis.

The meetings I attended of reference professionals exemplified this hybridization of forms. Meetings included open disagreement and free flow of ideas, with only a few hierarchical elements. The following excerpt from the transcript of one meeting provides an example of open disagreement, and the interplay of multiple voices in the discussion. In this situation, Megan was in the process of shifting from her job as science librarian in a branch library to the reference department in the main library; the position of science librarian had not yet been advertised and Megan was still covering that work, although she officially had started her new position.

Carole: Um, I think, that we should all collectively urge Megan to move to [the main library].

Olivia: What do we do? Pitchforks?

Carole: We walk across the campus, grab all her stuff, walk back and put it upstairs.

Les: Why?

Carole: Well, because I think strategically and tactically, the longer you do two jobs, [the

less likely the opening will be filled].

Olivia: You're going to turn into [name of another librarian who has dual functions].

Carole: Yeah, I'm afraid you'll never spend all your time [here] unless we seize up all your stuff and put it in

Megan: OK, my, my major concern about relocating at this time....The real issue I have is a considerable staffing and availability issue for my current—I consider the science faculty my current clientele. I don't have any liaison responsibilities right now in other departments. So my primary customers remain the science faculty, the science staff, the science students. And, um, and with the staffing situation, we still need someone available there to back us up because we don't have student coverage every hour the library is open.

Carole: But you will soon.

Les: I'm sorry, but I think Megan's arguments are persuasive and I don't see that it [is to our benefit to push her to do this.]

[Discussion continues]

Carole: I'm, I'm not absolutely adamant about it, but I think we could rue the day that you don't come over from science. I mean, if we have a discussion and we decide to fill it in a different way, that's one thing, but if it goes out as a science librarian, I think you should leave [the science library] before the science librarian is in place.

Megan: Yes.

Fred: I would suggest a timeframe, too. To sit down and set an actual timeframe as to when, if it does go out for a science librarian, when would you want to move over and when would it be realistically possible. Also, and a third thing to consider, when would be a good time to make sure that the fire stays hot so that the committee doesn't continue to just sit on it and sit on it and sit on it? Because it's been my experience that whenever a person is doing two jobs or is sitting in one job waiting to transition to the other,

Olivia: There's no incentive.

Fred: Exactly. There's no incentive because you're doing one and a half jobs or two jobs at a time, or two jobs are being split among everybody.

Megan: That may be contributing to why this [job advertisement] hasn't gotten going. That could be true. I will give you that. Because if [the library director] heard from faculty, "What the hell is going on with the science librarian position?" she would probably be moving on it and if I wasn't available for service in science that would be the case....

Carole: And I think that, and I think also that the more you can serve all needs in the sciences, the less likely we are to get someone with a science background. I think that the science needs have to be also perceived. That doesn't mean to make an artificial pain for them to suffer, although, but they it's more like they have to know that if you weren't there, they would miss you.

Chloe: But Carole, aren't we doing the same thing by covering the departments that, when Megan comes back here she'll be taking? Because we feel the same way that we don't want those departments to suffer. So, in the interim until Megan takes them over, we're covering them as well as we can. So I feel like we're doing the same thing of not wanting faculty to feel the pinch.

Megan: Right, because they shouldn't feel the pinch for

Chloe: Because we have the same, because I have the same commitments for those

departments that Megan has, you know, so I think that, in real life we feel the same way, that we don't want our people to

Carole: But I would say that most of us can cover what we're covering [Blue, PD12].

From the segment above, it is clear that Carole's opinions carry some weight, probably because of her position as department chair. However, Les and Chloe disagree openly with her, and Megan argues her position strongly, while conceding specific points. Les's disagreement is couched in a feminine ritual apology (Tannen, 1994), "I'm sorry, but I think..." but it is clearly antithetical to Carole's premise. Fred and Olivia, on the other hand, side with Carole. These two are the lowest on the departmental hierarchy and one could interpret their response as allying themselves with the department head; however, my sense is that their arguments fit their personalities and priorities rather than being mere obsequiousness.

Carole, as department head, chaired the meeting with relatively subtle cues rather than strict meeting protocols that would reinforce her position at the top of the meeting's hierarchy. She posted an agenda at the outset of the meeting but only referred to it when shifting between topics. She made these topic shifts at natural conversation openings and used question forms that softened the form of address, such as "Shall we? Let us move on. Aleph?" [Carole, Blue, PD12] She also redirected conversation toward her own interests through conversational conventions rather than direct meeting protocols. For example, in one instance she picked up the preceding conversational topic in one sentence ("I think right now...is a really really hard time...and I think we should regard this as a stopgap and then it can be reevaluated in light of the person we hire") and then shifted the topic in the next ("What worries me about the few conversations I've had, though, is that people seem...not to be very devoted to the idea that we get someone with a science background and that worries me a lot..."). As department chair, Carole could have taken

a more authoritarian position in the meeting, but did not, thus reinforcing a sense of equality among the members of the department.

The give and take of conversation in these meetings indicates a certain level of equality among its members; nonetheless, hierarchy was present. In this particular meeting, I looked carefully at the number of words each person spoke in order to double-check my perception of who spoke the most. The head of the department did chair the meeting, however subtly and conversationally, and spoke 30% of the time at the meeting, more than anyone else. And while the long-time professionals in the room disagreed with each other easily, and spoke a similar percentage of the time (around 20% each), the temporary librarian in the group and the non-librarian staff member (both people of color) spoke much less than the others (under 10% each) and sat outside of the circle of librarians.

Although this meeting of the reference staff showed a mixture of equality and hierarchy, an ad hoc committee meeting showed the real possibility of non-hierarchical structures in this library. The committee's charge was to plan and implement a specific campus-wide program. The group consisted of three professional librarians, Martina, Chloe, and David. By the time I attended a meeting, the committee had been working on program planning for some time. Yet at this particular meeting, it was clear that the group had been functioning as equals. During the meeting, leadership was fluid, with different people leading different parts of the discussion. However, at one point, a question arose about who needed to write a letter to the President of the college about the committee's work. Regarding this task, Martina said to Chloe, "You're the chair." Chloe replied, "I am? I've been deferring to you....Actually, I feel like we've all been working together" [Blue, PD10]. In this case, the small committee had been functioning collaboratively, with no designated leadership. When they needed someone to deal with the



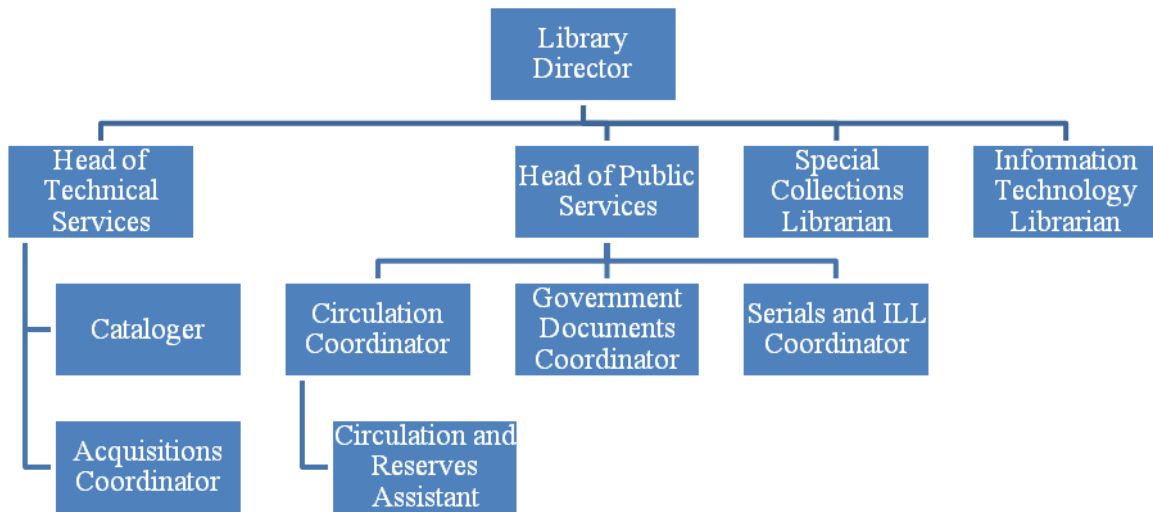
hierarchy of the college at large, they fell back on the original composition of the committee, which Chloe described, “I guess [the library director] said that I was responsible for reporting back or something that implied I had more responsibility” [Chloe, Blue, PD13]. Thus, this committee was an example of a perfectly functioning non-hierarchical group. They successfully planned and carried out a well-attended function involving a nationally known speaker without even a question of hierarchy until communication with the college hierarchy became an issue.

Although Blue College Library demonstrated the most hierarchy of the three organizations I visited, elements of egalitarian structures were present, too. The hierarchy of the library reflected the hierarchy of the college at large, and social hierarchy was a continuing element of the culture in the library. Yet, the director was making efforts to change the organization to one that would be more egalitarian. In the process, tensions between hierarchical elements and egalitarian elements heightened. Individuals at upper levels of the organization were perceived as talking about flattening the hierarchy, while they continued to participate in hierarchical behaviors, both socially and professionally.

#### Pink Library: Small Size, Some Hierarchy

Pink College Library, with only around a dozen workers, was the smallest of the three organizations I visited. Nonetheless, it had a layered structure with paraprofessionals reporting to professionals, who in turn reported to the director (see Figure 3). From the point of view of Dakota, a paraprofessional, “that means that I’ve never sat down and had a conversation with [the director] about my job or how things are going. She’s relying on [my supervisor] to have those conversations with me” [Dakota, Pink, PD340]. In my experience, a library of this size often has a completely flat structure, with professionals and paraprofessionals alike reporting directly to the library director, so I asked the director why she layered the structure. Her response indicated

Figure 3. Pink Library Formal Organization.



a desire to distribute authority to lower levels of the organization and a division of labor in administration to deal with individual needs of workers:

It's a combination of things. It's a combination of personalities... We have some personalities and individuals who want... sort of highly structured things. And then, I also have to build in some developmental opportunities for staff members so, so someone like [the head of public services] how I give [him] advancement, not just in terms of... status advancement, but how do I give him more experience that's going to prepare him for his next move if he doesn't have experience supervising full-time staff? .....And also... I can't check in with everybody all the time and so it's a way to make sure that... people don't have to just come to me if they have problems or concerns or things that need addressing. That they have other places to go, as well [Director3, Pink, PD345].

Pink College Library has had female directors for some time. Like the other organizations in this study, a past male library director took a hands-off approach to library management, and internal functions were essentially left to progress on their own. At one point, an intermediary level of assistant director took care of internal functions while the director worked with administration and faculty. However, there are now fewer staff than under those directorships, and recent female directors, including the current one, have taken a more hands-on approach to management in the library.

### *Professionals and Paraprofessionals*

Despite of its small size, some hierarchy exists in the day-to-day work of Pink Library, although professionals and paraprofessionals are less stratified socially. Unlike Blue Library, social relationships between professionals and paraprofessionals are friendly. However, work roles are more divided.

Socially, Pink Library was very friendly between all levels of library workers. Paraprofessionals and professionals mingled socially in hallways, the break room, and over lunch. Humorous emails flew between all levels of the organization (See Communication, below, for examples.) Maranda also shared with me “humorous email correspondence between the people I confess to joking with most: [the library director], Sally [a paraprofessional in cataloging], and Scott [her immediate supervisor]” [Maranda, Pink, PD364]. These four individuals are a mix of departments and levels, indicating the freedom of association the Pink Library staff members feel.

Other friendships developed between professionals and paraprofessionals, as well. Hazel talked about one friendship triad, “She and Pauline and I were the Three Musketeers” [Hazel, Pink, PD338]. This group consisted of two paraprofessionals and one professional. Although the professional has since left the organization, the closeness of their friendship still exemplifies the lack of social division between the two groups in the library. When I asked about friendships, Maranda named her supervisor, “Scott and I, I’d say are pretty good friends.... It flows pretty easily, pretty naturally.....It’s just one of those easy things to do” [Maranda, Pink, PD336].

Professionally, the gap between paraprofessionals and professionals is not the chasm of Blue Library, but there is still some distance between the two. Paraprofessionals (albeit those with library degrees in progress) even offer reference service, a domain that is strictly

professional in both of the other libraries. However, the director has structured meetings to divide along the lines of professional-paraprofessional status. She leads a monthly meeting of all professional librarians and has an individual monthly meeting with each professional. She also leads a separate monthly meeting of all staff, including professionals and paraprofessionals. The separate professional meetings make the two groups feel more divided.

One paraprofessional who has worked in Pink Library for many years, described the separation as having “always been true to a degree...sometimes more and sometimes less true or less obvious or less distinct. I think it’s unfortunate, unnecessary, because we’re such a small staff and everybody does everything, pretty much” [Sally, Pink, PD344]. In this library, the sense that “everybody does everything” lessens the feeling of hierarchy, as do friendly relationships between professionals and paraprofessionals. However, the structural separation of professional and paraprofessional meetings does create a distinction and a difference.

### *Silencing*

Silencing also occurs in Pink Library as a symptom of the hierarchy. As with individuals in Blue Library, people at Pink Library indicate that they dare not disagree with those above them on the hierarchy, especially the director. During separate interviews, two people said the same thing about disagreeing with a director: “[I learned] to keep my mouth shut” [Pink, PD337; Pink, PD338]. One indicated that this was a legacy of past directors; the other saw it as important with the current management. Regardless of whether the current director gave them reason to be quiet, their submission to authority is nonetheless indicative of the sense of hierarchy in the library.

### *Pink College: Summary*

Pink College Library, then, falls in the middle of the continuum from most hierarchical to least hierarchical. Its formal organizational structure is relatively hierarchical for an organization of its size, and a division of meetings reinforces this hierarchy. In some instances, individuals in the organization are silenced by authority, another indication of the hierarchical sensibility. Still, social relationships between professionals and paraprofessionals are friendly and open and paraprofessionals meet along with professionals in the monthly all-staff meeting. In addition, because “everybody does everything,” division of labor is less strict in this library than in Blue Library, which makes individuals more a part of a collective purpose.

### *Yellow Library: Least Hierarchy*

Yellow College Library was mid-sized in this study, with around 30 workers, yet it was the most egalitarian in practice. In terms of organizational structure, professionals supervised paraprofessionals, but all professionals reported directly to the library director. Unlike Pink College Library, there are enough professionals in public services to report through a single head of the department, but this organization did not adopt that more hierarchical structure in its most recent re-organization.

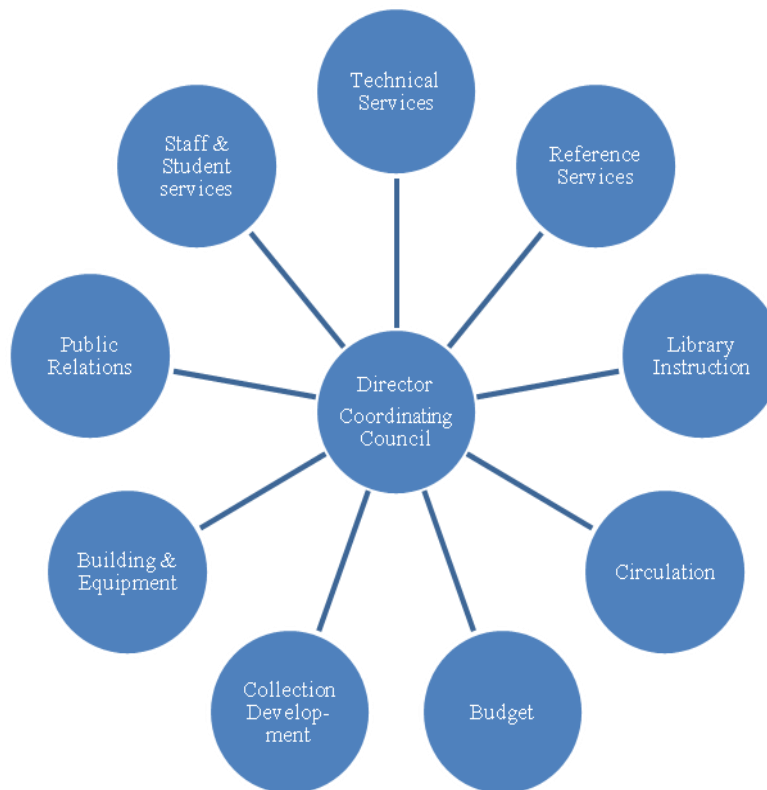
### *History of Reorganization*

This library’s history demonstrates how a less hierarchical system can evolve. Many years ago, Yellow Library’s director was “a retired military guy” [Director2, Yellow, PD28], “a former Colonel in the Air Force... very paternalistic.” [Haley, Yellow, PD42]. Like the former director at Blue College, he was an academic first and a librarian second. Also hands-off, “he did not integrate himself into the daily activity of the library” [Haley, Yellow, PD42]. The organizational hierarchy was very much like that of Blue College today, with heads of

departments supervising staff and reporting to the director. That director's successor was "a major change from the director before him....He was a very eccentric man....His façade was this kind of old hippy yada, you know, happy zappy guy" [Laura, Yellow, PD44]. His management style was different from his predecessor, too. According to Haley, he was not paternalistic and would "give the people the project" [Haley, Yellow, PD42], empowering people with ideas to carry them through to completion:

So he said, "You draw up a plan. Let's see if it's feasible. Let's get some input. You want to do that? Sure we can do it this summer. Show me, show me what you do. If it doesn't cost any physical money, we'll do it. Sure. That's a great idea" [Haley, Yellow, PD42].

Although Haley acknowledged that he was not universally liked, she nonetheless said, "I think he was perfect for that time, coming in and...pushing you and, [saying] 'You can experiment with ideas--it's okay. I'll let you know whether it's pushing the brink of failure here'" [Haley, Yellow, PD42]. While he was director, the library moved into a team structure, that ultimately became a complete reorganization (see Figure 4) to a "circular structure consisting of eight equally important task-oriented groups, with...a Coordinating Council and the Library director at the center" [memorandum May 13, 1998].



*Figure 4: Yellow Library's Team Structure.*

### *Current Organizational Structure*

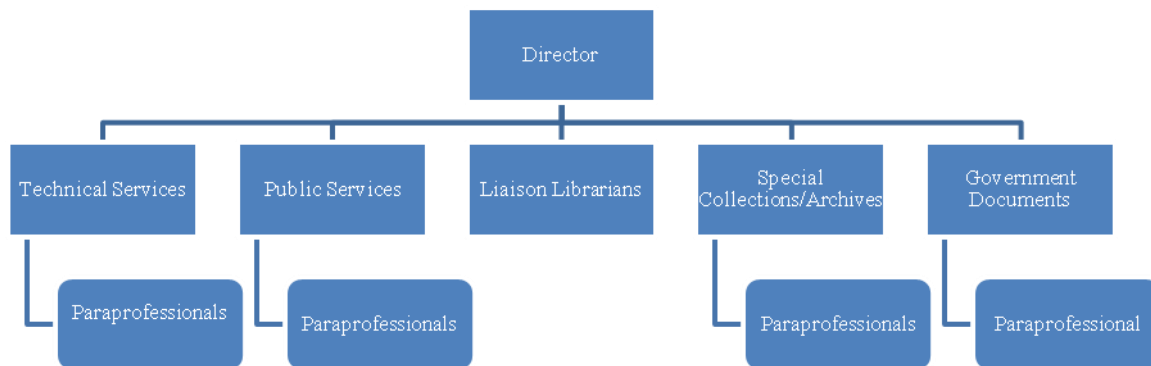
The current library director, who took her position in fall of 1999, shifted the structure of the organization back to one with a traditional reporting structure, but workgroups are still in place, and the spirit of empowerment pervades the work of the organization. She explained her reasons for shifting back to a traditional reporting structure:

This new structure had been in effect like a year and a half, I guess, when I got here. Maybe less than that. And what I said was that I would just participate in it the way it was structured for some time before making any changes. And I tried to do that. But one of the really strange things to me in that organization was that every single staff member in this library reported to me from part-time staff to the librarians so the organizational structure to me felt like...There I am [in the middle], the target...If somebody wanted to take a vacation [and] they worked in circulation, they didn't necessarily check with their

colleagues to see that that was an appropriate time. Frequently they would just e-mail the list and say, “I’m going to be gone next week,” or if they did ask anyone it would be me and I didn’t know whether it was appropriate or not....I had no idea what to do. The only people who didn’t report to me were student assistants. So I worked with that and I went to lots and lots of meetings. There were a lot of groups, and I tried to go to all the groups I could and just listen and participate. But it became increasingly clear to me that a lot of work was not getting done and that it was really chaotic....But I hung in there for a while and then...we had several resignations and I felt like I had to do some restructuring...to fill those resignations, to even come up with...reasonable job descriptions [Director2, Yellow, PD32].

Like the director at Pink Library, she found directly supervising and evaluating every member of the staff too administratively cumbersome. She decided that some degree of hierarchy in the structure was important; nonetheless, the organization remained flat in terms of decision-making and no professional librarian supervised another (see Figure 5). Although there was a sufficient number of public service professionals to create a layered reporting structure like the one in Blue Library, after re-structuring all professionals still reported directly to the director. The liaison

Figure 5. Yellow Library’s Reporting Structure.





librarians at Yellow Library served the same function as reference librarians at Blue Library, providing instruction and collection development for specific academic departments.

Haley was a librarian at Yellow Library before the implementation of the team structure. At that time, she supervised professionals, but at the time of this study, she was not a supervisor. She offered her view of the current organizational structure:

See, I like...the structure because I see it more as a profession where you don't have to have heads of this, heads of that, but where you can be creative in your own...space. That's what I liked about a small college, because you get to do a lot of everything and you don't have to be head of something. And you can have kind of this curiosity...that's fertilized [Haley, Yellow, PD42].

On the other hand, the lack of formal reporting can make mentoring, training, and accountability problematic, especially for paraprofessionals who have no formal library training:

The director before...had this structure where everyone reported to him, all the staff and everything. So...what it ended up meaning was that a lot of the staff that were in positions, not librarians but staff members, who might not have a lot of experience doing whatever they're doing, didn't really have any guidance. And before I was here...there was someone that kind of had this job, but she only kind of worked with cataloging, not with acquisitions or periodicals. So it was sort of, they still [had no one] to kind of organize the whole process or figure out what they're doing [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36].

### *Professionals and Paraprofessionals*

Both professionally and socially, Yellow Library was the least hierarchical in terms of paraprofessional and professional staff. Friendships crossed these lines, including one mixed group of professionals and paraprofessionals that “started this mahjong group....every two weeks or so we go to each other's houses and that's made us friends” [Laura, Yellow, PD44]. Esther, who originally organized the mahjong group talked about her relationship to the paraprofessionals, “So the staff...they're great people and they're so competent. And, you know, I just, I never felt like I was above them or better than them for having the degree” [Esther, Yellow, PD39]. I questioned nearly everyone in this library about any perceived social split

between paraprofessionals and professionals, and found little indication of such division.

Ashley's answer was representative:

I don't think there's as much division between staff and professional staff and support staff...It's weird, because we don't really make those distinctions, except they're there. People are being paid on different systems...but I also don't [think] our support staff feels like it doesn't have a voice. I've certainly been places like that. I don't think that it's as much here. We're small, and so I think that helps and then staff, usually, all sorts of people are assigned to working groups and task forces and stuff like that. So I think [our director] does her best to try to break down some of those barriers [Ashley, PD37].

Professionally, hierarchy was also less pronounced at Yellow Library than at any of the other libraries, primarily because of the workgroup structure and the egalitarian communication and decision-making patterns described below. Laura, a paraprofessional, indicated the collaborative and non-hierarchical sense of work at Yellow Library:

We're all just working toward a common goal in the library, which is to provide materials to kids. And we...organize 'em and make 'em accessible. And so that's what our, all of our jobs are, and so it's just different aspects of the same thing [Laura, Yellow, PD44].

The sense that everyone is on equal footing, working toward a common goal seemed to be part of the cultural script at Yellow Library, because Shauna also echoed the sentiment: "We all have a stake in this library. I value my job as much as anyone at this library" [Shauna, Yellow, PD36].

During the reorganization at Yellow Library, the composition of teams was specifically designed to recognize the unique contributions of each member of a workgroup and to reduce divisiveness between professionals and paraprofessionals:

The Team Taskforce also carefully crafted the composition of each team to include paraprofessional and professional staff. During the Spring of 1998, interviews were conducted to gauge satisfaction with the team structure. One of the outcomes of these interviews was to request that professionals serve on teams with paraprofessionals in equal roles. Concern was expressed that professionals have "a broader perspective" that was lacking in staff-only teams and that having separate teams contributed to an "us and them" feel. While professionals expressed concern that their presence would silence paraprofessionals, "support staff said that they would not feel silenced by administration presence" [Yellow, Team Taskforce document].

In the egalitarian culture of Yellow Library, administrative presence is not a silencing factor as it is in both Blue and Pink Libraries. Because they do not have a sense that they are “looked down on” by professional librarians, paraprofessionals at Yellow Library can value the “broader perspective” of the librarians and invite them to join team membership. I asked Shauna about whether paraprofessionals are willing to express disagreement with a professional or a director:

That’s probably more true here than in places I’ve been before. I think there is always...a bit less of an inclination to express an opinion that’s in disagreement, but certainly you do it if it’s something you feel strongly about. And I think some places you wouldn’t feel free to do that at all. Some places on this campus you probably wouldn’t feel free to do that [Shauna, Yellow, PD36].

With its history of organizational innovation, the culture of Yellow College Library supported a non-hierarchical orientation so that a sense of equality remained even in those areas where hierarchy was reinstated. By incorporating some level of hierarchy for reporting while maintaining egalitarian decision-making and communication patterns, the organization has successfully maintained the advantages of a flattened hierarchy while overcoming some of its drawbacks.

#### *Hierarchy of Offices: Summary*

In all three libraries, hierarchy is inherent in the organizational structure, simply because of the supervisory structures in place. However, the three libraries embody that hierarchy very differently. Blue Library is the most hierarchical of the three, with a social elitism bolstering the organizational divisions, described as “our own caste system” [Simone, Blue, PD16]. Pink Library has more organizational hierarchy than is necessary for the size of institution, but nonetheless contains elements of egalitarianism. Yellow Library is the least hierarchical of the three libraries, both in terms of organizational structure and social interactions.

One element of hierarchy that emerged as a major factor in all three libraries was the split (or lack thereof) between professional and paraprofessionals. The professional-paraprofessional split is not unique to the libraries in this study, as I know from my own experience. Participants also told me about such splits in other libraries they had worked in. Individuals talked about how common it is in all libraries and how they have experienced the division in various levels at other institutions. Charlotte talked about how she experienced the division in libraries she worked in before she came to Yellow College:

Another thing that's really important is...the hierarchy between librarians and the not-librarian staff...And that's always a really big thing in tech services...like sometimes when there's faculty status and the expectations for librarians are really way different...Like, if the librarians are really supposed to go off and do a lot of research or if they have special release time for things, it can make the staff kind of resentful...And, for librarians that don't work with a lot of staff every day, it's not such a big problem -- like the reference librarians -- 'cause they're all kind of in the same boat. But, then, for instance, in tech services and you have all these colleagues that...don't have those expectations it can cause some resentment [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36].

In some ways, the distance between professionals and paraprofessionals is similar to worker-management issues in other fields. Professionals generally make more money than paraprofessionals while some paraprofessional jobs are not hugely different from professional positions. As Charlotte pointed out, paraprofessionals can feel resentful when professionals are doing less of the daily hands-on work of libraries and more research or service activities.

When a strict division of labor does not allow paraprofessionals to perform rewarding tasks they are capable of, the staff can feel oppressed and unappreciated as well as bored with their work. Once these toxic emotions arise, factions develop and criticism of the professional staff fuels the divide. Elliot told me about his mother having such an experience in libraries:

That was a comment that my mother would make often and she had a friend who was a nonprofessional-- she was a nonprofessional too -- and she had a friend who she thought very very highly of and she was very critical of the professional staff because they wouldn't recognize this woman's abilities and didn't make room for her to exercise those

abilities in some sort of way and Mom always felt that was wasting a wonderful talent [Elliot, Blue, PD20].

When paraprofessionals have a voice in the organization, as they do at Yellow Library, there is less of a divide between professionals and paraprofessionals. Meetings seem to be a major factor in whether paraprofessionals feel included in the process. Individuals at Blue Library expressed how important it was to them that the new director had implemented regular meetings of paraprofessionals. Although this first step was an important one, other barriers left individuals feeling voiceless. Pink Library's separate meetings of professionals and paraprofessionals left paraprofessionals relatively uninformed and less involved in decision-making. Exemplifying the most egalitarian structure of this study, Yellow Library's workgroups provided ample opportunities for members at all levels of the organization to meet and be part of library decisions.

