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Abstract

This dissertation project is an interdisciplinary exploration of laboring lesbian bodies within the context of U.S. gas stations. I begin with an investigation of the history of gas stations in connection with the oil industry and the company for which they work. In addition, I examine how institutions of class, gender and sexuality are imprinted onto laboring lesbian bodies within the workplace. I suggest that the work within U.S. gas stations is now primarily feminized labor as is typical of the service economy. I also highlight the ways in which sexuality matters in the workplace through an analysis of the ways in which laboring lesbians perform emotional labor within this customer service environment. Emotional labor is a seminal contribution to a feminist analysis of the sociology of work. However, I am committed to complicating our understanding of emotional labor by attending more specifically to intersections of identity and geographical concepts of sexuality and space. As I explore how emotional labor is impacted by who is performing what for whom and where, an interdisciplinary lens becomes critical. To that end, I argue that the complexity of power is crucial to understanding the nuances of emotional labor through an intersectional analysis of class, gender and sexuality.

Laboring Lesbians at Gas Stations: Pumping the “Good Life”

By

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Science
in the Graduate School of Syracuse University
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Acknowledgments

To all the women who got me here...

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION- TRAFFIC JAMS

ORIGINS: MEETING HESSBIANS

It was just another Friday night in one of the rust belt cities of the Northeast almost ten years ago. I had been spending more time in gay bars than I normally do to complete a qualitative assignment on drag kings and had been invited out by some of the women I had met. I noticed a group of women gathered at one end of the room. Their laughter could be heard throughout the bar as they teased and touched each other with obvious affection and familiarity. I realized the entire group was comprised of women who, along with their girlfriends, worked at Hess. I had already learned that there was a group of lesbians who worked for a chain of gas stations in the area and was interested in this group being the focus of my dissertation, but had not yet actually talked to anyone.

Gretchen was clearly the matriarch of the group. We knew of each other, but had never had a conversation before. After a few beers had bolstered my courage, I struck up a conversation with Gretchen. We stood outside smoking cigarettes, the beer bottles cooling our hands in contrast to the summer heat radiating from the pavement. I told her I wanted to do a dissertation project on the lives of lesbians working for the gas stations and was intrigued by the name they had created for themselves: Hessbians. I asked if Hessbians were only found within this region. She chuckled and replied with a glint in her eye, “Honey, from Maine to Florida.”

In company materials, Hess stands for “**H**ello,” “**E**ye Contact,” “**S**mile,” and “**S**incere thanks.” “The Hess Way” is an oft-used phrase representing a customer service philosophy that invokes the company name. But in my own research, I have heard many other private re-imaginings of “Hess,” including: “**H**ell **E**very **S**ingle **S**econd;” and “**H**olidays, **E**venings,

Saturdays and Sundays.” While the original group of women who purposefully called themselves “Hessbians” no longer work for Hess, and the term is not as commonly known or used among the participants I interviewed, it remains a humorous and pointed example of how acronyms used for value driven service statements are reimagined. Vividly, it is also a reminder of the interaction between the company, the U.S. gas station and the laboring lesbian body.

Eight years later, while interviewing Alyssa, I asked her if she had heard the term “Hessbian” before. She laughed, and said she had not heard it. However, to my delight, she quickly listed off a few interpretive acronyms in relation to Hess; “**H**omos in **E**very **S**ingle **S**to**r**e” and “**H**omosexuals at **E**very **S**ervice **S**tation.” Grinning, she said she really liked the latter one better because they [homosexuals] service you [the customer]. The labels and acronyms that laboring lesbians have created, in combination with the name of the company for which they work, effectively conform to, challenge and transform the boundaries of sexuality, public and private, masculine and feminine, local and global. Equally important, the re-imaginings of the company name establish the significance of the laboring lesbian’s sexuality in relation to her workplace. With all of its patriarchal privilege, the Hess family name is reappropriated to acknowledge the local lesbian body. The re-interpreted acronyms do not attempt to erase the connections between the company and its complex histories and current expectations, but rather serve as playful spaces of imagination and interpretation between the laboring lesbian body and her work.

Work is a major aspect of everyday life in the United States. Institutional structures of race, class, gender and sexuality influence what job we can get, how much money we make, where we live, what schools we attend, where we shop, our social circles, how many children we have, how we get around, how healthy we are, how much time we have for leisure and how we feel about ourselves. Work is not just about the job one holds, it is an element of our identity and

intimately connected to regulatory systems that are woven throughout our everyday lives. Of course, these statements raise a host of questions within the context of my project, such as: What are the expectations for working in the service economy? In what ways are laboring lesbian bodies disciplined within this site of service? In what ways does their sexuality inform their work? And what strategies do lesbians employ to successfully navigate this complex work environment?

To address these questions, my dissertation project focuses on the everyday lives of laboring lesbians who work in U.S. gas stations for a global oil company. I rely on an interdisciplinary approach, beginning with an investigation of the history of gas stations in connection with the oil industry and the company, Hess. In addition, I examine how institutions of class, gender and sexuality are imprinted onto laboring lesbian bodies within the workplace. I argue that the work within U.S. gas stations is now primarily feminized labor as is typical of the service economy. I also argue that sexuality matters in the workplace through an analysis of the ways in which laboring lesbians perform emotional labor within this customer service environment.

My interests in this project have evolved over time. In the beginning of the research process, I intended to conduct a classic community study of lesbians who happened to work for the same company. As my research progressed, laboring lesbians' experiences within the workplace became my primary interest. This shift resulted in an increased focus on the company which exerted such major influence on their everyday life at work. In addition, the U.S. gas station as a primary site of work imbued with multiple meanings also broadened my inquiries. In the end, my project explores how laboring lesbians perform gender and sexuality through feminized service that is located in a predominantly masculine place.

LOCATIONS: REGULATING LABORING LESBIANS

The space of the U.S. gas station is a traffic jam of employee and customer identities, relationships and exchanges framed by corporate values and a unique historical beginning that is as disorderly as the discarded cigarette butts found on the ground of the adjacent parking lot. Institutional structures of power are understood to be factors in the amount of “freedom” we feel to make our own choices. For example, the fact that we need to work to make money to pay for food to sustain our bodies is a reality in our current economic system. There are debates within social theory about whether “real” freedom even exists within these governing structures, and Michel Foucault (1995) goes a step further to propose that disciplinary forces have been internalized and people regulate themselves in ways that are not easily recognizable. Feminist and queer social theorists explore the boundaries and borders of power where individuals express agency in an effort to resist institutional structures of inequality (Halberstam 2005, Longhurst 2001, Nelson 1999, Rofel 2007, Valentine 2007a). Geography of sexualities theorists contend that the interaction between identity and governing structures can be located within the space where power unfolds in specific ways, in specific places (Binnie et al 2001, Browne et al 2007, Peace 2001). Undeniably, the link between an individual sense of self and broader regulatory systems becomes inseparable within the workplace.

Within the framework of individual agency and structures of power within the workplace, a heuristic binary is created where individual agency is to be celebrated and structures of power are to be resisted. Yet, as has been argued, this binary is not so simple. Exploring the interplay between complex identities and dense webs of power provides rich opportunities to understand the daily struggle of laboring lesbians to feel a sense of belonging, an impression of control of

one's life, the struggle to win rewards from working within organized power, and even perhaps the satisfaction of real moments of resistance.

In particular, the workplace brings us into close contact with the inner workings of institutional control. There are the obvious rules of a given work environment that need to be followed to keep a job. There are informal networks of knowledge, such as occupational histories and workplace etiquette. There are expectations of contributing to the company's mission to create profit. And, many organizations are competing to thrive across a global landscape, adding another layer of influence. Focusing my research on laboring bodies within the workplace allows me to explore the interconnections between everyday experiences and institutionalized locations within structures of power. The specific site of my research- the U.S. gas station- also provides a crowded arena where issues of class, gender and sexuality collide very specifically within a service economy. I purposely use laboring lesbian bodies as a descriptor to highlight the body within this collision both recognizing the materiality of the body and the ways in which the body is scripted by structural forces (Bordo 2003, Butler 1990, Grosz 1994, Irigaray 1999, Price and Shildrick 1999). Within the service economy, it is the body that serves as the vessel between the customer and the company that continually produces and is consumed through being specifically marked by race, class, gender and sexuality. In an ethnographic account, my intention is to recurrently refer to the embodiment of laboring lesbians to highlight bodies as inhabited, capturing inseparable emotions, reactions, and understandings in everyday practice.

Work organizations are comprised of people who are interpreting, resisting, collaborating. It is significant to this project that in this workplace, my participants identify as lesbian. Exploring the impact of sexuality within the workplace adds further dimension to my

analysis of identity and power. In my work, an interdisciplinary approach that engages various angles of identity and work in relation to where work happens becomes critical to more fully providing a sense of the historical and political context of these women's lives.

My academic areas are primarily sociology and geography, specifically informed by queer and feminist perspectives. The sociology of work literature rarely references the significance of the place of work, but provides necessary political and economic perspectives in today's context of neoliberalism to connect the lives of local lesbian workers who work for a major oil company within a global web of power (Bergeron 2001, Buchanan 2006, Gibson-Graham 2006b, Hughes 1994, Jacoby 2006, Mills 1951, Powell 2006, Shipler 2004, Wharton 2001). The sociology of work literature that highlights the experiences of women in the workplace is a rich source for theoretical engagement with patriarchal systems of oppression. I would argue, however, that this literature often assumes the mantle of heterosexuality (Amott 1996, Crittenden 2006, Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2002, Kanter 1977, Leidner 2006, Pringle 1989). There is a growing and important subfield within the sociology of work literature that focuses on lesbians at work (Dunne 2000, Frank 2001, Peplau & Fingerhut 2004, Wright 2011). When grounded in a working-class context, this literature typically focuses on lesbians' experiences in masculine occupations rather than feminized positions within a service economy. Geographies of sexualities literatures analyze collective public spaces such as neighborhoods, bars, public events or private spaces such as the home, but do not often focus on bodies within the workplace (Bell et al 1994, Binnie 2001, Brown 2000, Browne et al 2007, Knopp 2007, Massey 2005, Myrdahl 2013, Oswin 2013, Valentine 1996). Nonetheless, this literature is critical to exploring the significance of the gas station itself, systems of power through multiple geographical landscapes and the subsequent impact on the lived lives of laboring lesbian bodies.

My aim is to thread my analysis through multiple literatures where the literatures ultimately inform each other and strengthen an interdisciplinary analysis of laboring lesbian bodies. In the broadest sense, my project furthers and complicates our understanding of sexuality in the workplace by examining the everyday lives of a particular group of lesbians working in a specific and historically situated socio-economic and cultural context. The recognition of the intersectionality of our identity complicates neat categories of race, class, gender and sexuality by creating multiple possibilities that disrupt unequal binaries of white, black, rich, poor, man, woman, heterosexual and homosexual (Crenshaw 1991, hooks 2000, Price et al 1999). If we also question the categories themselves, recognizing they are socially constructed rather than “natural” organic ones, we begin to more fully explore the political, economic, historical and social structures that govern our lives (Foucault 1995, Butler 1990, Grosz 1994).

STRUGGLING WITH INTERSECTIONS

Studying the complexity of identity within the workplace calls for a theoretical positioning that attends to multiple points of both privilege and oppression. Intersectionality arose as a theoretical perspective in response to the dominance of feminist analyses of patriarchal systems, which relied on the voices of white, middle-class academic women (Crenshaw 1991). In essence, a more nuanced understanding of multiple systems of oppression complicate the very idea of “woman,” appropriately highlighting that “woman” is not a universal experience. Intersectionality thus developed as a theoretical perspective within multiple academic disciplines in order to acknowledge that categorical markers such as race, class, gender and eventually sexuality, profoundly impact the experiences of women (Anzaldúa 1987, Clough 1994,

Crenshaw 1991, Manalansan 2006, McCall 2005, Mohanty 2003, West & Fenstermaker 1995).

In addition, there are many other axes of difference that continue to be explored within this literature, such as religion, age, ethnicity and ableness.

For my project, I have relied on the concept of intersectionality in order to draw attention to the specific experience of laboring lesbian bodies in a site of feminized service. In addition, though the gas station caters to all consumer levels of class, I argue that the nature of the labor within a gas station marks it as a working-class site. As such, the social relations of class distinctively shape the experience of laboring lesbians. However, intersectionality is by no means a standardized uncontroversial theory.

A range of invigorating and sometimes frustrating academic debates have sprung from attempts to define intersectionality and the methodological practices of intersectionality in the field (Brown 2012, Davis 2008, Nash 2008, McCall 2005, Taylor 2009). It is in the context of three specific debates that I want to frame my own troubles with and commitments to intersectionality. The first debate focuses on selecting which categories to highlight within a project. The second area of inquiry centers on the struggles inherent in using categories themselves. The final debate questions the benefits of an intersectional analysis without attention to specificities of place.

The first debate points to the difficulty of attending to multiple axes of identity and power within a single research project (Brown 2012, Seidman 2011, McCall 2005). Theorists argue that class matters, but sexuality is often ignored in analyses of class (Taylor 2009, Seidman 2011). Likewise, in analyses of sexuality, others argue that class is ignored (Taylor 2009). As a partial explanation, Seidman (2011) has observed that identity markers such as race and class have mattered less in the development of LGBT literature. In essence, he suggests that a shared

sexual identification provides a stronger connection between bodies than other axes of difference.

Within my own work, distinguishing “lesbian” as a different experience than that of “woman” is important to me personally and politically. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the laboring lesbians with whom I worked identified themselves as lesbian. Their self-identification supports Seidman’s argument that this category of identity does bring bodies together in some shared understandings and desires. In addition, as I will argue, sexuality is intimately connected to gender. However, class was also an axis of difference that profoundly mattered within my research which interrupted shared understandings. As a result, I would ally myself with recent theoretical pushes within intersectionality to capture the nuances of the lived body (Manalansan 2006).

In this debate around setting intersectional parameters, Davis argues that the inclusion of all points of difference dilutes a sustained analytical engagement with the most salient ones (2008: 75). Ultimately, there is no one answer to this debate. I have found that attending to all intersections of power and privilege potentially overwhelms this particular project. My research occurred in a predominantly white context in de-industrialized, non-urban centers in the Northeast. While race is certainly a critical aspect of laboring lesbians’ experiences as white women and women of color and intersections of gender, class and sexuality are racialized, I have set parameters on my focus while recognizing the artificiality of these boundaries to investigate the everyday lived experiences of laboring lesbian bodies in one particular workplace- the U.S. gas station.

A second central tension in the literature focuses on the ways in which intersectionality relies on categorical distinctions to understand the experience of identity, raising a host of

theoretical issues. An initial concern focused on the dangers of applying an intersectional analysis as distinct markers of identity that simply layer upon each other. Theorists have moved beyond this initial “additive” model to a more complicated analysis of identity where it is understood that, for example, sexuality and gender inform each other (Brown 2012, Davis 2008, McCall 2005, Valentine 2007a). Valentine (2007a) proposes that while intersectionality has been used to highlight the socially constructed categories such as race and gender, he is concerned that gender and sexuality continue to be artificially separated as clean categories of difference. Instead, he uses intersectionality as an aid to understanding how race and class influence the very meanings of gender and sexuality in his study of the category of transgender.

With the growth of queer theory and ideas of performativity, I would argue that recent theoretical contributions to our common understanding of the construction of gender and sexuality has deepened the conversation and disrupted ideas of a unified gay or lesbian identity (Browne et al 2007, Knopp 2007, Peace 2001, Probyn 1995, Sothorn 2004). This theoretical trajectory is designed to deconstruct binaries of gender and sexuality that depend on each other for meaning. For example, to invoke homosexuality is to rely on the category of heterosexuality. To invoke woman is to substantiate man. In exploring the connections between gender and sexuality, Browne et al write, “the intelligibility of the categories of ‘heterosexuality’ and ‘homosexuality’ is also reliant upon the opposition between ‘male’ and ‘female’ and upon the supposedly natural sexual desire between these two sexes” (Browne et al 2007: 8, Butler 1990).

Within this context, I want to address my use of the category of lesbian, which can also be falsely unified in much the same way as the construct of “woman.” Recognizing the categories themselves as social constructions- that is, naming laboring bodies as “lesbian”- constitutes a political project both by creating a category of difference that is marked by

disciplining regimes of power as well as creating a space of community among those who identify as lesbian. I have felt tension between lesbian as a categorical label that implies a privileged experience and queer as a theoretical disruption of categories within the ontological experience of identity within my fieldwork. The fact is that the women I interviewed thought of themselves and described themselves as lesbians; they did not, for example, name themselves as “queer.” Their sense of lesbian identity was solidly embodied, though one can argue that it was also spatially constituted. As Valentine (2007a) eloquently argues, mapping identity onto bodies has its own complications. As such, I want to argue that gender, sexuality, race and class are so enmeshed in everyday life that they are often experienced as a singular sense of self. I do not want to imply that this singular sense of self is any way less complicated than a collection of identity markers. Amory classically captures the space between important theoretical intentions and the essence of our experiences when she writes, “Even those scholars who argue for a social constructionist perspective treat identity as if it were a static object of analysis, an implicitly essential ‘thing.’ Perhaps this is because some of us experience our identities as essential even as we theorize them as constructed” (1996: 157).

In a similar vein, Kath Browne (2004) analyzes the production of gendered and sexed space through the experiences of women who are read as men within the policed, highly sexualized space of bathrooms. In this case, one body certainly queers space, though always in connection with other bodies. Her example of how masculine female bodies are subject to a heteronormative gaze animates how space is presumed to be heterosexual as configured through relations of power that normalize man/woman, female/male, straight/gay. Browne captures the theoretical conundrum when she writes, “A tension exists between challenging the borders of gender and sex and using these terms to enable a discussion of embodied experiences” (2004:

334). This is not to say that each of my participants' experiences of being lesbian were one and the same. In fact, they were quite varied. My goal is to engage in a discussion of embodied experiences using theory with an emphasis on gender, class and sexuality to enrich an analysis and avoid a simple, unified category of lesbian.

Class differences among laboring lesbians sculpted their orientation to the world. While I describe their labor within the gas station as "working class," there are internal hierarchies that are classed differently within the gas station, from the entry level sales position through the on-site manager position. In addition, their physical appearances differ: some laboring lesbians proudly identify as butch, some describe themselves as soft butch, some identify as femme. Others were not comfortable with what they perceived as specific categories that did not resonate with their own embodied experience of both femininity and masculinity. Ultimately, however, identifying as lesbian was an integral aspect of their lived experience. For example, the term "Hessbian" is itself an embodied example. As a result, I utilize the category of "lesbian" throughout this project and try to draw out nuances across and within this category.

Butler discusses this queer tension between the "opposition of all identity claims," alongside the materiality of "livability" that relies on bodily recognition (2004: 7). She suggests that instead of a singularized focus on dismantling categories, queer theory should "insist that sexuality is not easily summarized or unified through categorization" (Butler 2004:7). Ultimately, she proposes that "the livable life does require various degrees of stability" (Butler 2004: 8). Congruently, the lesbian laboring bodies in my study relied on the solidarity of a lesbian identity. While there is much that could be further unpacked around making these categorical distinctions, for the purpose of this project, I deliberately focus on the materiality of

Butler's notion of "livability" with attention to the specificities of understanding lesbian lives within a U.S. context.

The third debate argues that an intersectional analysis is fundamentally strengthened by attention to place (Duncan 1996, Nast & Pile 1998, Valentine 2007b). Who we are, how we publicly project ourselves and the ways in which we perform work, life and love are intimately connected to where we are. Our lived experiences are always connected to the places in which they happen and the bodies that form that space (Duncan 1996, Nast & Pile 1998). As a result, our lived experiences become a complicated mesh of analytical identity categories that are spatially reliant upon who is present at a particular moment and time, as influenced by history and geography.

I do position my project as a queer one, even as I focus on lesbian lives. I want to echo Manalansan's positioning of queer, not in relation to identity but as "a political and theoretical perspective that suggests that sexuality is disciplined by social institutions and practices that normalize and naturalize heterosexuality and heterosexual practices including marriage, family, and biological reproduction by marginalizing persons, institutions, or practices that deviate from these norms" (2006:225). From this viewpoint, my focus on overarching structures or regimes of power recognizes the intersecting regulations of our everyday lives within specific spaces. Laboring lesbians' struggles were not so much internal battles of their own sense of self as much as an effort to make sense of their own bodies in relation to other bodies, within a particular space that held a specific context of overarching structures of power. This was demonstrated by their numerous daily decisions that resulted in multiple gendered and sexualized performances in relation to their customers.

My project thematically engages this point through my research. In other words, I focus less on laboring lesbians' individual sense of identity and instead emphasize the ways in which their bodies are shaped, criticized, welcomed, punished and rewarded while carrying out specifically classed, sexualized, and gendered duties within a markedly gendered, classed and sexualized environment. It is through this theoretical positioning that intersectionality serves my project to critically examine active tentacles of regulatory institutions within a specific place, while upholding laboring lesbians' identification as lesbian.

In sum, I continue to utilize intersectionality as it keeps multiple aspects of power at the forefront of my analysis. Most importantly, intersectionality is useful as a theoretical tool to attend to powerful constructions of expectations and disciplines of what it means to be a laboring lesbian body working in the U.S. gas station. While recognizing intersectionality as inseparable in lived everyday experiences, for the purpose of analysis, I will heuristically focus on gender and class and then on sexuality within different chapters. I will now turn to a description of each chapter and its key arguments.

CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW: SITUATING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT

An interdisciplinary approach is critical to my project which attempts to remain connected to an ever-shifting combination of place, history and bodies. Within this chapter, I begin to knit multiple literatures together to provide a richer tapestry of the ways we might investigate the experience of bodies in the workplace. In particular, the sociology of work literature highlights individual actions within broader political and economic landscapes. From a feminist perspective, this landscape is complicated by an investigation of how frameworks such as globalization and capitalism are classed and gendered. As my project is primarily about

lesbians within a working class context, I review a currently relatively small collection of literature with this shared focus.

Given that my final substantive chapter specifically addresses emotional labor within this work context, I provide an overview of how the literature on emotional labor has progressed beginning with Arlie Hochschild's (2003) original work. Hochschild importantly argued that in front line service work, women are expected to engage not only in the labor of their bodies, but also the labor of their emotions. Interactive service work, Leidner's (1996) term, furthers this line of inquiry by arguing that the whole body is required to participate in the labor process within the service economy. Leidner argues that interactive service labor is reliant not upon the production of goods, but rather on the production of a relationship with customers. This addition of the customer to the labor process shifts disciplinary expectations and interrupts what was once assumed to be a primary relationship between the employer and the employee. Within this literature, I outline how this work has evolved, including arguments that advocate for the addition of the aesthetics of labor. However, I contend that the literature on emotional labor has not previously engaged sexuality and my focus on sexuality thus contributes to this literature.

Finally, I draw on literature in geography to demonstrate how space and place matter to a project embedded in a specific workplace. As such, I argue that an investigation of place through a historical and contemporary tracing of gas stations as a site of work highlights the power structures at work within U.S. gas stations. In turn, this strengthens an analysis of everyday practices of lesbian laboring bodies who work within the U.S. gas station. Furthermore, the company is an important aspect of the spatial configuration of these particular gas stations in order to investigate how bodies are disciplined. Locating my research within the body of literature of geographies of sexualities, I articulate how the space of U.S. gas stations

and company expectations direct bodies that are in relationship to other bodies. And in turn, bodies impact the space in which they are located. Within the U.S. gas station, this is a particularly relevant point given that these are highly productive spaces of consumption where bodies shift minute-by-minute.

CHAPTER 3- METHODOLOGIES: INTERDISCIPLINARY PUSHES

Methodologically, this is a qualitative project, an ethnographic study of laboring lesbian bodies. However, my project does not center on a specific community of people who share a single geographic location. Rather, this ethnography explores the lives and experiences of individuals who share a job within separated places of work, though connected by the context of the gas station and the company for which they work. It is here that I argue my interdisciplinary project has pushed me to include multiple forms of research. In other words, while I have pursued traditional in-depth interviews with eleven laboring lesbians resulting in a total of eighteen interviews, I have supplemented this important line of inquiry in multiple ways.

I utilized participant observation per traditional ethnographic practice, working as a laboring lesbian myself in order to more fully experience the expectations of the position and to gain a full appreciation for the difficulty of this service position. In addition, my commitment to geography led to significant research on the historical developments of U.S. gas stations. Finally, the picture was completed by an extensive document analysis of the company and its history, including the men who have led it. Taken together, I propose my final project is buttressed by multiple and historical understandings of the workplace, my own experiences as a laboring lesbian, and by nuanced data from interviews. The combination of these research

strands is closely aligned with my interdisciplinary theoretical engagement with this overall project.

Given my commitment to an intersectional analysis, I reflexively attend to my own role as a researcher through the lens of desire. Rather than defining desire exclusively as an erotic drive, my interests emphasize multiple forms of desire. This includes the desire that fueled my intellectual curiosity and commitment to laboring lesbians. In addition, I explore how desire moved me in some directions and not in others during fieldwork. In this way, desire informed the nuances of the interview process where the intersections of our own identities brought issues of class, age and sexuality to the surface. Finally, I explore how laboring lesbians' abilities to perform emotional labor brought desire into the interviews.

CHAPTER 4- PUMPING THE GOOD LIFE

As I move into the contemporary space of the U.S. gas station owned and operated by the Hess Corporation, I highlight the historical development of gas stations attached to a neoliberal agenda that rests upon a patriarchal ideology of "woman." In turn, these imaginations construct the very expectations of the laboring lesbian body in their everyday practice. Within this chapter, I begin by tracing the roots of the oil industry, which is intricately connected to the automobile industry and its immense tentacles of power. During the beginning of the twentieth century, the ways in which the development of the current physical landscape in the United States was shaped by these capitalist projects becomes clearer. I make connections between widespread use of the automobile, development of road systems, and development of suburbs that in the end results in our dependence on mobility, whereby gas stations become

commonplace everyday sites. Finally, I place the company within this context situating its history alongside the history of gas stations and oil.

I specifically attend to women's roles in this narrative that often rests upon ideologies of the heterosexual, white, middle class nuclear family. In an effort to secure the success of a neoliberal agenda, the oil industry marketed for a brief time to a particular woman as a customer. I propose as systems are developed to promote mobility and the use of the automobile became more hegemonic, this specific attention to a gendered market lost momentum. Ultimately, in the quest for profit, gas stations became a site of feminized service with the addition of the convenience store. It is with this addition that women transition from customer to employee in the gas station. In the final section of this chapter, I turn my attention to the Hess Corporation. In addition to outlining aspects of the company history that are relevant to my narrative, I also analyze the marketing and branding efforts of the company.

CHAPTER 5- LABORING LESBIANS

This is the first of two chapters that relies primarily on ethnographic and interview material. Within this chapter, my goal is to analyze current feminized labor responsibilities in the service company even as I argue that the gas station is a masculinized working class site. The majority of contemporary U.S. gas stations have now added convenience stores to the point that I would suggest the distinction is collapsed within everyday speech; "gas station" has become synonymous with "convenience store" or "convenience mart." Importantly, it is the addition of the convenience store that aligns this consumptive site with a broader service economy. Therefore, the work required in a combined gas station and convenience store is characterized as front line customer service. The realities of working within the service

economy add its own complexity to my project. I argue that women's idealized labor within the home is brought into this capitalist environment of the gas station through carefully measured responsibilities such as cleaning, stocking shelves and anticipating customer's needs. Not only do the job responsibilities depend on feminized labor, but given that laboring bodies are the site of production within a service environment, they are under surveillance and disciplined in multiple ways. This discipline rests not only upon gender and sexuality, but also upon class. Congruent with expectations of a service position, customers add another disciplinary dimension.

Within this chapter, I provide evidence that gas stations are still primarily a masculine place, but that the addition of feminized labor complicates the space of the gas station as a site of work. It is here that my work contrasts with other literatures on lesbians at work. While much of the literature argues that lesbians' ability to perform masculinity within the workplace allows them to move into masculinized occupations, I contend that it is lesbians' ability to perform feminized labor that brings them success within this context. I also argue it is the combination of feminized work within a masculine site that opens a fractured gendered space that is partial and uneasy. It is this uneasiness that allows for those who rest differently within dominant ideologies to see themselves within the space of the gas station. From this point, I begin an investigation of the ways in which laboring lesbian bodies perform emotional labor within this fractured, contradictory and ultimately productive space.

CHAPTER 6- PERFORMANCE OF LABOR

In this chapter, I shift from tracing the impact of structures of power onto bodies to focusing on the ways in which bodies are informing, resisting, and playing with as well as conforming to this complex space. Within the literature, "dealing" with customer's feelings in

the context of service is referred to as emotional labor. The concept of emotional labor (Hochschild 2003) highlights how emotions are a critical aspect of labor within a position of service required in order to develop relationships with consumers. Within the frame of my research, this body is a laboring lesbian. My goals within this chapter are to strengthen the original concept of emotional labor by complicating our understanding of the body with specific reference to sexuality. In other words, my point is to argue that sexuality in the workplace impacts the everyday experiences of laboring lesbian bodies. I draw on several critiques that have developed over the past twenty years and respond to them in relation to this project.

In particular, I present four contentions which I explore throughout the chapter. The first is that the literature on emotional labor assumes a heteronormative body and attention to the intersections of identities strengthens an analysis of emotional labor. Second, while acknowledging that the body is deeply embedded within disciplinary structures, I concur with critiques of Hochschild's work, to assert that the company is not able to completely control employees' emotional labor (Brook 2009). Within my research, laboring lesbian bodies interpreted, played with and sometimes resisted the performance of emotional labor. Third, while Hochschild's original work emphasizes the harm of emotional labor caused to the employee, others have argued that emotional labor can also be rewarding within the workplace (Bolton & Boyd 2003, Korczynski 2003). My own research indicates that both rewards and punishments shape the experience of laboring lesbian bodies. Finally, I apply Butler's (1990) concept of performativity to explore how gender and sexuality are performed within emotional labor. In order to more fully develop the argument that the performance of emotional labor must acknowledge the specificity of the body providing it, I attend to not only a particular lesbian body's, but also to how that body is visible and recognizable within the workplace. In other

words, I explore how laboring lesbian bodies inhabit gender and sexuality making them visible in different ways, and thus affecting their performance of emotional labor. Ultimately, I argue that laboring lesbian bodies effectively queer emotional labor by disrupting heteronormative assumptions of service.

CONCLUSION

The development of U.S. gas stations has had a role in shaping the landscape to the point it is nearly invisible in its very commonness. This very commonness belies how firmly the work within gas stations is structured by specific classed, gendered and sexed ideologies. I highlight how this commonplace site is both masculine and feminine through a complicated and temporal convergence of historical beginnings, heteronormative expectations and performances of labor. One of the unique aspects of the service economy is the position of the body at the center of the market transaction. In other words, it is the body that serves as the point of production between the customer and the company. Laboring lesbian bodies within the gas station are formed, disciplined, and constituted by this complex construction of gas stations within one specific company, even as they participate in remaking its future. As laboring lesbians attend to the gas pumps “from Maine to Florida,” we need to attend to the realities of lesbians performing multiple forms of feminized labor within the service economy. Within this space, laboring lesbians find a unique path; they see themselves, they find livability and are able to successfully navigate complex structures of power as they perform their labor.

CHAPTER 2: LESBIANS AT WORK- INTERDISCIPLINARY LANDSCAPES

INTRODUCTION: INTERDISCIPLINARY COMMITMENTS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The founders (of the Syracuse University Maxwell Social Science Program) believed that questions about the nature of society rested not in one discipline, but upon the integrated contributions of political science, geography, sociology, anthropology, history, international relations, economics and public administration. The Social Science Program created a new place for academic work not included in the traditional disciplines. (Social Science Ph.D. Program Student Handbook, Syracuse University: 3)

My dissertation project is an interdisciplinary exploration of laboring lesbian bodies within the context of U.S. gas stations. Before I begin a review of the literature relevant to this interdisciplinary analysis, I want to situate my commitment to interdisciplinarity. I propose that interdisciplinarity requires a holistic analysis that is deeper than engaging in multi-discipline theoretical offerings. Indeed, my very education contains multidisciplinary twists and turns, culminating in a search for an even more meaningful interdisciplinarity that highlights the way in which disciplines intertwine, add facets of inquiry and build upon each other.

While the following narrative might not constitute a traditional opening to a literature review, my intention is to reflexively engage in my educational background as evidence of the depth of my interdisciplinary focus that extends beyond my topic. My higher education journey began with a bachelor's degree in the emerging field of public relations from Texas Tech University as a first generation college student in 1987. As I engage in a dissertation project that includes an analysis of company messages, I find myself reminded of my early academic

training. During my undergraduate studies, I was actively involved in the residence life program. As graduation neared, I decided to focus my professional career within the field of higher education. In 1995, I completed a master's degree in counseling/student personnel at Oklahoma State University where I combined academic learning in the classroom with practicum experience as a residence hall director. My current focus on the emotional labor of laboring bodies is reflective of a longstanding interest in the role of emotion that began with these educational experiences.

Professionally, I have worked in higher education administration for the last 21 years. Ten years after completing my master's degree, I found myself wanting to further my education and engage in scholarly material that would push me in new directions. Therefore, I began a doctoral program in social sciences at Syracuse University in 2003. My professional path brought me to Empire State College, a non-traditional college with a mission centered on individualized degree programs and multiple ways of learning, which further influenced my philosophy. This doctoral program, which encourages students to design a degree that goes beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries, aligns with my educational history and my own values. In addition, the disciplines I engage here- including sociology, geography, feminist studies and queer theory- reflect an increasingly interdisciplinary world of the academy and continue to revitalize each other.

At its broadest level, my project is the study of lesbians in the workplace. As such, the sociology of work literature is the platform from which I begin my academic inquiry. Work is an integral aspect of everyday life in the United States. In a capitalist society there is an inherent need to make money in order to pay for the necessities of life. And there are many types of work. At one end of the pay scale, some don the company uniform which includes a smile on

their face, and spend a routinized day serving customers fast food (Leidner 2006). Some stay at home responsible for raising good citizens and making a place of respite for the family's primary breadwinner, while struggling with their own sense of identity as an unpaid and unrecognized laborer (Crittenden 2006, Kessler-Harris 1981). Some put on a company uniform of a different kind, bought at a department store rather than a specialty uniform supplier, and head to jobs that rely on social homogeneity (Kanter 1977). Some are unable or chose not to work at all, though they still need money to live and are subject to regulations and policies shaped around the Protestant work ethic, and still others work within an underground economy (Hays 2006, Gowan 1995). On the other end of the scale, a network of corporate, government and financial elites exist who have the power to influence ordinary everyday work life through the control of capital (Mills 1956). These examples do not constitute an exhaustive list of occupational options divided into neat categories of work- manufacturing, service, professional, unemployed and elite. These simplified categories become more complex when analyzed within the context of individuals' everyday lives and lived experiences. In this time and place, work is woven throughout our everyday lives and is often a significant component of our identities.

Within the sociology of work literature, I will draw on three specific areas. First, I will briefly frame the historical economies of work which begins to establish the emergence and characteristics of the service economy. Secondly, as my project is specific to lesbians at work, I provide a review of the literature of lesbians and work. Finally, as my work focuses on emotional labor, I will provide an overview of the originating theory as well as a review of the ongoing academic conversation that has ensued over the past thirty years. Emotional labor is a seminal contribution to a feminist analysis of the sociology of work. However, I am committed to complicating our understanding of emotional labor by attending more specifically to

intersections of identity and geographical concepts of sexuality and space. As I explore how emotional labor is impacted by who is performing what for whom and where, an interdisciplinary lens becomes critical. To that end, I argue that the complexity of power is crucial to understanding the nuances of emotional labor. As I outlined within the introduction, intersections of class, gender and sexuality provide the frameworks upon which this project rests.

Given the emphasis on how sexuality matters within a specific workplace, my viewpoint is heavily influenced by geographical concepts of place and space. In the second section of this chapter, I review the literature on geographies of sexualities. The specific site of the workplace is layered with meaning through history and regulatory structures of power. I insist that intersectionality is strengthened by attention to spatial concepts where meaning is created through bodies in relation to each other and specifically located. In other words, context matters in shaping our understandings of the world around us. In turn, attention to context strengthens understandings of nuanced performances of emotional labor. Taken together, this literature review provides the theoretical context of my project. Weaving the performance of emotional labor together with a specific focus on sexuality in all its multiple constructions and definitions within a specific context tells a more complex story about lesbians at work.

ECONOMIES OF WORK: HISTORICAL TRACINGS

The sociology of work literature describes how economic shifts over the last century in this country have contributed to changes in the social role of work. Economic change has been linked with modernity. Beginning with an agrarian society where work happened at home or at small craftsman shops, industrialization brought numerous changes to the world of work including new and improved mechanizations that began the process of routinization, alienation

from products and established forms of bureaucracies (Jacoby 2006, Tucker 1978, Mills 1951). Modernity is the result of technological and organizational innovations, further division of labor and mass production (Meyer 2006, Braverman 2006). Industrialization is also linked to urbanization where the masses moved to the city to sustain themselves. With the advent of industry, the production process was no longer about a farmer preparing the soil, planting seeds, cultivating the fields and finally harvesting a finished product. Instead, line-manufacturing positions were created where workers assembled one part of a whole product, efficiency of movement was studied, and workers were detached from the finished product (Meyer 2006). As machines replaced skilled human hands, the emphasis on faster, more profitable labor emerged. Pertinent to this project, the Ford Motor Company is often cited as a prime example of industrialization in the beginning decades of the twentieth century (Meyer 2006).

Over the past forty years, the U.S. has experienced an increasing shift to a service economy. This shift has been attributed to several broader sociological, economic and political trends. In the sociology of work literature, one explanation offered is the decrease of bodies needed to assist in the automated manufacturing process in conjunction with an increasing outsourcing of manufacturing due to lesser production costs (Powell 2006, MacDonald & Sirianni 1996). Other theorists focus on the increasing numbers of women who are entering the workforce, thereby creating market demand for support services typically handled by the unpaid workforce of women in the home (McDowell 2009, Powell 2006). A third loosely related explanation is the rise of economies of consumption where service becomes the product (Harvey 2005, McDowell 2009).

MacDonald & Sirianni (1996) argue that the shift from a manufacturing based economy to a service based economy is almost complete. Within the sociology of work literature that

focuses on the service economy, there are two contrasting analyses. MacDonald and Sirianni define service as “produced and consumed simultaneously, and the customer generally participates in its production” (1996: 3). The service economy is thus about social relations, whether it involves low-paying service positions or high end service providers. Similarly, in a description of the “new economy” or “knowledge economy” characterized by embodied performance and human capital, Lisa Adkins argues that “the distance between production, labour and products and customers is increasingly emptied out” (2005: 122.) In contrast to a focus on the importance of the laborer, another analysis focuses on routinization of service positions (Leidner 1993). The McDonaldization of the fast food industry is an example of how the skilled occupation of a short order cook can now be performed by anyone through advances in technology that uphold uniformity and the branding of products (Leidner 1993). Within my research, I would argue that working wage service positions contains elements of both trends. In other words, the service economy is informed by the alienation, routinization and bureaucracy of the manufacturing economy, but complicated by higher expectations of unpaid emotional labor. These contrasting expectations are evident in my research through routinized tasks such as counting commodity products as well a focus on embodied customer service.

Furthermore, the service economy is described as consisting of jobs that are primarily feminized (McDowell 2009). For example, customer service captures qualities that are often stereotypically feminine such as deference, care and friendliness. In addition, race continues to be marked within a service environment (Gatta et al 2009). For example, research has argued that working wage service providers of color are relegated to behind the scenes such as kitchens and maids rather than at the front desk. As a result, bodies are significant within the world of service in multiple ways.

Within the sociology of work literature, authors describe evolving economic conditions and the resulting impact on the workforce. Some argue that we are moving into a new economy due to globalization, organizational downsizing and rapid technological change (Adkins 2005, Bergeron 2001, Harvey 2005, Powell 2006). Powell (2006) argues that we are no longer in an economy where workers securely stay in one job throughout their career, advancing within the company or at least getting paid more. Over time, work is becoming project-based and flat organizational models are being established. The number of semi-skilled, well-paying positions is decreasing, resulting in a growing income divide (Powell 2006).

The full effects of this evolving economy have yet to be seen. The economic shifts and resulting workplace changes experienced in the United States in the last century are certainly more complicated than described above. The worker experience within these social structures is much more varied and resistant to such sweeping generalizations. Indeed, the foundations of the sociology of work literature have been criticized for a masculine focus. As feminist theorists engaged with sociology of work continue to impact the literature, the focus has broadened to include attention to race, class, and gender. However, I will contend that even within this emergent focus a limited attention has been paid to sexuality.

BROKEN SILENCES: LESBIANS IN THE WORKPLACE

The feminist movement and feminist theorists have brought the study of gender to the forefront of the sociology of work literature, broadening its scope through the study of women in the workplace. Critical interventions in the literature have focused on gender and equal pay, unpaid labor, sexual harassment in the workplace, socialization of women, and the challenges of balancing dual roles of family and work (DeVault 1994, Fox & Hesse-Biber 1984, Kahn-Hut et

al 1982, Stromberg & Harkess 1988, Kanter 1977). Not only is there now an acknowledgment of the challenges and issues women face in the workplace, there is an emphasis on representing the history of women's work within this literature (Kessler-Harris 1981, Fox & Hesse-Biber 1984, Anderson 1988, Amott & Matthaei 1996). Most importantly to my work, linkages are made between institutions of gender and heterosexuality that highlight how labor within a capitalist economy depends on a heterosexual nuclear family model and a strict division of labor whereby men are able to devote their energies to the workplace while women are responsible for reproduction at home (Acker 1990, McDowell 2009). Though this framework of divided work based upon the assumption of a heterosexual nuclear family rarely reflects the lived realities for both men and women, the structure is embedded at the largest of scales such as commonly established work hours in contrast to school schedules.

One of the primary contributions of the poststructuralist feminist perspective to the sociology of work is attention to the construction of gender and the exploration of the intersectionality of identity (Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2002, Kanter 1977, McDowell 2009, Ward & Winstanley 2005, Wolkowitz 2006). As a result, the political project of keeping "women" intact in the sociology of work literature has been questioned. Scholars continue to highlight gender while demonstrating the differing impacts of the interconnectedness of race, class, and gender on women's experience in relation to work (Ammott & Matthaei 1996, hooks 2000). Class is also revisited in current economic and political times (Shipler 2004, hooks 2000, Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2002). In the 21st century, we no longer need to prove that women have a right to be in the workplace, though many of the issues cited above are still relevant. No longer is the category of "woman" casually aligned with a white, middle-class perspective. However, I suggest that heterosexuality and heteronormative assumptions all too often still frame

the sociology of work literature. Sexuality and work are under-examined areas of inquiry and even when sexuality is investigated, heteronormative frameworks prevail.

Indeed, there is a wide range of literature dealing broadly with sexuality and work, including such issues as sexual harassment, pregnancy and sex work (Christensen 1988, Rogers & Henson 2002, Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2002). There is also a selective literature on lesbian bodies in the workplace, though it is not a comprehensive one which makes it difficult to generalize. Much of the literature I reviewed focuses on different aspects of sexuality from my own work. In particular, the literature typically centers on lesbian identity within work environments rather than how sexuality is performed within work responsibilities. However, the edges of our interests about lesbians in the workplaces do brush against each other. Therefore, while recognizing that my work is not a perfect fit with this literature, it still adds value to my analysis. In my review of this literature, I have identified the following thematic issues: coming out, visibility, proposed advantages of lesbian identity in the workplace and the frequency of lesbians in male-dominated environments.

In the literature that frames the ‘coming out’ process, authors discuss how coming out is a continual process contingent on factors such as safety and acceptance (Croteau 1996, McDermott 2006, Myers et al 2004). While the literature is more exclusively focused on coming out to co-workers, laboring lesbians were constantly challenged with split second judgments regarding whether to come out to their customers. Indeed, many of the laboring lesbians included in my project were quite comfortable being open about their sexual identity, which is not to say they were careless or non-strategic in their decisions about coming out. On the contrary, the very need to identify as a lesbian highlights the presumed heterosexuality of the workplace.

Furthermore, while the literature regarding the context of where and how individuals come out is

cursory, my project is focused on a relatively fixed setting but a constantly changing dynamic between laboring bodies and customers. Within my own work, I investigate the ways in which laboring lesbians respond to a heteronormative service expectations and coming out was one strategy used to respond to unwanted male attention. However, Ward & Winstanley (2005) importantly discuss coming out as a body in relation to other bodies. This point is critical to a discussion of front line service workers who interact with hundreds of shifting bodies throughout a given work day.