#### Division of Labor

Although there may have once been a strict division between professional and paraprofessional duties in libraries, personnel cutbacks and technology advances have blurred these lines. Said Laura, a technical services paraprofessional at Yellow Library, "We all know that what we do used to be done by a librarian" [Laura, Yellow, PD44]. The following joke illustrates the dilemma of professionalism in academic libraries:

How many academic librarians does it take to change a light bulb? Just five. One changes the light bulb while the other four form a committee and write a letter of protest to the Dean, because after all, changing light bulbs IS NOT professional work! (Library Jokes, n.d.)

Job descriptions divide the daily work of libraries among library workers. Custodians change light bulbs. Catalogers catalog. Reference librarians provide reference service. Circulation staff members circulate materials. The list goes on and this division of labor is part of

the underpinnings of library work in all three of these libraries. The very definition of bureaucracy includes “a division of labor based on functional specialization” (Bennis, 1993, p.5). However, feminist behaviors in these libraries challenge division of labor by blurring the lines between positions in order to complete tasks for the good of the community rather than to retain individual status. As with the other aspects of bureaucracy discussed in this chapter, bureaucratic elements coexist with challenges to those elements in all of these libraries.

### *Doing what Needs to be Done*

Although bureaucratic division of labor is basic to libraries, “doing what needs to be done” was a theme that arose in all three libraries. If a light bulb needs to be changed and a professional librarian has a ladder and a new light bulb, will she simply change it? If so, she is doing what needs to be done, ignoring the division of labor and her own status.

When I first arrived at Blue Library, the library director helped me to move furniture from one room to another to create my office space [Blue, PD1]. Moving furniture is not in a director’s job description. She could have called custodial staff to help me, but that would have taken time and involved another department, because custodians are not supervised within the library. The most efficient way to get the furniture to the room was to move it ourselves, and so we did. The director at Blue Library also talked about “going to do guerrilla ivy abatement...and bring our clippers and chop it off at the ground” [Blue, Director1, PD25] outside of the library building. Lucy talked about going out at the end of the school year to “[dig] in dumpsters to make seating areas” [Lucy, Blue, PD13] in the library because the former director would not buy accessories to create library “living rooms.” “Now, why the head of archives and the head of tech services are doing that, I’m not sure” [Lucy, Blue, PD13], she said, but the two administrators considered the library living room concept important enough to risk “dumpster diving.” It seems

that even in the hierarchical culture of Blue Library, library needs overcame the value of status in the hierarchy.

These kinds of physical tasks are the most obvious incidents of stepping outside the job description, but other less drastic measures are taken daily to accomplish library goals. People talk about how they “pitch in with whatever needs to be done” [Toni, Blue, PD13], how they “get to do a lot of everything” [Robin, Yellow, PD42], or how “everybody does everything” [Sally, Pink, PD344]. Olivia, who worked in Blue Library’s technical services department, described how the department’s head knew how to do “the smallest things, labeling and barcoding, putting the book plates in and putting the call numbers on the spine” [Olivia, Blue, PD18] and was willing to do them whenever needed.

A good example of librarians stepping outside their job descriptions to fill a need happened at Yellow Library when the library technology position was in transition. Systems work needed to be done, so other staff stepped in to fill the void. People worked collaboratively to share various aspects of the technology role. Esther took care of problem reports, telling her colleagues to “Pretend I am an EMT, ready to triage your [computer] problem. I will refer issues on to the appropriate person” [Esther, Yellow, PD364]. A number of people took on the role of being “the appropriate person,” including one librarian Holly praised for his work: “He learns how. He’s smart....and he wants the library to work” [Holly, PD40]. Someone who “wants the library to work” will do what needs to be done, even if the function falls outside of his or her job description.

Organizations can also tap into individuals’ particular skills and interests when they allow them to step outside their particular job descriptions. For example, in Blue and Yellow Libraries, there were men with graphic arts skills. One man was a reference librarian; the other was

circulation supervisor. In both instances, the men's personal interests were applied to library needs, even for projects not in their departments. However, in Blue Library, the reference librarian was the *only* person who could design library signage. At Yellow Library, graphic tasks were distributed more broadly. "We don't have to put everything on poor Ansel....We impose on [his] graphic skills too much," [Director2, Yellow, PD33] said the director in one meeting. These different approaches are in keeping with the organizations' distributed or centralized structures and attitudes toward division of labor.

At Pink Library, Maranda's penchant for staying up all night is another example of staff members using their personal interests in service of the library. Maranda enjoyed creating a spirit of fun, and enjoyed staying up all night with students. During exams, she kept the library open 24 hours. Although circulation was not her responsibility, she enjoyed staying up all night, so she offered to staff the library and supervise student workers in order to offer study space and library services for students throughout the night. In another instance (described above, under "collaboration"), she organized and participated in a sleepover with student workers. That night, they restuffed pillows for a comfortable seating area in the library while watching movies, eating pizza, and talking. While sewing projects were definitely not part of her job description, Maranda and the students accomplished a needed task and enjoyed the night along the way.

### *Cross-Training*

Cross-training is another way that lines are blurred between positions. All three libraries had individuals from other departments working the reference desk. In Blue Library, these were all professional librarians from technical services; in Yellow Library, all of the professionals in the building took shifts on the reference desk, including the library director; in Pink Library, the same was true, but paraprofessionals who were working on degrees in library science also staffed



the desk. At Yellow Library, decision-making for reference services included all those who worked at the desk; at Pink Library, it included all professionals, with informal input from the paraprofessionals who staffed the desk; but at Blue Library, only reference librarians attended reference meetings and made decisions on reference desk functions. In keeping with its more hierarchical and territorial nature, Blue Library's positions are more strictly separated from one another; although some blurring of lines between departments occurs, decision-making is reserved for the professionals in that department.

At Yellow Library, staff also cross-train for each others' jobs. Sometimes these are informal arrangements, "She helps me and I help her" [Katrina, PD40]. At other times, two people are formally trained to cover each others' positions: "Anytime she's out, I back her up....It's written in our job description that we're both there for each other" [Ann, Yellow, PD34].

### Competition and Collaboration

Bureaucratic structures give rise to competition; feminist values encourage collaboration and value community success over individual gain. In bureaucracy,

Each layer of authority tries to differentiate itself from immediately adjoining layers and to distance itself from them. Together they create both real and artificial or self-contrived barriers. Often only insiders know what distinguishes one layer from another, why one rank or title differs from another, and where one stops and another takes over....Status seeking may decline into absurd symbolism as savage fights take place over who sits next to whom, who has the place closest to the window or door or fan or fireplace or the boss's office or—and Lord help the newcomer who mistakenly crosses the lines and provokes indignation well out of proportion of the incident....Warring factions impede the flow of information, knowledge, and communications vital to the smooth operation of the whole (Caiden, 1994, p. 33).

Despite Keller and Mogland's (1987) assertion that women have been "immune to the competition that seemed to characterize the male world" (p. 22), women have always competed

among themselves in their own sphere. “We women have long been engaged in the enervating game of going every other woman one better...and the real revelation is that our competitiveness is not a dirty act of treachery but the survival tactic of a second-class human being” (Pogrebin, 1987, p. 12). Primarily, feminine competitiveness has been linked with competition for male attention and for social status. Nonetheless, collaboration is a stereotypically feminine trait affirmed in feminist thought.

These three libraries demonstrate both competition and collaboration in varying degrees, although individuals in the organization may offer counterpoints to the library culture as a whole. For Carlotta, who has a competitive mindset, competition seems natural, “This is work. This is academia. This is what we do. It’s not so much for income. It’s—What else is there? There’s, I’ll use that word ‘prestige’ to encompass other kinds of...influence” [Carlotta, PD38]. For Megan, who has a collaborative, other-oriented mindset, motivation is not about prestige: “I’m not about hierarchy and rank and title. It’s not what motivates me. What motivates me is doing something that I enjoy, that is fulfilling and feels like I’m making a difference” [Megan, Blue, PD15]. The following discussion begins with the competitive and collaborative gestalt of each organization and status-seeking among library workers and then continues with individual elements of competition or collaboration between library departments, with campus departments, and with other libraries.

### *Competitive and Collaborative Gestalt*

#### *Blue Library*

Blue Library was the most competitive organization of the three I visited. Although individuals like Megan, quoted above, may have views different from many of her colleagues, the library culture in general is competitive. Lucy described competition as being greater “in

New England than in any place else I've worked. It's a highly competitive environment" [Lucy, Blue, PD13]. The library reflected this regional competitiveness through the type of status-seeking, bureaucratic competition Caiden (1994) described, and masculine "one-up" (Tannen, 1994), where "the philosophy... was if you go up, I go down" [Lucy, Blue, PD13]. Much of the competitive atmosphere at Blue Library seemed based in historical grudges and the environment the last director created. More than one individual indicated that the last director purposely created competition in the organization: Simone described them as "pitted against one another [Simone, Blue, PD16]; Carole used the phrase "play us off against one another" [Carole, Blue, PD19]. A third described the environment in more detail:

No one trusted anybody to do their job right. It was a really hostile environment. There was competition. Who saw the director last would get the decision in their favor so if you could get in at 5 o'clock at night, it was good. Meetings were nasty. If I could make you look like a jerk in the big group meetings, then I got a plus and you got a minus [Lucy, Blue, PD13].

Even in this environment of distrust, some collaboration occurred simply to get things done. "There was a sort of anti-[the former director] allegiance formed. They still didn't trust each other. They did it in a very sort of practical...way over certain issues like building maintenance" [Director1, Blue, PD17].

This library may simply reflect the atmosphere of the college at large. One librarian described it as their "model for organizational behavior:"

I would say that [most] of the academic departments on campus are dysfunctional and they are dysfunctional for similar reasons to the dysfunctions of the library. They are people who have worked together for a long time. They have disappointed one another, and/or bumped heads and/or...simply judged one another from the sidelines such that grudges develop, people have memories [Les, Blue, PD26].

This combination of negative, distrustful relationships on campus and the history of mistrust within the library meant that any collaborative effort had shaky ground on which to build; this mistrust extended itself to collaborative efforts outside of the library.

### *Yellow Library*

Compare this setting to that of Yellow Library. There has been significant turnover among the professional librarians at Yellow Library; few of them have been there for more than 5 years. Meanwhile, some of the paraprofessionals have worked together longer, and “now, after all these years, we’re pretty much, we’re all fine [despite earlier territoriality]” [Laura, Yellow, PD44]. Under the last director, there were “some institutional jealousies” [Haley, Yellow, PD42] and controversy surrounded the director himself: “Some people liked him and some people really didn’t” [Laura, Yellow, PD44]. Since he left, the turnover of jobs at the library meant “people that are here now only heard rumors about [the last director]” [Haley, Yellow, PD42]. Turnover caused the legacy of his leadership to manifest primarily in the flattened organization and team structure, rather than in historical grudges that impede current work.

Overall, the atmosphere at Yellow Library when I was there was more collaborative than competitive. Only a very few individuals expressed that they were competing for “prestige” or “influence” [PD38]. The attitude in the library was remarkably positive. Competition did not reveal itself through negative characterizations of colleagues. Ann’s comments supported my own observations:

I’ve never in the whole time I’ve been here, I’ve never seen any bickering; I’ve never seen any, like, you know, backstabbing or...talking behind your back or anything like that. I’ve never seen any of that or heard any of that [Ann, Yellow, PD34].

At first, I attributed the “make-nice environment” [Holly, Yellow, PD40] to regional norms. The Mountain region felt friendlier to me, overall, than New England. People made eye

contact on the street, drivers were less aggressive, and simple polite phrases offered to strangers smoothed interactions. Yet when I asked people about other places they had worked in the region, it became clear that this workplace was unique, even there. Holly seemed as surprised as I was by the lack of negativity:

I think these people are, almost all, really good people because this place doesn't really have bad gossip. I tell them that blows my mind. Where I came from before --oh, my goodness--there was in-fighting and it was just low stuff that would get said [Holly, Yellow, PD40].

At Yellow Library, the staff at all levels seemed to get along well, both socially and in work situations. As an organization, this library has worked through many of the issues of collaboration and participation that Blue Library has only just begun to address. They not only work together well internally, but they have built alliances on campus and have collaborative efforts with other libraries, as well.

### *Pink Library*

Pink Library exhibited a balance of collaborative and competitive behaviors, somewhere between those of Yellow and Blue Libraries. Just as Blue's Northeastern region seemed competitive and Yellow's Western region seemed friendly, Pink's portion of the Southeast seemed at a crossroads of behaviors. On my 1st day there, I emailed the library director that the drivers seemed an unnerving combination of Southern graciousness and Eastern aggressiveness. She agreed with my assessment that "One minute you'll be at a 4-way stop and they'll be going 'You go first. No, you go first'" and the next you'll have somebody cutting in front of you to get over three lanes of traffic to an exit" [personal journal].

At Pink Library, the director was described as "very competitive" [Pink, PD334] and that competitive spirit may have influenced the structure she set up to put herself in charge of decision-making. Perhaps more influential were the problems in the library when this director

started her job. The interim director had expected to take the permanent director role before the current director was hired, and alliances formed within the library surrounding this woman, in addition to predictable competition between the former interim and the current director. By the time I arrived on the scene, little evidence of this division was still in play. Only a few remnants of conflict remained, including between Pauline and her supervisor: “We have a history. I think the only reason we get along now is a truce” [PD334].

Pink Library also used competition in a spirit of fun, to spur one another on to accomplish more. Librarians engaged in a friendly competition over how many of the students they came in contact with would end up going on to library school. This library strongly valued continuing education for its staff, and talked about librarianship as a career in very positive terms. The fact that students saw the librarians as career role models also indicated the generally positive atmosphere of this library. Collaborative decision-making (described below) was part of this collaboration, and the sense of fun that permeated this library was in large part due to collaboration.

### *All Libraries*

Libraries, in general, may be less competitive and more collaborative than other fields. At least two participants talked about choosing librarianship because of the cutthroat behaviors they had seen in their previous fields (theater, academia) and that they wanted to avoid that kind of competition. In Blue Library, Fred talked about his past work in the military where “even where it was an absolute team effort to get something done it was still...completely individually competitive” [Fred, Blue, PD27] and indicated that it was not that way in the library. As a whole, collaboration is at the foundation of librarianship, in the form of freely sharing information and materials. While it is clear from this research that librarians are not always collaborative,

libraries always are, and that sense of collaboration permeates much of the work we do, even in the most competitive of library environments. Dakota, a participant at Pink Library, sums up: “That’s the library ethos: I am helpful, ergo, I exist” [Dakota, Yellow, PD340].

### *Professional Status*

Competition and status seeking are the underpinnings of the hierarchical divide between professionals and paraprofessionals described earlier in this chapter. Compare Caiden’s (1994) description above where “each layer of authority tries to differentiate itself from immediately adjoining layers and to distance itself from them” (p. 33), with Blue Library’s distancing strategies between professionals and paraprofessionals. If “we’re not talking about metaphysics,” [Director1, Blue, PD16] when discussing an MLS, and the work of professionals and paraprofessionals includes some of the same responsibilities, then the differential between “us” and “them” becomes very small. The competitive nature of the region and of Blue College may have created an environment in which librarians felt the need to maintain the differential. Perhaps that is why professionals employ relatively extreme social measures to keep themselves above paraprofessionals. Perhaps, too, it is why paraprofessionals at Blue Library feel the slights so strongly and experience being “very much kept in our place” [Nan, Blue, PD34] so negatively.

In a competitive environment, maintaining or improving one’s individual status supersedes the goals of the organization as a whole. One professional librarian at Blue Library told me that she thought librarians should staff the reference desk on Saturdays because “no hours on Saturdays means that circulation staff member is a reference librarian. So if I can be a reference librarian in circulation on Saturdays, what’s the difference between me and them?” [Lucy, Blue, PD13]. This librarian did not express concern about the quality of reference service

provided at the circulation desk. Such concern for quality would demonstrate a concern for the mission of the library. Instead, she expressed concern that the circulation paraprofessional would think herself on par with the professionals. The primary issue, then, is status, not library goals.

Even within the ranks of professionals, there is status-seeking about the kind of degree one has. Sonya, an archivist in a position that requires either an MLS or other specific professional preparation, spoke about a woman with whom she had worked at another library:

There was a person there who felt very strongly that anyone who was a professional had to have an MLS and made it a policy of not talking to anyone who did not have a master's of library science...not acknowledging that they existed [Sonya, Blue, PD20].

The atmosphere at Blue Library best exemplifies how library professionals can participate in status-seeking and competitive behaviors. The other two libraries were much less competitive in this arena, and therefore were able to be more fully collaborative in other areas.

#### *Technical Services vs. Public Services*

There is a distinct divide between technical services and public services departments in many libraries. In these three libraries, however, only Blue had a real division between the two. One librarian at Blue Library, described how the orientations of public and technical services are different:

It's my experience that there is a structural issue in libraries that has to do with...the overplayed notion of different cultures. I do believe that a technical service orientation and public service orientation are rather very different approaches to what is ultimately the same object, helping people use the library, but because the everyday workload is so different, the work life is so different, that they cause issues that come up and that one tries to think through....So I think that's a given in libraries and there are probably lots of different ways different libraries have tried or succeeded in bridging that. We've done that to some extent by having technical services librarians work the reference desk [Les, Blue, PD 26].

The differences in workload and work life in technical and public services that Les described exist in every library in my experience. Technical services librarians are those who do



the behind the scenes work described in the organizational overview section of this chapter.

Workers in this area generally do most of their work alone and need a certain degree of focus to complete work accurately. Therefore, certain personality types excel at this work. Said one woman at Yellow Library of a paraprofessional coworker in cataloging:

You couldn't find a better cataloger anywhere...I don't care what degree they've got. [She's] just fantastic....And it's just in her nature, you know. She's got that cataloging nature. It's a little obsessive-compulsive, but it's also just, you know, what you need to be [Laura, Yellow, PD44].

The sentence, "I don't care what degree they've got" relates to the divide between degreed professionals and non-degreed paraprofessionals, which may be more of an issue in technical services than public services because of the number of paraprofessionals employed in technical services work and the complexity of tasks they are often asked to perform. Yet, the "obsessive-compulsive" comment fits the stereotype of personalities that are suited to cataloging. And the joke is not limited to one library. At Pink Library, Ava said to the library director, "So I go home and I tell [my partner] that you called me Rainman. [She said], 'You can tell [her] that sometimes I call you Monk.' Now, I am not that picky, right?" [Pink, Ava, PD339]

On the other end of the spectrum, stereotypical public services librarians are perky or theatrical. In some settings, like that of Blue Library, they are the most academically-oriented people in the library, with multiple subject degrees. Like service workers in other industries, public service librarians must maintain a positive image whenever dealing with library users. To do their work well, they draw on emotional intelligence traits as well as knowledge and memory of the library collection and systems, academic systems of knowledge, and library policies and procedures. However, they do not have to be as rule or detail oriented as technical services librarians. Therefore, as one technical services librarian said, "I think people who are reference librarians are often more...flexible" [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36].

The split between public and technical services is not limited to the three libraries in this study. Library humor illustrates the prevalence of the split between public services and technical services in the library world at large. Some jokes predicate themselves on the differences in the personality and work of individuals in these two areas. Take, for example, the fictional St. Minutiae, Patron Saint of catalogers. The website, “Great Moments in the History of Technical Services,” provides a detailed account of St. Minutiae, including her characteristic motto “Non pilus tam tenuis ut secari non possit,” which translates, “There is no hair too fine to be split” (Lewis & Urrizola, n.d.). Less academic is the light-bulb joke for reference librarians: “How many reference librarians does it take to change a light-bulb?” (with a perky smile) “Well, I don’t know right off-hand, but I know where we can look it up!” (Library Jokes, n.d.).

Despite these jokes, the split between technical and public services is serious business. Individuals in technical services often feel unappreciated. Charlotte described the reasons: “Well, that’s a...tech services problem [everywhere] ‘cause no one ever notices all the months that you do right. They only come in and complain about the ones that you do wrong” [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36]. Despite Charlotte’s feeling that such problems happen everywhere other librarians at Yellow Library talked about the lack of division between public and technical services there:

Rhonda: We have a real divide [between technical and public services] (laughing).

Charlotte: We’re not big enough to have a real divide.

[unidentified speaker]: It’s too friendly a group to have a real divide.

Charlotte: Physically small. It’s kind of almost physically too small. We’re all in one building. We’re physically crowded.

Rhonda: And Charlotte has really gulped the divide anyway. I mean, I don’t go to catalog things, but Charlotte does public service.

Charlotte: But you do selection. [Yellow, PD34]

In this discussion, two reasons are given for the bridge between the divide, small size and cross-training. It appears that size is the most important issue. Only Blue Library, the largest of the three libraries, actually had an identifiable division between public and technical services. It

seems to me that sheer numbers of people facilitate the creation of a departmental alliance group, and in the case of Pink Library, alliances were not made along departmental lines.

Yet a small library with a competitive and hierarchical mindset can still set up divisions between departments. One librarian from Yellow Library described a small library where she used to work:

The other thing I noticed there that isn't true here: I was technical service librarian, meaning a catalog librarian. And there was a huge difference between public and technical, a schism, and we all knew who was the second class. And it was technical services. I think that was increased by the fact that most of the public services librarians, not all, had a law degree....So it's somewhat understandable, but then also serving the public [was considered] more valuable, more important, more prestigious than working in the back in technical services [PD38].

In Blue Library, I heard competitive talk between departments in many conversations, especially from the heads of departments. Most of these were simple comparisons that put their department in a better light than another department: "We probably have more regular meetings and free-for-alls than any other department....One of the things that we do, that I don't think any other department does...is have an annual retreat" [Blue, PD24]. From another department head, "But it turns out that we're the most pro-public, pro-marketing in the library" [Blue, PD13].

### *Liaison Structures*

One place where librarians have direct connections with faculty is as collection development and library instruction liaisons. All three libraries had liaison structures, where individual librarians worked with teaching faculty to select materials for library collections, to promote library services and activities, and to provide library instruction. The very essence of liaison work is collaborative in that it requires building relationships with teaching faculty. Nonetheless, perceived power differentials between subject departments and turf wars over assignments were part of the dynamic of the liaison assignments.

Even at Yellow Library, the most collaborative of the three institutions, liaison roles engendered “little turf battles over like, ‘Who does this class? Is it this kind of class, or that kind of class?’” [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36] especially when courses were cross-listed. However, that was the only competition I observed or heard about in relation to the liaison roles at Yellow Library. Generally, the liaisons at Yellow Library worked collaboratively with their academic departments and with each other.

At the collection development meeting I attended at Yellow Library, each individual took responsibility for making suggestions for purchase, but there was more give-and-take in the discussion than there was at Blue Library. At Blue Library, the subject liaison spoke as expert to the group, and the group’s purpose seemed to be to simply approve or reject the request. At Yellow Library, however, liaisons presented some ideas more tentatively, in order to receive real collaborative input from their colleagues. The difference between these two styles has been attributed to gender, with men being more expert-focused and women being more collaborative (Tannen, 1990; Bartram, 2005).

The more collaborative style of Yellow Library is apparent in one particular interaction during the collection development meeting. In this case, the liaison to a particular academic department, “thought I would just bring [this request for a journal] and we could all [talk about it]. Anyway, a faculty member protested our ordering it, which is extremely unusual. So I thought I’d bring that part to the whole group” [Carla, Yellow, PD39]. After the liaison read the initial faculty member’s request and the second faculty member’s protest, the others on the committee discussed the topic with some animation. Eventually, they turned back to the liaison and Haley asked, “So what would the official liaison respond? Recommendation?” [Haley, Yellow, PD39] but it seemed that the “official” recommendation was open to the input the others

had offered, and it seemed that the liaison was summing up discussion perhaps even more than stating her own opinion. The collaborative atmosphere was enhanced by the positive interpersonal relationships between those on the committee. At the end of the meeting, all of the journals had been discussed and positively received. The decision concluded with positive feelings and humor:

Charlotte: Do we have any sort of budget?

Director: We have plenty of money for \$500 worth of journals.

Charlotte: How 'bout if we just buy them all?

Rob: The feel good solution! [Laughter.] I love you guys [Yellow, PD39].

In Pink Library, professional librarians did not compete over liaison assignments. Nonetheless, liaison assignments seemed particularly based in the awareness of power differentials between academic departments on campus. Although working with powerhouses on campus was a point of competition at Blue Library, it was almost the reverse of competition at Pink. That is, librarians at Pink Library avoided liaison roles with powerful academic departments, feeling themselves at a loss to work with them.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the director took on a particular set of departments “because there were some cranky professors who didn’t get along with the library” [Director, Pink, PD326]. Because this set of departments was also one of the most powerful on campus, handing off the difficult and powerful group to the library director provided the “cranky” professors with a liaison who could meet them at a more even footing, in terms of power on campus. The library director was the only library worker at Pink with faculty status; her higher rank in the library made her more of an equal in the eyes of faculty in the “cranky” department.

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<sup>3</sup> This “reverse competition” is gendered in its underlying nature. That is, modesty and self-effacement is considered a feminine trait, while assertiveness and self-promotion the balancing masculine trait.

The sense of the power differentials between campus departments played out very differently at Blue Library. Rather than shying away from powerful departments, librarians in Blue Library perceived liaison assignments as competition for prestigious departments because “There’s power in who you get” [Lucy, Blue, PD18]. The reference department held the most liaison positions: “They’re complaining how they have too many departments, but getting one away from them is like-- Holy Jesus” [Lucy, Blue, PD18]. The grip they hold on liaison roles indicates both the importance of the roles and the control the department exerts in their assignment. In most liaison assignments, the librarian’s academic background appeared to be the first factor in assigning roles, although social connections were also part of the equation. Such technical skill and background orientation is in keeping with bureaucratic models of technical expertise being the primary factor in job role.

A mixture of social relationships and status issues affect some liaison choices, even in Blue Library. For example, Carole volunteered to take on a non-prestigious department, physical education, because “I met a coach...He’s an alum” [Carole, Blue, PD22]. In this institution, scholarly activity is valued much more highly than any athletic activity; the fact that the coach is an alum indicates that he is a “scholar athlete” and therefore higher on the prestige scale than a mere athlete. On a personal level, the fact that the librarian had met and evidently liked the coach meant that she took the department based on this contact, despite her own scant background in the academic side of this department’s work. When Sonia offered to help with the liaison responsibilities to the department, the collection development coordinator indicated that there probably would not be much work for even one person, but “if anything actually comes of this, the two of you can—as they say in phys ed—duke it out” [Les, Blue, PD22]. He used the metaphor humorously, but it indicates the underlying competition over liaison positions.

### *Collaboration Within the Library*

Despite elements of competition, collaboration also took place in all three of these libraries. Each library collaborated in keeping with its overall organizational culture. Library workers in Yellow Library, the most collaborative of all the organizations in this study, put the needs of the library and the students above individual status. Pink Library collaborated in a spirit of fun and humor. Even Blue Library, despite competition between individuals and departments, sometimes pulled together to collaborate on new projects and systems.

Office size and location is often a status symbol in organizations. Consequently, I noticed that the reference librarians' offices in Yellow Library were small, especially when compared to other offices in the library. During my initial library tour the library director explained, "Those larger studies we looked at upstairs were offices, but [the reference librarians] gave them up a few years ago so that we could make group studies. We had none. They moved into these faculty studies" [Director2, Yellow, PD28]. When I asked each reference librarian about the move, there was no sense that it was a problem. Each implied that the need for group space overrode the need for them to have larger offices, as one of them summed up: "It's a positive decision" [Carla, Yellow, PD38]. Because collaborative work is based on meeting organizational goals rather than building individual status, the choice of a smaller office in order to provide group study space for students makes sense in a collaborative environment. This library's priorities were clearly based in student needs.