Another thematic focus centers on visibility in the workplace, highlighting the heterosexual nature of the workplace (Myers et al 2004, Hampf 2004, McDowell 1995, Ward & Winstanley 2005). While visibility is not my main concern, disruptions within a presumed heteronormative service moment are at the heart of my work. Others scholars analyze workplaces as both gendered and sexed (Dunne 2000, McDowell 1995, Ward & Winstanley 2005). Given my theoretical focus on intersectionality, the connections between gender and sexuality are inseparable. And when class is considered, the picture becomes more complicated. Scholars propose that although it might be assumed that lesbians would face more oppression in the workplace due to being both lesbian and women, this is not necessarily the case. In fact, they may actually experience advantages. These advantages include being perceived as more committed workers by escaping the assumption that they are or will become mothers, regardless of whether or not they actually have or intend to have children (Peplau & Fingerhut 2004, Wright 2011).

Finally, several studies explore lesbians' experiences working in male-dominated workplaces. Some scholars propose that lesbians are not financially dependent upon a male breadwinner and seek the higher paying jobs available within masculine work domains in order

to be economically self-sustained (Wright 2011, Dunne 2000, Croteau 1996). Others argue that working class lesbians, in particular, resist traditionally feminized entry level positions. They suggest that these lesbians seek spaces where the focus is on masculinity rather than femininity (Weston 1998, Dunne 2000). Peplau & Fingerhut propose that the stereotype of lesbians as masculine lends to perceived attributes of “independence, assertiveness, competitiveness, and self-confidence” (2004: 727). In essence, lesbians were credited with possessing traits that are ideologically linked to masculinity, which allowed them to more successfully inhabit masculinized spaces. Taylor’s (2008) study on mainstreamed spaces of LGBT consumption highlights how gay spaces both include and exclude working class lesbians. Though not directly referencing lesbians and work, Taylor’s analysis of working class lesbians not seeing themselves reflected within gay and lesbian places suggests that working class lesbians would gravitate towards work places that were more congruent with their own understandings of class and sexuality. I suggest that gas stations have interconnected histories that position them as historically masculine. I also contend that U.S. gas stations are predominantly a working class site of labor due to numerous factors such as the products for sale, the number of entry level workers as well as the customer base. This is coupled with primarily feminized work within the service industry. These combinations of forces provide cracks in an otherwise exclusionary landscape where working class lesbians can see themselves.

Dunne (2000) is interested in connecting the experiences of gender and sexuality in the workplace through a study of lesbians. She argues that, “The absence of lesbian experience in mainstream feminist accounts of gender, work and family life reflects their position as other, as exotic, and thus irrelevant for furthering contemporary understandings in this area” (2000: 134). Indeed, Dunne demonstrates how the study of lesbians and work should focus on social relations

that animate ideologies of gender and sexuality rather than the sexual practice of lesbianism. My project that investigates how lesbian laboring bodies perform emotional labor adopts this focus.

Despite differences, this body of literature has a common intent detailing the difficulties and successes lesbian workers have at work whether through visibility, equity issues, discrimination, surveillance or reclaiming histories. Taken together, this literature clearly evidences that sexuality in the workplace is highly regulated. My own research draws on these insights. Interestingly, much of this research has been done in the U.K., and focuses on workers' reactions from co-workers and managers rather than customers. None of the research focuses on lesbians who are engaged in working class service work. My work on laboring lesbians within a corporate waged environment will contribute to this growing body of literature as I draw on intersectionality in relation to the performance of emotional labor.

EMOTIONAL LABOR

Hochschild's (2003) influential study of laboring bodies in the airline industry introduces a theory of the labor of emotion at work, specifically analyzing how providing customer service is emotionally laborious. Building from Mills' (1956) idea that we sell personalities in order to sell products and services, and utilizing Marx's theory of alienation (1978), Hochschild's theory of emotional labor relies on the idea that management prescribes specific emotional responses that employees are expected to display to customers in order to sell their product. In recognition of the impact of a service economy, which moves the worker away from material products and physical labor to serving as a mediator between the company and the customer, Hochschild affirms that "in processing people, the product is a state of mind" (Hochschild 2003: 6). Thus she theorizes that airline attendants are taught to suppress certain feelings and express others to

promote consumer consumption and notes the gendering of these emotions in relation to the occupation. She defines emotional labor not only as the worker managing her own emotions, but also affecting the emotions of the customer.

Hochschild's (2003) concept of emotional labor aligns with Foucault's (1995) ideas of surveillance and self-regulation. The employee begins to regulate her own emotional responses to align with company expectations. Hochschild ultimately argues that the worker's emotional self is appropriated by the company, thereby producing alienated labor. She bases this argument on Marx's concepts of alienated labor to position modern work as concerned with the human cost of becoming "an instrument of labor" that includes not only the body, but also the mind (Hochschild 2003: 3). Within my project, emotional labor was significantly present throughout my research as laboring lesbians strived to provide excellent customer service.

Hochschild's (2003) concern is that the exploitation of emotional labor without acknowledgment or compensation contributes to gender inequality. "The whole system of emotional exchange in private life has as its ostensible purpose the welfare and pleasure of the people involved. When this emotional system is thrust into a commercial setting, it is transmuted. A profit motive is slipped in under acts of emotion management, under the rules that govern them, under the gift exchange. Who benefits now, and who pays?" (Hochschild 2003: 119). As a result, she firmly connects the everyday practice of emotional labor in the workplace with a capitalist agenda.

An important aspect of Hochschild's (2003) work is how she analyzes emotion as a social process. In other words, emotion is enacted in relation to place, histories, identities and bodies. She makes reference to the embodiment of feeling, "bodily sensations joined with what we see or

imagine” (Hochschild 2003: 17). Emotion is not stored within us waiting to be called to duty, but rather a process through which feeling is created. Heavily influenced by Freud’s affect of anxiety and Goffman’s work on the study of the social, she defines emotions as, “a means by which we know about our relation to the world, and it is therefore crucial for the survival of human beings in group life. Emotion is unique among the senses, however, because it is related not only to an orientation toward *action* but also to an orientation towards *cognition*” (Hochschild 2003: 228). What I want to highlight here is how Hochschild (2003) situates emotion as a process in relation to the social. In other words, emotion prompts awareness and understanding in relation to socially situated environments. For the purposes of my project, the gas station becomes a site of emotional labor analyzed in reference to class context, capitalist profit motive, the customer, and the laboring lesbian body.

Just as emotions are considered a primarily feminine trait, emotional labor is considered to be primarily a woman’s job (Buchanan 2006, Hochschild 2003, Korczynski 2003). Hochschild asserts that emotional labor is laden with primarily feminine skills, highlighting all the historically appropriate attributes of femininity- patience, grace and kindness- within the masculine world of work. One of the histories that cannot be ignored is the gendered nature of emotional labor, which has been primarily assigned as a feminine attribute and hence associated with low-paying positions (Guy & Newman 2004, Hochschild 2003, Jocoy 2003, Korczynski 2003). True to Hochschild’s (2003) original intent, the literature still resonates with a political gender equality emphasis. My review of the literature will primarily stay true to this original intention, as I work to highlight the specificities of laboring lesbians’ emotional labor.

Several important critiques have arisen around Hochschild’s work. For example, Hochschild’s (2003) model is critiqued for being absolutist insofar as it argues employees’

emotional labor is completely under management control which neglects a sense of agency on part of the workers (Bolton & Boyd 2003, Korczynski 2003). Bolton & Houlihan (2009) propose expanding the idea of agency beyond resistance to management control in an effort to “get beyond” the control/resistance debate. They dismiss grand narratives of resistance and instead ask more specific questions such as “what is being resisted?”, “who is doing the resisting?” and “is it really resistance?” (Bolton & Houlihan 2009: 7). I adopt this philosophy within my own analysis of emotional labor.

Another strand of inquiry questions whether all forms of emotional labor are inauthentic, as scholars seek to provide space for “spontaneous” and “genuine” emotional encounters (Bolton & Boyd 2003, Ashforth & Humphrey 1993). Regardless of whether some emotional encounters are less “scripted” than others, Hochschild (2003) importantly shows that the employee cannot avoid the expectation of emotional labor required in a service environment. This point is critical to my project. Bolton & Boyd (2003) contribute to this area by suggesting that not all emotional labor is consciously decided. This dip into the unconscious allows a glimpse into how expectations for being a good citizen have been internalized. With McDowell (1995), I will suggest that within the service economy, we are witnessing the creation of an emotionally disciplined Foucauldian and gendered subject. It is through the perspective that addresses the reality of an internal private self and an external performance of emotional labor that my own work will engage in these questions of agency and spontaneous emotional labor.

An important theoretical strand growing out of Hochschild’s work is that the customer brings a degree of uncertainty to a service encounter (Bolton & Boyd 2003, Korczynski 2003, Payne 2009, Wharton 1996). Korczynski (2003) proposes that the focus on customer service artificially gives the customer power over the worker. In fact, he outlines how service moments

are specifically designed so the customer appears to be in charge. He argues that customer dissatisfaction occurs when “the continuing, rationalizing, bureaucratic imperative of production becomes apparent” (Korczynski 2003: 57). Within my own work, I will explore the tensions that arise between the laboring lesbian body as a source of regulation, and the power of the customer as a consumer.

While Hochschild’s (2003) original work on emotional labor focuses on more professionally oriented positions, a range of studies analyzes the role of emotional labor within front line service positions (Ashforth & Humphrey 1993, Korczynski 2003, Leidner 1999). Highlighting the importance of emotional labor in the service industry, Leidner writes, “In these kinds of jobs, it is impossible to draw clear distinctions between the worker, the work process, and the product or outcomes, because the quality of the interaction is frequently part of the service being delivered and thus, in many cases, the product generating company profits” (1999: 83). Leidner argues further that workers are now asked to “inhabit jobs” and that “they are required to bring some level of personal identity and self-expression into their work” (1999: 83). Leidner’s work is particularly useful in that it outlines how a company begins to indoctrinate a worker to the right attitude and commitment through classes, training, manuals, ceremonies, organizational history, stories of entrepreneurial power of the founder, highlighting distinguishing characteristics of the company, speech scripts, references to body language and movement and mission statements (1999:83). I will trace these powerful forms of indoctrination within the Hess Corporation in chapter 5. Here I want to remind the reader that while there may be specific forms of branded emotional labor for individual companies, emotional labor itself is part of a larger economic system as evidenced by the attention to recruitment and training programs (Leidner 1999, Seymour & Sandiford 2005).

Related to the concept of emotional labor and branding, aesthetic labor is a concept that has grown out of emotional labor and is useful to my study (Bohme 2003, Hancock & Tyler 2007, Witz et al 2003). Arguing that the literature on emotional labor ignores the embodiment of labor, this concept expands the idea of emotional labor to incorporate bodily aesthetics. Aesthetic labor is defined as a stylization of workplace performance that includes mannerisms, dress, body shape, grooming and attractiveness (Witz et al 2003). This concept emphasizes the commodification of the body in the workplace, arguing that branding has been extended to the body of the employee. Adkins (2000) provocatively discusses aesthetics and the lesbian at work arguing that sexuality is also being aestheticized through the targeting of queer consumers, the development of lesbian signs reflected in popular culture and images of lesbian pleasure (Adkins 2000: 203). What has emerged is a stylization of lesbian desire which cannot be viewed outside “commodity production” (Adkins 2000: 205). She deconstructs the authentic self in relation to emotional labor by suggesting, “that the opportunities for cultural invention provided by the aestheticization of work disavow the idea of a true, real essential self which exists in a mythical place outside of the formal realm of work” (Adkins 2000: 208). While I am not directly engaging with ideas of a lesbian aesthetic in popular culture in my own work, I am critically engaged with the concept of the body as a commodity and support how the self is not independent from the workplace. Furthermore, I would agree with Adkins that Hochschild’s original theory is an embodied one. However, researchers engaged with the concept of aesthetic labor firmly situate the body as an integral part of the market exchange, which is a vital point.

Given my commitment to an intersectional analysis, I note that class is not vigorously investigated within this literature. Additionally, I found little engagement with race in the sociology of work that specifically engages emotional labor. Steinberg & Figart (1999), while

careful to not equate emotional labor with sexuality, describe smiling, flirting and touching as implicit requirements of some positions. A notable geographically-informed exception to the study of emotional labor is McDowell's (1995) oft-cited study of sexed and gendered workplace performances. In her study of the banking industry, she is explicitly interested in the power relations that create a heterosexual and masculine working environment. In examining the conventions and rules in the workplace, including emotional labor, she argues that structures are based on heterosexual models of femininity and masculinity which result in specific bodily performances. She extends these performances of sexuality and gender to not only emotional labor but to the body, including dress as a disciplining process. McDowell clearly equates emotional labor with sexuality in describing the need to make clients believe they are receiving specialty, individual service. She writes, "For bankers, too, selling oneself-one's body, sexuality and gender performance- is part of the job" (McDowell 1995: 93). It is in this framework that I will engage with emotional labor in relation to laboring lesbians in U.S. gas stations. In particular, I will explore how the place of the gas station has a specifically gendered history and how the work duties are based on heteronormative expectations. It is with this specificity of place that my own work on analyzing the performance of emotional labor begins.

In chapters five and six, I will further engage with these specific critiques of emotional labor in relation to lesbian bodies in the U.S. gas stations. In essence, I will argue that *who* performs emotional labor and *where* it is performed and *for whom* shapes and forms its directions and interpretations. While feminist literature has effectively applied an intersectional analysis to the gendered nature of women's experience of work, the literature on emotional labor has not consistently attended to intersectionality. Valentine (2007b) argues that context matters in the performance of identity, and as such, attention to space strengthens intersectional analysis.

More succinctly, meaning is a function of bodies in relation to each other that are specifically geographically located. Valentine writes, “Yet despite the reference to identities as ‘situated’ accomplishments, the wider social science theorization of intersectionality has paid scant attention to the significance of space in processes of social formation” (2007b: 14). The combination of attention to work, identity and space is captured in McDowell’s work in what she would describe as “high touch” service positions in primarily informal economies. However, my work is situated slightly differently based on the context of a waged service position within a corporate framework. Hence, it is an illustrative example of how place sharply informs everyday experiences. The next section of this chapter will more fully expand on how space, which is always intimately connected to place, strengthens both an intersectional approach as well as provides a more nuanced framework for an analysis of emotional labor.

SEXUALITY AND SPACE

Throughout this chapter, I have hinted at the importance of space and place to my project without close attention to how it is being used or how it is produced. As a more engaged introduction to the geographies of sexualities literature, I will first situate why attention to space matters:

Geography matters, not for the simplistic and overused notion that everything happens in space, but because *where* things happen is critical to knowing *how* and *why* they happen (Warf and Arias 2008: 1).

The ideas of how place and space inform meaning runs throughout my project from the design of the project, to methodological concerns, as well as a theoretical weaving of sexuality within the sociology of work literature on emotional labor. In this framing, space is always intimately connected to place. It is this emphasis on *where* things happen that drives my interest

in a chapter devoted to the historical development of gas stations in connection with the oil industry, politics and economics. Tracing this development adds to an understanding of how and why “things happen” within this contemporary place. What I want to draw attention to here is that places are not limited to material locations, but also include systems, political and economic structures, and social processes. Therefore, my emphasis on *where* is expanded to include the company for which these laboring lesbians work, the company’s history, and the men who lead it. So, even as I will provide an intricate analysis of laboring lesbian bodies performing emotional labor, my analysis is always quietly connected to the combination of where, who, how and why.

After exploring the historical backdrops of gas stations and the company to establish the context of this particular geographical place, I turn my attention to how these multiple meanings pervade the contemporary workplace through an analysis informed by attention to space. As proposed by Warf and Arias (2008), space is where the material, the social and structures of power are animated. With this in mind, chapter 5 provides an analysis of how laboring lesbians’ everyday experiences are imprinted by this animation. Importantly, the study of space is not a one-way street as bodies both form and inform space. Therefore, my analysis in chapter 6 focuses on the ways in which laboring lesbian bodies alter, even partially, the place of U.S. gas stations. In order to achieve my analytic goals, I engage with a subset of geographical literature which centers on sexuality and space.

The study of sexuality and space, now more commonly referred to as geographies of sexualities, is an interdisciplinary body of literature based in geography (Oswin 2013). Building on feminist geography, geographies of sexualities begin with the assumption that space is not only gendered, but also presumed to be heterosexual. This has been explored across many

spatial scales including the body (Bell et al 1994, Browne 2004, Grosz 1998, Longhurst 2001, Munt 1998, Valentine 1993); the city (Bell et al 2001, Califfa 1994); community (Joseph 2002, Muller 2007); the state (Bell & Binnie 2004, Brown 2000); the workplace (McDowell 1995) as well as on a global scale (Oswin 2006, Rushbrook 2002). Thus Longhurst (2001) writes about how the pregnant body literally leaks sexuality in public space which disrupts the gendered, nonsexual image of a woman's body. Valentine (1993) outlines how the architecture of the home is designed for a heterosexual nuclear family and further that home ownership is heterosexually based on a male breadwinner. McDowell (1995) describes how social practices in the workplace are designed on heterosexual models of behavior and paternally structured. Taken together, this continually growing body of literature informs how disciplinary structures of gender, sexuality and class are actively working.

Importantly, geographies of sexualities are not limited, or even expressly focused on, the study of sexual behavior. In setting forth the importance of this area of study, Browne et al write, "What we do makes the spaces and places we inhabit, just as the spaces we inhabit provide an active and constitutive context that shapes our actions, interactions and identities" (2007:4). This statement clearly notes the circular nature of the study of space and highlights the theoretical usefulness of the concept of space. So, in a simplified example, a laboring lesbian coming out to a customer will disrupt a presumed heterosexual space at the same moment that she might have thought twice before coming out given the risk of being pleasurably noticed, consciously ignored, verbally harassed or physically harmed. Both events in one simultaneous moment mean something.

The beginning of the study of sexuality and space has been traced to geographical mapping of gay men in urban centers which promoted both visibility of the gay male community

and highlighted how heterosexual space was disrupted (Browne et al 2007, Podmore 2013). While these were certainly pioneering studies, the approaches used in this geographical mapping did not attend to gender. In addition, others discuss the importance of studying lesbians who may have not created specific communities that can be mapped (Browne et al 2007, Duncan 1996, Johnston & Valentine 1995). As a result, geographers began to think about spaces that were queered for particular moments in particular contexts, such as Browne's (2004) example of bathrooms. The integration of queer theory, ideas of performativity and an understanding of the construction of gender and sexuality has deepened the conversation and disrupted ideas of a unified category of gay or lesbian (Browne et al 2007, Lim 2007, Knopp 2007, Peace 2001, Probyn 1995, Sothorn 2004). Indeed, it has also required the acknowledgement of the complications of heterosexuality (Hubbard 2007). And finally, these theoretical trajectories have brought to light the ways in which the terms "gay" and "lesbian" are western constructs (Oswin 2006, Rushbrook 2002, Browne et al 2007).

However, within the literature, how queer is applied still leaves us with a tension between queer as a marker intended to disrupt categories and queer as a focus on the various ways sexuality is spatially constructed, practiced, policed and experienced. While acknowledging the progress made with investigating queer space, Oswin (2008) challenges theorists to move beyond defining queer space as occupied by gay and lesbian people and instead argues for a "queer approach to space" (2008: 91). She argues that "the task of queer critique, then, is simply to do the work of understanding how norms and categories are deployed" (2008: 96). In complicating the equation of gay and lesbian with queer, she reminds us that identity is the result of multiple axes of power beyond just sexuality. For the purpose of my project, I will focus on queer scholars' efforts to critically call out heteronormative space (Browne et al 2007, Green

2002). In essence, even as identity has been theoretically integrated as a social construction rather than a natural state, the same challenges have been directed towards how space is actively produced as heterosexual. Eng et al (2005) call for queer scholars of all disciplines to take up social issues that inevitably connect everyday lived experience to the context of infused systems of power.

I align myself with this theoretical perspective. While my project is politically devoted to lesbian lives, my interest is not to map LGBT bodies within a community or more generally, LGBT bodies across a collectivity. Rather, my work shares the goal of analyzing how sexuality is infused within a specific workspace. Though I begin my dissertation describing laboring lesbians interacting together, this group disbanded early in my research process. Within my study, laboring lesbian bodies are rarely in connection with each other and do not constitute either a geographically bounded community or even a virtual one, but rather share a common worksite across a region. In my project, I explore how laboring lesbian bodies in U.S. gas stations momentarily, temporarily, yet exquisitely, disrupt, conform, and play with heteronormative space. The U.S. gas station and the company are classically hetero-masculine geographies, and I am intent on tracing both how structures of power have been historically situated as well as how laboring lesbians manage this contemporary space of work. In analyzing emotional labor by laboring lesbian bodies, my interests is not to define a queer space per se but rather to think about how emotional labor rests on heterosexual presumptions that define the work of laboring lesbians. I also explore the ways in which laboring lesbians disrupt an assumed heterosexual delivery of emotional labor. I am not suggesting that queering emotional labor is a radical rewriting of heteronormative labor, but rather suggest queer as a signifier to highlight how normative expectations are at work in multiple ways.

Massey (2005) argues that space has been used to create universal histories, presents and futures. In an argument for an open model of space, she defines space as a “product of relations” which captures the countless ways bodies touch each other through interactions. This is particularly pertinent to my work within the service industry where bodies are involved in many, often short-lived, moments. She proceeds to argue that theorists have misused space in an effort to make complete, and hence, circularly closed, explanations of social relations. She believes that not all connections can be made or explained. In essence, the ways in which a laboring lesbian body interprets a smile, a greeting, a snide remark are all intimately connected to the site where she is working as well as to the complexity of identities both in relation to her own as well as the bodies around her.

Indeed, Massey (2005) argues that space has been traditionally used to freeze time in order to unpack multiple variables of structure at work, a theoretical device that has informed my own work. But, she argues, this assumed relationship between space and time is problematic. She utilizes a critique of structuralism to suggest that holding time still creates the illusion of a totality of fully interworked connections. I am interested in employing Massey’s critique in my own work. I propose that it is only by analyzing the multiplicity of actors and structures located within a moment that meaning can be understood, if inevitably in a partial and temporal way.

Ultimately, Massey (2005) is calling for a definition of space that relies on several founding principles. The first is that “space is a product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny” (Massey 2005: 9). The second is that space is open and thus is fragmented by multiplicity. Her third and final principle is that space is always being produced. It is the “simultaneity of stories-so-far” (Massey 2005: 9) that emphasizes the fact that space is never complete, always in process and always the result of

multiple interactions. Embracing these principles, my own work doesn't attempt to tell a story in totality. And certainly within our current rapidly changing economic time, the story I tell is only momentary. In fact, Hess gas stations are currently for sale. It remains to be seen what will happen to laboring lesbians who work in Hess gas stations. Already, these are "stories-so-far."