Humor and fun were hallmarks of Pink College Library. The library incorporated the "Fish!" video into their training for circulation students, and its emphasis on working together to make the workplace a fun environment for both staff and customers permeated the environment. The director "giggles with students" [Pink, PD334] and the circulation department decorated

their service point seasonally. When the professional librarians presented together at a faculty lunch, their “Library Greatest Hits” was entertaining as well as informative. In the library, I heard stories about “our [toy] soldiers... parachuting down with messages” from the balcony of the library to the first floor [Pauline, Pink, PD334] and a staff member wearing a Twinkies costume and giving out the packaged cakes in the campus dining hall to publicize a library event. Even as a visitor, I was included in the fun. I received a Superman greeting card on a holiday, with a purposely gendered message, “to one of the good guys” [card from Maranda, Pink], and a humorous t-shirt supporting the College’s non-existent football team. Collaboration that involved fun while serving the needs of students was a strong suit of this library. One fun collaborative event was a 5<sup>th</sup> birthday party for the library. The library director described the event:

We...realized that it was our fifth birthday and we said, “Let’s have a birthday party. Let’s just have that kind of birthday party a five year old would have.” So we sent out invitations with a little cartoon hand that said “We are this many!” (she holds up her hand, palm out, fingers splayed) and we rounded up some door prizes like from local vendors and different things....We did it in April and it was a nice day and people played croquet. We decorated the golf cart and drove it around campus saying, “Come to our birthday party!”...Maranda wore a tiara. It was fun [Director3, Pink, PD337].

The party served a number of purposes. It helped boost morale of the campus after a difficult year, promoted the library, tested a library service (materials delivery), and provided a chance to gather some user satisfaction information. In order to have such a party, the library staff members were all involved. They bought and solicited prizes, ran the games and a raffle, and helped create an atmosphere that encouraged people to relax and play. Although this idea was initially the library director’s, it took collaboration of the whole group to implement her brainstorm.

In Blue Library, when the group got together to accomplish a goal, they could also work very collaboratively. For example, I observed one meeting in which librarians from all



departments worked together to introduce the new library system to campus. They collaborated on, what Carole described as “how to represent ourselves” [Carole, Blue, PD7]. To do so, they created a list of positive things to say about the catalog. Collaboration was evident in the conversational flow. Individuals supported each other’s ideas:

Carole: I think we should say ‘catalog.’ That’s the word we use...

Les: I think catalog is more-- / Carole: Although-- (talking over Les)

Les: meaningful than system...

Carole: People do know the word “system” but I think catalog is the best [Blue, PD7].

They also refined ideas together. For example, Lucy began a possible description of the catalog with “The ability to customize,” [Lucy, Blue, PD7]; with input from others in the group, the idea evolved into a “new look and feel.” [unidentified speaker, Blue, PD7]. Along the way, ideas spilled over the top of one another and more people contributed than I could keep track of in my notes. This meeting demonstrated the collaborative efforts that made Blue Library function as a whole despite competition between departments.

### *Collaboration with Library Users*

Academic libraries can sometimes become insular entities, forgetting to ask their patron base about their needs. All three of these libraries did reach out to students and faculty, in different ways. Blue Library conducted “different kinds of usability testing” [Chloe, Blue, PD13] and used focus groups to gather data on the webpage and other library service issues. Pink Library had an active suggestion board and the library director prided herself on answering all questions and suggestions posted to the board (even when the suggestion was “Don’t stop believing.”) [Suggestion board, Pink, PD326]. At Yellow Library, the suggestion board was humorously named “Ask Bob,” after the man for whom the library was named. “Bob” answered all of the questions that came in. Yellow Library also maintained a strong presence on the web in

a number of social networking sites, offering students a way to interface with librarians and the library through the social tools they were using with friends.

Collaboration with other campus departments in order to better serve students was most evident at Yellow Library. According to the library director, "There are five different reporting relationships in the library" [Director2, Yellow, PD28]. My notes from the tour of the library the director gave me on my first day there describe the offices housed in the building: "There's a lot of collaborative work with other departments going on. There are IT labs in the library, the writing and math workshops are housed in the building, as is disability services, and first year advising" [PD28]. A recent renovation houses the latter group of offices. The director, when describing these collaborative efforts was "very happy that all of this is here" [Director2, Yellow, PD28] and it appeared that it had happened at her initiative. The goal was to "create a collaborative learning environment," even though it meant that the library was severely lacking in space [Director2, Yellow, PD28].

At Pink Library, the staff collaborated with student workers to accomplish necessary goals and to have fun at the same time. The following excerpt from an all-staff meeting describes one such event, a sleepover to re-stuff pillows for a leisure reading space in the library:

Director (to Maranda): How did the sleepover go?

Maranda: The sleepover went well. It went well.

Director: Want to tell us a little bit about that?

Maranda: There weren't that many people here because [of scheduling], but the pillows got stuffed.

(Liz seems confused, as if she had not heard about the event.)

Director: Some of our student employees stayed to re-stuff the pillows for the loft because they were getting kind of deflated.

Maranda: So I think by the end of the evening there were probably only three or four of us left.

Sally: What would you define as evening, or end of the evening?

Maranda: Uh, like four o'clock in the morning [Pink, PD328].

In this instance, the idea for the sleepover was Maranda's, and because she was willing to take charge of the students and the project, she was given the go-ahead for the overnight. The primary collaboration was between Maranda and the students, however. They made the project into a party. According to Ava, "people [were] all dying to have the sleepover at the library" [Ava, Pink, PD328]. Maranda summarized the night, "It worked well. We had the TV in here [to watch movies] and then once we got done with our work, we ordered pizza and I ran over and got it" [Maranda, Pink, PD328]

At all three libraries, liaison work is a collaborative effort between librarians and faculty in departments to build collections and to provide instruction services on subject-based library and information resources. Libraries also collaborate with departments for special offerings. During my visits, both Pink and Blue Libraries worked with the museums on their campuses to create exhibitions using materials from the special collections and archives portion of the libraries.

#### *Collaboration with Other Libraries: A Universal*

All three of these institutions, like most academic libraries, participated in consortia. In the United States, libraries have "a deep tradition of sharing resources, often in the form of consortia" (Bostick, 2001, p. 128) that can be traced back as far as the late 1800s (Bostick, 2001). The libraries in this study all participate in interlibrary loan activities, a method of sharing collections that is now standard in libraries. All three also participate in a variety of shared electronic databases, including cataloging records through OCLC as well as public-access informational databases. Collection sharing through joint online catalogs also allows students at all three libraries to access materials owned by other libraries in their region. In conjunction with shared collections, the most recent innovation in resource sharing is shared collection

development; that is, in order to reduce duplication of resources between libraries that share with one another, the libraries collaborate on selection of materials among member libraries. All three of these libraries participate in this sort of sharing at some level.

### *Competition and Collaboration: Summary*

The function of libraries is based in a collaborative ethos that fits with a feminist perspective. Although these three libraries are based in that sort of collaboration, elements of competition also appear. Blue Library, in particular, demonstrates competition in its culture reflecting that of the region at large, although the library staff also collaborates with one another. Pink Library demonstrates some elements of competition, but its staff members collaborate often and have fun with their collaborative projects. Yellow Library is the most collaborative of the three institutions, both internally and with campus departments, students, and other libraries.

### Decision-Making

Decision-making processes may be collaborative or hierarchical, or some mixture of both. In a traditional hierarchy, the few individuals at the top of the organization make the decisions and hold all decision-making power. Centralized decision-making of this type was not the general rule at any of the organizations I visited. Instead, decentralized decision-making was the norm, with elements of consensual decision-making. According to Ianello (1992), decentralized decision-making has become more common than centralized decision-making in contemporary bureaucracies. When decisions are decentralized, non-critical decisions are delegated to lower levels of the organization, while top administrators retain critical decision-making authority and the right to recall authority as it has been delegated (Ianello, 1992). Consensual decision-making, however, is less common in bureaucracies, but it is one of the main elements of feminist practice commonly used in feminist organizations. In consensual decision-

making, members of the organization discuss issues and one or more members sum up the discussion to identify the prevailing ideas and, if no objections are voiced, the decision becomes agreed-on policy (Ianello, 1992). Consensual practice requires a fair degree of collaboration. The three libraries in this study practice consensual decision-making in varying degrees.

### *Blue Library*

At Blue College Library, movement is underway toward increased collaboration and consensus in the library as a whole, but those at the bottom of the hierarchy still have little say in library decisions, and even professionals who are not department heads feel that they have less voice.

I think that historically there has been a pretty strong sense among the support staff that they don't have any voice....That they don't count. That they're not treated with as much respect as they should have....That's been a real problem here. I think that, in terms of, who has the administration's ear, and all the people who feel that the department heads have more say, more voice, so people who, there's several people who are not in the library administrative group, who are not department heads, who may feel that they have less of a voice in terms of policy setting. I think that's one of the reasons there has been a lot of interest in flattening of the hierarchy because it seems like that may be a way that decisions are made that have more input from other people [Chloe, Blue, PD13].

Some departments and committees base their work on open discussion, collaboration, and individual decision-making power. However, consensus is not yet the primary means of operation in this library. Although the director espoused consensual ideals and individuals in the organization indicated a desire to move in that direction, the culture of hierarchy discussed above and lack of experience with consensual practice created tension within the library.

The director expressed her desire for consensual decision-making and talked about the difficulties of trying to initiate feminist practice with “a random group of people:”

Getting people to the point of being able to do process that way is not something I was necessarily prepared for. If you've got a room full of people who are already identifying themselves as feminists then you can say, okay, we're going to do feminist process and we're all going to have some ground rules...and because you're all sort of self-defined,

that's kind of de facto willing. I would have it be consensual in a sort of strict definition of the term rather than [the popular definition that] you have to...slug it out until everybody agrees and one person can derail the process by refusing to agree. I think...there are certain kinds of decisions that cannot be consensual--things that have to do with personnel matters usually....I suppose it might be possible to get to a point where even things like that could be done as a group, but I don't know that I've ever gotten that far. But my idea would be that...there wouldn't be things where I would have to make some executive decision or the department heads were making executive positions, that we would be doing it collaboratively. But we're sure not there yet [Director1, Blue, PD 25].

Despite the director's doubts about the viability of large-group consensus, individual groups within Blue Library did engage in consensual process. For example, the ad hoc program committee described above was not only non-hierarchical in that it lacked a formal chair, but it was also consensual in its practice. As Chloe summed up, "All of our decisions have been collective in this little group" [Chloe, Blue, PD13]. In the meeting I observed, all three contributed to the conversation as they went through a list of tasks related to the project, and it was clear that all the members shared the work of the committee.

The collection development group in this library also demonstrated elements of consensual decision-making, although the decisions that the group made were primarily delegated, rather than truly consensual. The group consisted of professionals in the library who served as liaisons or selectors for academic departments. Liaisons interacted directly with departments in a number of communication and instruction functions; selectors chose materials for areas not directly related to a department. At one point, the former director "made all [budgetary] decisions," but then he appointed Les "collection development coordinator." With the title of "coordinator" implying collaboration, Les set up a "very organized but rather collaborative system of budget allocation" When the new director arrived, she formally "folded in" the committee's work with the institutional budget process [Director, Blue, PD45]. From my observation of one collection development meeting and analysis of years' worth of meeting

minutes, the group primarily delegated decision-making to its members, dividing labor between individuals based on academic subject assignments. That is, individuals analyzed and presented their departments' budget needs to the group members, who generally accepted these recommendations. Individuals also worked with departments to select materials for purchase within budgetary guidelines as the year progresses.

As a whole, the group made consensual decisions on collection-related topics. For example, at the meeting I attended they began, in the meeting coordinator's words, "the very beginning of a series of conversations" [Les, Blue, PD22] on weeding the collection. From my interview and interactions with the group coordinator Les, I found him to be unusually aware and careful about language use. In referring to the upcoming discussion as a "conversation," he set the tone for consensual activity, where the group as a whole would talk about the topic and come to a collective decision.

A more complete example of this group's use of consensual decision-making also took place at the meeting I attended, where they decided on the format and timing of an event for new faculty. The director delegated the event planning to this group: "[The library director] asked last year that we organize--or help organize--a wine and cheese reception for new faculty" [Les, Blue, PD22]. After Les presented the director's request to the group, they used consensual process to deal with the decisions involved. Ideas bounced around the room freely, and individuals disagreed ("I'm going to offer a different view" [Lucy, PD22]) and agreed ("I have to agree with Carole's reasoning" [Vivien, PD22]) with one another, without any apparent departmental alliances in play. As portions of the discussion ended, Les summed them up: "It's just the new faculty and departmental liaisons that will be invited" and "So let's say 6:30. It will

be brief” [Les, Blue, PD22]. With no disagreement from the group, the decisions were settled by consensus.

One tension between consensual process and hierarchy demonstrated in this meeting was when the group tried to second-guess the director’s goals for the gathering while identifying the guest list:

Les: I think that may be [the director’s] interest in having the liaisons come.

Lucy: The department. No, I’m misunderstanding.

Les: Maybe I’m misunderstanding. I think one of [the director’s] hopes is that this thing can bring the department liaisons together if she has not called any meetings so that they too have a certain coherence as a group along with this. I’m sorry.

Megan: That seems like a different focus. So, it depends on what the goal is. If that’s the goal,

Les: I think that’s a side goal, not the main goal [PD22].

In this portion of the meeting, there was conflict between what the group had identified as its goal for the gathering and the director’s perceived goals. Had the members of the group felt that they had complete control over the decision process from inception to implementation, they would have defined their own goals and fulfilled them, rather than working with shifting sets of goals that might or might not be what the director envisioned.

Another tension was Les’ role in the meeting. As permanent chair, he generally controlled the conversation and acted as spokesperson for the director. Thus, his interpretation of her goals became the accepted “truth.” He could, therefore, hold more sway over the outcome than other group members.

The director at Blue Library still made top-down decisions, sometimes undermining the momentum toward consensual process. One such decision involved the creation of a fellowship for a woman of color who worked in the library as a paraprofessional but had recently completed a library degree. The concept of the fellowship originated in the hierarchy outside the library, but



the library director agreed to the proposal without engaging in consensual process. The director described the history as follows:

That was a very difficult thing...for a lot of people. [Olivia] had been on a couple of committees and so she'd had some contact with the [college] President but, you know, not a lot. But at some point she asked him if he would be a reference for her. And that caused him to say, "Yes, but isn't there some way that we could keep you?" And she said, well there wasn't a librarian position. And so [the President] then e-mailed me, [the diversity officer], and [the treasurer] and said, "[Is] there some way that we [can] keep Olivia?"...I did have a choice. I could have said no and I was very clear with everybody that I did not say no. I did not say no for a couple of reasons...I thought it was an opportunity to create something that we wouldn't necessarily have had an opportunity to do any other way in terms of being able...to make a statement about wanting to contribute to creating diversity within the profession [Director, Blue, PD25].

The director went on to explain that the negative comments that came from the department focused too specifically on Olivia, personally, rather than the idea of the position, which is why she overrode those objections and set up the position. Olivia spoke of the department's reaction, "Well, they all felt that it was forced on them. They didn't have a chance to decide on any aspect of what I was going to do" [Olivia, Blue, PD18]. Yet another person described the director as "capricious," perhaps in reference to this decision, or in other top-down decisions where she felt "Capriciousness plays out in favoring one person over another" [Blue, PD24].

Lucy talked about the director's decision-making style as participatory, but not consensual:

I think she...puts things out there for people to consider and come up with suggestions but the group doesn't understand that we're not truly a team. That we can talk, we can discuss, and we can advise, but at Blue College, in this structure, she's responsible. So if she says "Thank you all very much but I'm doing the opposite" that's OK. [Lucy, Blue, PD13]

Lucy's description may be an outgrowth of her own bias toward a more command and control style of management as well as a wish to explain the disconnect between the director's voiced

preference for consensual practice and the executive decisions she has made. Although the director did sometimes engage in non-consensual decision-making, her voiced preference was for participatory or consensual management and identified “input without influence” as not being in her definition of participatory management [Director1, Blue, PD17].

Blue Library, then, exhibited a mixture of consensual decision-making, decentralized decision-making, and hierarchical top-down decision-making. These decision-making styles are in keeping with the generally more hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of the library and the institution at large but also show the library’s shift toward more egalitarian models.

### *Pink Library*

Like Blue Library, Pink Library employed a mix of consensual and top-down decision-making strategies. The director described the library’s decision-making process as follows:

So we do a lot of stuff by consensus and I think we don't... talk about the consensus model. But there are a lot of things that I'll sort of bring and say, “OK, what do we think about this?” There are things that I need to decide and I'll just say, “I need to decide this,” because to me there's nothing more demoralizing than someone saying, “Let's decide together” and then they get tons of feedback and they just do what they were going to do anyway. So if it's something that I just need to do or something that I need to make the decision on, I'll just do it [Director, Pink, PD345].

This quotation illustrates one of the tensions of a consensual model applied unevenly in a hierarchical environment. If the person with position power uses meetings to “get tons of feedback” but does not follow the consensus of the group, then the leader has recalled the authority to make the decision—as in the decision-making pattern Lucy described at Blue Library. However, in a truly consensual environment, the input of the group members would *be* the decision, it would not simply *inform* the decision. The Pink Library director therefore used consensual decision-making when she was willing to share decision-making power with the group, but when she identified a decision as one she might have to recall, she simply made a top-

down decision, avoiding the emotional impact of recalling the decision. Therefore, she retained power over the direction of the organization at large and maintained a fairly strong level of hierarchy in decision-making.

This top-down process of decision-making had its genesis in the situation in the library when she took over as director, with the former interim resisting change in coalition with her long-time friends and colleagues:

She was not supportive of the changes and the changes in the culture and the environment that I really felt we needed to have. People were not coming to the library. People didn't respect the library. Their expectations for the library were abysmally low [Director3, Pink, PD345].

Because individuals were very entrenched in their routines and enmeshed in alliances, the director chose to make top-down decisions at the outset to enable the library to serve the campus: “We had to get the house in order. We had to deal with periodicals cancellations. That was one area, that was like, “This is nonnegotiable. This is going to happen” [Director, Pink, PD345].

As in Blue Library, some staff members at Pink Library have been in their positions for a very long time and resistance to change is a characteristic of both groups. The Pink Library director talked about using top-down decision-making when people refuse to budge from long-standing routine:

We've built our expertise on doing things one way and so if we change how we do it, then all of that expertise we've spent years building suddenly is nothing. And it's scary but I think...there are some things where we just have to adapt, adapt or die....If we don't, sometimes a groove becomes a rut. And you need a shove to get out of the rut....With our organization, we have people who have been here a really long time. We have people who have been here a heck of a lot longer than I have so sometimes [it is difficult to] figure out how we get buy-in. And so if I can sort of introduced the conversation, frame it in larger context, and sort of build support in buy-in, sort of build on success, that's great. But sometimes that doesn't happen and I just have to say, you know what, [we're just going to do this] [Director, Pink, PD345].

The staff perceive the top-down decision-making process as being more common than the consensual process the director described. One Pink Library participant shared her perceptions: “We all discuss it and then [the director] makes the decision” [Pink, PD338]. When I asked her whether she felt that the director listened to input from the discussion, she laughingly said, “No,” and indicated that the director made decisions before she even presented them to the staff [Pink, PD338]. When this director first took on her job, she made some immediate decisions that may have set a tone for top-down decision-making reflected in these comments.

Conversely, what feels like top-down decision-making to the paraprofessional staff may actually be the product of consensual process among the professional librarians. The split in decision-making between professionals and paraprofessionals was confirmed by a Pink College librarian, who said that all-staff meetings “are really more informational” and the librarians “definitely make decisions” in their meetings [Ava, Pink, PD339]. My own observation of meetings confirmed this split between the decision-making of professionals versus that of paraprofessionals.

Paraprofessional staff could initiate ideas, but the concepts would be implemented only with the imprimatur of professionals. For example, Pauline “thought it would be a good thing to have” receipt printers at circulation. She “mentioned it about a year ago...and we didn’t have any money in the budget at the time so she mentioned it again when we might possibly have funds” [Pauline, Pink, PD344]. The circulation staff, the supervisor of public services, and the technology librarian met to discuss the idea. This meeting followed a consensual process, with free-flowing discussion among the participants and summation of final consensus. A heavily edited version of the meeting follows:

Jimmy: Alright. OK, so the issue, the purpose of this meeting is to determine if we should buy a receipt printer.

Pauline: Mm-hmm. And I will confess that the first time we went automated I did get a receipt printer and it was a total disaster and there were constant complaints by faculty, students, everybody complained. And we had to give up on it.... Now I think things are a little bit different. We do send out the e-mails. We do, they can look at their information online so that is not going to be quite such a critical issue. Uh, they are still probably not going to like it....

Jimmy: They being just our patrons in general?

Pauline: Yes. Mostly students. Because, oh, "I'll lose it," or "I want it in the book." What the listserv has said is that they put out stamps for people who want a stamp to do it themselves. And they said nobody is really taking them up on it....I haven't heard any library staff say they don't like it. They all love it. And it's, apparently takes a while for them to get their patrons used to it ....

[Jimmy raises a question of whether it would be useful in interlibrary loan, but quickly realizes that it would require purchase of yet another printer, which isn't feasible at this time.]

Scott: We can also, we can put the receipt from the book pocket in the back.

Jimmy: So how would, so how would receipts help us? In what respect?

Pauline: Well, if we want to print out, somebody says we returned something, instead of printing out a whole page, we can just print out this. In terms of paper, it's saving a bunch. In terms of trying to keep these stamps all in order and getting the dates right and stamping each book, it's saving a lot. It makes the transaction much more efficient looking. Much more professional....Or, one option would be to try it downstairs in media where we don't stamp any due dates and where it's only a verbal and we could easily tape to the DVDs.

Scott: Yeah.

Pauline: Would be an easy introduction that nobody would object to.

Scott: That's true. Yeah, that might be good. You're adding.

Pauline: That's added service.

Scott: And we could see how well people like it, you know, we can order one machine and make sure it works okay in terms of setting it up with the system....So we would need three of them, if we were to implement throughout the building. Two for the circ desk and then, so that would be \$900 total and then do we know what the cost of the paper is?

[Discussion of cost factors]

Jimmy: So maybe we propose to [the director] buying one printer this year, testing it out...down at the media desk. Just seeing how it goes. We propose buying two more next year at the circ desk....

Pauline: I think that would be a good idea [Pink, PD339].

In this meeting, Pauline, a paraprofessional in the circulation department, suggested an idea she had researched and thought through, including the suggestion of a pilot project as a back-up plan. While it is clear that her ultimate goal was to get receipt printers for the main circulation desk, it

was easier to make a case for a single printer at the media desk, and that was the ultimate decision. The decision was agreed upon consensually after Jimmy summed up the conversation, “So maybe we propose to [the library director] buying one printer this year, testing it out...down at the media desk. Just seeing how it goes. We propose buying two more next year at the circ desk” [Jimmy, Pink, PD339]. Although Scott did not directly verbalize support of the idea, he did not offer serious criticism, either, and his body language indicated consent. Thus, the decision was agreed-upon.

Meetings of the professional librarians were also somewhat consensus-based, although the director set the agenda and dominated the meeting. One professional librarian described the meetings as a place where they “definitely make decisions....[The library director] will have an agenda. [For example], let's say we're going to discuss databases [and] what might we want to [purchase.] Anyway it's also a place where we can present our arguments for something [for the library to purchase] for our division” [Ava, Pink, PD339]. The director dominated the meeting that I attended. Although a paraprofessional made a presentation on Wikis during the first half of the meeting, this was clearly a special informational segment that the director had planned for the meeting. Once the presentation was over, the professional librarians went to another room and followed the agenda that the director set and led. The director ran the meeting from her position at the head of the table, with the male reference librarian at the foot of the table and the other librarians arrayed along either side of the table. Discussions ranged from the possibility of purchasing a particular product that was dismissed as “too pricey,” to difficulties with the interface between the library portal and other software on campus, and ended with plans for working with first year students in the following Fall semester. The latter conversation was primarily informational, with the director talking about the plans that she and the head of

reference had made (and all librarians would participate in), grant funding she was seeking, and the assessment tool they will be using. In all these discussions, the director not only opened the topic and summed up consensus, but also expressed her own opinions relatively strongly [Pink, PD330]. Thus, she maintained control over decision outcomes while still offering a forum for discussion.

At Pink Library they “sometimes make group decisions by email, as well” [Ava, Pink, PD365]. Such decisions could be purely consensual, although consensus was generally established by the person at the top of the hierarchy. Take, for example, this discussion of including Table of Contents notes in a catalog record, which began with Ava’s suggestion sent to everyone who worked in the library:

Hi All – I’ve been getting a fair amount of input lately from various sources that says library users love to have access to the table of contents via bib records. I agree that seeing the TOC is very helpful, and most books do not have contents fields with that info. I don’t believe we at [Pink] have been consistent one way or the other in leaving 856 TOC fields in the records we use that contain them. I’d like to start including this field consistently – *if it exists in the copy you’re using*. Don’t create it yourself from scratch. For an example, search the title Roman woodworking, which I just cataloged. What do you all think? [Ava, Pink, PD365]

Responses to this message came from both of the people who catalog items in the department and from the technology librarian; the director of the library did not participate in the discussion, although the messages were sent to her, as well. The responses read as follows:

Response 1: Sounds fine to me, I think people appreciate having a link to a reliable source with additional information [Pink, PD365].

Response 2: I always leave the 856 field intact in the bib, but I thought the issue was that the links are not maintained, so that the info contained therein goes away eventually. I usually go ahead and add a 505 to the bib as well (okay, so I don’t do it for those staggeringly huge compilations with hundreds of chapters) so as to keep the TOC information available for patrons [Pink, PD365].

Response 3: Sure – as long as we can rely on that link always working for the patron [Pink, PD365].

Ava then summed up with a short message, “Cool, thanks,” meaning that the method that has been in place with adding the 505 field is a good one in case the link is not stable [Ava, Pink, PD365]. The actual decision, then, was reached with the input of all of the people involved in cataloging and maintaining the catalog, and followed the lead of Lilla, a paraprofessional, rather than the head of the department or one of the other professionals.

Like Blue Library, Pink Library contains a mix of top-down and consensual decision-making, but the mix is more related to the management style of the director than it is to the culture of the staff at large. The library director’s first decisions in the library established this hierarchical model, when she essentially said, “bottom line, it’s going to happen” [Director3, Pink, PD345] on a few changes that the staff were against. Nonetheless, she espoused a consensual model and consensus does function in some arenas. One participant said, in terms of decision-making, “heavy-handed is not a word I would apply to this library at all. I mean, there’s always going to be, for the boss, sometimes you’re just going to have to say, ‘This is how it is’” [Ava, Pink, PD339]. This library, then, does have a portion of “This is how it is” thinking, but consensual process nonetheless drives many decisions.

#### *Yellow Library*

Finally, Yellow Library best exemplified consensual decision-making involving the whole organization. The library’s workgroup structure put together individuals whose job descriptions surrounded particular issues, and each workgroup made decisions in a consensual fashion. The library had a number of workgroups, each with a different function. They included: collection development, instruction, public services, circulation, cataloging, the library automated system, and supervisors. Group membership overlapped considerably, with each individual often serving on a number of groups. Most groups met monthly.



Each workgroup chose a meeting facilitator to schedule meetings, create agenda, and manage the flow of conversation during the meetings. Groups selected their facilitators to serve a term of 6 months to a year. Facilitators could come from any level of the organization. The title “facilitator” fit the function of these individuals in the groups well, because meeting leaders did not generally act as primary agents, but as people who keep discussion flowing and who sum up conclusions of the group. Some groups also rotated note-taking responsibilities.

Overall, the opportunity for individuals to engage in decision-making at this library was much more egalitarian than in any of the other libraries I observed. The library director did not lead any of the groups, and although certain individuals might dominate any given meeting, it seemed to be personal style, not position power, that gave them authority to speak. For example, I noted that two librarians, Rob and Ashley, always spoke more often and more strongly than anyone else at the meetings they attended. Esther, on the other hand, spoke very little unless presenting a topic and was remarkably soft-spoken [Yellow, PD39]. Although both of the “talkers” were professional librarians, neither supervised other individuals. The quieter person, however, supervised a number of people, placing her higher on the formal hierarchy than the “talkers.”

In general, participation seemed to balance between meetings, depending on how much the workgroup’s charge intersected with a particular person’s job. Professionals and paraprofessionals also seemed to participate equally, depending on the nature of the question at hand and their expertise in that area. One librarian who was a member of more workgroups than anyone else because of the nature of her job responsibilities explained:

I go to the Instruction [meeting] usually but...it doesn’t impact me so much as the other people, because I do instruction, but not so much. And I just kind of do what they tell me. It’s not like the collection development [meeting] where I have to *really* care what we’re doing [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36].