CONCLUSION

My research project is an interdisciplinary one, engaging in a range of literatures and drawing particular strengths from sociology of work, specifically scholarly work on emotional labor, and geographies of sexualities. It is the interdisciplinary nature of my project that organizes the substantive chapters intended to build on each other. I begin by specifically situating the place of U.S. gas stations in chapter 4. I follow with an ethnographic chapter providing an analysis of the ways in which laboring lesbians' work is gendered, classed and sexed in chapter 5. It is within chapter 6 that I most fully engage with multiple literatures as I ethnographically weave the foundations of emotional labor with geographies of sexualities. My goal within this chapter is to demonstrate how sexuality is a prominent aspect of laboring lesbians' work experiences. Ultimately, I propose that laboring lesbians queer emotional labor in multiple ways. Queering emotional labor is not a moment of complete and victorious transformation of heteronormativity, but an open moment of bodies in action with the potential to continuously and simultaneously open up new futures. From this view, it can be argued that emotional labor can be queered both collectively and individually, but always in relation to other human and non-human agents. Queering emotional labor is where all the variables of context are considered such as history, structures, agency, social locations, but always with the understanding that this is a process continuously in motion, a process that cannot and should not

provide a fully interconnected or linear story. Slippery in its meaning, a queer performance of emotional labor is not meant to be fully defined.

I would like to propose that a geographical framing strengthens a sociology of work project specifically focused on emotional labor through an analysis of laboring lesbians in the workplace. And this workplace is a context that is rarely examined. Tracing the historical significance of this particular workplace makes connections to a broader ideological project which will further our understanding of women- of all types and kinds- in the workplace. In addition, my specific attention to their lived daily lives including both mundane disciplined practices such as counting cigarettes as well as more complex interactions where their bodies become the labor with customers will provide a thicker description of both frontline service workers as well as lesbian lives.

CHAPTER 3: LABORING METHODOLOGIES- DESIRE AND ETHNOGRAPHY

I walked into a coffeehouse to interview an assistant manager whom I had never met. She was in her early 20's, butch and cute. We settled into the comfortable overstuffed chairs, both nervous not knowing what to expect from our conversation. Throughout the conversation, we continued to move our chairs closer and closer to each other at inconspicuous moments creating an intimate space within the increasingly busy space (Tweedy, fieldnotes).

As my research focuses on lesbians who work in U.S. gas stations, I have made a point of going to a gas station almost every day for the past five years to buy a diet coke. More than upping my caffeine intake, I have been fundamentally changed by my work with women who work in gas stations. I am much more aware of the pain and pleasure of service work and feel affection tinged with a deepening understanding of the difficulties these women often face. My local gas station is not Hess, but it still carries the flavor of a specific place that brings me comfort. I describe in a later chapter how laboring lesbians often know their patrons by what they purchase. I had the honor of earning my own title, "my diet coke lady," at my current gas station. I know the names of the women who ring up my purchases and they know mine. I often make a point of directly engaging with cashiers in gas stations and have heard tidbits about many women's lives. I have heard stories of needed hip replacements with no medical insurance, husbands who are unemployed and disappear fishing, Facebook fights with extended families, dogs that need expensive medication their owners can't afford, riding bikes to work because there is no money for a car, and concerns about needing welfare to supplement meager income. I am offering my frequenting of gas stations as a form of research method. But more importantly, I go to gas stations as a form of fulfilling my desire to stay connected to this particular site of service.

Multiple desires have arisen throughout my project and influenced the methodological decisions I have made throughout the research and writing process. Desire takes many forms within these processes, including the intellectual commitment to approach my topic from an interdisciplinary lens, a political motive to give voice to a group of lesbian women in the workplace, a growing curiosity about my place of research, as well as a flirtation between myself and the laboring lesbians I interviewed. From the beginning, my desire to understand the everyday life of laboring lesbian bodies pointed me to a qualitative project, and specifically, to an ethnographic one. The strength of ethnographic research resides in its ability to capture people's lived lives, in full complexity, while simultaneously focusing on the cultural context within which that life is lived.

In the social sciences, ethnographic practices are informed by various theoretical forces, moving from where it was believed a 'real' world- a universal truth- existed to be studied, to a more reflexive approach which holds that "truth" is situational (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: 3). Similarly, ethnographic practice, born from the anthropological tradition, has also moved from the study of artificially bounded local cultures to more complex and situated practices that recognize multiple social and economic connections among places (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). Poststructuralism and postmodernism have further influenced qualitative research methods, complicating fixed ideas of the body, culture, identity, history and subjectivity (Buroway et al 2000, Clifford & Marcus 1986, Coffey 1999, Denzin & Lincoln 2005, Gupta & Ferguson 1997, Kong et al 2003). These theoretical perspectives, though not synonymous, recognize the construction of the categories themselves. Rather, the focus is on how the categories work in relation to each other and constitute a multiplicity of 'realities' (deCerteau 1984, Denzin & Lincoln 2005, Gupta 1997).

Feminist theories concerned with embodied research, emphasizing the importance of a situated researcher in fieldwork, have given birth to wide-ranging ethical and reflexive conversations (Behar 1996, Christians 2005, Coffey 1999, Lincoln 1995). Within this context, the ethnographic study of sexuality put the focus back onto the researcher in the form of sometimes playful anecdotes, titillating confessions or affective reactions (Lewin & Leap 1996). All of these experiential additions challenge the rational, scientific model of research. My research interests focus not only on the messy composition of identity, but also on the intersection between physical places and social spaces and the economic and political complexities of power. As a result, the immersive experience of ethnography allows me a multifaceted lens from which to study.

Drawing on these traditions, I will argue that desire has also propelled me through a nine year research endeavor that began with my intention to conduct a traditional community-based ethnography centered on a group of lesbians. However, as my research progressed, I came to understand that the fact that these laboring lesbians all worked in gas stations for the same company was as meaningful as the community itself. Over time, two events changed the direction of my original project. First, due to the inherently transient nature of the work population in a service environment, many of the lesbians left the company and the original community I was studying disbanded. Second, and more importantly, through my own immersion in the field as a laboring lesbian body in the U.S. gas station, I became fascinated by different questions. The animating question became not how this community related to each other, but rather how did their sexuality affect their work in relation to the gas station, the company and the customer.

The focus of my project shifted to the intersections of class, gender and sexuality in the workplace. These intersections in the workplace, in turn, became illuminated through laboring lesbians' subjective experience of company expectations and interactions with the customers. This understanding strengthened my commitment to tracing structures of power within which the local laboring body worked on a daily basis. Attention to power in various forms required an interdisciplinary approach, pulling from multiple academic disciplines such as sociology, geography and queer studies. Conducting the research that I desired also required a multidisciplinary methodological and procedural approach. While the in-depth interviews typical of a qualitative project remained a priority, I also expanded my research to include archival research on Hess's company publications and current training materials, an analysis of the oil industry's impact on the landscape of the U.S., and a feminist-minded historical analysis of women's connections with U.S. gas stations. In addition, participant observation in this particular field required that I become a laboring lesbian body in the gas station.

This combination of attention to everyday lived life in relation to structures of power not only informed my choices of method in the design of this project, but also impacted my role as a researcher. For example, I assumed my own identification as a lesbian would create easy access to participants, but was surprised when I met class complications based on my own intersectional identity. Given that my intellectual work has always recognized the importance of place and space, I did not immediately make the connection that where I interviewed would matter as much as it did. For example, I learned that I needed to interview in locations where the women felt comfortable as a result of their own intersections of identity. Finally, I was unprepared for the commitment and affection I would feel towards the laboring lesbians who graciously told me their stories, stories that were painful as well as victorious.

This chapter is a reflexive exercise that details my ethnographic journey through the failures and successes I experienced. I will first explain my research choices in connection with the literature on methodology that informed my decisions. I will focus specifically on methodological connections between everyday practice and structures of power that provided a rich fabric of research material. I first turn my attention to the ways in which I conducted research on structure including the historical constructions of place and a focus on the company. Then I outline the ways in which I conducted research on embodied everyday practice. Finally, I will explore desire as both an erotic component of fieldwork as well as an ethical compass that directed me to examine how structures of power threaded throughout my process and required improvisations along the way.

METHODOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS: STRUCTURES OF POWER AND EVERYDAY PRACTICE

Social science is the study of social meaning, that is how people make sense of their life both individually and collectively (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). In studying the social, ethnography is one research method capable of focusing on multiple layers including place, space, identity, subjectivity, history, and political economy (Bogdan & Biklen 2003, Christians 2005, Denzin & Lincoln 2005, Holmes & Marcus 2005, Smith 2005). Ethnography's strength remains in attending to everyday lived practices, highlighting what people do on a daily basis, what it means to them, and how they make sense of their lives. However, a singular focus on everyday lived experiences has been critiqued for failing to examine the structures of power that have historically constituted that very invisibility of the everyday (Buroway 2000, Campbell 2004, Gupta 1997, Olesen 2005, Plummer 2005, Scott 1991, Talburt 1999).

As a feminist scholar, I am cautious of examining structure without attending to embodied experience. Combined with being a poststructuralist thinker, I am cautious of privileging embodied everyday experience without attending to the ways in which experiences are coerced, formed and internally possessed by structures of power. Both strands of thinking urge me to unpack the binary of the body and structure, emphasizing that both are complicated constructs that are incomplete, relational, temporal and simultaneous. Indeed, Foucault (1995) argues that “normalized behavior” is internalized through social institutions and everyday practice to the level that subjects unknowingly self-discipline themselves. Furthermore, if subjects do step outside of the “normal,” there are institutional systems in place to take on that disciplining role. Embodied experience cannot be separated from structural systems of power. As with Judith Butler’s (1990) work on gender, one’s sense of self is inevitably and intimately constructed by the disciplinary effects of power.

Given my commitment to studying embodied everyday practice in relation to structure, I borrowed principles from the concept of institutional ethnography to inform my research decisions. In a feminist call to study practice, Smith (2005) focuses on analysis of texts that inform individual action within institutional practice. Her call to study institutional ethnography also focuses on practice in minute embodied ways that bring attention to the structural forces that facilitate action. As summarized by DeVault, institutional ethnography “preserves the analytic significance of an embodied and agentic subject in a material world” (2013: 333). While my project was not designed as an institutional ethnography, tenets of institutional ethnography were helpful as I began to question how institutional frameworks such as the company were at work within laboring lesbians’ everyday work life in the particular site of the U.S. gas station. For example, I investigated workplace practices such as counting cigarettes, which were symbols of

institutional accountability. As I explored laboring lesbians' emotional labor, researching how the company set gendered front-line service expectations extra-locally served as a critically important complement to laboring lesbians' descriptions of their work. Components of institutional ethnography served as a foundation from which to begin the study of everyday practice within structure. Therefore, I utilized a broader lens to investigate how lesbian bodies are disciplined by ideologies of class, gender and sexuality within the workplace.

RESEARCHING STRUCTURE: GAS STATIONS AS A SITE OF RESEARCH

Two critical components furthered my research on structure. The first was that laboring lesbian bodies worked for a specific company was part of an industry that powerfully influenced America's landscape. The second was that this landscape included the specific site of the U.S. gas station. The commonplace existence of the contemporary gas station belies its rich historical influence and complex construction. In order to more fully understand the stories of laboring lesbians, I conducted feminist research on the geographical, economic and social development of gas stations in relation to the oil industry and the company itself.

As the geographical concepts of space and place are critical theoretical components of my work, I explored the specific site of the U.S. gas station as a space weighted with history and ideology. Comaroff & Comaroff (1992) advocate for the inclusion of history as a temporal groundwork for the study of practice and social structure as they write, "In order to construe the gestures of others, their words and winds and more besides, we have to situate them within the systems of signs and relations, of power and meaning, that animate them" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 11). They argue that if history is not conceptualized in relation to structure, then personal narratives remain just that- stories (1992: 17). At the same time, they acknowledge that

history is also a construct. However, despite the limitations of constructing histories, examining where we have been and how this informs the construction of place stimulates a deeper understanding of the contemporary moment.

In researching the company, I conducted an extensive review of materials from multiple sources including the company website, oil industry publications and business journals. This focus on company materials furthered my understanding of the messages and expectations of local laboring bodies within the local gas station as well as allowing me to explore the historical connections between the company and the overall development of gas stations in the United States. I also reviewed internal publications including training materials for the assistant manager and manager position within the local site. Finally, I participated in the training for an entry-level sales associate position.

In addition to these sources, I conducted a documentation analysis of annual reports from the 1960's, when the company became a publicly traded corporation. This review of annual reports was fruitful. Though I have become adept at utilizing online libraries from two institutions of higher education, accessing annual reports broadened my research abilities. The last ten years of annual reports were easily accessible from my desktop. Accessing annual reports from the 1990's and late 1980's required developing friendships with librarians who directed me to resources I did not know existed. The real challenge, however, was figuring out how to access annual reports from 1962 through mid-1980. I applied for an inter-institution library loan, but my application was denied due to the archival nature of the early annual reports, which universities were not willing to lend. Therefore, I began the process of arranging a campus visit to the Cornell University library. Then serendipitously, through a mishap of misplaced materials (theirs not mine), I connected with the Syracuse University warehouse

archival supervisor who was immensely helpful in my quest. Ultimately, he handed me a yellowed business envelope stuffed with microfilm and boxes of microfiches. I relearned and utilized both technologies as I manually scrolled through page after page on a screen I could barely read. In short, my research skills concerning historical materials were highly sharpened.

RESEARCHING PRACTICE: INTERVIEWS, PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS

In order to understand laboring lesbians' perspectives on their work, that is their practice, I utilized in-depth interviewing with eleven laboring lesbian bodies. While my initial research focused on lesbian laboring bodies in relation to each other, over time, I shifted the emphasis of the interview to more specifically focus on what they did every day at work in great detail. I interviewed each laboring lesbian twice.¹ Eight of the women were from one city and three were from multiple neighboring cities. The eleven women ranged in age from their early twenties to their late fifties. However, within that, there were patterns in relation to their job title. Five of the women who were in their early and mid-twenties were in entry level positions of sales associates. At the time of the first interview, four women were in their thirties and were in a position of assistant manager or manager. The remaining two were in their fifties. One had worked at Hess in the 1990's, who I interviewed to get a sense of laboring lesbians' work experiences in the past. The other did not work for Hess, but rather for an engineering firm that designed the gas stations. Finally, ten women identified as white and one identified as Italian and Puerto Rican. In total, I conducted eighteen in-depth interviews that consistently ranged from an hour to an hour and a half. The first interview with each subject served as an

¹ With the exception of three who left the company during my research process and I was unable to locate them. In addition, I interviewed a laboring lesbian once who worked for an engineering firm that designed the gas stations.

introductory exercise, which enabled me to begin building a relationship and rapport while also learning about each woman's history, education, life both within and outside of the workplace and a general description of their work responsibilities. The second interview focused solely on the workplace.

In addition, I determined that extended participant observations at my sites of research were essential to understanding everyday practices. While I frequently went to gas stations, spent time with laboring lesbians informally, and shadowed managers, gas stations are busy places. As a result, most lesbians did not have a lot of time for my presence. In order to engage in a more sustained observation and to be an engaged participant, I worked at a Hess gas station in an entry level position (Burawoy 1998). I approached a manager I knew and asked if she would hire me. Her initial assessment was that I was asking for a part-time job in order to supplement my income and she was very willing to hire me. I felt compelled to correct her and be truthful that I wanted to work there as part of my research. She was then slightly hesitant, but came to the conclusion that I should experience what it is really like to work there.

Over the period of a summer, I worked once a week. Typically, I worked on Fridays from 7:00am until 1:00pm as this was a busy time at this convenience store that would allow me to experience the morning rituals as well as the lunchtime rush. Throughout my chapters, I refer to my experience working as a laboring lesbian in a gas station. Within the context of methods, it is worth noting that I did not enjoy it, nor was I very good at it. I hated wearing the brightly-colored orange t-shirt advertising the current food specials. Even more, I hated tucking in my shirt as was required. As I was an entry-level worker and not a regular part of the scheduled shifts, I was a gopher. I made pizzas in preparation for lunch. I stocked the cooler. I cleaned and then cleaned some more. I worked the cash register during the busy lunch rush. My

memory of the experience is that I could never keep up and made many mistakes. As I progressed in my research, I was slightly surprised that laboring lesbians even had time to connect with customers.

This experiential learning at the worksite helped shift the focus of my interviews to the workplace and thus the focus of my analysis. I utilized Atlas-TI software to analyze my interviews which were digitally recorded and transcribed in order to devote minute attention and organization to the data. I coded and sorted my data across two categories. The first category centered on identity and included references to sexuality, class and gender. The second category focused on work and included the following codes: flirting, customer service, general duties, commitment to work, regular customers, and training. Through my process of assigning and defining codes, I realized that the sections blended across categories which supported my arguments of the connections between bodies and structure.

In the end, I borrowed from multiple methodological practices for my research project. This combination of methods allowed me to respectfully represent the stories of local laboring bodies in ways that attended to my desires, and to serve as a reflection of my theoretical commitments. While a focus on everyday practice provides a general framework for my analysis of the working lives of lesbians, in order to attend to structure, I felt propelled to go further in ways that moved me beyond in-depth interviewing and participant observation. My goals included deliberate attention to a space that is constructed as common, yet is symbolically powerful. Further, I sought to identify and connect structures of power that inform laboring lesbian bodies in the workplace, and to engage the complications of their laboring bodies in that space. Beyond the design of my project and subsequent supporting research decisions, my interest in the relationship between everyday practice and structure bled into my own labor

within the field. Through my experience, it is moments of embodied desire which highlighted the messy and sometimes uneasy juncture of power that informed my labor in the field.

DESIRE AND THE RESEARCHER: REFLEXIVE INTERSECTIONS

It is at this juncture- the uneasy, troubled crossroads where neoliberalism, pragmatism, and postmodernism meet- that a quiet revolution is occurring. This revolution is defined by the politics of representation, which asks, what is represented in a text, and how should it be judged? We have left the world of naïve realism, knowing now that a text does not mirror the world, it creates the world. Further, there is no external world or final arbiter- lived experience, for example- against which a text can be judged (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: xiv).

The theoretical movement that has questioned the construction of the categories of structure, agency, identity, community, local and global, and thereby rendered them porous, unmappable, and co-constitutive, has also highlighted the role of the researcher in ethnography. Denzin and Lincoln propose labeling a fourth historical phase of qualitative research beginning with the mid 1980's that they term the "crisis of representation" (2005: 8). This phase, they argue, is marked by social scientists engaging in self-reflexive analysis concerning how they themselves are influencing their research while paying attention to issues of race, class and gender. In essence, the researcher explores her own social location in relation to the research. Given the complexities of the intersections of identity for both the research and the researched, the researcher's gaze becomes critical to the interpretive construction of that text. In this tradition, my own identity as a lesbian contains the beginning motivations for conducting a lesbian-centered ethnographic project.

To this point, I have focused on the emergent design of my ethnographic research. While I would argue that an outline of the design of my project is itself a reflexive exercise, it is certainly only one layer of my construction of the story of laboring lesbian bodies. As the

opening quote signifies, there are many defining moments in an ethnographic text that beg interpretation, including careful understanding of the politics of representation of bodies and narratives. Both within the field and through the writing process, in my experience, multiple desires have served as reminders of the need for self-reflexivity. This has guided me through ethical considerations, recognition of my own agenda as well as strengthened my commitment to my research. For the remainder of this section, I will focus on reflexive desiring moments in the field to highlight how my own researching gaze informed my project.

In a discussion of the ethics of qualitative research and reflexivity, Christians reminds us that neutrality is not pluralistic, but imperialistic (2005: 148). The omission of the researcher from the text is not a sign of neutral, value-free observation, but a sign of the power of the academy that assumes scientific objectivity. Gupta & Ferguson (1997) call for a more specific reflexivity that does not presume that we, as ethnographers, all occupy the same social location. They call for more specificity and consideration of how the researcher impacts the text beyond the traditional laundry list of identity markers. The researcher's need to be reflexively present is a way to address the partialness of truth through the text, and highlight the power relations inherent in the research process (Clifford & Marcus 1986). Most importantly, I would argue that where there is power, desire matters.

Admittedly, there are differing levels of reflexive moments in ethnographic texts. Some researchers feel the need to situate themselves in the text and are satisfied with a footnote or paragraph in an appendix identifying their race, class, gender and sexuality. Indeed, Coffey (1999) argues that traditionally, reflexivity is superficial and partitioned rather than infused throughout the research. While I did make decisions in the text to selectively place myself where I felt my presence demanded it, generally I will follow a traditional path and primarily limit

myself to writing about self-reflexivity within this methodology chapter. However, reflexivity was a continual process from the beginning of my fieldwork to the very moment of writing this narrative. For the remainder of this chapter, I will travel through my fieldwork through the lens of desire.

EXPLORING ETHNOGRAPHIC DESIRES

“I am going to ask an embarrassing question. Is all this romance totally sublimated in fieldnotes and language learning only to emerge in texts as metaphors for the “heroic quest by the single anthropologists,” or does the erotic ever make a human gesture? If so, what might be the significance of the erotic equation in fieldwork and its representation or lack thereof in ethnographic text” (Newton 1993: 4).

Ethnographic research is embedded with relations of power from representations of identity that are anything but singular to troubled claims of authentic research that are embedded in disciplined academic regimes (Kong et al 2003). In the midst of these forces that guide our practice are the realities of research which are messy, emotional, complicated and embodied. In particular, I am referring to relationships within fieldwork. Feminist methodologists have questioned the strengths and limitations of the relationship between the researcher and the participant (Behar 1996, Gordon 1995, Guillemin 2004, Kennedy 1993, Krieger 1983). Gay and lesbian methodologists have also complicated the relationship between informant and participant by adding the element of desire (Grace et al 2004, Kulick & Wilson 1995, Lewin 1996, Newton 1993, Santillanes 2006, Talburt 1999, Valentine 2007, Weston 1996). One reason that desire matters is that in the practice of fieldwork, deeply personal relationships are formed (Coffey 1999, Kulick & Wilson 1995). We exist in relation with each other, and these relations inform the research. The immersion required in ethnographic practice placed me within a specific network of lesbian women over a period of nine years. While that network continued to change

throughout my tenure, I formed multiple types of relationships with the women I met. Within these relationships, and with regard to power relations embedded in a researching moment, desire weaved throughout my process.

As Newton (1993) asks above, does the erotic ever make a human gesture? In what ways could this gesture be conceived as practice and hence inform our research? I also want to be clear that while some authors have explored sex in the field, this is not the aim of my inquiry (Kulick & Wilson 1995, Lewin & Leap 1996). Instead, I am interested in exploring desire in perhaps more subtle ways- desire as erotic, flirtatious and caring. Furthermore, moments of desire prompted action on my part within my research. While Newton (1993) specifically highlights sexual desire in her discussion of the “erotic equation,” she also leaves space for an interpretation of desire separate from the sexual or perhaps in addition to the erotic. I would argue this includes inspiration and passion demanded of an ethnographic project.

I have been thinking about desire and ethnography for almost a decade. I wish there had been a moment when I experienced clarity that might have led to a singular, definitive explanation today. Instead, what I have to offer are intuitions and partialities that hope to capture the subtleties of erotic desire in ethnographic practice. During my research, I experienced many instances of flirting between participants and myself. What was happening that could cause me to smile sincerely and wink at a woman I had never met before? And why did she smile at me softly with a slight sparkle of interest in her eyes? Why did our bodies come closer together as the interview progressed, as if the possibility of desire was pulling us forward? I would have felt comfortable if this was a single encounter that I could safely attribute to a moment of mutual interest and admiration. But it happened again, and again. These moments of desire happened in varying degrees of awareness and strength. But in remembering, I could feel it was always

present. Coffey (1999) advocates for recognition of the self in fieldwork, whether or not that recognition is written into the text. Given my background of a counseling related master's degree, I took this need for reflection seriously as I was consistently surprised, troubled, and in fact, pleased by the multiple occasions when I encountered desire.

DESIRE IN THE FIELD

My identification as a lesbian, middle-age, white, middle-class, professional, academic contributed to both the success of my fieldwork, and the eruptions that I attended to within my fieldwork. Given that lesbian identity was the source of my political motivation to undertake this project, I assumed the status of being an “insider” would provide an immediate understanding with laboring lesbian women (Kennedy & Davis 1996, Lewin 1995, Newton 1996, Weston 1996). And though being a lesbian was helpful in establishing connections during the interview process, class became a much more critical axis of identity within the field. Desire helped me to recognize class- the moments when our experiences differed and I needed to attend to altering my practice. I argue that it was the experience of desire, on multiple levels, that helped ethically guide me throughout the complicated implications of identity within fieldwork.

In order to tell the story, I will explore desire from two perspectives: my desire and those of the lesbians I interviewed. On one simplistic level, my engagement with desire is relatively simple to explain. The very nature of in-depth interviewing is an intimate experience. Interviewing requires a laser focus that demands presence engaging all of the senses. I was rarely satisfied with the first answer I received to a question and continued to ask clarifying questions and push for richer descriptions of their experiences. An intimate space is created

through the process of devoting your attention to someone. Desire seeps into that level of engagement as stories are told, laughter shared, and connections made.

In addition, I truly cared about the women I interviewed both as individual people and as a collective group. I interviewed several lesbians throughout a nine year span. Even when I wasn't actively interviewing, I was in contact with them at least on a bi-annual basis. We knew of each other's divorces, babies, parents' health issues, and new relationships. In essence, while we might not have shared a deep friendship, I cared about them, and my care for the laboring lesbians I interviewed translated into the text in multiple ways.

First, classical ethnographic research assumes a "necessary" distance between researcher and participant. As I practice the art of ethnography, I question the reality of that distance. For example, even the language of "participant" and "informant" implies a distance that can be challenged. But more importantly for me, it creates a hierarchy that I have chosen to reject in writing this project. Throughout my text, I identify participants as laboring lesbian bodies. Though I fear the facelessness this descriptor implies, I am deeply uncomfortable claiming ownership of "my participants."

Secondly, I came to understand the challenges of their lives as they trusted me with multiple stories of alcoholic mothers, absent fathers and abusive partners; obstacles that prevented them from continuing educations and financial restraints that impacted their choices. My own privilege of working on a doctorate stood in stark relief to their experiences. Further, I came to a full appreciation of their work; work that was busy, at times redundant, where they were sometimes treated badly, and burdened with huge responsibilities. Notwithstanding the constraints, they were almost unanimously committed to serving customers and finding spaces of

play in the workplace. In writing my text, I was not willing to sacrifice a deep analytically open engagement with the research material. But I did feel protective. I am committed to representing their voices in the most respectful way possible. Above all else, I have tried not to judge their actions, but to understand them.

At a deeper level, I came to understand that many of the lesbians I interviewed didn't feel that what they did was important. In an effort to draw out specificities of their daily work life, as well as their own personal histories, I flirted as a way of communicating my interest in their work as well as an affirmation of themselves. While this sounds potentially devious and staged, I would argue this was a slightly less intentional tactic that developed during interviews. After all, I truly was engrossed in them and their work. Furthermore, as I came to understand, they were well-versed in flirting as a way to make connections with others in the workplace as I personally experienced. In this context, my desire to hear their stories is expressed through flirting. I wanted to engage laboring lesbian bodies and gently transform their sense of worth as laborers and provide assurance that their stories were worth telling in granular detail. Most specifically, I wanted to impart a sense that their work mattered to me personally. And as I was engaged in research for a dissertation which they all knew as they signed the consent form, their experiences of their work would be of interest within the academy. Certainly, in this way, class arose through our shared label as lesbians to mark our differences. While class differences urged my desires, I chose to respond not in trying to pretend our class differences did not matter, but rather connect in ways that would feel familiar to both of us and were based on shared desires as lesbians.

Desire also took other forms in my fieldwork. To connect with the majority of the laboring lesbians I interviewed, I utilized snowball sampling. However, there came a time when

I needed to geographically move outside of the originating area of my research which forced me to use expanded networks and other methods of finding participants. I was always on the lookout for possible connections in my daily trips to gas stations. It is through connecting with a laboring lesbian body that I will illustrate another element of their desire as I experienced it. One day, per my usual routine, I stopped at a gas station outside of my regular route to get a diet coke. As I was paying for my purchase, I realized that the cashier was a lesbian. And although I had my son with me (which sometimes leads others to read me as straight) she identified me as a lesbian. This interaction was instantaneous and largely nonverbal. In an effort to upsell me from my 12 ounce diet coke to a 32 ounce diet coke that would only cost me an additional forty cents, she intensely flirted with me through smiles and gestures, despite the line forming behind me. Though I remained committed to my 12 ounce diet coke, I was curious that she was flirting with me. I didn't interpret it as flirting out of sexual interest as I was old enough to be her mother, wearing a wedding ring and toting around my son. Then I realized I had just witnessed flirtatious emotional labor in action as a consumer. Through my research, laboring lesbian bodies tell story after story of going out of their way to please customers in order to create a sense of loyalty to the store. During the interviewing process, I propose that laboring lesbians relied on techniques they utilized on a daily basis in order to connect with me. These techniques translated into a concentrated focus of attention on me as I was concentrating on them. The combined concentration of interest made the interview space ripple with desire.

PARTIALLY INSIDE: INTERVIEWING LINDA

Fire and Ice

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.

From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

Robert Frost

Desire is a slippery term full of multiple imaginations and it is difficult to think through in a cohesive, simply experienced form within my research. Though desire is often associated with feeling good, the feeling can also be uncomfortable. During the course of my project, connections between me and lesbians were complicated by a shared identification as lesbians both in the form of flirting as well as differences in class. Lewin & Leap (1996) describe a feminist contribution to anthropological study that shifts the focus of studying the other to studying themselves. This is also true for researchers of color. Sometimes termed “native anthropology,” this approach raises other methodological concerns, as well as benefits. The primary concern rests on questioning the objectivity of the “native” researcher (Lewin & Leap 1996: 10). On the other hand, while fieldwork has traditionally been characterized as the lone ethnographer entering a new, distinct and distant culture where social blunders were part of the anthropological growing up process, the native studying the native originally assumed this cultural inauguration was not a barrier.

However, in light of the focus on fluid and intersectional identities, the idea of insider/outside status has been further deconstructed by ethnographers (Kennedy & Davis 1993, Kong et al 2001, Krieger 1983, Lewin 1996, Weston 1998). In expanding reflexive moments through written text, Weston (1996) tells the story of her book dedication. In that story, she

proposes that a self-identified lesbian identity does not guarantee insider knowledge. And further, it can be a barrier if shared understandings are assumed rather than discussed in the research process. She writes, “A single body cannot bridge that mythical divide between insider and outsider, researcher and researched. I am neither, in any simple way, and yet I am both” (Weston 1996: 275). Similarly, my own experience in the field has led to moments of examining my own assumptions of insider status which I assumed would provide a bridge of understanding in the field. As the focus of my project changed from lesbians in relation to each other to lesbians in relation to their work, my status as an insider also changed significantly.

Most notably, I experienced multiple moments where I had to attend to differences of class between myself and the women whom I was interviewing. As I have described, I worked at a gas station for a brief stint where I quickly realized I was not an insider when it came to lesbians working in gas stations. This socially located difference demanded attention from the very first interview to the very last. To illustrate how class was significant in my fieldwork, I will describe a critical methodological mistake that I made near the end of my research. But this story is more nuanced than just a response to difference, it also describes a moment where I was uncomfortable with desire.

I was about to interview Linda for the first time. Linda works at a Hess station in a neighboring city about forty minutes away. I didn't know the area very well and as we exchanged text messages about where to meet, I suggested Panera Bread which was located by a major shopping mall. As I entered the eatery, my discomfort quietly grew. The place was packed with clearly middle-class women and their infant children out for lunch, as well as with professionals from local businesses. While I had already learned to intentionally dress down for interviews, this time I was coming from work and was wearing business casual clothing. Linda

arrived in her tie dyed over-sized t-shirt and men's athletic shorts, and we sat down to get to know each other better while sipping our drinks. I gave her a copy of the IRB form to review and sign, only later realizing that she had severe dyslexia and could not really read it without extended time. Moreover, she had just experienced a break-up with her girlfriend and when I asked her how she was doing, she dropped her eyes. As we casually talked about ourselves as a beginning exercise of learning about each other, Linda told me she loved poetry. She then recited Robert Frost's poem "Fire and Ice" from memory. Though clearly a performance, I was intensely uncomfortable being in a public setting responding to what I perceived as partly an intimate exploration of interest in me. The interview was quickly becoming a disaster.

Desire was working through our interaction in multiple ways. I knew she felt out of place within the environment. I felt out of place in what was being constructed as a date rather than an interview. As a result, I looked around and made a comment about it being too loud and suggested we go sit in my car. I needed to shift the dynamics prompted by both the space we were in as well as the space between us. In the more private and familiar shared space of the car, with me literally in the driver's seat, we both relaxed and proceeded to talk for over an hour. As was perhaps appropriate to my research topic, I interviewed in cars more than once during my fieldwork. Though cars are also laden with gender, class and sexuality as I describe in a subsequent chapter, they provided private spaces that rescued me more than once. And while laboring lesbians' primary work was in gas stations, they were comfortable with cars. Given my academic focus on the power of place in the construction of meaning in our everyday lives, I was surprised I hadn't thought through the implications of where I initially selected to interview Linda.

Throughout my research process, I interviewed in trailers, studio apartments, single family homes, the workplace, my own home, as well as in cars. Each time, I encouraged the laboring lesbian to select the location. But, in this previous example of my first interview with Linda, not being familiar with the terrain, coupled with Linda's hesitancy to suggest a location to meet, laid the groundwork for a terrible fit. For our second interview, I made sure to wear shorts and a t-shirt and we met at a Dunkin' Donuts.

In this case, my desire is complex. First, I was desperate to interview another laboring lesbian body, as motivated by my need to satisfy my committee and claim a reasonable number of interviews. More importantly, I had developed a fondness for laboring lesbians over the years and truly was interested in hearing her stories. To provide an environment conducive to sharing, I wanted for her to be comfortable. I was also ethically compelled to stay aware of the differences in our social locations that would interact with the research process. When these multiple forms of desire collided, I experienced an affective and embodied reaction that prompted me to pay more attention to the spatial dynamics impacting our interview.

Importantly, I learned that I needed to reflexively attend to moments of embodied desire within the field. It is through the moments of experiencing desire in multiple ways that I became aware that I needed to alter the course of the interview, stay closely in tune with dynamics between me and the laboring lesbian and, as in this case, change the environment of the interview.

Throughout my dissertation project, I argue that the place of work informs everyday practices. This example highlights the power of place that was certainly raced, classed and temporally gendered. The space at that particular moment was entirely unsuited to two lesbians who were laboring in different ways that I would argue made us both uncomfortable. It is through this lens that this lesson in desire is applicable to any interview within an ethnographic study. The

intersection of identity is not limited to bodies but expands to include our surroundings. Given that there are already many power dynamics working through an interview, careful attention to where we stage our research is equally important.

CONCLUSION

As I designed an interdisciplinary project that attended to the ideologies of class, gender and sexuality within the U.S. gas station, my methodological choices became multi-faceted. Given that I focus on laboring lesbians working within one specific company, I quickly realized that an analytical review of company materials was critical to understanding the everyday working lives of laboring lesbians. As I continued to make connections, realizing the company's gas stations were part of a larger neoliberal agenda, I turned my attention to a historical analysis of gas stations in relationship to the geographical landscape of our nation. And finally, given that I am investigating a work site that is intimately connected to a particular commodity, my research expanded to include research on the oil industry. While the foreground of my ethnographic commitment remained on the everyday practices of laboring lesbian bodies, I assert that supplementing this research with historical and archival work gave new light to the understanding of gas stations as a site of work and how laboring bodies perform service. As such, I am able to make more nuanced and informed connections between structure and practice as it relates to laboring lesbian bodies within U.S. gas stations.

It is through the lens of desire that I argue my interests developed both in the overall methodological intent of my research as well as within the field. Desire served to move me in particular directions in response to a need to understand the laboring lives of lesbians in gas stations. Desire also pointed my direction as I encountered obstacles, openings, difference, and

likeness within my fieldwork. In this way, desire serves not as a problematic aspect of fieldwork to be repressed, but rather as an embodied alert to ethically respond to challenges and opportunities within my research. At the most organic level, when I experienced a spark of desire, I began to understand that something was *happening* that demanded my attention. As I describe, the happening of desire took multiple forms from flirting between me and laboring lesbian bodies in order to engage each other, to gently affirm them and their work, my own agenda, as well as recognition of differences. Through my experiences of desire, I stumbled upon the realization that the interview setting was as important as all the interviewing skills I had been taught.

During my years in the field, I learned that each interview would be different. This difference was a reflection of the shifts in academic inquiry of my project, moving from an initial focus on a lesbian community to a focus on their everyday work. In addition, it was a reflection of a dance of differences and sameness between me and each specific lesbian laboring body. My academic examination of the relationships between structure and everyday practice was reflected in both the design of my research and within my fieldwork. My assumption of a shared identity with laboring lesbians in my project was one measure of connection that I ultimately realized was only partial. Intersections of identity became more than a way to organize academic inquiry of identity. The embodied reality of identity in everyday lived lives is complicated and impactful. Awareness of this partiality propelled me to pay attention to desire as a methodological tool for insights. Through these insights, I was able to make the connection between flirting and emotional labor which serves as a central focus of my dissertation.

CHAPTER 4: PUMPING THE “GOOD LIFE”: CONSTRUCTIONS OF SEXUALITY AND GENDER IN U.S. GAS STATIONS

The 1920’s saw the birth of the secular temple of modern American Civilization—the drive-in gasoline station (Yergin 1991: photo 35).

INTRODUCTION

Shortly before 8:00 in the morning, Kelly kisses her girlfriend good-bye and leaves her suburban home for work. As she drives down the two-lane route in her working class neighborhood, she mentally notes the gas prices at the gas stations she passes: \$3.84. \$3.92. \$3.87. She arrives at her store where she works as a manager, turning her brand-new, fully loaded Chevrolet Mustang into the parking lot. She parks in the farthest corner parking spot because she is nervous about someone denting her pride and joy. She notices that the Pepsi display in front of the store is not fully stocked and frowns. A display that is not fully stocked can mean that customers don’t buy Pepsi. Kelly knows that she needs every sale she can get in order to receive her bonus this quarter.

As she approaches the door, she takes a deep breath and straightens the required green and white speckled uniform polo shirt with the company logo stitched on the right breast. The shirt is neatly tucked into her favorite pair of men’s khakis. She notices that her required black shoes are getting a bit scuffed. The comfortable shoes, however, serve her well. She’ll be on her feet until almost 7pm that night. As she enters the store, she remembers that she wants to buy the new Hess toy truck before it is sold out for her collection. She keeps them in a closet at home in the original packaging as a symbol of the pride and loyalty she feels to the company. She also knows the toy will eventually become a collector’s item. After getting settled in for her day, as she does every morning, she calls the corporate office to inform them of the competitor’s gas prices. She is then told what price to sell the store’s gas for the day.

(Tweedy, narratively created from the combination of fieldnotes and interviews with Kelly)

My ethnographic project centers on the everyday experiences of laboring lesbian bodies working in U.S. gas stations. While today’s gas station sells much more than just gas, its primary reason for existence has always been to sell fuel for automobiles. Moreover, due to our dependence on the automobile to meet the daily demands of our lives, the gas station is a central place in everyday American life.

However, the gas station is not an isolated and unconnected site of consumerism. Place is embedded with structures of power which shape boundaries, expectations and practices. Thus, the meaning of gas stations in their current form requires understanding a complex history that has influenced contemporary culture, economics, politics and social space. Notably, each gas station boasts a lighted neon sign as a visual reminder of the connections to the company that owns it and the primary product it sells. Therefore, I will pay attention to two key structures of power in this chapter: the oil industry as a whole and the specific company related to my project, Hess. My purpose in this exercise is to ultimately highlight the ways in which the place of gas stations is imbued with specific ideologies of class, gender and sexuality. As I move explicitly into an analysis of the everyday experiences of laboring lesbian bodies in further chapters, this foundational work is important to understand the ways in which these meanings are translated into their job duties and their everyday work experiences.

Gas stations are intricately connected to the powerful oil industry and the masculine status-laden automobile. Indeed, the politics of oil and a continual neoliberal agenda have produced this key physical, economic and social landscape. Jackle and Sculle (1994) argue that the gas station is so much a part of our environment that it is often overlooked. It is this very “commonness” that makes it a rich site to capture a glimpse of the everyday life of the laboring lesbian body. Though the U.S. gas station is a common place of consumption, as the opening quote from Yergin (1991) indicates, it is a significant symbol of a very specific construction of “civilization.”

Oil is one of the few natural resources that is connected to virtually every marketable product. Oil serves as a necessary ingredient for thousands of products, but also creates an infrastructure for consumerism that relies on oil for manufacturing and shipping (Downey 2009).

Oil is integrated into every facet of a capitalist economy, and those men who control it have immense power. While recognizing the important connections between the oil industry and far-reaching social and political influences, this chapter specifically focuses on one by-product of oil: gasoline and the “secular temple” designed to sell it- the gas station. Indeed, the very landscape of the U.S. has been formed by motives driven by the need for gasoline. Within this context, the image of a grease-stained male mechanic historically pumping gas shifts to that of a female cashier in a service industry ringing up a customer’s purchase. In this chapter, I will trace how the individually owned gas station, as a symbol of entrepreneurial spirit, becomes the outpost of the hegemonic, global oil industry in a multinational corporate economy. In this tale, the sidewalk gas pump in the city center morphs into a neatly manicured corner lot on a wide suburban street. And finally, the recent addition of the retail convenience store opens the door of the gas station to laboring lesbian bodies.

Given the significance of the gas station as an everyday location, this chapter aims to explore specific power dynamics which inform the current experiences of the local laboring lesbian body. Specifically, I will trace the development of gasoline, which is inseparable from widespread use of the automobile. Further, I will trace the history of gas stations that, as part of a neoliberal agenda, supports an ideology of the “good life” based on an idealized heterosexual nuclear family within the U.S. To illustrate this ideology, I will first describe how infrastructure that includes gas stations develops as part of the landscape defining a very specific ideal of the “good life.” Second, I will review the marketing and branding efforts of the oil companies that defines a specific female consumer, motorist and social subject. I will attend to a very distinctive history of the industry and marketing practices that has contributed to shaping women’s lives in the United States. As I will demonstrate throughout this project, profit is of

utmost concern and, as a result, branding and service is essential to understanding the contemporary space of the gas station for the laboring lesbian body. Finally, the laboring lesbian body in this study is working within a gas station owned and operated by Hess. In order to more fully understand the local site of the working lesbian at a retail gas station, I will sketch how Hess is situated, historically and in the contemporary moment, within this broader context. Through these tracings, I intend to illustrate how the common space of the gas station is historically masculine and continually reproduces hegemonic ideologies of sexuality, class and gender.

OIL AND CIVILIZATION

At the end of the twentieth century, oil was still central to security, prosperity, and the very nature of civilization (Yergin 1991: 13).

The birth of modern dependency on oil is actually not tied to gasoline, but rather to kerosene (Downey 2009). Others have described how, as the U.S. continued its quest for “civilization,” the need for artificial light to lessen a dependence on sunlight resulted in a decline of the whale population (Yergin 1991, Downey 2009, Rutledge 2005). Whales were hunted and butchered for their oil that burned brighter and cleaner than beeswax. By the 1850’s, whale oil was becoming an elite commodity due to the rising costs of its production (Downey 2009). In 1854, an entrepreneurial Pennsylvania businessman, in collaboration with a Yale professor, discovered that crude oil could be heated to create kerosene (Downey 2009). This discovery resulted in the creation of an industry.

The development of electricity and the widespread use of electric light reduced the country’s dependence on kerosene as a source of energy (Yegin 1991). Though this resulted in a

decreased use of kerosene, it was discovered that the process of heating crude oil created another by-product that was initially thrown away (Downy 2009). As fate would have it, an innovation was in the works that would make use of, in fact depend upon, this “throwaway” byproduct of kerosene production. I am referring to the mass produced automobile in the early era of the twentieth century (Downey 2009). It was the discovery that crude oil could be heated and refined to produce gasoline, and the subsequent discovery of immense oil fields in Texas, that made widespread use of the automobile possible (Downy 2009). While the original Ford engine was powered by ethanol, the overabundance of oil that could be made into gasoline readily and economically made gasoline a preferable choice as the primary fuel for the mass produced Ford Model T. Further, it was the strategic advantages of speed and availability afforded by oil that prompted Winston Churchill to change the fuel source for the British Navy during WWI partially credited with their ultimate victory. Countries worldwide followed suit, securing a gigantic military consumer for oil companies while strengthening ties between industry and government interests (Yergin 1991).