In one meeting, then, a person may be relatively involved, but may take a less active role in other meetings. A final element that ensures equal participation and voice in meetings is that Yellow Library's meeting facilitators commonly use "Round Robin" reporting from individuals in the group, in which everyone in the room reports on activities related to the meeting's purpose.

In all of the meetings I observed, decision-making was consensual, in that the facilitator summed up the group's decision that was accepted if no dissent was voiced. For example, in one collection development meeting, four librarians each recommended one periodical title for purchase. After each individual presented a case, with little or no negative feedback from other meeting participants, the meeting facilitator focused the decision:

Charlotte: OK, well let's go back and look at all four of them. I forgot to ask is that first one indexed anywhere?

Rob: It is. It's in *Humanities International*.

Charlotte: And are we going to get it online or?

Rob: She said online is fine.

Charlotte: Do we have any sort of budget?

Library Director: We have plenty of money for \$500 worth of journals.

Charlotte: How 'bout if we just buy them all? [No disagreement with this decision is voiced. The periodicals are therefore slated for purchase] [Yellow, PD39]

This excerpt demonstrates not only the consensus-driven decision-making model in place in this library but also the egalitarian nature of participation in decision-making that takes place. In this meeting, as in others, the library director participated only when she had a separate topic on the agenda or when, as in this case, she had information to offer to inform the decision. She did not lead the meetings either through overt or implied power; she simply participated as a worker in the library with her own niche to fill (in this case, budget manager).

Decision-making at Yellow Library was seldom top-down. Ideas were often generated in meetings, but also came from individuals' interest in a project or topic. Ashley described the process: "Someone might say, 'I want to look into something' and [the director] will say..." You

might want to talk to so-and-so” [Ashley, Yellow, PD37]. The director routinely encouraged collaboration with people both in the library and outside it, “She’s really good about saying that you might want to talk to so-and-so” [Ashley, Yellow, PD37]. As part of “talking to so-and-so,” a collaborative *ad hoc* committee could be formed to take an idea to completion. Ashley described her involvement in one such committee:

A couple years ago [I said]...”I’m concerned about the ADA requirements and issues in the library.” We [had] just hired [a new disability services coordinator] and I said I wanted to meet up with her and [the library director] said, “Well, why don’t you and [the technology librarian and the disability services coordinator] all meet and talk about some of the things in the library.” Then we came together with a web page and then got that out [Ashley, Yellow, PD37].

Even in the midst of this egalitarian model of decision-making, the hierarchical structure of pay and position imposed a tension between empowerment and expectations. Charlotte described this tension in regards to the staff she supervised:

Another thing...is like the contrast between the expectations for the non-exempt staff and the expectations for librarians, which is more obvious in tech services. Like, those people don’t get paid that much. What are the expectations of them? They shouldn’t have to worry about some of this stuff....And so I try to get them to sometimes offload that to me...[I try not to say] to people, “OK, you can’t make any decisions” but so they feel free to come and bring me stuff. And, you know, it depends on the person what, how much experience they have or what they [feel comfortable with]. But then I feel, sometimes I feel a little torn like, I’d be happy to give them the power to do stuff and decide things, but I don’t want them to feel like there’s too much pressure on them when they’re not really one of the -- are the expectations too high if you’re making not that much [money]? [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36]

There is, then, some differentiation in decision-making between paraprofessional and professional staff. Professionals have a level of experience and education that should enable them to make decisions of many types. Paraprofessionals have less library-focused education, and therefore may not have enough information to make all types of decisions. In this library, though, the difference between the decision-making power of paraprofessionals and

professionals is not about a hierarchical perception of the differences between these individuals, but a sense of individual comfort with and knowledge of the topics at hand.

There is also tension between the desire to make a decision and move on and the desire to ensure consensus, but the library culture enforces consensus. “I notice that some of my colleagues are much more concerned about consensus-building in decision making. [I think], let’s just make a decision and move on to the next thing,” Rob told me [Rob, Yellow, PD41]. Esther, another reference librarian, let me know how tacit training maintains the culture of consensus in the face of this tension:

I think that Rob did have that tendency [to want to move on without consensus], when he first got here and before he had the dynamics figured out....He had to learn that we were at the meeting to make the decision and that decisions didn’t get made before we got there. He had that tendency, but we didn’t let him do it [Esther, PD41].

In general, the decision-making process at Yellow Library is the most consensual of all three of these organizations. The decision-making structure makes it possible for individuals in the library to function as equals, both personally and professionally, thus helping to create the egalitarian culture of this library.

#### *Contrasting Methods: The Same Decision at Pink and Yellow*

A bit of synchronicity provides an excellent contrast in how two different libraries make the same decision. The process exemplifies the flattened hierarchy of Yellow Library’s decision-making process and the more hierarchical nature of Pink Library. Although both libraries came to the same decision--to keep dustjackets on the books--they arrived at that conclusion through very different paths. Yellow Library’s process was clearly bottom-up, with input and decisions related to the details of the task coming from those who would be doing the work itself; Pink Library’s process was top-down, with even the details of the task coming from above.

At Yellow Library, I first heard of the book cover plan as an agenda item in a public services meeting. Jo had raised the issue at an earlier collection development meeting, initiating the idea tangentially during a discussion of another topic. The group picked up the idea as a good one, and Charlotte, the head of technical services, took the concept back to her department to discuss its viability there. She then presented a cost estimate to the public services group, who discussed the rationale behind the idea, and reached agreement by consensus:

Rhonda: So when you say covering, what kind?

Charlotte: They have covers the way the [browsing books] are covered.

Jo (clarifying): Clear plastic wrap going over the dustjackets.

Rhonda: Oh, O.K.

Library Director: You might give the group a little more background of why we're doing this.

Charlotte: Oh, well, maybe the people that were interested in it could tell you better.

Jo: I was the one who pushed this, so I will try to justify....I believe that a dustjacket is an integral part of the book, that it is not meant to be thrown away and that it contains information that is not contained elsewhere in the book, useful information. Along with it being pretty and attractive and something that draws your eye and something that helps a student find the most recent book, for example, on the shelf. Often we buy paperback for academic books, so it's not relevant, but this started because we were covering the popular best sellers books and then uncovering them to put them in the stacks and that seemed like that seemed not efficient to me. If we're going to cover them, I thought we should just leave them alone and let them stay covered and I have always thought that it would be nice to keep the jackets on the books but I certainly don't want to create an unreasonable burden on staff or on the library. But this doesn't actually seem that bad to me.

(A couple of "yeah's" around the table.)

Esther: When we were at [a nearby campus], they now do this too....

Jo: Oh, I think it also came up because we were talking about putting pictures of the books in the catalog and I thought, well, if we think a picture of the book is useful to somebody searching the catalog, then why wouldn't we want to keep the jacket on the book itself?

Ashley: I think it does sort of enliven the shelves which you know students sometimes go to our shelves and even though we might have current things

Rhonda: it doesn't look like it / Ashley: It doesn't look like we have current things. The new plan is that we would keep all jackets.

Rhonda: Would that involve any more student assistants?

Ashley: That's what this is about (referring to the document in hand).

Rhonda: I know the hours, but will they need to hire someone else?

Charlotte: Well, we'll just have to see. In cataloging, they have another student who's studying abroad right now so she's going to come back in Spring so maybe they'll just

wait until she comes back so they'll have two students.

Jo: One downside to this is that it will take a little longer for a book to get into the stacks. There's one more step that it will have to go through.

Charlotte: It shouldn't be, like, a lot.

Esther: I think it's a great idea.

(General sounds of approval from those who have been talking.)

Rhonda: Anything else from the collection development meeting? Or I know we're missing some people, but I have / Charlotte: Is the money to buy materials OK?

Rhonda: I don't think anyone's going to complain.

Jo: Except the poor student who has to cover them.

Rhonda: And the people who like to decorate with book covers. [Yellow, PD33]

The meeting structure followed a consensual pattern. Rhonda was the meeting facilitator, but she appeared to know less about the proposed book covering than anyone in the room, so she asked questions to clarify the issues. The library director's role in the meeting was that of a regular group member. Although she did direct conversation once ("You might give the group a little more background of why we're doing this."), she did not wield position power to shift the conversation at any other point in the meeting. Jo originated the idea even though her specific job function was not involved with regular new book processing. Her involvement indicated that the workgroup structure and the culture of this organization encouraged people to generate ideas benefiting the library as a whole. In the meeting, Charlotte presented the cost analysis, Jo explained the rationale behind making the change, others asked questions and clarified, and the feeling in the room was generally positive. When Rhonda, the meeting facilitator, began to move on to the next agenda item, Charlotte interrupted to sum up the discussion and make sure that funding for the project was actually approved. Since no opposing viewpoints were voiced, consensus was verified and they moved on to the next item on the agenda.

With this approval of the public services group complete, the task of deciding exactly how to implement the book covering project fell to the librarian and paraprofessionals in the

technical services department. My notes regarding their meeting later that day to discuss details are as follows:

Charlotte begins this portion of the meeting by saying, "We're not going to start doing them [the book covers] all right away because they don't have enough students in cataloging to do it, but we're going to get some more supplies and then we'll do some tests and stuff." They plan to begin with some recently-arrived art books and supplies that are on hand, while other materials are being ordered. Charlotte suggests that, while they're ordering, they could get the covering material on a roll, and the idea bounces around a bit, with the first paraprofessional who responds to the idea strongly opposed. They all participate equally in the discussion, disagreeing with one another and with Charlotte with equal abandon. Charlotte says, of the idea to purchase on rolls, "That's fine. I don't care." They ultimately decide not to purchase the covering material on rolls [Yellow, PD33].

This follow-up meeting demonstrated how one group reached consensus in the face of disagreement. Charlotte, the head of the department, seemed to think that the rolls of covering material were a viable option, but others in the department disagreed. In a more hierarchical setting, Charlotte's opinion would hold extra weight because of her position power as head of the department and the only professional librarian in the room. However, in this group, open disagreement with the department head was comfortable. The others vetoed her idea with no hedging. Seeing the opposition, she backed down on the idea: "That's fine. I don't care." Thus, consensus was reached.

At Pink Library, the same decision was made in a much more hierarchical way. In this case, the director initiated the idea of book covers in a one-on-one meeting with Ava, the head of technical services:

Director: So I want to throw a crazy idea out there. For instance, I'm looking at this book. This pretty, pretty book. And I was thinking (taking off the illustrated book cover to reveal a plain grey cloth binding) that's going to be a sad day when we put on the shelf and it loses its pretty pretty book jacket. So what would you think about leaving the book jackets on, cutting a hole for the spine label, cutting a hole for bar code, and just leaving the book jackets?

Ava: Always?

Director: Yeah. Until they get tattered, in which case we throw them away.

Ava: And do you want them loose?  
Director: Yeah.  
Ava: Oh, OK. I'm glad to hear that. That's one less.  
Director: Just like they do in bookstores.  
Ava: That's one less little processing thing to do.  
Director: We just have to cut around the spine label and the barcode.  
Ava: Sure. I will inform the parties affected. (laughter from both of them)  
Director: I mean, part of it is just that they, you know they spend so much money on book jackets. And the first thing we do is take them off.  
Ava: Oh, man, I just took some down today that were gorgeous art books.  
Director: Exactly. I'm like, you know, and if, if they get tattered the barcode and the label will still be on the book itself so we can just throw them away if they get tattered or destroyed.  
Ava: OK, let me write this down. All book jackets. To make this simple, should we say all book jackets?  
Director: Let's just try it. If you're game, I say we try it.  
Ava: OK, cut out space for barcode and call number.  
Director: And the way I see it done they literally just go snip snip snip (demonstrating with her fingers how the spaces can be cut out) so this is just an open flap and then they go snip snip snip. So it's not like figure out exactly where the barcode is and create a hole for it. It's just cut cut cut.  
Ava: Plenty of space so it doesn't have to be precise. All right. (sigh) I can hear this now.  
Director: I know.  
Ava: This is a pretty wide spine. However, not all books with jackets have wide spines.  
Director: But where does the label go when you have  
Ava: Oh, that's just the answer. Wherever you put the label.  
Director: Cut out the hole....Alright. And I'll let [the circulation person] know.  
Ava: We don't have that many things, relative to everything we get, with jackets.  
Director: I don't know.  
Ava: I mean we get a lot of jackets, but if I look at it when I pull stuff off.  
Director: Yeah. I just think about it when I walk past a new bookshelf. I'm like, I know that's a gorgeous book but, it's sort of a plain Jane on the shelf when we take it off. And who knows it may well be that circulation freaks out and doesn't want to try this. Try this. And we'll call it a trial.  
Ava: (writing it) Trial. And when tattered, just throw away.  
Director: Yeah, and when, if it gets damaged in transit or something, just chuck it. But they're so pretty. They spend so much money on the artwork so why not?  
Ava: OK.  
Director: OK. Excellent.  
Ava: (writing) Don't tape jacket down [Pink, PD339]

Both acknowledged, through laughter, that there would be resistance to the change from Sally, who oversees the processing. In contrast to Yellow Library, where the idea was formed in a meeting but left to the hands-on workers to formulate process, Pink Library's director handed



down not only the idea but also the implementation process. From Sally's point of view, Ava conveyed the decision this way:

[Ava] said, well, how did she put it?—" [The director] and I were talking, blah-blah-blah, and you know, [she] had this idea of doing this, what do you think?" I was like, (sigh, eye rolling). It was clear what I thought without me saying. Then ... she tells me [the director's] idea and I raise all these objections. She says, "I know, I know, but she wants to try this." So then we just talked about the practicalities of, okay, how do we do this? It's crazy. It's like, "Yeah, we can do that and we'll try that, but it would be more work for our processor." It's not a huge thing, but anytime you have a process, it's just, I don't know, we'll see. I just... have a problem with changing procedures with things that have been longstanding. [Sally, Pink, PD344]

From the director's point of view, she wanted the book cover project to proceed. She had brought the idea up before but could not get buy-in:

And sometimes there are things that people feel strongly about doing because they have always been done and I can sort of try to sort of bring them around and sometimes I have to say, "You know what? Let's just try it." The book jackets is an example. And that's been one that I've been trying to nudge and get some change and it's been resisted and resisted. Finally, there was sort of a confluence of things and it was like, "Okay, let's try this now." Because I had suggested this before and it was like crickets. (she laughs) I'm not going to sort of force people to do something that they're really adamantly opposed to [but] that's something I wanted to try.... Maybe it will fall flat and I'll be totally wrong and nobody will care and everybody will think it's stupid to have book jackets. In which case, okay we'll stop doing it [Director3, Pink, PD345].

Although position power ultimately pushed the decision through, Sally and Ava did have input into the decision-making process and may be permitted to reverse the decision in the future, mitigating some of the hierarchical nature of the decision. Later in the week, Ava sent this email message to the director:

Hi – I just talked with Sally about the book jackets. Here are some drawbacks:

The main one (I thought it, but didn't express it in your office) is that it will slow down processing of books quite a bit. Processing is already tedious, and this will add to the tediousness. And right now we have a fair backlog of processing due to the Christmas break without student help and the incredible volume of gift books that have been cataloged. Those bookplates are another time-consuming procedure. So, I just want you to be aware that less books will be coming out each month by keeping the book jackets.

Two, Sally notes that the book jackets will probably get torn and/or lost pretty quickly, and I think she's probably right. So this may be a lot of effort for a little return. I can't think of any way to track (and who'd want to anyway) whether books with jackets are returned minus them.

However, we're willing to try it out [Ava, Pink, PD365].

In Pink Library, initiation of the idea came from the director, and her position power carried the decision despite opposition from members at lower levels of the organization. Regardless of the top-down nature of the decision, however, there was clearly tension in giving "an order." Gentle nudging was more acceptable for all involved, and to balance the top-down nature of this decision, the director expressed willingness to give it up if it does not seem to work. Although the process was not entirely consensual, the director couched it in a gentler, more feminine, context. And, ultimately, Ava and Sally did consent to the new procedure, albeit under pressure from above.

#### *Decision-Making: Summary*

An ethic of consensual decision-making pervaded all three of the libraries that I studied, although the implementation varied with the hierarchical culture or leadership of each organization. Individuals value the outcomes of such work. As Carole put it, "We have collectively reached much better decisions than any one of us would have reached alone" [Carole, Blue, PD24]. Blue Library's director indicated that she wanted to move her library toward a more consensual model, but that the culture of the organization needed to shift in order to make that possible. Pink Library's director had a consensual ethic in mind and the staff engaged in consensual practice in smaller groups, but generally, the library operated under a relatively hierarchical model. Yellow Library, on the other hand, had a fully realized process in place that could act as a model for libraries that aim for consensual practice.

## Communication Patterns

In a traditional bureaucratic model, formal communication flows through lines of authority, and communication between individuals at lower levels in the hierarchy is less common than communication between individuals at higher levels in the hierarchy (Guetzkow, 1965). Division of labor encourages individuals to complete their assigned tasks and to look no further unto their role in the organization at large or to the functioning of other departments. Department heads may communicate with one another, but contact between individuals lower in the hierarchy is not encouraged outside of specific roles. Because stereotypically feminine behavior is said to be cooperative and communicative and masculine behavior is said to be independent and competitive, bureaucratic communication at its worst follows a masculine paradigm in its focus on independence and competitiveness. Feminine and egalitarian communication models emphasize the free flow of information, which is one of the basic tenets of librarianship as a profession. Furthermore, researchers consistently find that communication between all levels of an organization helps to create an organization that is able to be flexible in a changing and interdependent environment (Bennis, 1993). For example, Tjosvold and McNeely (1998) found that employees with cooperative goals, unlike employees with competitive and independent goals, communicated openly and skillfully, made progress in problem-solving, developed creative solutions, and used resources efficiently.

As is the case in other findings of this research, these three libraries exhibit a range of communication patterns, from the most strictly controlled and competitive to the most open and flexible. In keeping with the levels of hierarchy and decision-making styles, Blue Library has the most highly structured and dysfunctional communication although steps are being taken to make

it more functional, Pink Library has a mixture of open and closed communication, and Yellow Library has the most open communication patterns.

### *Blue Library*

Simone, a Blue Library participant, summed up communication in the library: “We don't communicate other than, very slight passing. The library has trouble, as a whole, communicating” [Simone, Blue, PD1]. Communication is one of the issues being addressed in the library as part of the changing organizational culture, but difficulties still exist with both vertical and horizontal communication patterns in formal and informal settings.

### *Vertical and Horizontal Communication*

Part of the communication problem in this library stems from the culture of hierarchy previously discussed:

I belonged to the communication task group about five years ago and...the whole idea of that was improving communication and the main focus was...trying to get librarians to communicate with staff. You know, like, “Hi, how are you?” And I'm thinking, “Oh my God,” you know...staff and librarians don't take breaks together, they don't have lunch together [Louise, Blue, PD15].

These problems with vertical communication seem not to be limited to social communication. While I was visiting Blue Library, a committee was exploring the idea of upward evaluation to address issues of communication of workers with their supervisors. The establishment of this committee demonstrates both the perceived lack of opportunity for upward communication and the desire to improve communication models in this library.

*Silos.* The director at Blue Library described one of the communication difficulties in the library as departmental “silos” [Director1, Blue, PD5]. This metaphor, now relatively common in management literature, refers to horizontal fragmentation of organizations. It is also

a gendered metaphor, in that the shape of a silo is a phallic image. In the case of this library, limited communication between departments was one symptom of the silo effect. Departments often took action without consultation or conversation with other departments. For example, at a reference department meeting, the question of whether or not circulation had decided to give long-term loans for advanced projects was a matter of speculation:

Carole: I was under the, I was under the misapprehension that we were actually giving two-semester loans /Megan: It sounded like that was the goal, but it's not/ Yeah.  
Megan: It's not organized right. So whether that was a change that was made or not? When she talked to students, the orientation for student assistants, she said nothing of the sort. So my feeling is either we couldn't get it to work or, I don't know. [Blue, PD12]

The question of whether the two-semester loan had been implemented became a matter of speculation rather than knowledge simply because the circulation staff did not inform the reference staff of the change in policy. Meanwhile, rather than asking the circulation staff about the policy, the reference staff made an inference from the student orientation content. Both sides of this miscommunication upheld their silo walls as neither crossed the boundary to talk to one another.

The culture of the library and the institution at large has supported departmental silos, reinforcing the idea that sections of the institution are in competition with one another, not part of a holistic entity. The director described the situation:

In this particular organization there's been reward for sort of secrecy and control of information and...a culture of...enclosure....For example, it is the case that technical services does sort of set departmental goals every year but the way they do that is by talking to themselves. They don't ever go and talk to other people that are essentially their customers so there's not this idea that, that we're all part of a whole, I think. And I think that part of that is that there is, external to the library, there is reinforcement for that as well....So there's a lot of reinforcement for that idea that we're all these independent agents, and so that...doesn't help any. You're also having to fight against the outside to get people to see themselves as part of something, a whole. And then there are barriers between pieces of the college so the people in the library never talk to the people in the museum or, you know, whatever our closer counterparts are. We don't communicate with

them. A little bit of that is starting to happen but that reinforces this idea that you are in these silos internally [Director1, Blue, PD25].

The competitive atmosphere in Blue Library further strengthened the silo structure.

Librarians love the catchphrase “Information is Power” and in this library, the phrase “I happen to know” [Lucy, Blue, PD13] was indicative of the competition for informational power within the organization. In this case, a woman told me something she “happened to know” of the director’s plans, meaning that she was close enough to the director to obtain special knowledge others did not know. By saying that she “happened to know” something that a colleague did not know, she was indicating a sense of special knowledge in the information she held. If knowledge is special and interactions are competitive, then the only reason to communicate information is when it will bolster your place in the competition. In this way, the interaction of competition and the power of information bolstered silos between departments.

*Management within departments.* The managers of technical services and reference departments in Blue Library exhibited very different communication styles that permeated communication within those departments and increased the fragmentation between the two departments. The head of reference was generally informal and indirect in her communication, humorous, and anti-managerial. The head of technical services, on the other hand, had a very hierarchical, straightforward but controlling style of communication, more in keeping with the historical leadership of the library. The two supervisors’ very different approaches were part of the silo effect in the library. That is, the dissonance between the two approaches reinforced the separation of the departments and discouraged cross-communication between the departments. Although the heads of the departments did communicate in formal channels such as meetings, little communication took place at lower levels of the hierarchy.

The head of reference primarily communicated informally and indirectly with the members of her department. One of her subordinates called her a “fly-by manager” and described her style: “You know, she’s, she’s laid back, she doesn’t communicate. No, she communicates a lot, but...she communicates about things that aren’t that important...to the function [of the library]” [Blue, PD18]. She also ignored business-related emails: “You send her an email and ask her a question and she doesn’t respond. You send her another email, and say, ‘Well, this went down this way because of this’” [Blue, PD18].

During my observation of the reference department, the supervisor did not give direct orders but did use her position power obliquely to influence outcomes in her department. For example, in a reference meeting I have described earlier, she stated, “I think that we should all collectively urge Megan to move to [the main library]” [Carole, Blue, PD12]. Although she shifted responsibility to the group as a whole through the phrase “we should all collectively urge,” her position power made the urging an imperative of sorts. After quite a bit of dissent among the department members about whether it was important for Megan to move as soon as possible, Megan and others agreed that she would move “no later than Thanksgiving” [Megan, Blue, PD12]. Despite this clear deadline decided in a (relatively) formal setting of a meeting, I later observed, on an informal jaunt to the local coffee house, the head of reference teasingly prodding Megan to move earlier [Carole, Blue, PD12]. In a later conversation with me, the head of reference said she would “like [Megan’s move] a little earlier. I don’t want to start off on the wrong foot by causing problems” [Carole, Blue, PD24]. She therefore never gave a direct order to the professional under her supervision, but she used indirect means to influence outcomes—a “feminine” strategy (Tannen, 1994). Nonetheless, she did indicate that, should the indirect approach not work, she would take a firmer stand:

And I feel that, I still disagree with her and I feel that at some point, I will get to say. But I am perfectly willing for it to spin out for awhile, but I think, sometime around the end of next month [October] I am simply going to say, 'When would like me to help you pack up and carry your stuff because we are no longer debating this?' [Carole, Blue, PD24]

There is a similarity between this approach and that of the director at Pink Library. For both, the first strategy is to “nudge and get some change” [Director3, Pink, PD345] but, if that does not work, to force the issue.

The reference department met often and communicated formally with one another through those meetings. The meetings I observed had a loose agenda and a note-taker, but allowed tangents to the agenda and were led by meeting members as much as the head of the department. Overall, I would characterize them as conversational and free-flowing. The head of reference laughingly described them as “bedlam” and “shrieking” [Carole, Blue, PD24], but seemed proud of the sort of chaos that took place in the meetings. She also characterized her managerial style as related to the personalities in the department: “Reference librarians just don't respond well to command and control....They'll reach the same conclusion; it will just take awhile longer” [Carole, Blue, PD24].

On the other hand, the female head of the technical services department used a command and control style, especially with the paraprofessional staff under her supervision. This more direct communication style can be characterized as more “masculine” in nature, and is more common in men (Tannen, 1994). Many participants told me how this department head intervened when someone in her department asked someone else a question. Her intervention enforced the hierarchy; it was a way of saying “I'm in charge” and micromanaging the department's activity. One participant described the pattern:

If you were speaking to someone else, she would interrupt you and say, “Can I help you?” “No, you can't help me, I'm asking Ellis about something.” But you could never say that. You have to ask [her]. And that is still the protocol for how we handle any



questions. Anything goes back to her and then gets distributed out. And so there's a question of, "If I know you aren't going to know this because it's an OCLC thing and I just want to ask Ruth, and it will take her 10 minutes to find out and figure it out, why can't I just ask Ruth, rather than going to you and then you going to Ruth?" She said, "Well then I wouldn't know and I wouldn't be able to distribute that information evenly" [Simone, Blue, PD16].

Another pointed out that the interventions undermine the director's efforts to change the culture:

If I can't talk to the person at the desk next to me about where our two jobs overlap without having someone come out of the office and say, "I'll take care of that" and not even know what the conversation is about, then it doesn't really matter what [the library director], does, you know, unless [she] really puts a foot down on someone, you know, and that's not a feminist model at all [Elliot, Blue, PD20].

In contrast, Olivia defended the head of technical services' interventions as an efficiency:

[She] feels that the best way to get something done is to go to one person who can then show you, or tell you who to go to next. Because a lot of times...people come in [and] they decide to go to somebody they're friendly with or somebody they know about a problem then she comes...rushing straight out there...so they don't go from person to person to person to person [Olivia, Blue, PD17].

This department head therefore put herself in the powerful position of being the person who knows everything. While it may be appropriate to a bureaucratic division of labor, it kept individuals within their own small sphere of knowledge and limited communication to a single conduit that runs primarily from the top down. When such restrictions are in place, individuals subvert authority by breaking the rules. They may "save their questions and ask...when [the department head isn't] around" [Libby, Blue, PD23].

Lest one think that her interventions were far in the past (she was said to have become "more open" in recent years), I experienced such a moment firsthand:

[I] just ran up to tech services to see if they have any empty boxes I can use to ship a few things home. Since I also wanted to talk to David, I asked him about the boxes first. As he's showing me the recycling bin and starting to tell me to go to ILL, Lucy comes out, asks "What size boxes do you want?"  
"A relatively small one, just to mail a few things home."  
"They're all in the galley kitchen behind circulation for interlibrary loan shipping. You can get one there" [Blue, PD23].

David could easily have handled my question, or referred me to someone who could. Lucy's behavior, however, effectively silenced any conversation that David and I were to have. Not only did he not answer the question about the boxes, but I ended up coming back later to ask him the more substantive question that I had in mind because I felt Lucy was waiting for me to go get the box right away. I was not part of the organizational hierarchy, but the force of her personality placed me in the role of a subordinate.

Lucy's communication style, following the line of command and division of labor, is rare in libraries but showed the influence of the hierarchical bureaucratic culture of the organization under the former director. However, it did not fit with the current director's style or vision for the library. After encountering Lucy's management style, I wondered if it was more common in technical services departments than I thought, even though it was not a style I had encountered in my own career. I asked many of the librarians and staff members I spoke to about the communication patterns in the technical services departments they had worked in over the years. Many of these librarians had experience with a number of different libraries; none of them described a communication system anything like that used in this department at Blue Library.