The U.S. was the second largest producer of oil until the 1990’s (Rutledge 2005). However, demand for oil had already exceeded domestic production by the 1970’s, forcing oil companies to focus more explicitly on exploration and production throughout the world (Yergin 1991). The stakes, in terms of money and influence, surrounding oil are immense. This is largely due to the fact that “oil as a commodity is intimately intertwined with national strategies and global politics and power” (Yergin 1991: 13). The production and marketing of oil is carried out by oil companies. But given an economy that relies on the availability of oil, the U.S. government is deeply concerned with and actively involved in securing access to oil by maintaining careful diplomatic ties to oil rich countries, while supporting and protecting the

infrastructure such as pipelines, in order to keep oil flowing and affordable (Maass 2009). The quest for control of oil is connected to a breadth of worldwide government and corporate decisions including war, tenuous relationships with developing countries that have eventually wrestled ownership of national oil reserves, backroom deals to secure U.S. interests, and belated concern for the environmental impact of the multiple stages of oil production. Furthermore, oil has seeped into our everyday life in multiple ways. By-products of oil are a necessary ingredient of thousands of products consumed daily within the U.S., significantly impacting the construction of our everyday lives within the U.S.

THE MAKING OF A NATION: CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE “GOOD LIFE”

It is commonly understood that we live in an energy needy society, dependent on multiple natural resources required to fuel our material life by lighting our homes, cooking our dinners, and driving our cars. While the focus of my project is on gasoline, oil products are embedded in the very fabric of our lives. Conoco Phillips includes an interactive page on their website where one can click on a particular room to learn just how pervasive oil derived products are in our day-to-day world.² A pop-up appears describing how oil products- including natural gas- are used in our everyday lives. The list is surprising and includes everything from coatings on pain relievers, the ingredients for make-up, shampoo, couch foam inserts, insulation, fertilizer, nonstick cookware, nonflammable and colorful clothes, hangers, toys, crayons, laundry detergent (both the container and the product), and casings for computers.

² (<http://www.conocophillips.com/EN/about/energy/pages/petroleumhouse.aspx>: retrieved April 20, 2013).

Indeed, Huber (2012) convincingly argues that a specific neoliberal agenda has assured that we are dependent on oil products. Further, Huber argues that what Americans define as success is inseparable from the market and ultimately, the oil industry (Huber, 2012: 311). He describes this construction of the “good life,” marked by the privatization of the nuclear family which led to suburban development, the entrepreneurial spirit of private home ownership, and the now familiar trappings of success for the nuclear family, most notably including a car. He uses Exxon’s branding tag line from the 1950’s to illustrate his point: “petroleum helps to build a better life” (Huber 2012: 305). Huber (2012) argues that “oil’s imbrication within a vision of entrepreneurial life is not singular. It not only provided the gasoline to propel masses of atomized individuals through the dispersed geographies of social reproduction (home, work, school)- but also provided the material for much of this sociospatial infrastructure- asphalt for roads, vinyl siding for homes, countless plastic commodities to fill the home” (2012: 302). Yergin likewise argues that the powerful reach of oil companies has formed our very “modern way of life” as oil-infused products are woven into our everyday lives and serve as the “lifeblood of suburban communities” (1991: 14). In this construction of the nuclear family, I want to highlight the implied assumption of heterosexuality. Hence, not only is “the good life” a gendered, racialized and class-specific project that shapes the place of women within the nuclear family, but a sexed project that privileges heterosexuality.

While my project is not an analysis of neoliberalism in its many forms and guises, I am mindful of the ways in which neoliberal imaginings becomes critical to the exploration of laboring lesbian bodies in U.S. gas stations. Through a neoliberal framework, Huber (2012) points to the how the “good life” is available only through the oil industry which provides the material trappings for it, cloaked in a narrative of individual choice and hard work.

Neoliberalism is an incomplete, yet penetrating political economic theory based on securing interests of the private market through market deregulation and privatization (Harvey 2005). Importantly, Harvey also draws attention to the message of individual entrepreneurial freedom advocated by a neoliberal policy that includes an emphasis on private property and free markets. Rofel argues neoliberalism is more than an economic and political ideology, but as influenced by Foucault, “a mode for governing citizens” (2007: 15). In the neoliberal paradigm, citizens are considered consumers and market needs infiltrate all forms of social life. In this case, market driven values are embodied in everyday practices. Though neoliberalism is a political economic theory, it also has ideological underpinnings. Lerner suggests neoliberalism influences “the commonsense way that many of us interpret, live in and understand the world” (2006: 449). The U.S. gas station, as a specific site of consumerism, is a clear example of a neoliberal ideological project in this country’s historical development, insofar as it is the arm of an industry that holds immense power to form and alter multiple U.S. landscapes.

Indeed, consumption is a much needed ingredient to keep a neoliberal economy afloat. The focus on consumption allows capitalism to work as a cultural economy as well as an economic one (Klein 2000). What I find particularly powerful is that not only is there a directive to consume, but neoliberalism supports a specific message of what, where, and how to consume. For example, Huber (2012) marks the birth of neoliberalism with the postwar political arena of the late 1940’s and 1950’s, arguing that neoliberalism becomes hegemonic in the post-Fordist economic period of the 1970’s. This closely mirrors my own research on the history of gas stations in the U.S., including mass production of cars in the 1920’s and the development of the U.S. highway systems 1950’s, which allowed for suburban growth synonymous with private home ownership. I would argue that gasoline, the car, and gas stations have played a key role in

this story. While the gas station is now an everyday place that is almost invisible in its commonness, it is a key part of the landscape that the advent of gasoline as fuel made possible. It is notable that by 2001, 69% of oil consumption was for transportation, with 53% of total oil consumption by motor vehicles alone (Rutledge 2005:10). Hence, the gas station as a delivery point for this indispensable resource is significantly important in a society so heavily dependent on motorization.

Due to oil's first place as a source of energy, Yergin (1991) argues that oil is central to the national economy. In the 1960's, the president of General Motors is reported to have said, "what is good for General Motors was also beneficial to the country" (Rutledge 2005: 19). Rutledge argues that there is some economic truth in this assertion, citing the number of automobile makers and oil companies that were included in the Fortune 500 list in the 1960's (Rutledge 2005: 19). Indeed General Motors was at the top of the list. At that time, the top 10 list also included Exxon, Ford, Mobil, Chrysler, Texaco and Gulf. Not surprisingly, Rutledge's evidence details the power of these companies to literally shape not only the U.S. economy, but also the creation of a specific service sector focused on a mobile consumer market including shopping, entertainment and tourism (Rutledge 2005). From the turn of the twentieth century through the 1960's, our national dependence upon the automobile created and firmly instituted the physical infrastructure of malls, suburbs, highways and a gas station on every corner. The American construction of the "good life," intimately connected to material belongings such as a car and a house, has been purposefully mapped by a broader social, political and economic agenda.

In the rest of this chapter, I will follow two paths in exploring how the U.S. gas station plays a role within this neoliberal construction of the "good life." The first focuses on the

material infrastructure of highways, suburbanization and the private home as collaboratively directed by the oil industry. I demonstrate how the oil industry is agile enough to both cause the landscape changes as well as shift with the landscape as it changed through multiple forms of gas stations. Secondly, I will highlight marketing efforts that are specifically aimed at women as a result of increased competition for market share by the oil companies. These marketing efforts are reflected in advertisements, as well as the material location and design of gas stations. In short, I will argue that the development of gas stations helps us to understand the rise of a neoliberal culture that is mirrored in the rise of the use of automobiles and the development of suburbs where the gas station is placed on neighborhood corners, marketed to particular women, and becomes a common part of our everyday lives. Threaded throughout this description, I point to the ways in which the development of gas stations supports a heteronormative, gendered, racial, and classed ideology of the “good life.”

THE OPEN ROAD: MASCULINE MOBILITY AND THE AUTOMOBILE

The history of the automobile is packed with stories of men attaining the American dream through entrepreneurship. The widespread use of the automobile signifies the shift to an industrial economy as systematic technologies resulted in the ability to mass produce them. The mobility enabled by the automobile also changed the material landscape. When the automobile became affordable to the middle-class, support markets were created to fulfill the demand. Highways were mapped onto the landscape, often ignoring the boundaries of private property and the geographies of cities. Quarries boomed in response to the need for highway materials, and thousands of men built roads (McShane 1994). Federal and state governments enacted laws and policies to meet the increasing need for order as automobiles crowded city streets often creating accidents. This newly mobile society needed nourishment and lodging to meet the

needs of traveling individuals and families. Motels and restaurants appeared in abundance (Scharff 1991). The automobiles themselves also required mechanical repair and fuel to sustain travel. From that critical need the gas station was born.

The early automobile of the 20th century required strength to operate, effectively preventing many women from learning to drive. Held hostage by their clothing and the social expectations of the times, women of a certain class spent most of their time in the private space of home. “Climbing into an automobile, a woman rejected the cloister, certainly, and potentially also the female sphere of hearth and home” (Scharff 1991: 24). Joan Newton Cueno, the first famous woman race driver, was quoted as saying,

There is no good reason why thousands of women should sit quietly in the tonneau and let the men have the keenest enjoyment of the greatest sport today....If women could realize the exhilaration that comes from being able to handle a 60-horse-power touring car, the sight of a woman driver would be anything but a novelty (Scharff 1991: 29).

The image of a woman dressed in leather to protect her from the elements and controlling a powerful engine, fundamentally challenged the stereotypical idea of the white, upper class, delicate female. Certainly, a few women did cross the gender divide in order to drive. Gertrude Stein, the noted lesbian intellectual and author, was an avid motorist who took a course to be able to meet the mechanical needs of her automobile and served as an ambulance driver in WWI (McShane 1994).

Furthering an already overwhelming male domain, automobiles also created a new space for sexual conquest (McShane 1994). “Cars served as a private space. Only in private cars could proper middle-class men swear at complete strangers. Men smoked as they pleased in cars. Driving, even in traffic, could be made competitive and aggressive, a false bravado” (McShane 1994: 155). As female drivers became more common, women were policed by

society for appearing too “mannish” and scorned for driving (McShane 1994). And, the increased use of the automobile changed the cityscape while heavily influencing the creation of suburbs that further isolated white and upwardly class mobile women.

In addition to being a gendered project, it is also difficult to ignore the classed neoliberal implications of the integration of automobiles in society and the resulting market it produced. Due to cost, automobiles were originally only available to white upper class people, which lent status to the automobile. Once available through mass production, the middle class market thrived (McShane 1994). The feeling of status was married to a false sense of liberation.

Drivers received psychic, not objective liberation, since the car, after all, carried with it a new set of obligations. Car payments firmly tied owners to the workplace in order to earn the cash needed for participation in the consumer culture. Traffic required obedience to the norms. Breakdowns and accidents were commonplace. Nonetheless, the feeling of ownership was exhilarating. More than any other consumer good the motor car provided fantasies of status, freedom, and escape from the constraints of a highly disciplined urban, industrial order (McShane 1994: 148).

The gendered division of labor as a result of the industrial revolution separated work and residence. The automobile enabled men to work even farther away from home. The class status symbolized by the automobile was usually reserved for white men and it created a new form of consumption by adding not only a car but also all the additional expenses required to maintain the automobile. One of the consistent expenses was to keep it filled with gas.

CITY SIDEWALKS

By the end of 1919, competition among gasoline proprietors was fierce. The gasoline pump was everywhere and had become an integral part of the streetside arrangement by 1920, taking its place on the sidewalk with the mailbox, the streetlamp and the fire hydrant (Witzel 1992: 34).

The earliest filling stations were located on the fringes of urban areas due to the dangerous combination of a rubber hose and a steel container of unfiltered gas that was needed to fill the auto (Witzel 1992). The invention of the mechanized gas pump in 1906, and the practice of creating underground storage tanks coupled with increased use of the auto moved the gas pump to sidewalks in front of local mercantile and grocery stores along an already congested city street (Witzel 1992). By 1910, a 4,500 percent increase in the sale of automobiles over the previous year dramatically increased the need for gasoline (Witzel 1992). Oil companies, eager to maximize profit without putting forth a large capital commitment, encouraged installation of street-side gas pumps that allowed oil companies to sell gas to a middle person without the hassle of dealing with the customer or maintaining the pump.

However, pumping gas was still a dangerous endeavor. The convenient sidewalk location that allowed a motorist merely to pull to the side of the street to fill up his tank was responsible for much of city traffic and congestion. Fires and explosions were also common as gasoline pumps were knocked down by out of control vehicles (Witzel 1992). In 1923, the New York State Supreme Court ruled that curbside stations were prohibited, a ruling that affected 600 of the 700 gasoline operations in the state (Witzel 1992). This state-mandated change set a precedent for the rest of the country, forcing oil companies to buy property outside central business districts to set up their own shops (Witzel 1992). Until the 1970's, the major oil companies were referred to as the "Seven Sisters" and dominated the market (Downey 2009: 9). Thus, the resulting drive-in gas station took its place as a "secular temple" of modernization. As gas stations become more prominent upon the U.S. landscape, a race for market share of gasoline sales ensued. As a result, oil companies engaged in significant branding campaigns among themselves to ensure profits.

ATTENDING THE ROADSIDE: THE SERVICE STATION SALESMAN

A highly visible employee, the station attendant was effectively an extension of the brand of gasoline sold and ultimately a figure head for the petroleum company that produced that product. The employee's appearance had to instill a sense of quality and service in the minds of motorists to ensure their future return for business (Witzel 1992: 62).

In my research on the scant published history of U.S. gas stations, I encountered several texts waxing nostalgic about gas stations equipped with phallic gas pumps, a symbol of good times gone by, and celebrating the modernity that gas stations helped create. In the literature, the invention of the electric meter-type pump in 1932 is applauded as a landmark event, when gas went from being sold by the gallon to being sold by the dollar (Witzel 1992). The pumps were advertised to the consumer as accurate machines, removing human error and shady practices from the price calculations of the local "Phill-er up" (Witzel 1992). In addition to the phallic form, gas pumps became branding tools themselves as they were also designed "mimicking the exaggerated female form of the era" (Witzel 1992: 53). The electric gas pump also marks the moment when the oil companies could easily calculate total gas sold for the day.

Beginning in the 1930's, the gas station attendant was a man who wore a uniform emblazoned with the oil company's logo on the breast (Witzel 1992). Shell is specifically lauded as setting the standard for the gas station attendant, including the now classic uniform, and an emphasis on customer service (Yergin 1991). "Influenced heavily by the style of military uniforms, the Shell uniform included a hat typical of any service hat. Decorated with the same company identification as the jacket, it allowed immediate brand recognition during times when a station worker interacted personally with the public" (Witzel 1992: 67). The sales representative, as an extension of corporate image, became an important focus in order to attract

customers and established a particular authority reminiscent of other uniformed occupations. This practice is still in use today.

By the 1920's and 30's, negative attitudes towards women drivers, at least on the part of the oil companies, had shifted as a result of increased competition and recognizing women as a market. The uniformed attendant was required to be courteous and smile at women and to maintain a high level of personal hygiene in order to appeal to women (Witzel 1992). In addition to pumping gas, he would provide a full range of services including checking the oil level, filling tires with air and washing the windows (Spellman 2004). Several companies even required attendants to only use clean, crisp money with female customers, sending a message of care and courtesy to promote repeat business. The first departure from this male attendant model was during WWII when, as in other industries, women went to work outside the home, filling roles previously held by men, including gas station attendants. The Standard Oil Company had a specific name for its female attendants, the 'Sohioettes.' And as with most industries, women were removed from their positions after the war and returned to the private space of their homes. Then, in the 1950's, the era of the gas attendant begins its descent with the advent of the self-service gas station which allowed consumers to save a few cents per gallon pumping gas themselves.

BRANDING ROADSIDES: WOMEN AS CONSUMERS

In 1928, an influential advertising man in the oil industry is quoted as saying to an audience of oil men, "My friends, it is the juice of the fountain of eternal youth that you are selling. It is health. It is comfort. It is success. And you have sold merely a bad smelling liquid at so many cents per gallon. You have never lifted it out of the hated category of a hated

expense... You must put yourself in the place of the man and woman in whose lives your gasoline has worked miracles” (Yergin 1991: 211). Contained within this quote, the heteronormative ideology is captured by crediting gasoline as providing eternal youth, health, comfort, success and ultimately, a miracle. One can easily imagine the implied image of a young, white, heterosexual, middle-class, good-looking, educated couple who has achieved success through meeting these ideals. By 1920, there were approximately 15,000 gas stations in the United States (Witzel 1992: 30), and nine years later that number had exploded to 300,000 gas stations (Yergin 1991: 209). However, there was little congruency between stations. In an effort to secure a loyal market, oil companies began including symbols to mark their difference from their competitors, including the Texaco star, Shell’s scallop shell, Gulf’s orange disk and Hess’s familiar green and white logo (Yergin 1991: 210). Corporate branding began in earnest during this era. In addition to symbolic icons that would appeal to consumers, oil companies hired architects to design unified stations (Witzel 1992). The buildings included not only a specific aesthetic, but large signs announcing the brand of gas being sold. Then and now, it was loyalty to the brand, rather than the product (Klein 2000). Gas is one excellent example. There are only minor differences between the gasoline offered between companies, but it was the loyalty to the brand that oil companies strove for in order to make a profit.

As gas stations became more ingrained within local communities, and moved from the side of the street to a freestanding structure devoted to gasoline, oil companies responded to a classed aesthetic such as the one advocated by the City Beautiful movement (Witzel 1992). In the late 1920’s, one of the most popular gas station designs that emerged was the English cottage style, built to resemble a house with a blue-tiled roof, and matching shutters and moldings complete with two tall chimneys. Spellman (2004) argues that the cottage style was the oil

companies' attempt to attract the female motorist. The style was aesthetically pleasing and included manicured lawns, flowerboxes and drapes on the display window. This style was congruent with the automobile's symbolic link to middle-class hopes and dreams, while simultaneously attempting to provide a public space of consumption disguised as the private space of home.

The quaint cottage image also blended in well with local landscapes, allowing for previous ordinances regarding commercial buildings to be lifted as gas stations penetrated residential areas (Witzel 1992). In addition to the architectural detail in the newly designed buildings, oil companies designed larger and wider parking lots to appeal to the female driver (Spellman 2004). This attention to the space and place of U.S. gas stations demonstrates how the oil industry engaged dominant ideologies of gender to increase profit. They were appealing to the image of the dainty, white, middle-class housewife who would obviously be attracted to flowers at the local gas stations and needed a wider parking lot due to her limited driving skills. At the turn of the twentieth century, women were described as bad drivers because of their "emotional instability, physical weakness, and intellectual deficiencies" (Scharff 1991: 26). However, oil companies and automakers soon recognized that women had to embrace the automobile as a family vehicle if it was to replace horses, and thus oil companies and automakers had to embrace female consumers.

The face of gas stations continued to change in the 1940's and 1950's. Due to a complex combination of factors- the decrease in consumer spending as a result of the Great Depression, oil companies leasing gas stations to individual dealers and then a saturated market- gas station owners had to work harder to make a profit. As opposed to the early design that replicated domesticity, the architecture of gas stations was later influenced by the postwar 1940's modernist

style of a plain box that was cheaper to build (Witzel 1992). Additionally, one of the new sales strategies employed was to offer products and services beyond the basics of gas. These products included tires, batteries and accessories for the automobile. Some companies went a step further by providing a line of cleaning supplies to women, attaching their stores to appliance and furniture stores and collaborating with dry cleaners and beauty shops in an effort to create a one stop shop (Spellman 2004). This marks the beginning of the modern day gas station with the accompanying convenience store, though this did not become the prevalent model until the 1980's (Jackle & Sculle 1994).

BATHROOMS: MARKETING TO WOMEN

From the late 1930's through the 1950's, several oil companies employed another marketing strategy to appeal to the female consumer. It focused on gender separate bathrooms, including amenities such as hot and cold water, flushing toilets, toilet paper and an emphasis on cleanliness (Spellman 2004). Indeed, the creation of public bathrooms speaks to the limitations women experienced in public spaces up until this time. To advertise these amenities to the public audience, several companies instituted clean bathroom campaigns. For example, in 1938, Texaco instituted the 'White Patrol' consisting of a group of inspectors that traveled the country inspecting the company's restrooms (Spellman 2004). In the same year, Shell partnered with Good Housekeeping to create the "Home Clean" campaign, to assure female customers that Shell bathrooms were up to their standards (Spellman 2004). Perhaps most impressively, Phillips was known for their "Highway Hostesses," instituted in 1939, which featured a group of certified nurses who inspected bathrooms (Spellman 2004).

A picture of the Highway Hostesses shows a line of young, white women flanking the Phillips chairman. Their matching uniforms were reminiscent of military uniforms, including the serviceman's hat though they wore perfectly pleated skirts (Witzel 1992: 107). In this photo, they stand in front of a cream-colored automobile with the company's name and logo on the driver's side door. Underneath is the name of the program, "Certified Rest Rooms" (Witzel 1992: 107). "Doubling as ambassadors for the company, the Highway Hostesses helped to sell Phillips 66 by their courteous manner, pleasant personalities, and willingness to aid anyone in distress" (Witzel 1992: 111). In fact, this picture is one of the few actual photographs of women who are working as laborers in gas stations rather than targeted solely as consumers. In addition to ensuring the cleanliness of bathrooms, Highway Hostesses provided information to motorists and could discuss hygiene with mothers. On at least one occasion, they were called to assist a highway accident where they "calmly administered first aid and spread good cheer with unflinching poise" (Witzel 1992: 111). It is significant that in 1939, professional women were hired to represent Phillips 66, though this was only possible due to the public's needs for bathrooms. The connection between women's roles in cleaning with their responsibilities within the home while possessing a "pleasant personality" is striking.

Finally, Witzel's book on the *American Gas Station* displays a full-page Texaco advertisement from 1952. It features a polished, young white woman in a convertible with three young daughters (1992: 84). All are perfectly dressed, down to bows in the daughters' hair and white gloves demurely covering the mother's hands. The slogan reads, "Something we ladies appreciate!" (Witzel 1992: 84). The advertisement is a snapshot of raced, heteronormative, middle-class ideals and marks a moment when white middle-class women emerged as powerful consumers. Spellman elaborates that as female consumers "expanded their 'world,'" they

“nonetheless retained their role as guardians of domestic values,” which included influencing the services and styles of U.S. gas stations (2004: 467). Notably, while the white, middle class woman’s world expanded, this was still a time in our history when bathrooms were either racially segregated or unavailable for African Americans. And despite Ford’s car produced for the “everyman,” owning and operating an automobile would still be out of reach for the working poor (Scharff 1991).

SIMILAR SUBURBS

In a small booth located at the center of all this activity, a supervisor watched the proceedings through glass windows. A public-address system allowed customers to be reprimanded over an external speaker if seen smoking or doing something inappropriate (Witzel 1992: 113).

The gas station changed forever in 1947 with the creation of the self-service Gas-A-Teria (Witzel 1992: 116). While the panoptical design described above embodied Foucault’s observation of institutional discipline and punishment, self-serve gas stations were nonetheless an instant hit with consumers. Self-service allowed for more pumps in operation, which allowed consumers to fill up quicker, resulting in an increased profit for the oil company. The full service male gas attendant was momentarily replaced with young women on roller skates wearing tight clothing, completing financial transactions with customers (Witzel 1992). Again the image of the white, young, attractive woman is used to sell gas, reminding us that sex sells.

By the 1950’s, the history of gas stations becomes further intertwined with U.S. domestic policy. In 1956, multiple industries successfully lobbied for the Federal Highway Act, which created a national grid of over 42,500 miles of highways at the cost of \$41 billion dollars incurred by the Federal Government (Rutledge 2005: 18). One of the supporting public

arguments for this legislation was to create a roadway system that would allow for emergency evacuation of urban centers in the event of an atomic disaster. However, it has also been documented that more private lobbying efforts included making roads in order for consumers to buy more cars (Rutledge 2005).

Many towns that were not fortunate enough to be located along the newly developed major highways were devastated by the loss of consumer traffic. Gas stations were similarly affected by this changing traffic flow and many went under. During the latter half of the 1950's, oil companies noted the profits gained by the self-serve station and the change in the landscape created by the new highway system. In reaction, oil companies once again opened their own stations and many independent owners went out of business (Witzel 1992). This resulted in a cluttered landscape of debris left by the aging, now vacant buildings. For the remaining gas stations, in 1966, Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson met with twenty-seven oil marketers to convince them to beautify service stations (Witzel 1992: 125). As gas stations became further entrenched in the high traffic areas of suburbia and highway access roads, the oblong box design was discarded in favor of schemes that blended better with the residential neighborhoods where they existed (Witzel 1992).

The OPEC oil embargo of 1972 brought a new set of challenges to gas stations. "By the end of 1973, five percent of the 218,000 gas stations in business when the year began had closed their doors" (Witzel 1992: 139). As a result of the shifting oil market, mergers of major oil companies became the norm with companies becoming larger global conglomerates in the struggle for oil rights. Independently owned gas stations were hardest hit during this time and many were forced out of business. By the end of the 1980's, the number of gas stations had dropped to 158,540 (Jakle & Sculle 1994: 77). In addition, the creation of OPEC is also

regarded as an integral moment where neoliberalism was furthered as a global political and economic system as the U.S. controlled the financial systems that benefitted from the cash flow from oil rich countries (Harvey 2005).

By the 1980's, the combination of the gas station with a convenience store was the newest marketing strategy (Jakle & Sculle 1994: 80). "Many convenience stores cut prices below cost at their pumps and covered losses with markups on beer, bread, milk, and other items" (Jakle & Sculle 1994: 80). The new gas station, with its accompanying convenience store, resulted in a further decline of traditional gas stations. The traditional gas stations could not compete with this newest model. By 1990, there were only 111,657 gas stations with the top ten oil companies controlling 67.8% of the market (Jakle & Sculle 1994: 80). Effectively, the stand-alone gas station was abandoned in favor of the added convenience store in order to increase profits. I propose that the addition of the convenience store changed the space of the contemporary gas station as women again become laboring bodies in gas stations, though beginning with the socially acceptable role of cashiers. The gas station becomes fully integrated into the U.S. landscape to the point that it is assumed one will find a gas station on almost every corner. The locally owned gas station becomes a thing of the past, replaced by branded gas stations owned by global oil conglomerates.

To this point, I have outlined the history of gas stations as an integral, yet commonplace, fixture on the U.S. landscape. I have attended to the historical experiences of women as both consumers and occasional workers. I have argued that the very existence of gas stations is an aspect of a neoliberal project of consumerism intimately linked to far-reaching agendas of oil companies. This collaborative agenda has created a dependence on mobility that is reflected in the very structure of American cities and countryside that brings us to this contemporary moment

of the corner gas station either alongside a highway or integrated into a suburban neighborhood. While the literature on gas stations and the automobile emphasizes men and masculinity, I have attended to the history of women in relation to cars and gas, recognizing this as a gendered, classed, raced and sexed construction. This history includes women being recognized as a consumer, builds on an ideology of domesticity that becomes temporarily reflected in the very architecture of gas stations and marketing efforts. In addition to being targeted as a consumer, women are sometimes employed as workers such as during times of war or as billboards in short skirts or a military style nursing uniform. Today, the experience of women in gas stations continues to shift as demonstrated by the presence of the local lesbian laboring body.

INTRODUCING HESS AND “HESSBIANS”

Within this landscape of expanded service to the motoring public, one of the companies operating gas stations is the Hess Corporation. Though the company’s roots are in refining oil, it began opening gas stations in 1960, which put them in a prime position to build gas stations along the newly developed highways which is still evident today. Hess currently owns and operates over 1,300 gas stations along the Eastern seaboard. My project is focused on lesbians’ experiences working in U.S. gas stations owned and operated by Hess.

Up until now, I have described “the oil companies” as relatively interchangeable. At this point, I will turn my attention to one specific company within this context, Hess, which signs the paychecks and sets laboring expectations for the local lesbian body. While I have outlined how the number of gas stations has changed throughout the last hundred years, I have not fully described the immense amount of money that is at stake in this endeavor. While Hess’ profits from gas stations in the U.S. pale in comparison to the \$38 billion in profit from the exploration

and production efforts in 2011, each individual gas station enjoys up to a million dollars of sales per year (2011 Hess Annual Report: 1). Indeed, in 2011, Hess reported earning an overall \$1.2 billion in total sales from their retail marketing division (2011 Hess Annual Report: 14). Notably, this number excludes the sale of petroleum products sold at the gas stations; it only includes products sold in the convenience stores such as lottery, cigarettes, food and beer.

In the beginning of this chapter, I provided an introductory description of the massive scale of the oil industry before narrowing my focus to the U.S. landscape of gas stations. Here I briefly return to the oil industry in order to place Hess as competing within a broad reaching industry with its own complicated history before returning to the specificity of Hess gas stations. While we might quickly rattle off a list of well-known U.S. based oil companies, these companies represent only a portion of the global oil industry. Comparatively, Hess is a small fish in a big pond. Oil companies are measured by the amount of oil they have in reserve as it is a guarantee of resources as well as the annual production measured in millions of barrels (Kaiser & Yu, 2012). Hess is the 25th largest non-OPEC oil company producing 250,000 barrels of oil daily (Downey 2009: 71). On the top end of that non-OPEC scale, Exxon/Mobil has a daily production of approximately 2.7 million barrels of oil (Downey 2009: 71). In comparison to OPEC countries, using the scale of reserves, Hess Corporation ranks number 48 with the Saudi Arabian Oil Company and the National Iranian Oil Company having three to four times more than Hess in reserves.³ While Hess may be a less prominent player in the world of oil

³ (http://www.petrostrategies.org/Links/Worlds_Largest_Oil_and_Gas_Companies_Sites.htm, retrieved 4/2013).

companies, the company is ranked 74th among the Fortune 500 list which emphasizes the relative wealth and power of even a smaller oil company in relation to other industries.⁴

Geographically, Hess is not a singular site or place to behold, but a multitude of sites from the oil fields in Norway and Ghana to the refineries in the Virgin Islands to the corporate Hess offices in New York City to the corner store in Massachusetts. According to its website, Hess owns and operates sites in twenty countries across six continents.⁵ The company is a conglomeration of spaces and places that embodies a tangible brand which is more often linked to the founding family than a specific site. Though the company carries a familial legacy, this multibillion-dollar global energy company is an active member of the world economy. In the background of the daily lived lives of laboring lesbian bodies in the local Hess gas station, a global company is mining natural resources in developing countries with the commitment to provide services and products to a U.S. market.

Having briefly placed Hess in a global market, the remainder of this chapter focuses on the historical and contemporary company structures and practices that impact the experience of laboring bodies in Hess gas stations today. In order to outline the connections between the corporation and the local laboring body, I examine the history of Hess, which is intimately connected to two men from one family. Given that bodies are part of the production within a service environment, the ways in which a company engages in branding informs ideologies of gender, class and sexuality. As a result, I provide a textual analysis of the company's annual reports since the company became publicly traded in 1962, focusing on messages of service and the company's marketing and branding efforts. I conclude with an analysis of Hess's corporate

⁴ <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500/2012/snapshots/204.html>: retrieved 7/18/2013).

⁵ <http://www.hess.com/operations/default.aspx>: retrieved 4/14/13

citizenship and social responsibility to illustrate a paternal corporatism that lends itself to a contemporary masculinized workplace.

CONSTRUCTING HESS: HEGEMONIC MASCULINITIES

One of the unique aspects of this particular oil company is its connections to a specific family that is still omnipresent today. For example, when discussing the potential sale of the retail division in 2013, I expressed disbelief that the corporation was willing to sell something that made so much money. Gretchen, the manager of a local store, looked at me and said, “Amy, we are a pimple on John Hess’ ass” (Tweedy, fieldnotes, March 4, 2013). For her, the company was not just a collection of geographical sites, a collection of policies and procedures that organized her day, or a faceless oil company involved in the business of selling gasoline. It was a man. In outlining the gendering of globalization, Acker (2004) argues that global companies are led by men and, as such, “symbolize and enact varying hegemonic masculinities” (2004: 29). In this case, the company is embodied with histories and masculinities synonymous with the men who share its name.

Leon Hess founded Hess Incorporated during the Depression, reforming his father’s bankrupt fuel delivery business, coal yard and gas station (Norman 1987: 50). The son of Lithuanian Jewish immigrants, his story is representative of the “American dream.” As the country transitioned from kerosene to gasoline, Leon Hess bought lower quality oil leftover from refineries and resold it for a profit from the back of a 1926 Dodge truck in New Jersey (Norman 1987: 50). Following the international trend initiated by Churchill’s decision to fuel the British Navy by oil rather than coal, Hess’ business expanded greatly as electric companies switched

from coal to oil in the late 1930's.⁶ Importantly, Leon Hess served as a petroleum supply officer in World War II, which assisted in the growth of his own business both in terms of contacts and increased knowledge about the organization of supplying oil. In the 1940's and 1950's, Hess continued to expand the oil terminal and refining business and began preliminary exploration of crude oil in the U.S. (Shaner 1991: 34). From these humble beginnings, Leon Hess built a multi-billion dollar business.

In a classic representation of the oil tycoon, the front cover of the June 1991 issue of the *National Petroleum News* features a large black and white photograph of Leon Hess smoking a Cuban cigar in a dark suit and tie, wearing sunglasses (Shaner, 1991:32). The article highlights the connection between the man and the company: "It should be noted for the record here and now that Amerada Hess is literally and figuratively a one-man company, the extended shadow of its former-chairman-CEO, Leon Hess...his word and whims are law in the company" (Shaner 1991: 50). In addition to the portrayal of the maverick entrepreneur who has built a company by his own rules, he is described as particularly private. Photographs, quotes and press contacts were not allowed within the company or on the football field (Leon Hess also owned the New York Jets for thirty-five years) (Shaner, 1991). Leon Hess retired at 80 years old after completing a 60 year career with the company he founded. Near the end of his career, he was criticized within the oil industry for "parochial" leadership of the company, but the legend remains (Johnston and DiNardo 1995).

Leon's son, John Hess, joined the company as a graduate trainee in the 1970's after completing a MBA from Harvard University at the age of 23. In preparation for a future in the

⁶ <http://www.hess.com/company/history/default.aspx>, retrieved April 16, 2013

oil industry, John Hess was already fluent in both Arabic and Farsi.⁷ John Hess took over as CEO when Leon Hess retired in 1995. Consistent with the values of his father, John Hess is also described as being wary of public attention and possessing an extraordinary work ethic.⁸ Historian Daniel Yergin describes John Hess's relationship to the company as embodying "his very fiber" (Gilbert & Lublin: 2013). While the two leading men of Hess clearly share a commitment to the company that goes beyond serving as chief operating officers, John Hess grew up with more privilege than his father. The younger Hess is the product of an Ivy League education and operates in an increasingly global political and economic landscape. As a result, he possesses different priorities for the company. As portrayed in the annual reports of the last fifteen years under John Hess' leadership, the company continues a shift to exploration and production in order to increase profits and remove themselves from refining and retail sales. This is a significant divorce from the founding roots of the company to provide 100% of service to customers as described in the annual report from the 70's, meaning controlling all aspects of oil from production to retailing (Amerada Hess Annual Report, 1974). While the company began as a family business and clearly still possesses a familial aura, it has also been transformed through multiple mergers with other companies to become the global company it is today.

Hess' earliest beginnings focused on refining and marketing. Building on a significant refining and supply network, the company opened its first gas station in 1960 in New Jersey.⁹ The company began to expand following a merger with Cletrac Corporation and became a

⁷ <http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/biography/F-L/Hess-John-B-1954.html>, retrieved April 16, 2013

⁸ <http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/biography/F-L/Hess-John-B-1954.html>, retrieved April 16, 2013

⁹ <http://www.hess.com/company/history/default.aspx>: retrieved 4/14/2013

publicly traded corporation in 1962 as Hess Oil and Chemical Company.¹⁰ In a significant move in 1969, Hess acquired Amerada which completed the picture of an international company involved in every aspect of the oil industry and changed its name to Amerada Hess (Hess Annual Report 1970). From this point forward, the mergers and takeovers became mind-boggling. Naomi Klein's (2000) work on branding discusses mergers as a form of extending the brand. While Hess has experienced a giant merger as Klein discusses in her work. However, Hess' history also includes a series of smaller mergers that, likewise, do not dilute the power of the Hess brand but only expand it internationally.

In 2006, Amerada Hess Corporation changed its name to Hess Corporation effectively erasing a complicated history and re-establishing the Hess name solely (Hess Annual Report 2007). Hess as the name of the corporation is singularized specifically to the men who have led it, strengthening the hegemonic masculinities that carry through the company reports, training materials, and website. As I demonstrated in the introduction to this project, the Hess name becomes embodied in multiple ways for the local laboring lesbian body. The company becomes synonymous with the men who lead it as Gretchen highlights in the following:

Gretchen: Because when you come to work for Hess, you come to work for a family. I think it's the name. You know, it's not just a generic name, there is really a guy.

In the same conversation, she continues to make sense of working for a company that is represented by the Hess family that has just announced they are selling the retail division of the company which impacts her position. She is confused by a sense of loyalty she has felt to the family which has motivated her within her own work in light of what I imagine feels like a betrayal. And while recognizing the financial motive of the company that places the gas station

¹⁰ (<http://www.hess.com/company/history/default.aspx>, retrieved April 16, 2013).

as a “pimple on John Hess’ ass,” she subscribes to a paternal model as she hopes that he will take care of the employees. What is evident is that the company is embodied by a man. Per that man’s instructions and consistent with the goals of a multinational oil company, Hess has continued to expand its operations since its inception and its success is measured accordingly.

MEASURING SUCCESS

I want to express my gratitude to our employees, who continue to deliver strong performance to maximize the value of our assets for shareholders (Letter to Shareholders, H. B. Hess, 2012 Annual Report).

Hess operates in a hyper-masculine industry that does everything from finding natural resources, drilling, refining, and shipping to marketing and selling oil. Using industry terminology, Hess is divided into two divisions: Exploration and Production (E&P) and Marketing and Refining (M&R). Exploration and production are termed “upstream” efforts within the oil industry, meaning they are closer to the point of the raw product of crude oil. In this case, the aim is to find new sources of crude oil to remove from the ground. This enterprise includes onshore and offshore production in the United States, multiple sites in Europe from Russia to Denmark and locations in Africa and Asia including Equatorial Guinea, Libya, Azerbaijan and Indonesia. The corporation also currently conducts exploration in Australia, China, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and Algeria (Hess Annual Report, 2012).

The refining areas are described as “midstream” activities. This includes processing crude oil into usable substances and storage. “Midstream” activities include refining facilities, as well as supply stations and terminals for holding refined oil.¹¹ “Downstream” activities refer to energy marketing and retail gasoline and sales. The retail division contains gas stations and

¹¹ (<http://www.hess.com/operations/default.aspx>; retrieved 4/14/13).

convenience stores, which the company owns and operates along the U.S. Eastern seaboard from Massachusetts to Florida (Hess Annual Report, 2012: 10). At the time of this writing, Hess is one of the few companies still classified as a vertically integrated oil company which means it is involved in every aspect of the petroleum industry (Downy 2009).

Similar to the goal of oil companies since their inception, there is one overriding mission for the Hess company: to increase profit. This particular point is important to my project where labor is highly structured and informed by this primary goal. The company website prominently posts information about its oil production which is titled quantitative net daily production. Net daily production is defined as how many thousands of barrels the oil fields produce on an average daily basis. In 2012, the company's annual report indicated an average production of 406,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day, which is a victorious 10% increase from the previous year (Hess, Annual Report, 2012, p. 6). The website also includes a brief description of each drilling location worldwide, while proudly claiming the percentage of interest the company owns. It is common practice for several oil companies to invest a percentage within a specific drilling site to spread the risk rather than assuming full ownership. As a result, the geographic locations where the company drills for oil are monolithic representations of profits, rather than populated locations where real people live their lives. There is no distinction between Denmark and Indonesia. In describing the ways that the West has been constructed to represent superiority while silencing pluralities and ignoring brutal histories, Eisenstein has stated: "The West- as a state of mind, a set of privileged cultural values- identifies a singular location of power across various geographic sites" (2004: 74). The company's rhetoric exemplifies this privilege. Hess headquarters are located in New York City and the United States is at the center of the

company's world with tentacles of power connected to the "immature" countries and cultures where the Company is an "active participant." (Hess Annual Report: 2012).

The corporate practice of measuring daily oil production on a global scale carries through to daily practices at the gas station. The workday of the local retail site is driven by daily counts of cigarettes, lottery tickets, gas sales, food sales that are reported every morning to mid-level managers. The success of the sales numbers ultimately decides if the local store manager will receive a quarterly bonus, measured against preset goals. The profit-driven message is clearly articulated by the employees. In an interview, an assistant manager, Kath, described a disciplinary moment with an employee where she declared, "You are here to make my company money." This singular purpose is also clearly illustrated in the opening quote from the annual report, thanking the employees for their role in producing profit that is passed along to the shareholders. In an environment where most entry-level employees in the retail division are making between \$8 to \$10 an hour, the inequality shines in comparison to the \$17 million dollars John Hess earns annually.¹² Though the pressure of making money for the shareholders is important in a publicly traded company, John Hess receives the most benefit. And in the quest for profit within a highly competitive marketplace, branding the Hess name, thereby setting Hess apart from its competitors, becomes critical.

BRANDING HESS

During a college event where I work, I met a woman, serendipitously a lesbian, who works for an engineering firm that designs Hess gas stations for a distant regional area. During the middle of our interview, she pulled out a napkin from under her coffee cup and began mapping the geography of a typical site. From

¹² <http://www.forbes.com/profile/john-hess-1/>, retrieved 4/28/13

memory, she could place blacktop, concrete, fuel tanks, gas pumps, countertops, and coffee stations (Tweedy, fieldnotes).

Consistent with the history of gas stations, branding remains critical today. In outlining the corporate emphasis on branding in response to the marketplace, Klein writes, “The astronomical growth in the wealth and cultural influence of multi-national corporations over the last fifteen years can arguably be traced back to a single, seemingly innocuous idea developed by management theorists in the mid-1980’s: that successful corporations must primarily produce brands, as opposed to products” (Klein 2000: 3). As indicated earlier, oil companies have recognized the importance of branding since the 1930’s, recognizing early that there is very little difference between gasoline from one oil company to another. Still true today, Hess is in a race for the loyal consumer. The entire website is designed with the familiar green and white theme with the logo available on every web page. To be sure, the language so carefully crafted in public documents and available within a ‘public’ domain such as the World Wide Web is a reflection of the branding efforts of the company. In following chapters, I will emphasize the ways in which branding impacts laboring bodies. In this section, I want to set the stage by briefly describing the company’s public branding activities that emphasize masculinity.

Unlike many other oil companies, the Hess logo has remained relatively unchanged since the inception of the company. While this fact might reflect the consistency of the company’s leadership, the nostalgic simplicity of the logo belies the current marketing strategies the company utilizes. For example, the company has taken advantage of new social media for marketing purposes such as the ability to “like” Hess express on Facebook (speaking of branding, the autocorrect program automatically capitalized Facebook).

The website also offers a game application for your phone utilizing one of the specialty toy helicopters that the company sells, as well as a GPS application so you can always find your local Hess gas station. And these innovations are not new; one of the most well-known company branding programs is the Hess toy truck. Starting in the early 60's and continuing today, the company sells a toy truck model at its retail stores during the Christmas season, which is especially ironic given that the founder of the company is Jewish. Most recently, Hess is represented by a Hess truck float in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, continuing the holiday tradition. The toy truck has a gendered and classed history as it usually relates to a service occupation such as a fire truck or semi-truck. Hess is credited with making toy history by creating a top quality truck that utilized working lights and sound.¹³

The early toy trucks are easily found on Ebay, an online auction house, as collectibles, speaking to the nostalgic and cultural value of the Hess toy truck. The most unique models, such as the Hess oil tanker, can be worth up to \$2400.¹⁴ As described in the opening vignette of the chapter, Kelly is also a committed collector as the toy represents the company for which she works.

Describing the success of other companies such as BodyWorks and Starbucks, Klein outlines how companies create “powerful identities by making their brand concept into a virus and sending it out into the culture via a variety of channels: cultural sponsorship, political controversy, the consumer experience and brand extensions” (2000: 20). The Hess toy truck is

¹³ (<http://www.theantiquesalmanac.com/hesstrucks.htm>; retrieved 4/16/2013).