However, Lucy's style did fit that of the former director of Blue Library. His communication style seemed, "more organized" [Olivia, Blue, PD18] to those who preferred the hierarchical model, in that he communicated with top managers and few others; by contrast, the current director was "telling everybody everything" [Olivia, Blue, PD18]. That style of "telling everybody about everything" follows a feminine and egalitarian model of open communication throughout an organization. Similarly, the current director had a "much more open door policy" [Chloe, Blue, PD13], and nearly everyone I interviewed said they could comfortably go to her to talk about library issues. Conversely, the former director "was a much more formal person,

[with] more hierarchy and less empowerment of support staff that I think [the director] is committed to” [Chloe, Blue, PD13]. Although he claimed to have an “open door policy” and staff said they could “go in any time you wanted and talk with him and he would understand what you were saying” [Louise, Blue, PD15], it “kind of was like a Fort Knox here....It wasn’t always easy to get in there and see him. Not like with [the current director] where people just walk right in there” [Brenda, Blue, PD25]; he “kept a distance from the staff” [Blue, PD19] and the paraprofessionals said that they felt their thoughts were given no weight [Blue, PD15].

The head of technical services, then, used a more masculine, bureaucratic form of communication with her staff in regards to work: direct, impersonal, and linked to division of labor. This style fit well with the historical leadership of the library, but clashed with the current director’s emphasis on openness and participation. On the other hand, the head of reference used a more feminine communication style: indirect, personal, and generally using oblique manipulation rather than direct command.

### *Electronic Communication*

Electronic communication can help to break down silos within an organization when message routing includes everyone in the library. Although shared repositories for Blue Library contained minutes and other factual information that all library staff could access, email was not as universally distributed. Electronic communication in Blue Library took place through three media: a shared campus drive of documents and shared information resources, a Blackboard site, and email. I did not have access to the shared drive, but from my conversations with staff, I learned that the drive contained factual information of concern to the library at large. The Blackboard site, too, was primarily an archive of factual documents. The shared drive seemed to have replaced the Blackboard site in this archival function rather than serving as a location for

collaboratively created documents. The library had not used the discussion and communication components of Blackboard since early in the site's creation, so those components did not play into the mix of communication options while I was there.

The email sent to the all-staff distribution list that I received during my stay indicated that Blue Library uses email differently than the other two libraries. During the month I spent at Blue Library, only 64 messages were sent through this list. Although Blue Library is, by far, the largest library in this study, they sent the fewest all-library emails (compare to 140 at Pink Library and 161 at Yellow Library). One third of these emails originated from the library director. The character of the messages was primarily factual. Little humor or personal information crept into these business-like communications.

Minutes were a major component of both Blackboard and email at Blue Library. A standard process used for distribution of minutes was the one set forth for Support Staff Meeting minutes: "Draft Minutes, clearly labeled as DRAFT, will be distributed to the Support Staff email distribution list plus [the library director] for any adjustments; when finalized they will be emailed to All-Staff and posted on Blackboard" [Minutes, Blue, PD104].

Because written communication can be a one-way medium, motivation to read electronic communications (or written memos and documents) is an element in whether a communication is successful. At Blue Library, formal minutes and other documents were posted on Blackboard or through email, but the very formality and technical nature of these written documents made individuals less likely to read them. Louise described her response to technical communications from a library systems committee: "We would get notes from the...committee but I, I don't understand what the heck is going on. I don't really pay attention to that. I'm not a note reader for emails" [Louise, Blue, PD15]. Despite the fact that this woman's work—indeed the whole

library—was drastically affected by the decisions the committee was making, she would rather wait for information to be passed on verbally, even though she said she felt “kind of left...in the dark...[until supervisors] share a bit of information and then as time goes on they'll share a bit more” [Louise, Blue, PD15]. Even the library director said, “I don't read [posted minutes]. And I think it's unfair to expect people to. Because they're not [going to]. You know, it's like a waste of time to say, ‘But it's your responsibility to read minutes and if you don't know what's in there, too bad’” [Director, Blue, PD25].

Although electronic communication makes it possible to distribute information easily to all members of an organization, in Blue Library its use was “hit and miss” [Ruth, Blue, PD23]. The sporadic use of email for information of interest to the entire library perplexed many participants.

A lot of...stuff doesn't get into emails. It's kind of strange what does get into email. An example, a recent one. We had a search for a replacement in the reference department. A lot of emails to everyone about when the candidates were going to be available and what questions did you want to ask and all this kind of stuff.... Two [candidates came] and everybody [met] them and they'd been shown around the library and all that kind of stuff. And then there was nothing else about that position at all, who had been offered that job, why they may or may not have turned it down [Elliot, Blue, PD20].

Eventually, an internal candidate was hired for the position, but no information about that hire was shared until the final announcement. In this case, individuals involved in the search used email and other formal communication conduits for a portion of a communication process and then switched to an informal verbal method that did not reach all members of the library. “All of a sudden the thing that was very formal and structured and included everyone disappeared off the face of the earth, and then, something happened at the end and it's done” [Blue, PD20]. While a number of individuals at higher levels in the organization talked about the need for privacy in personnel issues, a simple message sent to everyone that explained those privacy issues and why

the process had changed would have helped those who were not part of the final decision-making. As it was, many “felt that their comments didn’t get listened to, so they wouldn’t want to do it again” [Olivia, Blue, PD4].

The Blackboard site, too, demonstrated the director’s intentions for cooperative and distributed communication, but it did not fulfill that promise. On the opening day of the course site in Fall 2004, the director posted this announcement:

Library 999 is under construction as a resource to facilitate discussion and collaboration among...library staff members.

All members of the library staff are "Course Builders." You can create discussion boards, set up groups, and add content of all kinds to the site.

To ensure privacy, only I have the ability to view use statistics. Guests and observers are not permitted beyond this point. To encourage participation, I have set the discussion boards to accept anonymous posts.

The opening-day content is a reflection of some of the conversations we've had so far. As we go forward, it will be interesting to see how well this tool will serve my goal of developing a highly collaborative, truly distributive organizational structure. [Director, Blue, PD104]

In the years following this posting, the site became primarily an archive of formal minutes. Little discussion actually took place on the site, and the library director was the primary person to post materials, reinforcing top-down communication patterns.

As with other aspects of miscommunication in this library, the upper levels of the organization seemed aware of the problem and desired to improve communication, but sometimes “dropped the ball” on the communication aspects of their work [Olivia, Blue, PD18].

Vivien told me about one problem she had:

I've been working so hard to get it fixed, that I haven't done that final step, which is to say, ‘This is where we're at and this is when I think it's going to be fixed. We've identified the problems, we just are waiting for [a systems administrator] to install the fix.’ I just need to say that. I can say that to people, but what I need to do is put it out. To

make sure that all the players and all the people who want to know are informed [Vivien, Blue, PD21].

Vivien knew she needed to “put it out” on email rather than communicating verbally and informally to random or select individuals; nonetheless, she had already begun to communicate the progress to those she spoke to informally. She left others “out of the loop” [Elliot, Blue, PD20] if she didn’t communicate more fully and more formally, as she intended. It appears that intent, in this library, often did not equal action.

### *Pink Library*

In a library with a staff as small as Pink Library, communication should be easy. Bureaucratic structures become more complicated as an organization grows and staffs become more specialized (Dubin, 1968). Pink Library’s staff members were generalists and needed to interact with one another to accomplish the daily work of the library. However, Pink Library had a mix of open and closed communication patterns. Individual personalities and personal affiliations influenced communication in the library, as did the library’s physical structure.

### *Physical Impediments*

One of the impediments to informal communication in this library was the layout of the building. Although the staff was small, the building they work in is relatively large, with staff areas dispersed throughout the library’s three floors. That means that individuals are separated physically, and if information is disseminated through informal word of mouth, then some people are left out and do not obtain timely information. One person gave this example:

I do feel somewhat cloistered...One time, we were supposed to hire [to fill a position] and then I asked about it...and everybody looks at me like, "Oh we're not getting that person." "Oh,when was that? Was that in a memo?" "No, I don't think we sent an official memo about it." ...It gets circulated around [the other floors] but [doesn't reach me] [Liz, Pink, PD337].

## *Meetings*

Meetings in this library also stratify communication. As I have previously described, the director of the library led professional staff meetings, “one-on-one meetings with [professional] librarians” [Director3, Pink, PD326], and separate all-staff meetings. Not all information made it to all of these meetings; in particular, the paraprofessional staff members said that they missed information shared with professional librarians. Sally described the effect of these separate meetings:

I don't know what they're doing in there, because I'm not there. . . . But [it doesn't work] in terms of everybody being on the same page and knowing everything that's going on. If you [have separate meetings] even with the best intentions of informing everybody of what everybody needs to know, it's not necessarily going to happen because you don't remember, or it's like, “Oh that was in that meeting and not in this meeting where we talked about that?” So sometimes when we have a staff meeting we're like, “Stop! Wait. What?” [Sally, Pink, PD344.]

## *Use of Electronic Communication*

Pink Library's staff used email for both formal and informal communication, perhaps because of the inconvenient physical layout of the building. Each individual created his or her own library distribution list; the director requested that they copy me on all messages. Because there was no formal list, I may have seen a different set of emails than in those libraries where they only had a formal distribution list and did not send copies of other correspondence to me. However, it still appeared that they sent a broader range of materials to everyone in the library than the other libraries did.

They shared everything from humor to decision-making electronically, and emails flew between all levels of staff and across departments. While I was at the library, a few instances of humor sent to all professionals and paraprofessionals included: an advertisement for “The Illustrated Librarian: Temporary Tattoos” (from Dakota to all library staff); a YouTube parody



of the movie *March of the Penguins*, titled *March of the Librarians* and placed at the ALA conference in Seattle (from Maranda to all library staff); and another YouTube video of a “help desk” teaching a medieval patron how to use a book (from Ava to all library staff) [email, Pink, PD364].

Conversations about national library trends went on in email. The most serious of these were sent only to the professional staff, but others were sent to the entire library staff. For example, the topic of “Library as Place” (an issue discussed in all three of the libraries in this study) was brought up through the director’s posting of an article from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. One paraprofessional and one professional commented on the article. The article was humorous, fitting the culture of Pink Library: No matter how beautifully appointed a library building is, a student will never find “a library that would read the book for me” (Holleran, 2007) [director email & replies, Pink, PD364].

Despite the humorous nature of these electronic communications, the entire staff also conducted very serious business via email. Decisions like the one on including table of contents information in cataloging records (discussed in the decision-making section of this chapter) were a common aspect of email. Most decisions made in email, however, addressed simpler issues like travel to a state library association meeting after “word that the hotel rate went up” [Hazel, Pink, PD364]. More often, ideas were brought up in email for discussion at later staff meetings. For example, Meg posted an idea for making re-usable “Out of Order” signs:

Good morning all,

Suggestion – when something is out of order, in spite of trying to keep signs available, they always seem to be discarded – so every time it happens – we have to make more signs!

What if? We have *official looking* laminated signs for the most common out of order sites, the evaluator and rest rooms etc., and keep them in a known location at the circulation desk for this very purpose?

No need to respond now – as this is more suitable as a staff meeting agenda item – but I might forget! [Meg, Pink, PD364].

Pink Library also used a shared drive I could not access. As with Blue Library, the shared drive contained documents available to all workers in the library. For example, the circulation librarian sent an all-staff email message to let people know: “An example of how we track our student employee hours in an Excel spreadsheet is available on the shared drive” [Pauline, Pink, PD364]. This short message also provides an example of collaboration in the library, because the spreadsheet was posted so that other departments would not have to start from scratch to create their own. As Pauline pointed out, “Everybody will find their own way of doing it,” [Pauline, Pink, PD364] using her initial work as an idea-starter, but building on it to suit departmental needs.

### *Within the Campus Community*

While much more open than Blue Library about communication, there is tension in Pink Library between the desire to control marketing of the library and the wish to encourage individual growth and development. At Pink Library, a publicity committee “communicated as an institution, or as a department within the institution, a ‘united front.’ . . . because we didn’t want message overload from the library” [Scott, Pink, PD338]. Individuals were not necessarily using the committee as the conduit for information dissemination, “sending out other communications on a regular basis” [Scott, Pink, PD338], including some “guerrilla marketing” and postings to campus online sites. Although the library director and the head of reference discussed the idea of limiting these communications, the director expressed ambivalence about doing so: “That’s

where I sort of go back and forth because I hate to discourage enthusiasm for a good thing” [Director3, Pink, PD338].

### *Yellow Library*

Of these three libraries, Yellow Library was the most openly communicative, in a net of communication that extended in all directions. Widely distributed communication was embedded in the library culture and organizational structures. Electronic communication and communication in meetings were the primary modes of communication used in this library. Both included everyone who worked in the library, and sectional or departmental decisions were readily shared across-the-board.

### *Meetings as Communication*

Of the three libraries I visited, Yellow Library had the most meetings, with the most diverse combinations of meeting membership and participation. Generally, each standing workgroup met monthly, and all of the staff met together once a month, as well. While there was some overlap between the groups so that some information was repeated in multiple meetings, the mixture of meeting attendees disseminated information broadly, across departmental and hierarchical lines.

Monthly all-staff meetings provided an opportunity for communication to the entire library at once. Because the all-staff meeting scheduled during my month at Yellow Library was cancelled due to bad weather, Charlotte summarized for me what happened at those meetings: “The facilitator, note taker, and treat provider for these meetings rotates with every meeting. The facilitator asks in advance for agenda items, and we also do a round robin. [The library director] usually has some announcements about items of library-wide interest” [Charlotte, Yellow, PD359]. This model of meeting structure is followed in most of the workgroup meetings (minus

the treats). The “round robin” ensured that everyone, even the quiet or less assertive, had a chance to speak. Thus, everyone in the library was encouraged to talk in meetings.

Paraprofessionals and professionals participated equally in meetings. Only one workgroup—library instruction—had no paraprofessional members, simply because only librarians provided library instruction. In other meetings, paraprofessionals seemed thoroughly integrated into decision-making at this library. For example, one workgroup was made up of individuals who cataloged materials, including individuals from technical services (where cataloging is traditionally located), special collections, government documents, and a subject library. This excerpt shows the comfort with which the paraprofessionals speak without deferring to the professionals in the room. For ease of identification, I have italicized the names of the paraprofessionals in the following:

*Lalana* (who is facilitating the meeting): Who's taking notes?

*Meg*: We had, we did an alphabetical list of who was to do it.

[Personal talk and additional discussion of who is to take notes. It is decided that it is Meg's turn.]

*Lalana*: We didn't have any agenda items....So shall we just do Round Robin?

*Tammy*: I think last time I told you guys I was going to be cataloging for the GIS lab? And I have been. I've probably done thirty-some books. And I went over there last time and [the faculty member] told me, “Yeah, I have some more at home.” (laughter) I didn't dare ask how many, I just said, “OK.” So far it's just a handful.

*Charlotte*: As long as she doesn't take them home again. (Tammy laughs) Once they're cataloged, they have to stay here.

*Tammy*: That's the only new thing. I have a bunch of art books I've been working on.

Some of you know. And we decided that, well, Charlotte and

*Charlotte*: A lot of people have been having this discussion.

*Tammy*: public services or whoever have decided to cover all the books that come with covers. And I've been covering all the popular books that have covers... So other than that I think I'm just doing cataloging....

*Meg*: Let's see. Cataloging. I'm cataloging. That's good. But I don't have anything out of the ordinary to report, so I will pass. Lalana?

*Lalana*: I have been cataloging, using like a template, I have been working on older things. I have a record from 1969 and there's no other record available. So keeping the record and then using that as a template, and then changing all the data [Yellow, PD34].

At this point, Lalana's statement that she had been cataloging new materials using a template caused some quiet consternation, because the process of doing so is complicated and can result in technical problems in OCLC, the shared national database that librarians use to catalog materials. Another library paraprofessional has been helping Lalana with this process, but she is also relatively new at cataloging, and the technical services staff and the technical services coordinator expressed some concern about the process that Lalana was using. It was the paraprofessional who took the lead in questioning Lalana about the process, not Charlotte, the professional librarian. My reflection on the day's notes reads as follows:

In a later conversation with Charlotte, I discovered that she feels that Meg helping Lalana is "the blind leading the blind" but at this point, while watching this conversation, I am amazed at the calmness with which Charlotte takes this information. Most catalogers would freak that someone is putting information on OCLC that might be even slightly bad cataloging. I didn't see any real reaction here from Charlotte. Game face? The technical services staff, on the other hand, are much more protective of the records [PD34].

In the case of this meeting, staff participated as fully as the librarian in training their peers to add to OCLC with care. In a technical services department like Blue Library that relies on vertical communication, any communication of this type would come from above; whereas at Yellow library, individuals have the opportunity to provide feedback to peers, even in the formal setting of a meeting. In this case, it is clear that the power to train peers can cause problems. When an informal trainer like this one is not fully aware of the broader issues, she can lead a peer astray. However, in this openly communicative environment where each department reports on its progress, the problem immediately surfaced and was addressed.

Therefore, the open communication pattern in place at Yellow Library has its own system of checks and balances. Individuals may make mistakes, but mistakes are thought of as merely problems to be solved. Because everyone is encouraged to share their work progress and to help

others, these problems come to light and are corrected without heavy-handed bureaucratic reprimand. Open communication, then, humanizes and softens the bureaucratic edges of an organization while simultaneously encouraging accurate productivity.

### *Criticism of Bureaucratic Communication*

Members of Yellow Library's staff seem to value free-flowing communication of information and therefore express frustration when they encounter more closed, bureaucratic models. In reference to the communication patterns of a particular library consortium they participated in, individuals at this library express their frustration and offer solutions that fit the models they follow at Yellow Library. "What I'd say is we need a better clearinghouse for all this information... So, whether it's our all-purpose Wiki solution or whatever it is, you know, it seems really silly that we're all working at this and the only way I ever hear about it is at these meetings with you" [Rob, Yellow, PD39]. In the meeting, Ashley criticized the consortium for having a strong division of labor and little communication between groups: "Well, each little group is doing their own little thing and...I don't feel a sense that there's coordination between the four groups" [Ashley, Blue, PD39]. Yellow Library's communication and division of labor models are so much more open than the consortium's that criticism of consortial communication break-downs seem natural. Solutions like a Wiki or better email communication come out of the librarians' own experience of strongly functional electronic communication in Yellow Library.

### *Electronic Communication*

Yellow Library had the most active and most personal all-library email list of the three organizations. Individuals posted "outage" messages to the all-library list whenever they would be taking vacation or sick leave. Each message was clearly labeled "Outage" in the subject line, in order to make the volume of email more manageable. Some messages provided personal

detail, “I’m off for my little river trip this week. Back Tuesday. Yep, great weather for it. I know all are envious” [Haley, Yellow, PD363]. These postings are a remnant of the period when the director supervised all staff, but they serve the purpose of letting everyone know when an individual will be unavailable. They also provided a means for offering personal support and care. For example, when one participant was in a car accident, her supervisor posted her outage on the list:

Donna was in a car accident this morning. She was taken to the hospital, and was checked out and then released. Thankfully, she appears to be OK, but of course shaken up and bruised. She will probably return to work in the next few days. [Esther, Yellow, PD363].

This message served as impetus for many people to help and support Donna through phone calls and other contact.

Social postings, sometimes labeled “Social” in the subject line also varied widely. Humor was a common part of the email culture. Library-related YouTube videos were also all the rage here, as in Pink Library. People were making plans for costumes for Halloween, and the sexy librarian Halloween costume available at Target was posted as a humorous example of what someone might wear [PD363]. One of my favorite social postings came from Rob at Yellow Library:

My son...is really into rockets right now, the Space Shuttle in particular. We got him a few mission patches--I was able to use some iron-on stuff to get the patch on his Halloween costume, but the stuff just doesn't work on the sweatshirt where he wants the other one.

So would that be an easy thing to sew on for a person with a sewing machine and a clue? (I have neither.) Let me know what you charge for piecework [Rob, Yellow, PD363].

More formal work messages also appeared on the listserv. These included calls for agenda and minutes; postings relating what people learned at conferences; patron issues and problems. This library did not make decisions via email because there were ample meetings in

which to make such decisions. Minutes were generally concise and readable, which made it easier to skim for information and identify decisions made at meetings.

Yellow Library also had an active library Wiki site. They used this site as an interactive communication point. For example, the following email message alerted people to a new technical problems log:

Something new:

Log in to our wiki...and you will see a new "Technical Issues Log." Any problems reported to me (along with actions taken) will be listed on this log [Esther, Yellow, PD363].

This log was created after the library's technology librarian left in order to track problems and their solutions in one location accessible to all library staff. Wiki technology allows multiple users to add and edit documents and make comments on changes, so it is a particularly flexible technology for collaborative work.

The Wiki site also included blogs from meetings that the professionals attended, policy and procedure documents, and updates necessary for public services personnel to know. Truly an "all purpose Wiki solution" [Rob, Yellow, PD39], the site offered a location for sharing both static and more fluid items, and for collaborative document creation.

### Chapter Conclusion

Of these three libraries, Yellow was the most egalitarian and presented the most challenges to bureaucracy. Blue Library was on the other end of the spectrum but moving toward more egalitarianism. Pink Library fell somewhere between the two, with elements of bureaucracy and egalitarianism residing together among its small group of workers. However, an egalitarian ethic underlies the work of all academic libraries. One librarian at Blue College eloquently described his view of any academic library's challenge to authority and hierarchy:



One of the reasons I'm very devoted to libraries is that I believe libraries encourage individuals to self educate and therefore not rely so much on authority, which is not to say that people's expertise isn't to be relied on. Education is about the ways in which hierarchy plays out. And I believe that...just about any educational system is hierarchical from the get-go. And in libraries I believe there is a kind of alternative which is proposed. And it's up to an individual to make use of it but the opportunity is there to have a different way of exploring, discovering information [Les, Blue, PD26].

Rothschild-Whitt and Whitt (1986) identify four conditions that improve the likelihood of egalitarian participation in organizing, and these conditions apply to the discussion of the feminist challenges to bureaucracy in this chapter. The first condition Rothschild-Whitt and Whitt discuss is size. I selected these three libraries for this study in part for their relatively small size, but it appears to be no coincidence that the largest of the three libraries is the least egalitarian. Pink Library, on the other hand, does not conform to this expectation because the library is very small but nonetheless has a relatively hierarchical structure. The second condition is relatively equal knowledge. In this study, Yellow Library had the most open communication, with all members of the organization receiving and sending information through email and in regular meetings. Pink Library did not communicate as well through formal meetings because professionals and paraprofessionals met separately. However, their small size and regular use of email helped balance the meeting structure to give knowledge to the library workers. Blue Library, however, had issues with control of information. Despite the director's attempts to open communication paths, controlling information was a strong element of the library culture and it kept individuals from being fully informed and therefore fully involved in the organization. The third condition is that the organizational environment must support participatory practices. All three of these organizations were selected for the support of participatory practice, even though that practice is still in a relatively rudimentary form at Blue Library. Finally, individual members must be flexible and non-competitive. Competition is a salient feature in Blue Library, and some

competition appears in Pink Library, as well. The resistance to change in this library may be indicative, also, of a type of inflexibility, although flexibility was not one of the features I specifically examined.

In addition to these elements of egalitarian participating, this chapter has explored elements of bureaucracy in these libraries. The patterns remain the same in this arena. Blue Library is the most hierarchical and maintains the strictest division of labor of these three libraries, with Pink Library showing less of these elements and Yellow showing the least. One other standard element of bureaucracy, the strict division of public from private, is discussed in Chapter 5 as an element that genders the library.

## CHAPTER 5

### GENDERING THE LIBRARY: FEMININITY AT WORK

A practice is “gendered” when its attributes are more commonly associated with one gender and practices associated with the other gender are devalued or hidden in the process (Putnam & Kolb, 2003). For example, because women are traditionally the primary caregivers for children, parenting has been equated with mothering and feminine values of nurture and caregiving; therefore, acts of fathering are “disappeared.” Similarly, gendering occurs when the same behavior is attributed differently, depending on whether a woman or a man enacts it. This chapter explores how library work is gendered in these three libraries (Putnam & Kolb, 2003).

#### Blurring the Binary of Public and Private

Feminist critics challenge the binary separation of the public and private spheres. This binary separation is part of the definition of bureaucracy, but people who practice femininities in the workplace blur that bureaucratic separation. Traditionally, in Western culture, the public sphere (that of work, politics, etc.) is the domain of men, while the private sphere (that of home and family) is the domain of women. When women entered the workplace, they carried with them private sphere values and were expected to engage in feminine behaviors. Simultaneously, feminine and private sphere values were considered inappropriate in the workplace, leaving women in a double bind that has contributed to glass ceiling and other subtle and overt workplace discrimination issues (Buzzanell, 2000). Chapter 2 delineated a theory that public and private sphere work each has its own set of truth rules (Fletcher, 1998) that reinforce the binary. These rules include time span, motivation for work, rationality-emotionality, abstraction-concrete action, output, and individuality-community. Library workers take private sphere truth

rules to the workplace while an underlying stream of public sphere truth rules provide a quiet counter-dialog hidden in the prevailing gender rules assigned to women's work.

*Blurring the Nine to Five Workday*

One way in which this binary is blurred is through the way individuals balance time needed for home and work responsibilities. Traditionally, work and home are separate from one another. When a man went to work, he left issues of home and family at home, with his wife taking care of the household.<sup>4</sup> As middle class women entered the work force in greater numbers, some husbands began to share household tasks, but the majority of household work, including childcare, continued to be women's responsibility. Women still spend substantially more time than men on household work (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007a). Regardless of marital status or gender, though, people have responsibilities outside of work. Yet, public sphere truth rules require that paid work activities take place during the specific time span of a workday, while private sphere rules spread unpaid work throughout an individual's life.

I was interested in talking to participants about how much they allowed work to slip into their home time and how much they allowed home to slip into work time. Nippert-Eng (1996) explored the concept of home and work boundaries and found a continuum of strategies, from integration to segmentation, with certain organizational and professional cultures encouraging different levels of boundaries. As I began this research, my sense was that library workers are

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<sup>4</sup> I notice, as I write that sentence, that I have a choice between writing that the wife "administered" the household, or that she "took care of" it. In the context of talking about gendering, it seems important to reflect on the choice. "Taking care of," is a phrase that is gendered feminine, in its association with nurture and care, as opposed to the rational business-oriented (and therefore masculine) "administered." In gendering private sphere work, emphasis on nurture and care obscures the management and administrative aspect of household work.

relatively integrative. Participants in this study confirmed that expectation, telling me about private activities at work and completing necessary work activities at home. Ashley's response is representative:

A lot of times we think... "Do you take work home?" but sometimes you don't think, "Do you bring home to work?" But, you know, sometimes I do and again it's because of phone calls I have to make, personal...errands that I have to do during the regular work day. I mean it won't wait until afterwards. And so there's some of that but then just knowing, I think I kind of have a pretty good bead on how much time that involves. So, you know, I work over or later [Ashley, Yellow, PD39].

In every library, people talked about the library being flexible in a way that allows for such personal activities in the workplace. While a few people claim to have a very sharp demarcation between home at work, Ava's comment was representative. She said she did "a little of both but not a lot of both" [Ava, Pink, PD339], working at home and participating in domestic activities at work.

All three libraries are flexible enough to allow a few life responsibilities to cross over into work hours, and directors and managers recognize the need for individuals to blur the lines between work and home. Among the personal activities people told me about or I observed were private travel planning and personal email [Ava, Pink, PD339]; completing coursework [Dakota, Pink, PD340]; and dealing with parenting issues [Meg, Yellow, PD35; Jimmy, Pink, PD332]. At each library, individuals talked about the flexibility available to them. One participant at Pink Library described her experience:

Here things are just very laid back. Here I'll just shoot emails to [my supervisor] and say 'May I do this? [leave work to deal with a personal matter]' I always ask. But I always pretty much know what the answer is going to be [and that answer is 'Yes'] [Maranda, Pink, PD337].

At Yellow Library, the director was said to "set the tone" in that, "She's not a slave-driver sort of person or real precise. I mean, she's detail minded, but she doesn't impose any rigidity on us.

She basically trusts that we're, we're doing our job. So, it's nice" [Ashley, Yellow, PD39].

Similarly, the Blue Library director "has been really good about saying, 'Of course you can do flex time. Of course you can do whatever, I mean, as long as service points are covered, you're grownups, work it out'" [Chloe, Blue, PD13].

This reference to "grownups" is part of a theme that emerged in relation to scheduling and flexibility. In both Blue and Pink libraries, individuals used the words "grownups" or "adults" when talking about people self-regulating their hours and prioritizing tasks. In keeping with this theme, the Blue Library director said in her interview for the job, "'I don't want to be a babysitter [for employees]'" [Amy, Blue, PD4]. When the Pink Library director started her job, she changed the vacation rules that had been in place to allow people to have more flexibility in relation to leave time, "You know, your vacation is yours and you're an adult and you get to regulate. And that's yours to decide. Now, we have to make sure that the buildings open and the desks are staffed [but otherwise, the time is yours]" [Director, Pink, PD345]. Paternalistic, highly hierarchical organizational cultures treat individuals like children, denying them control over their own schedules and work priorities. In libraries like the ones in this study, individuals have a fair degree of autonomy about their work schedules as long as they take into account library needs as they make their choices.

Interestingly, a "grownup" theme did not emerge at Yellow Library. It may be that Yellow Library has evolved far enough beyond a paternalistic model that no mention of adulthood need enter the conversation. The evidence of that evolution appears in the egalitarian models I explored in Chapter 4 of this study. The workers in Yellow Library have progressed beyond merely "adult" into "professional," if Laura's word choice is any indicator: "[The director] pretty much trusts everybody that they're going to do their job, which they do. You

know, everybody acts like a professional here, [and] nobody's goofing off." [Laura, Yellow, PD44].

### *Flexible Scheduling and Part-Time Work*

Flexible scheduling helps people balance work and home needs. At all three libraries, individuals worked shifts that varied from the normal college schedules. Some of these staffed public service points on evenings and weekends, and the unusual schedule resembled other types of shift work, which people may choose in order to accommodate household needs. However, all of these libraries also allowed individuals who did not work at public service points to shift their schedules to fit their own personal needs. With supervisor approval, these schedules either varied from day to day or were set for a significant time. People commonly described their workdays in flexible terms: "[my start time] kind of fluctuates. Sometimes it was 8:30; sometimes it was 9. But right now it's 9" [Ann, Yellow, PD34].

Part-time positions were also a regular feature in these libraries. The reasons for individuals to participate in the part-time workforce are distinctly varied, but most do so in order to free up time for personal priorities (J. Martin & Sinclaire, 2007).

Part-time work and flexible scheduling as "family-friendly" policies are not unique to libraries. According to a 2005 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 27.5% of all workers had flexible schedules (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). In 2007, 17% worked part-time (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007b). In nursing, another female-dominated profession, part-time and flexible work is relatively common (Whittock, Edwards, McLaren, & Robinson, 2002). Whittcock et al. examined the part-time and flexible work of nurses. They found that mainly female employees take advantage of such options and these women fall behind male colleagues in career development and promotion. However, men as well as women in the libraries I studied took on

part-time or flexible roles, and individuals in part-time positions advanced in the profession comparably to their full-time counterparts.

For example, at Blue Library, Les had worked part-time throughout his nearly 30-year career and was on a 10-month contract at the time of my visit. His primary purpose for part-time work was to have time for his literary and artistic pursuits, but “for a number of years my wife was working and I was probably doing marginally more of the child care than she” [Les, Blue, PD26]. Despite his part-time role, he was an active professional in the library, spoke with a strong voice in meetings, and the former library director named him to coordinate the collection development group, a position of some prestige and authority. He acted and was treated no differently than the other full-time 12-month professionals.

Likewise, part-time pursuit of an avocation punctuated Ansel’s career at Yellow Library. He began working at the library in 1990, working full-time for about 9 years and “then I decided to do some other things, because I really am into photography and digital photography” [Ansel, Yellow, PD29]. For “a couple of years,” he worked on specific photographic projects in special collections and then was asked to come back to work 4 days a week, which eventually turned into a full-time position. “But now I’m actually thinking about going back the other way, back to 4 days a week, maybe in another year trying to get back to that, because that gives you like a 3-day weekend, more time off in the summer” [Ansel, Yellow, PD29].

A final example of advancement for a part-time woman worker is that of Esther, at Yellow Library. Like others, she began as “very part-time” and her hours have “wiggled up” to the point where she is three quarter time, with a flexible schedule [Esther, Yellow, PD39]. Her responsibilities and authority in the organization may well be even greater than many of her full-time colleagues. The director described Esther and Charlotte’s work: “In some ways those are



assistant directors...because they have major supervision for departments” [Director, Yellow, PD32]. Like Les, Esther fully participated in her librarian role, with only the number of hours worked in a year differentiating her from her full-time colleagues.

Interestingly, each of these three stories frame the motivation for choosing part-time work in a gendered fashion. Both men took time for other professions; even if these “professions” brought in little or no income, they were considered “work.” Despite the fact that Les spent time on childcare during his off-time, his primary purpose was framed as “work.” For Esther, however, her primary purpose was childcare. Although she spent time as an independent indexer, that work was framed as a sidelight, almost a hobby. For men, work for pay is primary and childcare secondary; for women, childcare is primary and work for pay secondary.

Shifting from part-time status to full-time status depending on life situations was an experience both male and female paraprofessionals described in all three of the libraries. Because there is little or no advancement possible for paraprofessionals in libraries, the flexibility of part-time work makes some positions attractive and allows individuals to work in ways that fit their outside lives. Such flexibility blurs the lines between work and life as it makes room for priorities outside of the workday. Many “fall into” [Amy, Blue, PD19; Haley, Yellow, PD42] library jobs, as home life or geography coincides with a library opening. Brenda at Blue Library is like others who began in libraries as part-time workers while their children were small and increase their workload over time:

I actually had just put my last daughter in nursery school and I decided I wanted to go back to work....So I went to get a job and there was a six hour job where you would just be typing for all the librarians. I came and applied for it and I got it. And I did that the first year when [my daughter was in nursery school]. And they just kept giving me more hours and more hours....And I love it. I really love working here [Brenda, Blue, PD25].

### *Counter-Dialog: Reframing Flexibility*

Although flexibility may be an element in gendering these libraries feminine, individuals in the libraries may reframe flexibility into a masculine mode. This alternative discourse came through in a conversation with Vivien, a Blue Library department head who based her flexibility on the bottom line, putting the (feminine) emotional in the context of a (masculine) rational-bureaucratic argument:

[I] define good work in terms of quality and output, and I don't really care how they get it done, as long as they aren't antagonizing everyone and making them crazy. So as to as great an extent as possible, that sidesteps whether they are having a conversation on the phone, or whether they are running to the dry cleaners, or whatever. As long as all the new Interlibrary Loan requests are done by the time they leave for the day, that's terrific. Anything else they want to pack into the job is O.K. It makes them happier and my production goal is met [Vivien, Blue, PD21].

This department head used a public sphere frame related to output in order to explain flexibility. The private sphere notion of output is based in community, service, and management of emotions; the public sphere definition is about the bottom line. Using private sphere rules, one could define the same work of Interlibrary Loan in terms of the value of service or could speak of flexibility in relation to the happiness or autonomy of individual workers. Instead, this department head chose to frame flexibility in relation to a “production goal.” Such a goal is a quantitatively measurable output and “sidesteps” the human dimension of work boundaries.

### *Emotions and Friendship at Work*

In addition to flexibility in relation to time, there is often a sense that individuals can have emotions “that bleed over from my personal life and that’s OK” [Chloe, Blue, PD13]. Public sphere truth rules focus on rationality, while private sphere rules focus on emotion. Friendship at work blurs the public and private spheres by integrating the voluntary role of friend with the more institutionalized role of coworker. Many individuals in these libraries described

supportive and emotion-based friendships, rather than rational, network-building and activity-based friendships.

Supportive friendships are important to people within these workplaces: “I would say that my friends and my confidants are here at work” [Lucy, Blue, PD13]. The feminine value of supportive, emotional friendship, “more heartfelt” [Simone, Blue, PD16] than mere affiliation, comes out in the way that individuals describe their friends at work. One person at Blue Library found little difference between friendship at home and friendship at work, “You share the personal information and caring, mutual caring that I both count on and am committed to” [Les, Blue, PD26]. At the same library, another woman summarized her friendships with her department, “It feels like it could just be a very supportive work environment. You could just call it that, but I feel like we go a bit further. We support each other with understanding” [Chloe, Blue, PD13].

When individuals do not find the kind of emotional friendships they hope for at work, they express disappointment. These say that they have few, if any, real friends at work, and then appear to define “real” friends in terms of emotion—a feminine definition. Said one “I have a lot of acquaintance friends. There’s probably a handful that you could go to if something were, you know, more heartfelt” [Simone, Blue, PD16] Holly described the relationships that people have at Yellow Library (including almost all of her own) as “superficial:”

It feels very disheartening for me because I come here and I’m like, I’m coming to a place and, again, it’s weird because you can trust them and they’re good people, but none of them are my friends. They don’t know me [Holly, Yellow, PD40].

Both of these women were disappointed that friendships were not deeper at work. Their expectation was for feminine friendship that is emotional, not the instrumental friendship that they found. The expectation of a particular gendered activity comprises a vital element in the

gendering of that activity. Their expectation for feminine friendship demonstrates the feminine gendering of the library as much as the friendships that actually are feminine in nature.

When feminine friendships do exist, they provide strong support in times of crisis:

There are three or four of us who have helped each other through some difficult things along the way. And we don't, we don't tend to socialize outside of work...but we have had very personal kinds of conversations for each other, some of us here [Yellow, PD41].

When I had a crisis...[she] was very good to me when that happened 'cause I got the call at work....She was very, very understanding...and, when I came back to work the next morning, [she] came in and she had a dozen beautiful salmon colored roses for me....And so I've been trying to be very supportive because she just lost [a loved one]. [Yellow, PD34]

While friendships provide emotional support, they also provide a sense of community and connections between individuals that go beyond the workplace. One director pointed out the advantages to the workplace of individuals having multiple levels of connections:

You have to let some [friendships happen] so the people can have a foundation for relationships other than their work relationships because there need to be multiple levels of connections. Otherwise it's going to be like, you know, if you're only connection is just your task related work, um, it's very fragile. Because it's just the task related work done the first time I screw up on a task, all basis of trust in the relationship is severed. Whereas if you say, well, OK, [she] really screwed up. She didn't get that report to me on time but I know she's been a lot of other stuff going on and I'll, I'll let her know she screwed up this time but I'll give her another chance. You know, and so I think you have to let some of it in [Director, Pink, PD345].

This rationale shows the importance of relationships in the workplace as helpful to accomplishing workplace tasks. Multiple layers of connections create caring between individuals that allows situational acceptance and support.

### *If She Were a Man...*

Sometimes gendering happens very overtly. Because everyone involved in my research knew that gender was the focus of my study, many individuals made overtly gendered

comments. However, one particular example shows the clash between public and private sphere values related to emotion. At Blue Library one woman in management was perceived as being too open about her own personal life at work when she “was telling everybody” about her unpleasant breakup from her partner. “It was really strange, because I know if it was a man, he would not have said Jack...I think that was something that shocked a lot of people” [Blue, PD18]. In this case, not only did the person devalue the use of coworkers as an emotional support, she made a connection between the biological sex of the manager and her behavior. Blue Library, as I have previously established, was the most caught up in masculine models; such emotionality at work crosses the lines from the private to the public, so the femininity of sharing grief over a broken relationship “shocked a lot of people” [Olivia, Blue, PD18]. In a fully feminine organization, sharing emotion at work would be the norm.

#### *Counter-Dialog: Masculine Separation*

A few people in these libraries placed “a stone wall” [Vivien, Blue, PD10] between their personal and professional lives and developed distinctly different work and home personas. At Yellow Library, for example, some individuals resented sharing their personal selves at work in the context of a staff retreat:

We went there for a retreat and we did work on emotional maturity. I thought it was terribly exciting and loved breaking down in groups. It was so, you know, finding out about yourself...And later on they did a survey and there were a few people that were just so upset because it was like breaking into their private lives. They didn't want to discuss how they felt and they were not into saying 'this is how I feel' [Katrina, Yellow, PD29].

In this case, individuals considered the separation between their private lives and their work lives an important distinction. As Sally at Pink Library said, “When I leave work I don't want to think about work” [Sally, Pink, PD344]. A number of participants who segment home

from work made a point about separate personas in each sphere. Vivien at Blue Library talked about this issue:

I find that I am...a bit different at work than at home. I would actually prefer people be different at work than at home. This is not home. This is a work environment. I want it simpler and a little tidier....When you start treating everyone like your real family, it just gets weird. I mean, we're friends and we've lived through a lot of life together, but this is different, this is a workplace [Vivien, Blue, PD21].

A similar response came from another participant, “I can be outside of work a different person and I like the person who I am outside of work. And I’m free” [PD38]. Holly, a participant at Yellow Library, described a colleague who “enjoys” separating home and work selves because she “gets to be a different [person], dress a certain way, and she gets to do a whole concept that makes her feel, ‘This is the...work [me].’ And then she has the ‘home [me].’” Holly represented the larger number of people I spoke to in her perception of herself: “Who I am is the same all along the way” [Holly, Yellow, PD40]. In these workplaces, there is clearly room for integration of home and personal selves, but nonetheless individuals choose to compartmentalize.

Individuals within libraries carry their experience and knowledge of the outside world into their workplace interactions. Masculine workplaces devalue femininity despite maintaining gender role expectations. These gendered expectations may seep over into even the most feminine of environments.

At Pink Library, for example, one small interaction exemplified how masculine norms (and the false androgyny that hides these masculine norms) may cause individuals to question the feminine in the workplace. The circulation desk at Pink Library taped yellow silk flowers to the pens they used in order to identify them and keep library users from accidentally removing them from the department. With my research on gendering in the front of her mind, Pauline asked me, “Are the flowers feminine, do you think? Should I get rid of them?” [Pauline, Pink, PD328].

Because this was early on in my work at that site, she did not know whether my take on the feminine in libraries was positive or negative. She thought that because a particular activity was gendered, it was inappropriate in the workplace.

Even though these libraries are feminine workplaces in many ways, some individuals draw strict boundaries between their feminine selves and the workplace. These individuals may have strict boundaries about work and home, generally. For example, one reference librarian would not permit even the most satisfying of work activities to cross over into her personal time, nor would she allow activities she loved to take place at work. She said of a trivia challenge, “Too much like work. I answer questions for work; I don't do it for fun. I make bread, I cook, I don't answer questions for fun” [Blue, PD14]. During another conversation, the same woman talked about her activities at home: “Oh, I cook. I love to cook. [My husband] and I decided long ago that I'm the better cook and so I do the cooking, when we're both there. But that's home. At work, it's different” [Blue, PD25]. This woman “wary of even the positive” [Blue, PD25] feminine roles enacted at work, nonetheless selected feminine activities at home. At home, she cooked; her husband cleaned the gutters and mowed the lawn. As a woman who has seen the ill effects of sexism—her stories included more examples of overtly sexist behavior than any other participant--she has chosen to segment these portions of her home and work selves. And although her mannerisms, clothing, and speech patterns were the most feminine of anyone in her library, she says, "I'm probably the biggest boy at the reference desk" [Blue, PD19]. Indeed, her style of strategic and competitive thinking was more masculine than that of her colleagues in the department. She also couched her motivation for work as public sphere monetary exchange: “I know what I sell them and what I don't. My heart and mind cannot be purchased cheaply” [Blue, PD19]. Such separation of heart and mind from work may be a result of painful experience of

sexism, or it may simply be part of her feminist ethic. Regardless, this woman clearly separated her private and public sphere behaviors consciously, based in a consciousness of gender roles and their impact in the workplace.

Just as the hegemony of masculinity in the public sphere makes femininity difficult (while paradoxically required) in many workplaces, the hegemony of heterosexuality and overt heterosexism in American society makes it difficult to be openly gay or lesbian outside of certain sub-cultures. Because discrimination against gay and lesbian people is still rampant in the United States and few workplaces allow this population equal opportunity, many people feel the need to hide their sexual orientation in the workplace. The library profession, generally, is more accepting of homosexuals than other fields and people in libraries “are comfortable ...being out and open about who they are” [Ava, Pink, PD339]. Even at the national level, our library association has a strong lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered (LGBT) section that influences national library policy and diversity in the profession. In fact, individuals may choose the librarianship over other feminized professions like teaching because of that very openness [Chloe, Blue, PD9]. Over a dozen individuals involved in this study were open about their relationships with same-sex partners.

For Vivien, a woman with a “stone wall” [Vivien, Blue, PD10] between work and home, the phrase is particularly apt, whether or not she was consciously referring to her own sexual orientation. In Blue Library where I met her, being lesbian was clearly not a problem because a large percentage of the library workers were openly gay or lesbian and the library’s geographical region was equally open. She indicated that she had loosened some of her distinctions between work and home in recent years, and my conjecture is that the lack of heterosexism in the library allowed her to lower some of these barriers, in addition to a generational “softening of the



rigidity” that she identified as a global reason for more personal interactions in the workplace [Vivien, Blue, PD21]. At one point in our conversations, she referred to a manager’s interest in her workers’ personal lives as “a lawsuit waiting to happen” [Vivien, Blue PD21]. For her, strict policies and rules functioned to enforce fair treatment of both insiders and outsiders in a workplace:

Primarily, fairness is coming up with rules that apply to everyone....I think if you have rules that you are constantly amending and adjusting depending on circumstance, the rules aren't very good and what you're going to find is that you're prejudicing your service based on whether they're like you or whether they're perceived as foreign [Vivien, Blue, PD21].

The sense that rules are a way to ensure equality for outsiders was brought up by another person who strongly segmented her life, and preferred “there to be very much a wall [between her personal and professional lives]” [PD38]. She mentioned research that suggested “out groups are more successful in an area where the rules exist and the rules are made apparent” [PD38]. Gender research does show that hidden rules and informal practices that bend rules undermine formal policies designed to ensure equal opportunity of out-group women (e.g., Kjeldal, Rindfleish, & Sheridan, 2005). It follows that if rules are designed for equality and enforced across-the-board, then out-group members have more opportunity to succeed.

Both of these strong segmenters emphasize formal rules as an important equalizer. This emphasis on formal rules de-emphasizes the need for social and cultural change that underlie the rules. Rule-making of this sort is a public sphere behavior. In the private sphere, social and cultural connections and communal activities shape relationships between groups. Rather than creating unbending formal policies, private sphere rules would allow flexibility in rule-making based on the ethic of care. Unfortunately, such an ethic has not been consistently applied in organizations or society, creating inequalities. For members of an out-group (such as women or

homosexuals), “care” may seem less stable than a rule of law. In an ideal organization, then, both rules and culture should be consistent between groups and subgroups. In such a case, out-group members can identify with the organization at large and become part of the larger in-group, creating less conflict between organizational sub-groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

### *Motivation for Work*

According to private sphere truth rules, people work because they love it and want to do it, as opposed to public sphere rules where people work because they have to in order to make money, or, as Lucy at Blue Library put it, “women work for values and quality of life kinds of issues, whereas men are working for the money” [Lucy, Blue, PD18]. In this case, the Blue Librarian overtly gendered a colleague’s work motivation and identified a negative outcome. Ostensibly, the colleague had little experience outside of this library because her feminine motivations kept her from getting a “broader perspective” [Lucy, Blue, PD18]. In turning the gendered motivation into a negative, this librarian was not only gendering the behavior but also denigrating the feminine in the process. Although such gendering may be part of hegemonic masculinity, I generally observed individuals in these libraries positively enacting feminine motivations for work.

Most people identify emotional and value-laden reasons for working in libraries. When I asked why they work in libraries, over a quarter of all participants used the word “love” to describe some aspect of the work. Many of these indicated that they love their jobs. For many, helping people is the most fulfilling part of the job:

There is this component of service also....That’s where I’m most satisfied. It’s really great to...be able to help somebody; and they’re so grateful a lot of times for the help that you provide because they just don’t know how to do this themselves. And so, they’re very appreciative and that’s just a good feeling [and] that keeps you going [Yellow, PD39].

Six people specifically used the word “help” or “helping” to describe working with patrons as the most important and most satisfying portions of library work [Ruth, Blue, PD23; Les, Blue, PD26; David, Blue, PD26; Rhonda, Yellow, PD39; Scott, Pink, PD335; Dakota, Pink, PD340]. Some talked about choosing librarianship from among a number of helping professions: David’s undergraduate degree was in sociology and psychology, and he considered a variety of helping professions before choosing librarianship [David, Blue, PD26]; Chris had an undergraduate major in social work [Chris, Blue, PD19]; Chloe and Liz both thought about teaching [Chloe, Blue, PD10; Liz, Pink, PD337]; Rhonda was a teacher before she went to library school [Rhonda, Yellow, PD39]. In keeping with the idea of working in professions that help people, Amy talked about wanting to do “socially beneficial work” [Amy, Blue, PD19] and Vivien echoed the sentiment in looking for “socially responsible” work [Vivien, Blue, PD21]. Megan described how reward is intrinsic to the work: “What motivates me is doing something that I enjoy, that is fulfilling and feels like I’m making a difference” [Megan, Blue, PD15].

When experienced librarians ask job candidates the question “Why do you want to work in a library?” they often laugh at the answer “I love books.” It is a cliché response, often deemed a “wrong answer” in the profession because it does not take into account the contemporary shift away from print formats or the administrative and technical tasks that make up most of the workday in a library. Quite a number referred to the cliché and said that books are, nonetheless, the underlying appeal of libraries for them. As Liz at Pink Library described it, “[Books] are tantalizing because you think all the wonderful knowledge that’s in there and you just want to dig in and read some. Of course you don’t have time. That’s the irony of our work” [Liz, Pink, PD337].

Many people enjoy working in libraries because they have intellectual curiosity and want to dig into the subject matter in the material all around them. “You come across these interesting titles. I wish I had more time to read them. I see so many interesting things” [Katrina, Yellow, PD29]. Librarians with generalist positions like those in most libraries of this size can afford to be dilettantes, indeed, their jobs encourage them to dabble on the surface of a huge variety of subjects, but to delve deeply into very few:

[There are] so many things I’m interested in. And I’m not interested in them to really go after [them] full-fledged and become really knowledgeable about any one subject. I like all the subjects. And when a student [has] a project or a faculty member has a certain thing that they’re pursuing, that’s really interesting to me, just to see what somebody else has done. Working in the indexes and abstracts and finding the literature [and exploring] what’s been done in the past [is interesting]....Sometimes it’s only for a couple of minutes that I’m working with the students but I’m just interested [and] I’ve learned a little bit along the way. So, that’s what really drives me to the profession [Yellow, PD39].

Despite the fact that many academic library positions require additional advanced degrees in a subject discipline that librarians draw on when working in that field, librarians in most of these professional positions must also have a broad knowledge of both traditional liberal arts subjects and contemporary cross-disciplinary studies. Many people are drawn to the profession for the very reason that they can dabble in a huge variety of topics without ever having to delve deeply into them.

Although needing work to pay bills is certainly part of the choice to work in the public sphere, most people emphasize the fulfillment of the work much more than money. Vivien is one of the few who mentioned money when I asked about why she chose librarianship:

Beats digging ditches, doesn't it? I was not making a living--well, I was hanging on by the skin of my teeth [as an artist]--and there happened to be a job opening at a little public library. So, that's how I entered into it, and then it was like, the finances were so great. So I could do this work that was satisfying and socially responsible, and I had energy and money at the end of the day, or the beginning of the day, to do my creative work [PD21].

Compared to being a starving artist, library work may pay well, but it is not high-paying in relation to other knowledge work. Therefore, people for whom money is the prime motivator are unlikely to choose librarianship. Charlotte specifically described an unpleasant experience of staying in a job for the money, and how that was the wrong choice for her:

I got a big raise...so I was making more money than you would make [at another job], so then I never did quit even though I hated it, which was a big mistake. I should have just got another job....So then I did. I took a pretty sizeable pay cut, but it was a much better environment. So that taught me a little lesson. The amount of money you make isn't everything [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36].

When money “isn't everything,” other motivators such as a “better environment” can mitigate low pay. Pauline talked about how recognition helps when pay is low:

I think you have to [give positive feedback] because when people say you're not paying me enough it's not about the money, it's about the recognition. It's about being appreciated for what you do. So I try and appreciate people and thank them for what they do [Pauline, Pink, PD334].

A major aspect of library work is problem-solving, whether solving managerial issues, troubleshooting technical problems, cataloging a difficult item, or answering a reference question. Problem-solving, when framed in a masculine, instrumental mode, is a rational process associated with the public sphere. Although many individuals referred to the problem-solving aspects of library work, most framed that rational process in a private or creative mode. For example, participants talked about the work as being like “a puzzle” [Sally, Pink, PD344; Katrina, Yellow, PD40] or related it to solving a mystery. Both television mysteries like CSI and mystery novels came up in casual conversation often, and that interest in mystery fiction came out at work. For example, after a particularly stressful interlude with their library system, Blue Library planned to purchase CSI-type hats that say “LSI-SBI” for “Library Science Investigators

-- Special Bibliographic Unit” [Blue, PD1]. In the same vein, according to Dakota, “Reference work is detective work” [Dakota, Pink, PD340].

### *Ethic of Care and the Service Ethic of Librarians*

Gilligan’s (1982) work on the psychology and moral development of women (in contrast to Kohlberg’s theories of development) is the basis for an area of feminine philosophical thought dubbed the Ethic of Care. Nodding’s (1984) work closely followed on Gilligan’s, fleshing out the idea of the Ethic of Care and the different perspective it offers from traditional ethics. For Noddings, ethics is based in specific relations between two parties, the “one-caring” and the “cared-for.” In a fully realized ethic of care, people do not take caring to the point of a loss of self, but instead use it to comprehend individuals in all of their diversity. Benhabib (1992) describes the ethic of care idea through the concept of the “concrete other,” which:

Requires us to view each and every rational being as an individual with a concrete history, identity, and affective-emotional constitution. In assuming this standpoint, we abstract from what constitutes our commonality, and focus on individuality. We seek to comprehend the needs of the other, his or her motivations, what s/he searches for, and what s/he desires. Our relation to the other is governed by the norms of equity and complimentary reciprocity: each is entitled to expect and to assume from the other forms of behavior through which the other feels recognized and confirmed as a concrete, individual being with specific needs, talents, and capacities. Our differences in this case complement rather than exclude one another. The norms of our interaction are usually, although not exclusively, private, non-institutional ones (p.159).

Thus, the ethic of care brings private sphere truth rules into the public sphere by concretizing the needs of the individual served and normalizing the values of community and care in the workplace, basing work output on values and people.

In libraries, caring plays out in service, the basic tenet of librarianship. The entire purpose of a library is to connect people with the information they need. As Dakota at Pink Library put it, “The library ethos is: ‘I am helpful; ergo, I exist’” [Dakota, Pink, PD340]. Public service

librarians show care in the personal assistance that they offer library users, focusing on the concrete and individual needs of the patron. Technical services work deals with a more abstract sense of library users, but the underpinnings of the work is making materials clearly accessible to patrons. One woman described caring as the very underpinning of all of the work she did:

I think that I probably do everything from a base of caring. I care about the collections. I care about helping patrons. I care about the college. I care about the library. I care deeply about my colleagues in [my department]...It all comes from caring. I think that's what unites [the library staff]. They give of themselves, they give of their free time, they go the extra mile all the time. They never even have to be asked to do that. And I think that is such a great tribute to them. And I think it's reflected in the kind of service we provide. So that when we say we can't do X, it's because we truly can't, not because it's too hard, or we don't want to, or it's uncomfortable, it's because it's really not possible with the resources we have. [Sonya, Blue, PD 20]

The service ethic of libraries can also be tied to service in the home. “Women’s Work” is not scheduled. Babies must be changed or fed at “point of need,” not at a time convenient to the caregiver. On the other hand, mowing the lawn or taking out the garbage are jobs that happen at regular intervals, but at the convenience of the person scheduling the tasks. In the workplace, similar role segregation has been common. Receptionists answer the phone when it rings and screen calls for their bosses, who may wait to return calls at a convenient time.

Compare two models for a very similar service: the IT help desk at colleges and universities and the library reference desk at the same institutions. In all three colleges I visited, calling the IT help desk with a complicated question involved talking to a relatively low level employee with limited knowledge. “We call them and we get a student who rarely has an answer for us. We get a number. Here’s your number. I've had various experiences in terms of service and courtesy but I've rarely had an answer for first time I called and you are just as likely to get an answering machine as a human being” [Dakota, Pink, PD340]. In each institution, the person who answered the help desk phone took the caller’s name and contact information, put a

description of the problem into a computer system, and gave them a “ticket number” for follow up on the problem. A higher level expert on the particular problem then contacted the person who called in the ticket. If, for example, the caller was not in the office, or was not checking e-mail, the answer was delayed. The IT expert sometimes even came into the caller’s office (or computer) while the person was out and corrected problems without ever speaking directly with him or her. Dealing with the customer’s needs was based on the schedule of the expert, not the timing of the individual’s needs.

Picture the same scenario in a library: A person with a question can contact the reference desk by telephone or come to the library in person. A librarian, the expert on library systems and services staffs the desk. She or he is nearly always able to answer the question as it is asked. If the librarian cannot answer the question, he or she will take the caller’s name and contact information and ask when a convenient time to call back would be. Librarians may also make appointments to meet with people to discuss their information needs, either in the library or in the library users’ office. The transaction takes place at the convenience of the library user. In addition, the librarian generally shows the patron how to locate similar information in the future, engaging in a teaching role that gives the user self-sufficiency in the future.

Because librarians engage in an ethic of care for their patrons, they put the “cared-for” first. Experts are on the front lines because service is highly valued. Sharing that expertise is also highly valued. A librarian teaches library users how to access library materials on their own. Other professions traditionally keep a tight hold on their expertise. Lawyers, for example, charge large fees to navigate the language and intricacies of American law for their clients. Few lawyers (those affiliated with Nolo being a notable example) offer plain-English explanations or do-it-yourself advice for the average client. Librarians, on the other hand, offer keys to lifelong



learning that are available to everyone. In providing teaching-based service, the librarian concentrates on community needs, not individual gain.

Individually, people who work in libraries also engage in an ethic of care with their coworkers. In each of the libraries I visited, I observed people supporting each other during difficult moments; in fact, I received support from individuals in these libraries as I struggled with being away from home and living in strange places. At Blue Library, a notable example of care came from a supervisor to one of the women in her department. The “cared-for” in this case was Fran, an older woman who had worked at the library since high school and retired with 42 years in service soon after I left the site. She returned from having hip surgery during my visit, and told me “people were very good to [her]” [Fran, Blue, PD21] after the surgery, including her supervisor who took her grocery shopping and drove her home after she left the rehabilitation facility. At the same site, I, a relative stranger, found support for my own grief at the loss of a pet during that first week. People helped me through a difficult time with their kindness and listening.

At Yellow Library, Donna was in a car accident and sustained some injuries but was able to return to work within a week or so. People she worked with offered her advice, gave her rides, asked about her health, and generally offered the kind of caring that characterizes a supportive community. She told me about how it felt: “It’s nice to have support. You know, you get phone calls. They...send you cards to find out if you’re OK” [Donna, Yellow, PD42]

At Pink Library, Pauline was described as having “a good heart” [Director, Pink, PD345] and sometimes leaning too far towards giving problem student employees second chances when they have had problems with work because “she so cares about the students” [Director, Pink, PD345]. The director of the library tied Pauline’s care back to the service ethic of libraries: “The

service ethic is there. The core is there” [Director, Pink, PD345]. She even cared for me, offering a sympathetic ear and even lending me a self-help DVD. She showed the kind of supportive listening skills that are vital to certain kinds of caring and she used those skills with colleagues and students.

People show consideration and caring in little ways: “I try not to email her too often, because she has had problems with her arm and I try to help keep her from having to spend too much time at the computer” [Blue, Carole, PD20]; “We actually need to take care of Chris this morning because she lost her kitty....So a small delegation could deliver her [food]” [Director1, Blue, PD22]; “What are you putting on your, on the booboo on your neck?... You know you can also buy that stuff and it’s a cream you can buy over the counter to help things keep from scarring” [Ann, Yellow, PD40]; “I can give [a 5-minute lesson] if Vivien is overwhelmed” [Megan, Blue, PD22]. Small incidents of caring for one another, whether helping with physical ailments, work issues, or emotional events, create a community of care where individuals are not simply going to work, but also participating in community.

### *Counter-Dialog: The Downside of the Service Ethic*

One librarian pointed out the problem of the underlying service ethic of librarians. She equated the ethic with femininity, but her attitude toward such femininity in the workplace was negative:

But there is a tendency in librarianship, among librarians, to be what I call 'girls.' (she raises her voice into a higher, more girlish pitch and exaggerates her gestures), “Oh, it doesn't matter what kind of shit you pile on me. I can handle it. Oh, everything is for the customer.” There's that kind of self-sacrificing, I call it a girl thing, if you want gendering, I think it's a girl thing. And, you know, I get tired of it [Blue, PD24].

Self-sacrifice can, indeed, be the downside of care. If one indiscriminately puts others over self, then one can be harmed when the other person does not operate under the same ethic. Indeed,

such self-sacrifice is part of the oppression of women in sexist society. However, a fully realized ethic of care does not take caring to the point of loss of self. Instead, it recognizes the other person as a full individual, with different needs than every other individual. In keeping with such an ethic, a librarian does not make herself a martyr. Instead, she expects complementary reciprocity, which may involve negotiation to reach an outcome satisfactory to all.

### *Community as the Basis for Library Service*

Another truth rule from the private sphere is “Context of creating a collective leads to focus on community” (see Figure 1, Chapter 2). That is, people who work at home focus on family and collective needs, as opposed to workers who compete for rewards and therefore end up with a focus on individuality. Yet, the very concept of libraries is a community-based one. Think about what a communal idea the library really is: the library buys one item and the whole community has access to that item, shared among them, with limits to keep any one person from taking advantage of the system. And here is the radical point: no individual pays for the service. Imagine what it would be like if communities had shared pools of lawn mowers or bicycles or other non-consumables. Instead, we have shared pools of information to offer opportunities for self-education and lifelong learning. At colleges and universities, we have libraries that not only support curricula, but also “encourage individuals to self-educate and therefore not rely so much on authority” [Les, Blue, PD26], enabling them to explore ideas outside of the classroom.

Libraries engage in community practice by sharing materials and services with other libraries, as well. All three of the libraries I visited participated in library consortia—a practice almost universal in libraries—through which libraries share resources and engage in collaborative agreements. All academic libraries (and nearly all public libraries) participate in interlibrary loan systems, too. Through these systems, libraries share materials with each other.

Because every collection is unique, sending materials back and forth between libraries allows even the smallest of academic institutions to access the world's rich information resources. Even cataloging is a shared endeavor. Since the early 1970s, libraries have shared huge databases of catalog records, making it possible for each unique item to be cataloged only once and copied (with minor local changes) for use by each subsequent library.

### *Directors, Advocacy, and Approachability*

The caring and service basis of librarianship extends to expectations that workers hold for their library directors. Library workers expect directors to advocate for the library and the individuals who work there. They also appreciate directors who are approachable. Workers in these libraries assign the traits of advocacy and approachability to directors they admire and trust; former directors who were trusted less were also less approachable and were perceived as being more allied with campus administration than with the library and its workers. Advocacy and approachability are related to caring in that a director shows caring through her support of library issues and through her willingness to talk with people at all levels of the organization. These two issues are also related to hierarchy in that those directors who aim to increase their power on campus ally themselves with their superiors rather than their subordinates.

All three of the library directors had an open door policy for their staff that was a true openness, not just a token policy. At Blue Library, one staff member compared the accessibility of this director to the last, "Even though he had the open door policy it wasn't always easy to get in there and see him. Not like with [the current director], where people just walk right in there" [Brenda, Blue, PD25]. At Pink Library, the director disliked the location of her office because it was tucked away and difficult to find.

The people who were involved in the building process...set [it] up so that [the director's] office is an interior office and Hazel's office was out front so you actually couldn't get directly to [the director] without going through. Now if I had my druthers, my office would be, like, ref desk. Well, maybe not quite that public. For me, it's so awkward that one of the things we did was open up [a meeting room] and basically use that as a thruway because it's so awkward to go around and come in [Director3, Pink, PD326].

The former director of Pink Library planned this hidden physical location in order to protect herself from contact with staff and library users; for the current director, the location clashed with her more open attitude.

Meg described the director at Yellow Library as “very accessible...It's not like she's down and dirty with us all the time, but that's 'cause she's busy [Meg, Yellow, PD35]; Laura echoed the sentiment, describing her as “approachable” [Laura, Yellow, PD44]. The meeting structure of the library encouraged conversations with her because she attended many of the workgroup meetings. She was available in her office, and I observed her out in the building, talking with people in their offices rather than making them come to her workspace.

The directors in all three libraries were described as being supportive of staff. At all three libraries, staff used the word “supportive” to describe their director's actions or talked about how they felt “support” from library administration [Scott, Pink, PD334; Pauline, Pink, PD337; Liz, Pink PD337; Louise, Blue, PD15; Rob, Yellow, PD41; Carla, Yellow, PD38]. At Yellow Library, Meg described the director's support in the language of caring: “She clearly cares about our well being and...she's our advocate...on issues” [Meg, Yellow, PD35]. Holly indicated that her director supported the staff through acting quickly and decisively:

She actually is a very good boss. The thing with [her] too is she's not nicey nice...which I appreciate.... You can trust her. I have gone to her with very serious things and she acts (snaps fingers) just like that on 'em. That is what you want in a boss [Holly, Yellow, PD40].

Individuals also valued the support that other library directors had given them in previous jobs: “My director supported me [when a patron lodged an unfair complaint]” [Libby, Blue, PD23].

Some past directors were characterized as being more part of the college administration, siding with administrative views and playing politics with the faculty, rather than working to do the best for the library.

I think one of the things here particularly if there is this feeling that a person whose role it was to sort of protect them and support, didn't do that. So people developed some sort of coping mechanism of one kind or another but they assumed that they were being let to be victims at some higher level [Director, Blue, PD25].

For these participants, the role of director was defined in terms of protection and support, social and emotional roles that are more feminine in nature. When the role of director is defined in these terms, individuals who see directors siding with administration feel betrayed. At Blue Library, the former library director avoided conflict and that “meant not being supported, not being active and...being abandoned if there was some principle that was at stake” [Director, Blue, PD25]. In a similar vein, Liz described a time when a former Pink College Library director made a decision that opposed the librarian's professional opinion: “And if she had just come out and said, ‘Well, we have to do this whether we like it or not. I agree with you. I think it's a stinky situation.’...I would have been like, ‘OK’” [Liz, Pink, PD337]. In this case, the librarian could understand a director making a decision for political expediency on campus, but she wanted that expediency to be acknowledged and her own opinion validated. Such behavior would have indicated to the librarian that she's trusted and valued, while still meeting the library's needs on campus.

### *Mothering: Actual and Metaphorical*

Mothering may be the most feminine private sphere activity in which a woman can participate, and combining mothering with the workplace blurs lines between public and private

in another way. Biology makes mothering, at least in its early stages, a very different process than fathering, and the biological aspects of being female are among the taboos of mixed-gender work conversations. Even though societal pressure for childbearing is still strong, “Professional women are often discouraged from discussing their children. In this way, women’s reproductive roles and important life experiences are dismissed and remain invisible and devalued” (Bullis & Stout, 2000, p. 64).

Historically, librarians were not exempt from the need to hide motherhood. Haley, a librarian with adult children, described her experience with maternity:

When I was young, there was no maternity leave. I was already out for a month when they called me and asked me how much time I needed. They offered me [the same amount of time] that faculty had. No administrator had ever taken maternity leave. If administrators got pregnant, they simply left work. So we tried hard not to look different from people who didn’t have kids. [Haley, Yellow, PD42]

Haley is an example of a woman of her generation who had children and still advanced in the workplace. Although women in traditionally male-dominated professions such as law, medicine, business, and science, seldom advance to top positions in the field if they choose to have children, women academic librarians do advance to top positions while balancing the demands of motherhood and librarianship (Zemon & Bahr, 2005).

This balance might be easier for librarians in institutions that are open to parenting. The contemporary culture of all three of these libraries encouraged parents and grandparents talking about children. At every social gathering, mention of children and their activities abounded, especially at Yellow Library, where more people had younger children at home. There, proud mothers and fathers displayed their children’s art on office walls [Rob, Yellow, PD29; Meg, Yellow, PD30; Jo, Yellow, PD30]. Ann’s stories of her grandchildren were common topics of

conversation: “Little man’s going to be a gingerbread man [at school for Halloween]. He has to be a storybook character and he has to bring the book with him” [Ann, Yellow, PD40].

At a birthday gathering for Meg at Yellow Library, two conversations swirled around me as I nibbled and took notes. One focused on the food at the party; another was all about children. I quote a portion of my notes from that day here because they offer an example of conversations about parenting while also demonstrating a concern for gender role identification:

This conversation continues throughout the whole break, focused on children and Halloween, primarily with Jo talking about her kids and her friend's kids. At one point, Jo says to Rob, “He says 'Ballet is for girls.' How does he know that?” From the bits I catch in the ensuing conversation, she is talking about a 3-year-old son of a friend. Jo focuses on the fact that the boy doesn't seem to have any exposure to ballet, let alone ballet as a girl thing. Rob begins problem-solving: all it would take would be knowing girls who are in ballet, but no boys; he's seen little pink tutus in pictures and was told that was what ballet dancers wear; finally, he makes a suggestion that Jo accepts, and they decide that is the source of this notion: Angelina Ballerina. Jo says that she's seen advertisements for it recently.

Because Pink Library had a much smaller staff than the other libraries, it also had fewer parents. But child-culture was acceptable enough for the library to “have that kind of birthday party a 5-year-old would have” [Director, Pink, PD337] for the 5th anniversary of their new building. As in Yellow Library, a mother and a father who worked at Pink found their respective children to be a common interest. “Certain things happen to draw you closer together. Like [Jimmy’s] wife had a baby...a year and a half after I had mine. We would talk about things like that” [Pink, PD337]. The mother, who had recently returned from maternity leave, posted photos of what the director described as her “little wee one” [Director, Pink, PD335] on the door of her office [PD332]. The father also had his child’s art and his photograph in his office [PD334]. One telephone conversation I overheard from the next room points out his involvement in his child’s life and the extent to which he participated in parenting even while at work:



I hear Jimmy's phone ring and then his voice, raised and loud enough to hear [here in the reference room]. "You DID! Good boy! In the potty? Wow, I'm so proud of you!" and a bit later, "Can I talk to Mommy? I love you and I'm very proud of you. Bye-bye [Jimmy, Pink, PD332].

At Blue Library, most parents had older children. Nonetheless, conversations about them were common. I heard colleagues inquire about others' children, with the usual kinds of updates: "She fell and broke her wrist" [Director, Blue, PD1]; "[she] took her cat on a trip to Russia" [Martina, Blue, PD18]; "High school is good. He likes Spanish" [Lucy, Blue, PD10]. For those with children in college, technology was a key method for keeping in touch. "Heck, I just started IM and [my son] tells me so much more now" [Chloe, Blue, PD12]. Proud grandmothers are also part of the family talk. Brenda let me know, "I have 10 grandchildren." Her screensaver scrolled photos of these offspring [Brenda, Blue, PD27]. Even on business-related topics, children are a legitimate conversation point. Concern "for people with childcare" in a planning meeting for a new faculty event [Chloe, Blue, PD22] prompted discussion of appropriate timing of the event to meet the needs of parents. Such concern for issues of family reflects on the value placed on making room for parenting in these workplaces.

Our national culture closely ties caring and nurturing to mothering. Many metaphors of mothering appear in my fieldnotes, both in my own descriptions and in others' conversations. Some are slightly negative and controlling—a kind of smothering mothering that "knows best" what you need and is, in its nature, hierarchical: "It's motherly and...it's still being above" [Simone, Blue, PD16]. Often, mothering habits are attributed to women who have grown, or nearly grown, children. They may be seen as having transferred their mothering instincts onto their coworkers. Baby talk in phrases like "the booboo on your neck" [Ann, Yellow, PD40] underlines the mothering aspect of caring and frames a question about a coworker's health in a

mother-child form. La Donna, one of the youngest staff members at Yellow library described some of her colleagues' approaches:

It is, actually. I get quite a bit; it's all the women that used to have kids kind of watch out for me, and I don't, it's not bad, that's just what they do. I mean, it's not something that you can say, "All right, turn it off." So, you know, I just, I let 'em do it....They all have them. I mean, I've got the whole range here. [La Donna, Yellow, PD42].

In many mother-daughter relationships, caring and criticism are intertwined (Tannen, 2006). For some, concern is taken as tearing down rather than building up:

I got... really aggravated a couple of times because her version of being sympathetic was more than I could cope with. [Her] version of being kind and helpful involves telling you how tired you look. Stuff like that. It's like, don't tell me that... Make me feel better not worse. So that's been a big thing [Director1, Blue, PD25].

At another library, a student responded humorously to similar concerns: "That's like, when I was sick this summer and everybody kept telling me how bad I looked. Great, so now I'm sick AND I have low self esteem" [Tiffany, Pink, PD329].

Motherly worry can be one of the ways that people become socialized to gender role in childhood. Such role socialization in the workplace is a symptom of gendering. Ashley, a librarian at Yellow Library, told of coworkers at a previous library job who worried about her activities that were outside of gender role, in this case, camping alone:

It wasn't really a mean thing. It was actually a caring kind of, like, "We're concerned." I used to camp a lot by myself....But the guys that I knew that did this, no one was like "Oh my god, are you sure you should be doing that? Are you safe? Blah, blah, blah blah blah." And I didn't know how to respond. I mean, maybe my internal clock is all wrong? Maybe I don't know whether I'm safe or not? [Ashley, Yellow, PD37]

Worry may smother, but it is also a normal aspect of mothering and nurturing. Mothering may not always have to do with humans, however. Nurturing instincts are also stirred by pets. Said Megan, a library dog-owner, "Oh, when I first got Fido I felt like a new mother. I'd have nightmares, or daydreams or whatever that something bad would happen to her....that she'd get

stolen or hurt or something” [Megan, Blue, PD12]. Pets are one of the major topics of conversation that arose in my fieldnotes, and at least a dozen people had pictures of pets in their offices. Perhaps the demographics of libraries, filled with educated middle class women, often single or childless, promote the acquisition and anthropomorphizing of cats and dogs, but my sense is that a nurturing and caring instinct, be it for animals or humans, is an element at work for many library workers.

### *Gendering and Private Sphere Truth Rules*

When private sphere truth rules are emphasized over public sphere truth rules in defining a profession or an organization, the masculine public sphere rules are hidden, gendering the organization feminine. In the case of the library, service, caring, and community are foundational to library work. Nonetheless, librarians handle large budgets, organize information using logical-rational rules, work with technology and systems, and are professional in their approach and outlook. In conversation and interview, the people who work in libraries focus on the helping and caring aspects of the work, not the rational-technical side of the work. Therefore, the masculine aspects of the work are de-emphasized and the feminine aspects emphasized.

### Men as “Other”

Simone de Beauvoir (1949/1972) first formulated the concept that men view women as fundamentally Other, embodying the binaries of desirable-frightening as well as admirable-deplorable. Kittay (1988), among others, has argued that women do not view men as Other in the same way. However, what I saw in these libraries indicated to me that in an organization that is gendered feminine, women and their ideas and ways of being form the basis for “normal” behavior in that organization. When the norm is feminine, men are sometimes viewed as Other and behavior that might be normal in other more masculine settings becomes questionable and

even threatening. In a variety of ways, these libraries demonstrate this sense of librarian as feminine and Other as masculine.

### *Men's Behavior in Libraries*

As in most libraries, men are a numerical minority in all of these libraries, and male library workers express “feeling like...a minority in terms of just sheer numbers for one thing” [Scott, Pink, PD344]. At Yellow Library, Ansel pointed out his status at the beginning of a meeting, “Speaking of minority concerns, I'm the only guy here.” Ashley responded, “Yeah, you better behave. You better behave,” [PD33] indicating that the majority status of women in the room meant that they held him to a particular standard of behavior that might not be the case were there more men in the room. Certainly, everyone was joking in this situation, but does the joke merely point out the expectations that men who are a minority in the workplace should behave differently than they might when they are the majority?

One participant posited, “I've often thought that you have to be a certain kind of guy to be a librarian or work in a library. Usually by the time men are actually librarians, either they are [that kind of guy] or they quit” [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36]. What is this “certain kind of guy?” I will begin with examples of what is “non-allowed guy behavior in the library” [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36] and follow with men talking about how they feel they need to change themselves at work.

Men who do not conform to the model expected in libraries, “run into trouble...[when they] do all these things that are totally not acceptable to all the women that they work with. It'd be fine if they worked in a man environment” [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36]. For example:

Well, we used to have this other guy that worked here that had that problem...He used to work in Circulation...He had really long hair; he was like, “I'm really cute rock star,” and would talk a lot to all the girls that worked in Circulation. And his girlfriend would come when he was working at night and hang out with him. And, and I don't think he

was...respectful enough with [female coworkers] in the way that they wanted...I think he didn't have the right guy attitude for working with all these women. Where, it seems to me, like you have to pretty much ignore that they're all women [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36].

This quotation indicates that a man who pays too much attention to his own sexuality at work, perhaps flirting with coworkers and students, is not engaging in acceptable library behavior. Men in libraries may "have to pretty much ignore that they're all women," and this attitude toward women carries over outside of the workplace. Ansel told a story that shows the difference between his attitude and that of many men outside of libraries:

I can remember going to, back when we had lots of parties, and I remember this one instance. I was sitting at this—it wasn't just library people. It was other people too, but there were a large number of library people...There were probably 30 or 40 people at this party. And I knew three or four of the women, so I was sitting down on the floor and they were all sitting there with me. And some guy came by and said something like, "Well, I don't know what you've got, but you do." These were people I just knew, you know? But I had no problem. I guess some guys would have a problem sitting and communicating with [women]. I do it all day long, so there was, for me, I was saying, "What's the deal?" That didn't even enter my consciousness. But he thought that I, you know, that I attracted four women to sit and talk to me [Ansel, Yellow, PD41].

Heterosexual male culture outside of the library may often support the idea that if a man associates with many women, there must be a sexual element involved. For Scott, being a man surrounded by women in the library is compounded by his working at a women's college:

Scott: I played frisbee with people and soccer... [and] it's interesting here to because you get a lot of "Oh, you work at [the women's college]" ribbing from that perspective because [the college] has a reputation for being a finishing school amongst most people my age and older in this area. And you get from, oh you're a librarian. But it's really locally more "You work at [The College]..."

M: So is it like, you work at [The College], you've got this cornucopia of girls to choose from?

Scott: Exactly, "Aren't you lucky to be?" You don't know what to say to that. You usually just laugh it off [Scott, Pink, PD344].

Aggressive sexuality is an unacceptable trait among men in libraries, yet in other settings, such behavior may be perfectly acceptable. A minor incident at Pink Library pointed out the

cultural differences between the culture of corporate sales and the culture of libraries, “a place where corporate American values don’t belong” [Scott, Pink, PD344]. A slick salesman came into Pink Library one day, wearing a well-tailored suit and shiny shoes, smelling of an expensive cologne. In a rather demanding tone, he told Scott that he was a representative from a particular company and wished to demonstrate a product to the library staff. Scott essentially sent him on his way without much conversation. Scott and I talked about it afterwards. To both of us, the salesman’s approach seemed inappropriate. The hard sell feeling of the interaction with an undercurrent of sexual energy was not what we as librarians expect from our vendors, although culture clashes with product sales people do happen occasionally.

One incident from my own career exemplifies the culture clash between vendors and librarians and the discomfort with sexual displays among librarians. At one national conference, a number of colleagues and I attended a vendor-sponsored dinner. The entertainment at the dinner was a Marilyn Monroe impersonator, dressed in a white halter pleated dress and flirting with the men in the audience while singing in a breathy voice. The response of the audience was a study in the clash of library and corporate cultures. The salesmen whooped and catcalled at the entertainer; they encouraged her to sit on their laps or to lean over them in her low-cut dress. Meanwhile, many librarians seemed quite uncomfortable and my table talked about how inappropriate the choice of entertainment was. When the impersonator flirted with the male librarians, they shooed her away or looked sheepishly at their female colleagues. For librarians, overt sexuality is not part of our workplace culture. Unlike some service professions such as bartenders or waitresses, librarians are not expected to flirt with customers, and not much banter about men as sexual beings took place in any of the libraries I visited, nor has it been commonplace elsewhere in my experience. On the other hand, I asked our sales representative

(the only female in sales for this company, I believe) whether this was usual for her company. She replied that this kind of thing was quite normal at their sales meetings.

Even rather obvious sexual jokes are sometimes skipped over in libraries. I found it amusing that Blue Library called the preview of their new library system a “Peepshow;” however, they shifted straight from the idea of a “Peepshow” as a visual presentation of the new system into a reference to Peeps, the marshmallow candy shaped like baby chicks. A few years ago, a document with photos titled “Peeps Research: A Study of Small Fluffy Creatures and Library Usage” (Avery & Masciadrelli, 2003) was circulated among librarians and has evidently become part of the library pop culture canon. I remember seeing it circulated in my library, and references to the video appeared not only at Blue Library, but also at Yellow [PD19]. I asked nearly every person at Blue Library about whether anyone made any snickering comments about the “Peepshow,” in reference to a sex show, and everyone said they did not hear or make such comments. In response to my queries, Ruth said, “There is absolutely nothing sexually intriguing about [our library system]. There is nothing you would want to have a peepshow about on that one” [Ruth, Blue, PD23]. Nevertheless, if the culture of the library were as sexualized as that of the corporate sales group that hired the Marilyn Monroe impersonator, I am certain that the joke would have been made. I am still a bit surprised that it was not made in the library.

The differences between corporate culture and library culture help to point out the way that masculine culture is hidden in the femininity of libraries. One male librarian talked about the idea that libraries are less open to masculine attitudes that might be commonplace in other types of workplaces:

I was reading an interviewing book recently, preparing for these interviews that I'm going to be going on and the sort of approach they took to it was not the approach that I am used to in libraries in terms of, you know, they just seemed kind of cutthroat and scary and not very nice and not very understanding of emotions. And I know that's kind of a pat

generalization, but I do think that the sort of affective side of things is more apparent working in a library [Scott, Pink, PD344].

Although libraries may be more aware of the “affective side of things,” men’s anger and aggression causes discomfort in libraries. Anger may be an emotion, but it is not one that is traditionally acceptable in women. In libraries, when men express anger or engage in open conflict, the emotional atmosphere of a room freezes, as if the anger is a dangerous thing.

It’s like sometimes if, that men in the library, if two men in the library have a conflict, it makes the women go nervous. And, maybe because the men are more willing to show it or come right out with it, which is not how women would deal with it.

The conflict between [two men in this library] has been like that sometimes where, like, the level, not even escalating to really high level but a level beyond what women were normally comfortable with in conversation. Not even like yelling at each other, really... That’s, I’ve seen that like when I, in the other library I worked in too, where sometimes men would, two men librarians would get in a conflict like that together and make everyone really uncomfortable. And since it’s sort of woman dominated it’s sort of like not acceptable or something. ’Cause it’s abnormal in the setting [Charlotte, Yellow, PD36].

Aggression is taboo for men in the library setting. The story of the “scary guy” at a training session reverberated through Blue Library, emphasizing the outsider position of men who express themselves aggressively and with anger. This man was an outsider, both literally and figuratively, in that he worked at an external library and had little interaction with the people at the library I was studying. I did not attend the training session that the man disrupted. The stories I collected about it, however, show the impact of his disruption and the emphasis on masculine aggression, anger, and violence that pervade perceptions of the event. One woman described the meeting:

That was weirder than anything because this guy... is a very big guy and he always has a sort of air about him of suppressed violence. It's always not happy and he usually asks very direct and not necessarily... on the conversational track questions.... Yesterday [the woman presenting] was doing her spiel on why we switched OPACs and I was sitting kind of near him so I could hear him under his breath going, "Oh this is bullshit. It's such



bullshit” and then asking a lot of questions in a very confrontational, accusatory manner [Ruth, Blue, PD23].

Similar descriptions emphasized his physical features and his angry demeanor, “Even when he’s in a good mood, the tone of his voice, his body language, maybe his build, his looks, whatever. It almost makes him seem angry or upset” [David, Blue, PD26]. His physical features emphasize a strong masculinity: “He’s very tall and imposing. Tall, beard, dark beard, very fierce” [Lucy, Blue, PD23]; “a very big guy” [Ruth, Blue, PD23]; “the one with the beard” [Natasha, Blue, PD23].

In addition, their descriptions evoke a sense of suppressed violence. Responses ranged from the most mild description, “aggressive” [Nan, Blue, PD24; David, Blue, PD26] to Carole’s most extreme response:

Thank God he’s out there [at an off-campus center], because if he was here, I’d be afraid. I mean, he looks like an axe murderer. I mean, this is a guy who is scary, he looks like he could go postal. He asks questions like this [making a fierce face]. I started to do an introduction, "Hi, my name is [full name] and I’m here to talk to you about..." You know. I tell a joke, it doesn’t go over, oh well, never mind, we move on and so I start to talk, and he starts asking questions.... There’s something about him, you think he’s going to go postal at any minute. But Lucy eventually told him to be quiet and then he was and I went on with the training [Carole, Blue, PD22].

In a later conversation with me, she discounted the “axe murderer” part of her description and minimized any fear she might have felt. As a person who I perceive as enjoying the theatrical nature of story-telling, she probably was making the fear bigger than life. Nonetheless, the emphasis of her story was on violence.

Others also talked about the aggressive elements of his delivery:

It was more his delivery and the way he said it. He’s rude in his delivery and he’s rude. He’s nasty when he says something. It’s like attack mode. That could just be his personality. He’s like a really angry kinda guy. Or he’s someone who thinks he’s got to prove everyone’s a moron so he looks better [Lucy, Blue, PD23].

This training session was not the first time where his aggressiveness disrupted a meeting. One man said, “Whenever he asks a question he is always loud and forceful” [David, Blue, PD26]. A woman described the last time his behavior seemed out of the ordinary. Her description of “guy energy” also emphasizes the masculinity of his behavior:

Oh, I remember the last meeting we had with them, he kept at David. David was doing the show, he kept saying, "Just do it. Just DO it. JUST DO IT." And David didn't want to go that way. Talk about some guy energy. Whoah [Simone, Blue, PD23].

Contrast the response of another woman who attended both training sessions. She considered the aggressive behavior normal for a man: “I'm used to seeing men like that, I mean, in [my home country of] Georgia” [Natasha, Blue, PD23]. Another counter-narrative marked the fear response as an overreaction. Elliot, one of the few men who were at the meeting, took the “scary guy’s” questions as a misinterpretation of an invitation for “a conversation.” He told the story this way:

So [she] got started on the talk. [He laughs]. I don't know, her opening was kind of strange, it fell kind of flat, but she was trying to make a joke....So she made a few more introductory remarks, and I think she wanted to make it a more casual thing rather than a “I'm here, you're there and I'll just talk to you.” And so she said, “I hope we can just have a conversation.” I think first she asked, “What do you guys see here?” as she projected an image of the first page, just the basic searches. There wasn't much of a response. It was kind of a dead audience. Then she went on for a bit....The person next to me said, “I have something to say. I think it looks more modern” and stuff like that, which struck me as kind of strange, because it seemed to me to be backtracking a little bit, but she understood that the invitation to have a conversation, as [making it] O.K. for more people to discuss things. Then [“the scary guy”] started asking questions and he was more specific. Not how it looked, but “O.K., you have a drop down box, what's the difference between this and that? How do you do this and that?” He really wanted to get into some nuts and bolts. [His] personality is a little--[it] takes people by surprise....I don't have a lot of interaction with him. But he tends to be more, "Prove it to me." That kind of attitude. That's the tone that you hear from him. And part of that is a little accurate, I think....But part of it is just his way of presenting himself. If he worked on that, it would help him, I think. The first comment was short and to the point. It didn't get us off track too much. But [he] kept pressing when he'd get an answer, “How come this is this way then? But you said that, and this is not working for me.” And I think that really got things off the track....To me, well, [he] was kind of an interruption [Elliot, Blue, PD23].

One woman's version of Elliot's response pointed out Elliot's masculinity, and his supposed masculine reasoning about responses to the event:

It's very interesting because yesterday afternoon Carole came up and was saying something about it and Elliot...said, "Well, you asked for a conversation." Because she had asked at the beginning, "I want this to be give and take, a conversation." I'm sure Elliot is like, you know, why are these women making such a big deal over this? But [the guy] makes me nervous too [Ruth, Blue, PD23].

The story of "The Scary Guy" points out men's status as Other in a feminine organization. Women in our society live with a fear of masculine aggression and violence. Although our participation in public life is on a supposed equal basis, women's public movements, especially at night, are more restricted than men's. I had a conversation with a woman at another library about violence against women, and she described the fear of rape this way, "[a man] won't go because [he doesn't] want to have the shit kicked out of [him]. I won't go there because I don't want to be physically penetrated into my being, like into my soul" [Ashley, Yellow, PD37]. At work, in daylight, we expect to feel safe. And while the women in the organization did not fear that "The Scary Guy" would rape them, the sense of restrained violence invoked all of those hidden fears. Because a sense of leashed physical aggression in a feminine workplace is so rare, when it does arise, even in the tamest form of rude questioning in a meeting, it triggers all of those underlying fears of violence that control women's movements. The man becomes, not just a rude person, but "an axe murderer" ready to "go postal."

Men who do comfortably fit into the feminine organization of the library do not act aggressively or sexually, but they may have adjusted their behavior to fit library culture. Scott talked about how the femininity of library culture and that of Pink College shapes his behavior at work:

I think it definitely affects...how I approach what I'm doing, and I think it is...challenging to work in what's perceived as a woman's profession as a man, in an

institution that employs mostly women and at a college that is mostly a women's college. So, yeah, I think all of those things both affect how I approach what I'm doing...and I think they change my management style...purposefully, but they change kind of because I think women and men approached leadership differently and approach organization differently. And, in fact, just because I have worked in libraries long enough, I think they definitely effect how I approach that as something that's part of my job [Scott, Pink, PD344].

Add to this conscious change the fact that Scott's speech, when presenting library instruction sessions, was markedly feminine in its intonation. That is, his tone rose toward the end of declarative sentences. Lakoff (1975) identified this pattern as one women often employ. This sort of "uptalk" might be more gender-neutral in the Southern U.S., but Scott's origins were Northern, so it was unlikely that this was the reason for the speech pattern. Instead, I believe that Scott was unconsciously softening his speech patterns to match the feminine culture of his surroundings, just as he said that he consciously shifted his leadership style.

Some male librarians at these schools expressed their concern about their own communication styles at work. Scott talked about "altering my communication style to meet the communication style of what is predominantly women" [Scott, Pink, PD344] and Rob said:

I have thought, more so in my last job than here...I've thought about...masculine and feminine communication styles....I think that if I were in a more masculine work environment I would certainly not be one of the more "masculine men." But here I do feel like, I tend to be one of the more outspoken [people]. Also, I notice that some of my colleagues are much more concerned about consensus in decision making. [For me,] let's just make a decision and move on to the next thing. And, so there's, you know, I haven't made any kind of study about gender communication; these are just kind of the fairly obvious things that one would consider more masculine. Sometimes I wonder how my colleagues see me in that way and sometimes I wonder if I...am able to take some advantage from that or if I have some kind of disadvantage [Rob, Yellow, PD41].

Here, Rob poses an interesting question. Is it an advantage for a man to have a more masculine style in a feminine environment? My sense is that, like women in masculine environments, men must strike a balance between masculinity and the general culture of the workplace. If he is too masculine, he will be perceived as scary; if he is too feminine, he will be

acting outside of his gender role and will seem “a little weird” [Fran, Blue, PD21]. However, the range of acceptable gender behavior in libraries appears to be wide. For example, wardrobe for men in these libraries ranged from typical academic khakis and blue oxford shirts to flamboyant colors and flashy jewelry. Women demonstrated the same range of wardrobe options. The stereotypical male librarian is effeminate, just as the stereotypical female CEO is aggressive. However, I did not see any extraordinarily feminine behavior among men in these libraries. My own norms of appropriate gender behavior are probably exceptionally broad, however, so my bias is to consider nearly anything appropriate.

### *Women's Power*

In organizations where men hold power positions, women may be excluded from conversations or even from jobs; but in libraries where women hold both power positions and positions at lower levels of the hierarchy, men can be excluded. At Blue Library, where only recently men had been in power, women were aware of conversations taking place in female domains, now excluding those men who were formerly part of these private conversations. The library director at Blue College described such a moment:

I can remember, I'd been here for a little while and Sonya said, and we were all leaving a meeting and it was she and I and maybe somebody else, maybe Carole, and we walked into the restroom. And Sonya said, "Oh my god, the secret conversation in the restroom won't happen anymore.... Well, actually, it will. And I'll be there" [Director1, Blue, PD16].

In a masculine workplace, women are sometimes discriminated against in hiring decisions for unconscious reasons. They may simply seem not to fit in with the corporate culture, and the individuals in the organization may not recognize that the reason they do not fit in is because of the masculine nature of the culture. The opposite could also be true in the hiring of

men in feminine organizations. In one library, I heard a story from a three people, two men and a woman, about various hiring decisions that the story-tellers considered gender biased. One version went like this:

When I came here I started watching how people got hired....And you have these meetings; lots of middle-age women like me, white women, and some a little older than me, you know, a few years. And then watch this interview process, and I watch all the work that would get done, and then I'd see who got hired. And I'd be like, "What the h-, what happened?" And the men would come in, and I'd be like, "That's the candidate?" I remember, many, like this one time, I couldn't come. I'd done all the work; gone to every one, because I was on the feedback committee for [the library director]. And it was the guy. I knew it was the guy. The guy would have been perfect [for]...this job. I wrote a letter. I explained why [it should be the guy], and then they picked [a woman]. And then another time it happened; they didn't hire the guy for [another] position. Oh, my God. I was like, "What happened here?" And there's like these comments... "Well, you know, he seemed a little... 'stubborn,'" or these coded kind of words [Yellow, PD40].

Another version was similar:

I can remember [a specific hiring decision]. I've heard it was down to two candidates - a guy who everybody thought was very competent and [the woman who was hired], which I sort of didn't know anything about....The woman was chosen over the, instead of the man. Now, I don't know, I wasn't on that committee so I don't know the exact of why that, that happened, but...It was my personal feeling that the person that was chosen was one that they thought they could work better with [but] may not have the competencies...required for the job, and as it sort of turned out, [she] has struggled... with the technology aspects of the position, that's just the way that one broke down. But I thought, and everybody said this guy had really gotten in there....He understood a lot of this stuff. But obviously [they] didn't feel comfortable working with the person....And I thought, "Well, is that because they would really rather choose a woman than a man?" [Blue, PD41].

Both of these individuals, and one other person, ascribed hiring decisions to gendered motives. Hiring decisions based on whom "they could work better with," may indeed be gender-based. A man may throw off the balance of equality or even hierarchy in a department if gender dynamics of masculine power and feminine subservience start to come into play. Whether or not gender rules actually influenced the hires, the very fact that these three individuals ascribed it to gender is an element in gendering the library. They blame the choices on feminine motives and

consider these feminine motives to be negative, too concerned with social-emotional needs and not enough concerned with technical skills.

### Conclusion

The gendering of libraries as feminine simply means that feminine behavior is generally acceptable and generally accepted in libraries. This chapter has explored how library workers blur public sphere-private sphere boundaries and how certain types of feminine behavior are the norm and how certain types of masculinity are devalued. Nonetheless, I would like to make it clear that libraries are not feminine in a sense that many individuals would typify femininity.

Femininity has many faces, and expectations for feminine behavior differ from situation to situation, from place to place. The femininity of libraries is not the femininity of sexuality, emphasizing sexual attributes through clothing, cosmetics, and behavior. The femininity of librarians is not the femininity of consumerism, defining self and competing with others through shopping for expensive purchases. The femininity of librarians is not couched in girlishness, in pink and lace, in feigned innocence, weakness, or helplessness. The librarian persona is that of a strong woman, intellectually curious, technologically adept, practical in her clothing choices and professional in her interactions. To be strong, intellectual, practical, and professional is simply another face of femininity.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION: THE JOURNEY

The five chapters that precede this one chronicle a journey from theory to practice and back to theory again. I began with a vague idea that libraries are both feminine and feminist and a wish to explore the gendered aspects of libraries in more detail. My experience in my current library position, working under an effective and feminine dean made me want to explore how femininity can be a positive element of a workplace. After introducing the idea and exploring literature that gave me some bit of direction, I planned a major project: to visit three libraries for a month each, to chronicle everything I saw and did, and to identify patterns of gendering from that information.

It was not easy. The travel that I had looked forward to caused me more personal stress and discomfort than I ever would have anticipated. I belatedly realized that taking my naturally introverted self out to talk to total strangers for 3 months was nearly the most difficult thing I could possibly do. Some of the people were warm and welcoming, and I think I even made a few friends. Yet I went back to my lodgings each night exhausted. By the end of the 3rd month, I had a database full of fieldnotes and other materials, a box full of paper documents, and a mind swimming from information overload. Like many qualitative researchers, I wondered why I did not just send out a survey and been done with it. But this project was not ever just about the doctoral degree; it was about being true to my vision of this research. I wanted to think about libraries. I wanted to think about gender. Through the process of conducting this study, I learned more about academic libraries than I ever could have learned from another kind of research project. I also clarified my own views of organization, of leadership, and of gender. Moreover, I attempted to answer the research questions put forth at the outset of this study. Focusing on the



answers to these questions will help to encapsulate the concrete outcomes of this research. Each question also provides a platform for exploring ideas beyond those put forth in the preceding chapters, to begin to think of what these outcomes might signify.

#### Research Question 1:

##### How Is Femininity Manifested in These Organizations?

The definitions of femininity I used in this study reflect private sphere attitudes toward work and a “woman-centered” affirmation of traditional roles. Chapter 5 explores the feminine gendering of libraries. The idea of that chapter is not to “disappear” (Fletcher, 1998, 1999) masculine behaviors in libraries, but to examine how feminine behaviors play out in a female-intensive workplace. The themes that emerged here showed a blurring of the binary of public and private spheres, an expectation that women hold power, and a sense of men and hyper-masculinity as “Other.”

The exploration of femininity in these libraries offered me an opportunity to consider how organizations can successfully affirm femininity in the workplace without denigrating the masculine. Both men and women can work flexibly and fluidly while meeting organizational goals. They can be active parents and even engage in motherliness with their peers. Part-time work is acceptable and individuals who choose part-time employment can advance in the organization without penalty. Emotions are not only accommodated, but expected. Friendships can create bonds that reinforce working relationships. People can enjoy a job when the work is something they love and believe in. Even more, they can care about the individuals they serve as individuals, not as demographics or a means to an end.

I learned a lot about what makes a good library director in the eyes of the staff. A good director is approachable and advocates for her library and its staff. The staff wants to feel that

she is on their side, not an administrator whose goals are external to the library. Even more, the staff want the director to be honest and open with them. When honesty and trust are part of the mix, people can understand why the director might have to override a consensual decision or reject a professional opinion. When the director has not earned that trust, they can be seen as capricious or headstrong.

More problematic to my sensibilities is the section on men in libraries as “Other.” Men are certainly a numerical minority. They may feel the need to shift their gendered behaviors to accommodate the women with whom they work. Is it sexism or backlash for women to expect men to move toward androgyny in order to work in a library? I would certainly call it sexism if I were describing a workplace where men expected women to “play like a boy.” On the other hand, when men in libraries take on aggressive, competitive, or power-based roles, then those roles strongly conflict with a culture of egalitarianism and cooperation. As such, they reenact the dominant-submissive dialectic of the hegemony. Perhaps, then, in the spirit of the second wave feminism that pervades most of this study, I find the need for a kind of androgyny, where we meet in the middle of the continuum from masculine to feminine, with each of us engaging in behaviors from both sides of the continuum, but few, if any, of the extremes.

#### Research Question 2:

In What Ways Are the Libraries Included in This Study Feminine Organizations?

This question relates directly to the first question of femininity in libraries. These libraries are “feminine organizations” in that they manifest a number of feminine attributes, as discussed above. The culture of the libraries permits and perhaps encourages feminine behavior within certain parameters. That is, it allows people to blur private and public sphere roles,

expects men to engage in a certain amount of androgynous—possibly even feminine--behavior, and revels in the fact that women hold positions of power.

As I pointed out in the conclusion of Chapter 5, this femininity is not about presentation of self in terms of appearance. Adkins (2001) described this sort of “feminization:”

A new sovereignty of appearance, image, and style at work, where the performance of stylized presentations of self has emerged as a key resource in certain sectors of the economy, particularly in new service occupations. This is thought to constitute a feminization of work because appearance, image, and style are understood to be closely aligned to the aesthetics of the feminine (p. 674).

The femininity of libraries does not fit this particular stereotypical role of women. I did not report data on wardrobe, for example, because although clothing is one of the primary markers of gender, the clothing of most of the women in these libraries was chosen for practicality, not competition or sexual show. Similarly, no report of flirtation or sexual presentation appears in Chapter 5, primarily because such a theme did not emerge as significant in these libraries.

The culture of libraries also encourages the work of the library to be couched in feminine terms. Libraries are caring institutions where the basis of the work is service and sharing information. Libraries participate in cooperative and collaborative work with other libraries and with library users. As such, the underlying ethos of libraries is feminine in nature, thus making the organization itself a feminine one.

### Research Question 3:

What Gender Ambiguities or Contradictions Exist in the Organizations?

Counter-dialogs in Chapter 5 address this research question, providing some sense of the masculine undercurrents of thought in each organization. The strongest elements of contradiction and ambiguity, however, appeared in Blue Library and are explored in the most detail in Chapter 4. When I visited the library, it was in a transitional space, moving away from its roots of

hierarchical masculine leadership under the direction of a more egalitarian, feminist leader. No doubt the reader has noticed that Blue Library seems over-represented in quotations in the preceding chapters. This is in part due to its size. With nearly 50 staff members, it was larger than both Yellow and Pink put together. Because there are more people, there were simply more quotations for me to choose from. However, it was also the most interesting in terms of tensions and contradictions. At Blue Library, bureaucratic and egalitarian cultures were clashing. More masculine counter-dialog appeared in Chapter 5, as well. Pink and Yellow may actually fit my vision of “organically” feminine workplaces, but they do not offer as many contrasting and conflicting elements to explore. Because they are more straightforward, it takes fewer words to describe their femininity and feminism.

Blue Library might be more analogous to organizations outside the realm of academic libraries because many organizations that have been shifting gears toward a more feminine workplace environment for over a decade. Fondas (1997) found, “Qualities that are culturally associated with females are appearing in descriptions of managerial work in the texts of contemporary writers and these texts function as carriers of a feminine ethos to practicing managers” (p.257). The qualities Fondas identified were based in relationship, shared control and responsibility, and interdependence and caring. More recently, Miller (2005) discussed the need for managers to “access their inner-feminine” in order to “manage social relationships” (p. 624) and Hatcher (2003) described managers who “must be, not just rational, but passionate about their work” (p. 391). Blue Library, then, is a model of an organization in transition from hierarchy to shared responsibility, with attendant tensions regarding some feminine behaviors in the workplace. Nonetheless, other feminine behaviors have been fully integrated and accepted into the library, just as some have been integrated into other formerly masculine workplaces.

Gender itself is an ambiguous and contradictory concept. Only selected faces of femininity are presented in this dissertation. The lack of other faces might be considered an ambiguity to be reported, but it is more a part of the reality of gender. “There is considerable distance between the gender stereotypes that are available to us all, and the behavior of real people as they go about their business in the world” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 86). In that gap between stereotype and real behavior lies a world of absences. I chose, in this study, to focus on those behaviors that were present. Perhaps future work will explore more of the absences.

Research Question 4:  
What Explicit or Implicit Feminist Principles Are at Work in These Organizations? How Are They Implemented?

Chapter 4 focuses on the feminist principles at work in these libraries. From the research, the main points that emerged in this area were the ways in which these libraries challenged bureaucracy in their daily practice. The libraries varied widely in their actual practice related to hierarchy, division of labor, competition and collaboration, decision-making, and communication. That is, Blue Library struggled with an ingrained culture of hierarchy and bureaucracy that was in the process of changing under the leadership of a feminist director. Nonetheless, egalitarian elements were also part of the culture. Pink Library, despite its small size, had a balance of bureaucratic and egalitarian elements, and Yellow Library was the most egalitarian of the three.

Yet, through the course of this research, it became clear to me that leadership does matter in the actual implementation of anti-bureaucratic feminist practice. All three library directors were feminists. At Blue Library, the director was working to put feminist practices in place, but the historical culture of the library resisted those changes. At Yellow Library, the structure was

already in place to support egalitarian functioning. In this case, the director needed only to allow control to continue to be in the hands of the workers in order to continue egalitarian functioning. As Pink Library shows, a director can feel the need to control is more important than the need for egalitarianism. Pink Library's director was younger, less experienced in management than the other two directors. She took a more command-and-control stance early on in her work at Pink Library, and that influenced the power structures, particularly in decision-making. Nonetheless, other elements of her leadership were strongly feminist. The workers at Pink Library crossed professional-paraprofessional lines both socially and in work assignments, engaged in collaborative work, and communicated with one another freely. For me, these were good lessons to learn about leadership's influence on an organization.

More than these basics, the feminine behaviors that emerged from the research are also feminist, at their base. Blurring the boundaries between public and private spheres allows a balance of work and home that is not available within the boundaries of the traditional bureaucratic workplace. Even the man as "Other" portion of Chapter 5 fits in with radical separatist feminist thought (see Chapter 2).

### The Journey Continues

These three libraries are, indeed, both feminine and feminist. They exemplify how workplaces can successfully operate under egalitarian and private sphere models. All of these libraries serve their users well. Whether well-funded and staffed or not, they connect individual users to the information they need in a timely fashion, taking into account the wide variety of people they serve. It is clear to me that all of these libraries purchase and maintain the best collections possible within the limitations of their institutions. And every item is purchased with the goal of supporting the academic community in which they belong.

These libraries also contain counter-discourses that are sexist, hierarchical, and masculine. Individuals “don’t get paid enough” to provide exemplary service; people denigrate the feminine, considering it inappropriate in the workplace. Although these chapters highlighted the feminine and feminist, they have also given voice to some of the sexist and masculine elements in the libraries. Just as no individual exhibits every behavior that is considered feminine or masculine, neither does any organization exhibit only feminine or masculine traits. Nonetheless, because women predominate in libraries, most people would consider the library feminine, regardless of the balance of discourses revealed in Chapter 5. In fact, my own positive bias toward the feminine probably skewed my interpretations toward positive feminine traits (and negative masculine ones) and away from positive masculine traits (and negative feminine ones). As any good librarian knows, every author has biases. No matter how carefully I try to step away and consider the situation “rationally,” my emotional involvement with this topic must color my coding and my writing.

Ultimately, it was the core of the project, the pairing of the feminine and the feminist, that challenged me the most. The focus on hierarchy in Chapter 4 fell into place easily, fitting well with my notions of feminism’s challenge to the status quo. Much more difficult was the feminine and feminist sex role theory that underlies Chapter 5. The pairing of pro-feminine and anti-sex role feminisms has been one of the most difficult logical challenges I have wrestled with in the course of this dissertation. Throughout the work, it has been the most difficult thing for me to articulate to participants and to myself. The postmodern part of me that lives comfortably with logical inconsistencies is not the same part that was trained to write a logical argument. How does one express what the postmoderns call “slippages of meaning” without sliding down the

slope of impenetrable language? How can I shift that which makes total sense to me intuitively into something that also makes sense logically? I hope I succeeded in making that shift.

A feminist can both challenge sex roles and challenge the hierarchies inherent in those sex roles. In Chapter 5, I explored how these libraries are gendered feminine. The gendering itself is a product of a binary construct that is linked in most people's minds to biological sex. Throughout this dissertation, I hope that I made it clear that I do not think that this linkage is helpful, particularly in a sexist society that denigrates that which is associated with women. Individuals deploy a variety of resources to present themselves to the world, and some of these resources are gendered. I, personally, value many private sphere truth rules more highly than public sphere truth rules. In doing so, I value that which is labeled "feminine" in our society.

The personal nature of this concluding chapter is not just self-indulgence (although it is probably that, too). Its purpose is to make visible the reflexivity that was part of the process throughout this research. I tried to think, daily, about what I was doing, how I was doing it, and how I was shaping the research. Even after I finished fieldwork, I kept examining my own motives, my own assumptions. These six chapters represent more than a simple dissertation to me. This study is the culmination of an interest I have carried for decades. If it is deemed worthy of pursuit, it may be the starting point for my work for the coming decades.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

I am already considering where this study should go next, both in my own future and for others who find this research area interesting. I offer the following ideas for those who might follow up on this project:

Throughout this research project, I have wished for a counterpoint, a masculine organization with which to compare what I was seeing. While literature on gendered



organizations offered some points of comparison, I believe that a useful study would be to use ethnographic methods to explore a masculine organization in light of my research. My own thoughts have turned to academic information technology departments as an excellent comparison, because their work is more closely akin to modern library work than any other university department and information technology work is male-intensive and gendered masculine (Rosser, 2005).

Another direction would be to add to the cases in this research. Do other types of libraries (larger academics, public, or special libraries, for example) fall into the same feminine and feminist patterns?

Another question that this study could not explore in depth is the efficacy of feminine and feminist organizations. Quantitative investigation using survey or analysis of library statistics or other outcomes data could address this question.

Quantitative measures of masculinity-femininity such as the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (1978-1981) could be given to library staff in order to assess the sex role categories of individuals in libraries. Such research could address the question of whether men in libraries perceive themselves as being more feminine, as Chapter 5 suggests. It could also explore dimensions of androgyny in libraries that were out of the scope of this project.

One thing I glimpsed while doing this study but did not have a chance to explore was the effect of institutional memory on organizational climate or culture. A quantitative researcher could compute the average length of tenure of staff in a particular organization and then use a climate or culture measure to assess the impact of that history.

Another topic that I touched on was the tension between hierarchy and egalitarianism in these libraries. Additional research could explore this tension in more detail.

Finally, survey research could identify the percentage of librarians who consider themselves feminist and what type of feminism (liberal, radical, socialist, poststructuralist, etc) they espouse. Qualitative questions or follow-up focus groups or interviews could explore how they believe that feminism influences their work lives.

### The Final Conclusion

The journey of this research has been long and emotional. Yet, in exploring the gendering of libraries, I accomplished two disparate tasks: to bring to light the gendered assumptions in our everyday lives and to point out the positive outcomes of incorporating feminine and feminist behaviors in the workplace. I hope that this research adds one small but colorful thread to the tapestry of research on workplaces and gender.

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APPENDICES  
APPENDIX A: FIELDNOTE TEMPLATE

Date:

Day's Chronology:

Detailed Description:

Related Files:

To do:

My thoughts/reflexivity about the day's research:

To do better next time:

## APPENDIX B: PEER REVIEWER DOCUMENTATION



East Tennessee State University  
University Libraries

The Sherrod Library • Box 70665 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1701

3 March 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

I was honored when Marie Jones sought my assistance as a peer reviewer while she researched and wrote her dissertation ***Academic Libraries as Feminine/Feminist Models of Organization***. Her topic was close to my heart both professionally and personally. Throughout this process Ms. Jones and I spoke in person and by phone and corresponded via email depending upon our circumstances.

During the early stages of her dissertation we spoke at length about her viewpoint and theories of libraries as feminine and feminist models of organization. Our shared backgrounds in feminist and Marxist philosophy allowed me to comprehend her perspective and support Ms. Jones' beliefs, theories, conclusions, and to a great deal, her approach to the research.

While surveying the literature we spoke at length about the strengths and weakness of particular research, articles, and other published materials within her review. Occasionally I shared articles or books with her that held allied theses about leadership, organizational culture and structure, and feminist philosophy. As she fleshed out her dissertation topic, our conversations turned to methodology, especially the challenges of qualitative research, her coding and transcription, and the statistical software that she employed.

As she conducted her research at each of the three sites, we spoke at length on several occasions in person and via telephone and email about the data she collected and how it supported her thesis. She frequently updated me on how her perceptions changed as she experienced the differences within each of the three sites and what this might mean for her arguments and how each site either confirmed or unconfirmed her theories. She discussed the coding of her data at some length and shared with me the immensity of time that transcription consumed.

Based on my reading and review of Ms. Jones' dissertation I conclude that she met and exceeded the research goals set forth in her research proposal. Her curiosity and drive served her well in this endeavor and her tenacity paid off in



the vast data she collected, coded, interpreted, and presented in her dissertation. Her research in this area is original and assuredly provides a solid benchmark so that others may build upon her ideas and develop ones of their own on the nature of academic libraries, or so that Ms. Jones herself may expand upon her course of research.

I hope these comments will be useful to you.

Sincerely,

  
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- Publications: Jones, M. F. (1996). *Annotations: A directory of periodicals  
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#### Honors and Awards

- Eutreva S. Small Award in Creative Writing, 1985
- Kappa Alpha Pi, Capital University Honors, inducted 1986
- Beta Phi Mu, Library Honorary, inducted 1990
- Phi Kappa Phi, inducted 2007