¹⁴ (<http://www.theantiquesalmanac.com/hesstrucks.htm>; retrieved 4/16/2013).

one such success story. This branding strategy goes beyond logos and collectables. John Hess is credited with developing one of the first cross-branding efforts within a gas station when he struck a deal with Dunkin Donuts in 2002 to provide a self-service counter in Hess Express stores, resulting in an 11% increase in convenience store sales the following year (Hess Annual Report: 2003).

Public image is crucial to an oil company making millions of dollars in a society where every mode of transportation relies on oil. The automobile serves as a sign of independence and a sign of economic wealth and “civilization” for many the world over. Hess continues the tradition of celebrating a masculine historicized automobile which is intricately linked to the very profitability of Hess.

ANOTHER FORM OF BRANDING: CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

At Hess Corporation, we understand the importance of responsible Environment, Health and Safety management to our growth, profitability and long term success. Guided by our company value of Social Responsibility, we are committed to meeting the highest standards of corporate citizenship. As a company, we feel a strong sense of social responsibility. We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of our employees and all who are affected by our business operations. We are committed to protecting the environment. We are committed, as a company and as individuals, to obeying the laws, respecting the cultures, and having a positive impact on the lives of the people in the communities where we do business (<http://www.hess.com/sustainability/socialresponsibility/default.aspx>: retrieved 4/27/13).

Amerada Hess: a petroleum company aware of its role in today’s complex pattern of economic and social development (Hess Annual Report: 1974).

Corporate citizenship and social responsibility includes everything from workplace safety and philanthropic endeavors to environmental sustainability initiatives and other domains relevant to the “greater good.” As the company quotes above illustrate, the company has connected “profitability” with social responsibility through branded messages of goodwill from

the 1970's until today. Huber (2012) argues that a political corporate agenda emerges in the 1990's to include environmental concerns that he labels the "Greenwashing" of oil companies. It is difficult to reconcile this projection of environmental concern with the reality that oil companies have had a hand in the construction of the "good life," which is dependent on oil products and further, that this construction of success has been fully integrated into our everyday life. The result is specifically targeted social and environmental efforts designed to make us feel better. Oil companies now regularly participate in environmental campaigns, adding educational and community based philanthropic programs in host communities, while conducting business as usual. In other words, oil companies are publicizing their good works in the construction of the company's good will as another form of branding.

This twist on branding is reflected throughout Hess materials in the form of corporate citizenship and social responsibility. According to Shamir, corporate social responsibility is a politicized and commercialized construction of the: "type and scope of social obligations- whether codified into law or not- that corporations must consider in the course of their routine business practices" (2005: 230). Shamir also argues that corporations use social responsibility to "give the impression that they are good citizens" (2005:230), providing the motivation for these programs as public relations efforts separated from real responsibility driven by the bottom line. In questioning the legitimacy of corporate citizenship, Ong asks, "How can citizenship be explored when it is lived in an age not of heroic sacrifices, but of pragmatic considerations about productivity and profits?" (2003: xiv). In effect, these constructs support corporations as private authorities actively marginalizing, objectifying and regulating citizens in multiple geographic locations. Furthermore, corporate citizenship is a paradoxical term in itself as "corporation" implies not a national identity, but a global identity that knows no borders.

Frynas (2005) interviewed oil officials concerning their views on social responsibility programs initiated by their own companies. He outlines four key reasons for these programs including: “obtaining a competitive advantage, maintaining a stable working environment, managing external perceptions and keeping employees happy” (Frynas, 2005: 583). The interviewees were aware of the political bribery that these programs masked, allowing access to specific places and contracts. He argues that social responsibility programs are farcical, internal and external public relations campaigns, rather than productive programs directly linked to the communities they purportedly serve (Frynas 2005).

Under the heading of corporate and social responsibility, Hess presents a list of initiatives that includes monitoring their carbon footprint and investment at the local level in education, health and community (Hess Annual Report, 2012). In the past ten years, Hess has focused its programming on countries where the company is directly involved in the production and exploration of oil. These community programs include malaria prevention and a funded library in Equatorial Guinea, and rebuilding schools and hospitals in St. Lucia. Their most recent and ambitious \$20 million program, called Prodege, is a longer term commitment to education in Equatorial Guinea, where the corporation continues to actively explore potential drilling. Certainly, Hess will be the greatest beneficiary of its presence in these countries.

Hess also donated funds to Walt Disney World to create a 200-acre sports field, appropriately named the Hess Sports Field.¹⁵ “Once the perimeter of the brand has expanded, corporate attention inevitably shifts to ways of making it more self-sufficient, through various internally coordinated cross-promotions. In a word, through synergy” (Klein 2000: 147). This

¹⁵ (http://www.mickeynews.com/News/DisplayPressRelease.asp_Q_id_E_6134Addition, retrieved 3/15/2004).

deal is a prime example of synergy. In this case, there are two corporate giants who benefit from a cross promotion. The donation of an undisclosed amount to another giant corporation in the business of commodification of family fun is a clear example of the intertwining of branding, corporate citizenship and social responsibility for the real purpose to increase capital. Hess' reach also expands to research as they recently donated over four million dollars to the University of Wyoming for the development of a "Center for Advanced Oil and Gas Technologies Nano Resolution Imaging Laboratory."¹⁶ In addition, Hess promotes education programs in North Dakota where they drill for natural gas.

These varied branding efforts by Hess represent a new corporate paternalism. The relationship between public image, branding, and the current politically correct jargon of social responsibility and corporate citizenship is interdependent. In line with the professionalization of the company under John Hess' leadership, corporate citizenship as a specific term is not used in the annual reports until 2002 when it appears as its own section. However, as illustrated in the above statements from an annual report in the 1970s, Hess has long been aware that the company plays a role in economic, environmental and social development. But branding does not stop with websites, toys, public relations programs and a specific logo. As I will explore in following chapters, bodies are also branded through appearance codes, service expectations and company uniforms.

BRANDING SERVICE

Service Sells: Hess bases its approach to retailing on a belief in quality. The company offers quality in the gasoline it makes and in the manner it is sold.

¹⁶ (<http://www.uwyo.edu/uw/news/2013/01/hess-pledges-4.4-million-to-uw-for-energy-research.html>; retrieved 4/16/2013).

Stations are designed for service- prompt and courteous attention to the fuel needs of the motoring public (Hess Annual Report: 1965).

Reminiscent of a bygone era where the uniformed service attendant dutifully pumped gas and checked tires, Hess has consistently maintained a focus on service to the “motoring public” since they opened the company’s first gas station in the 1960’s (Hess Annual Report: 1964). An emphasis on customer service is evident throughout the annual reports that I reviewed from the 1960’s, then diminishes within the annual reports as Hess merges with Amerada Hess to become a more global oil company. The opening quote to this section reflects the early focus on service in relation to sales in 1965. Though the gas station did not yet have a convenience store attached to it in this historical moment, the consistent messages in the annual reports in the 1960’s are about quality of the product, cleanliness of the station and most importantly, the interaction between the Hess employee and the customer.

The company created a training center in New Jersey in 1964 in recognition of the “important part being played by personnel living up to the Hess traditions of service and dedication to the company’s welfare, principles upon which future progress and success must rest” (Hess Annual Report 1964). The 1969 annual report refers to supporting the local Hess businessman who is, “trained and motivated to the highest standards of service and cleanliness” (Hess Annual Report: 1969). The company continued to open Hess gas stations throughout the late 1970’s, though at a subdued pace due to the oil crisis. Consistent with other oil companies that recognized the profit potential of the added convenience store in the 1980’s, the company began to add HessMart convenience stores to its existing gas stations and continued an expansion program. In 1991, Hess owned and operated 460 gas stations (Norman 1991). By 1997, Hess owned and operated 638 gas stations. Within five years, that number doubled, with 1,200 Hess locations by 2002, and a commitment to adding convenience stores to the remaining 20% of

stand-alone gas stations specifically in order to “take advantage of the underutilized, high-quality real estate” owned by the company (Hess Annual Report 2002: 12). Today, there still exists a focus on outstanding customer service to distinguish the brand from competitors through internal training materials that I will explore more fully in the following chapter.

THE LOCAL LABORING LESBIAN: KELLY’S STORY

Tracing the connections between an embodied laboring worker in a specific geographical site to a company with global reach is imperative. In this project, my goal is to place laboring lesbians’ lives in a particular company within a global context. In addition, I am committed to thinking critically about the connections between and contradictions of historically constructed systems of power that continue to define the relationship between women and the U.S. gas station. Acker argues that attempting to separate economic structures from social life “may impede rather than facilitate understanding by posing connections as particular objects of investigation rather than as integral to the ongoing function of social relations as a whole that extend across discursively constructed boundaries” (2004: 19). I want to recognize the profit motive that has paved the U.S. landscape with gas stations. This geographic arrangement is purposeful as dictated by oil companies reach for profit. Furthermore, this profit purpose is connected to masculine histories and has relied on ideologies of the “good life” that prescribe a specific place for women in terms of economics, mobility, social roles and public space. Initially, gas stations were not for any women except perhaps a few upper-class white women with the means to purchase an automobile. As the development of the automobile supported a suburbanization project for primarily white, upwardly, heterosexual women that further isolated them within the home. At the same time, oil companies specifically marketed to their mobility which was sometimes less than liberating. Today, the landscape is firmly established and cars

are now a necessity for many women to fulfill their responsibilities relating to work and/or the home. As a result, the gas station has secured its place as secular temple of civilization. And for some laboring lesbian bodies, the addition of the convenience store has made this secular temple their workplace.

I would now like to return to the opening story of Kelly. Kelly is a young white lesbian Hess Express manager from a working class background. These labels do not describe the complexities lived within her everyday life. To this point I have focused on the company she works for without consideration of any one particular woman's life. The laboring lesbian voices and their stories in the U.S. gas station are complicated ones, for Kelly operates within a contested space. She is targeted as a woman, as a lesbian, as a working class laborer. She resists constructed notions of femininity and femaleness through her clothing, through her choice of occupation, through her mannerisms, and through her lifestyle.

Kelly is a U.S. citizen working for an international corporation with immense resources and enjoys racial and national privileges. However, she is also a lesbian in a heterosexual world. She is working class within a culture that privileges the upper class and places many barriers in her way. Her life "further complicates the ideas of 'simultaneity' and 'multiplicity' to examine how oppression may be experienced in specifically complex and shifting relationships to different axes of domination" and privilege (Frankenberg and Mani 1993: 488).

Though Kelly has since left the company, she once benefitted from working at Hess. She attributed the company with changing her everyday world from a life of addiction and lack of direction to a professional life full of responsibility and financial reward. She worked on her associate's degree using the educational benefits provided by the company. She still feels a significant sense of loyalty to the company. She received a livable salary, which allowed her to

attain the “good life” and own a home and drive her expensive sports car. In return, she dutifully cleaned the parking lot, kept the displays stocked, sold over \$100,000 of cigarettes monthly, hired and fired the sales associates, sold gas, while proudly serving as a branding billboard wearing the green and white Hess uniform. She was very aware of her sales targets and worked hard to meet them in order to receive her quarterly bonus. And though she has left Hess, she still works at a gas station.

In discussing feminist approaches to the global and the intimate, Mountz and Hyndman (2006) argue that they are connected. They ask the question, “So where are the people? They appear belatedly as messy bodies that spoil the smooth surfaces of roving global capital” (Mountz and Hyndman 2006). I have focused this chapter on the enormous power of a company competing within a global marketplace of oil arguing that our very landscape has been shaped by an oil-saturated, neoliberal agenda of the “good life.” I will devote the remainder of my project to documenting and analyzing the lives lived by the “messy bodies” of laboring lesbians in well-branded U.S. gas stations.

CHAPTER 5: SELLING SERVICE- LABORING LESBIANS

Alyssa: I'm an overachiever. So I just want, I just want to have a good life, I don't want to struggle like my mom, I don't want to struggle like my friends. So when I actually can have a baby, I want to be able to give it what it needs. Not spoil it so much, but just be able to give it what it needs 'cause, as of right now like, like, I know people are...people shy away from talking about their income but I make \$9 an hour but after taxes I only make \$7.

INTRODUCTION

My intention is not to weave a tale of tragedy, though it is tragic that many of the laboring lesbians I interviewed will never achieve the “good life” as described in the previous chapter, due to social inequalities that are so deeply embedded within our society (Shipler 2004). Many laboring lesbians will not ever be able to afford a home in the suburbs or even own a car; yet they work within an industry that continues to service and thereby promote these ideals. Rather, my primary goal in this chapter is to trace how their work is indeed classed and gendered. With this understanding, I will then propose that laboring lesbians make a bargain that they will embody the feminized work that needs to be done, and they will do it quite well. In exchange, and in contrast to many other sites of work, I argue the masculinized gas station offers a complex site of service that allows them to see themselves. In other words, the gas station is a space of multiplicity which opens spaces for bodies that are othered to fit, even if partially.

As previously demonstrated, the gas station has a raced, sexed, classed and gendered history that initially catered to white men who had the privilege to drive. The very ability to service an automobile has been traditionally viewed as a male-dominated skill. Furthermore, the company's history, embodied by the two men who have led it, reinforces this masculine tale. In addition, and as a result of the oil industry, gas stations have now become commonplace within our landscape. As I described in the

history of gas stations, the work of the gas station has shifted from predominantly a site of production that included pumping gas and fixing cars to a site of service with the convenience store. Historically, technological developments have also altered this work space. The automated pump and the ability to pay at the pump means that many people are able to get gas without a man to pump the gas. In many cases, there is not even a need to enter the store. Additionally, the shift to increasing profits through the addition of the convenience store began in earnest for Hess in the 1990's as the "convenience" products have a higher profit margin than the gas sold at the pumps. Today, it is rare to find a gas station that is not connected to a convenience store and thus the distinction between the two is rapidly disappearing.

With the addition of the convenience store and the automated pump, the gas station is now primarily a site of service that shares the same characterization of routinized duties, surveillance and gendered expectations of customer service common to the service economy. Related to this shift from strictly gasoline and car maintenance to service, it is now more common for women to work in gas stations as laborers. As many have pointed out, working class service positions are often reserved for women and people of color (McDowell 2009, Hochschild & Ehrenreich 2002). My goal throughout this project is to continue to open the category of "woman" to include laboring lesbians.

During my stint as a laboring lesbian, I was required to complete a timed and scored online training which I had to successfully pass in order to keep my job. At the end of each section, "Scooter," a comic version of the original 1929 Dodge truck that Leon Hess used to start the company, appeared on the screen and honked his horn in a congratulatory toot. While I became fond of "Scooter" as it indicated I had done something right, it always felt like Leon Hess himself was patting me on the shoulder. This created an unusual combination of a connection to someone specific who embodied the company, a nod to the connections to the automobile which makes gas stations necessary, as well as somehow reminding me of whom I was serving. In addition, the training was narrated by cartoon

versions of a young African American man and a white woman on the computer screen. At a simplistic level, both representatives were indicative of the type of entry-level worker that would be found at a Hess gas station: a white woman or a black man.

Though the local gas station is intimately connected to a larger organization, it is also a geographically separated place of work, and this specific location matters. The customer base is directly related to the local economy and businesses surrounding the gas station, as well as networks of roads and neighborhoods that butt against the corner store. Typically, Hess employees refer to a singular store by the street address or by the exit number of major highways where they are located. This referential practice highlights the specific development of store cultures based on the type of customers who regularly inhabit the spaces, the geographic placement across the state, the divisional region to which they report, as well as the specific personality of the manager who works on site.

Feminist theory has demonstrated that the body does not constitute a singular identity (Bordo 1999). Each laboring lesbian has her own interpretations, sense of self, and intersections of identity. As a result, the stories are rich and complex and affected by laboring lesbians' positions within the stores, their relationships to the company and their own articulations of their experiences. While I will attend to the multiplicity of individual laborer' experience throughout my project, there are thematic job practices and responsibilities that clearly emerge from my research. The laboring lesbians I interviewed are often quite successful as measured by company metrics that focus on sales. Their success is due to the amount of hours they work, the attention they pay to their duties, and the positive relationships they develop with their customers. An overall task of this chapter is to describe the multitude of responsibilities that constitute their daily work life. Within these work duties, I will provide an analysis of how the work is classed and gendered. First, service positions are shaped by class context and characterized by certain measures of routinization to create uniformity across multiple locations

(Leidner 1993). Routinization is based on manufacturing principles that require strict, often timed, bodily movements and practices in order to increase efficiency. Leidner proposes that within what she terms “interactive service work,” routinization is more challenging due to the bodies that must be routinized rather than the tasks themselves (1993). Within the work of gas stations, there are routinized expectations that are tightly controlled. However, I would propose that within this classed space, the emphasis on routinizing bodies is not to increase efficiency, but rather a form of surveillance. This is evidenced through practices of counting commodities, running the register and policies on appearance. Secondly, I will argue that the work is indeed feminized through its focus on cleaning, keeping the store stocked and an emphasis on serving customers.

One of the unique aspects of the U.S. gas station is the complicated meshing of class, gender and sexuality in a place of work. At the end of this chapter, I will bring together the arguments I have previously outlined concerning the gendered history of gas stations and the company, coupled with the feminized expectations of customer service, and ultimately suggest that these complex intersections creates a particular space for the lesbian laboring body.

In essence, gender and class are at the forefront of this chapter. As Foucault (1995) has argued, the body becomes a script upon which institutional structures of power are written. In this sense, the company serves as a more obvious and accepted structure of power for the lesbian laboring body. The company’s discourses are enacted upon the worker through training practices, policies and procedures, evaluative methods and company messages promoting the organization’s aims. If we take seriously the understanding that space is co-constitutive, then this chapter focuses on how expectations of a gendered and classed job are imprinted onto bodies. Within the next chapter, I will more specifically explore how laboring lesbian bodies work and play within that space. Ultimately, in this chapter, I emphasize feminized work as key to laboring lesbians’ experience.

CONTEMPORARY GAS STATIONS: CLASS AND MASCULINITY

Though oil companies continue to market to women and middle-class clientele, gas stations remain a primarily masculine location. In fact, gas stations have been described by an industry insider as “man caves” selling beer and cigarettes and often associated with dirty bathrooms (Lindell, 2012). Given that the ability to pay at the pump requires a bank account, a debit or credit card and enough money in the account to easily allow the bank to hold up to \$75 until the sale clears, the inside of the store often includes working class customers who largely participate in a cash economy. Often, particularly where there is also food service, the mornings and lunchtimes become spaces of congregation for many working class men such as city workers and construction workers. Kath gives an illuminating description of the workplace, which gives life to this idea of the gas station as a “man cave.” Her description includes men dropping food on the floor, “bullshitting” with each other and “mowing down” on food:

Kath: We get truckers in there, a lot of men. Men are your biggest customers, in the gas stations. Guys that work on the road, guys that are doing siding, the guys that are plumbers, national grid, ya know, all these companies, all these company vehicles that you see out on the road, pay attention, it's mostly men, so it's mostly men customers, yes we get the women that come in and get their parfait and their salad and they go back to the medical center. Ya know, umm...but it's men and it's working men and uh...don't get me wrong we get some suits, we get a few, we don't get a lot of suits. But we do get some suits and they're usually just short and sweet and out the door. Ya know, the construction guys, they'll stand around there mowing down a piece of Stromboli, talking to each other, bullshitting and spilling food all over the floor. And, but those are the guys that I can bust balls with the best; I get along with all those guys. Ya know, 'cause they say something shitty to their pal, and I'll chime right in (laughing).

Kath's description draws out the dimensions of class within the man cave formed by the gas station. The “suits” are short and sweet, unlike the working man who lingers and inhabits the man cave. During interviews, laboring lesbians almost exclusively told customer service stories that involved a

male customer rather than a female customer. I reviewed my questions to confirm I was not leading laboring lesbians to give examples that involved men only. As Kath indicated, this reflects the fact that the clientele of gas stations are primarily men. Tellingly, a recent internal marketing training for all employees separates the clientele into “Hard Workers” who want “value priced fuel, tobacco, coffee, packaged snacks and cold beverages” and “Busy Professionals” who want “value priced fuel, healthier snacks, fresher food, and improved brands.” Working class men are described as “hard workers” which shifts the focus from class to how hard they work. Given the fact that many of the employees in the gas station are also “hard workers,” this categorization which sounds respectful on the surface, also sends a message that employees are expected to work hard.

In another reference to the basic elements of a man cave, Gretchen describes why she has chosen to move from a sales position in high end retail sports equipment to convenience stores. Gretchen is able to articulate her career choices, “What I realized, no matter our economy, we will always need to eat, drink and drive. So I needed to be in commodity items which are alcohol, cigarettes, gas, food, tobacco.” In other words, she moved from an arena of luxury to a working class space that, in her mind, would be more economically stable. This reference to commodity items frames the products offered in the convenience store and the clientele who frequent the space of a convenience store gas station. The majority of the items Gretchen listed are sales leaders: that is, products that make the most profit for the gas station. These products, particularly cigarettes, alcohol and tobacco, are exactly the products mentioned by Lindell (2012) as requirements for the “man cave.”

Finally, I want to draw attention to laboring lesbians’ connections with the men who run the company. Gretchen captures how this connection impacts her construction of her workplace in the following:

Gretchen: Because when you come to work for Hess, you come to work for a family. I think it's the name. You know, it's not just a generic name, there is really a guy.

Given the combination of the historical beginnings of gas stations, the dominance of male customers, the focus on a specific set of consumable items, and the connection Gretchen and others describe in relation to the male corporate leader, gas stations are fundamentally masculine spaces. My contribution to the literature on lesbians at work hinges on this distinction. Similar to the other studies on lesbians and work, the workplaces for laboring lesbians are masculine in the U.S. gas station. However, given the service nature of the positions within the gas stations, the work itself is highly feminized.

THE SERVICE ECONOMY: ENACTMENTS OF CLASS AND GENDER

These occupations [service occupations] are so stratified that worker characteristics such as race and gender determine not only who is considered desirable or even eligible to fill certain jobs, but also who will want to fill certain jobs and how the job itself is performed. Worker characteristics shape what is expected of a worker by management and customers, how that worker adapts to the job, and what aspects of the job he or she will resist or embrace. The strategies workers use to adapt to the demands of service jobs are likely to differ according to gender and other characteristics (MacDonald & Siriani 1996: 15).

The service economy continues to gain momentum within this contemporary neoliberal moment. Historically, manufacturing served as a relatively stable and lucrative job for the working class. Indeed, there are novels and ethnographies that attest to the lesbian body's place in the masculine world of manufacturing (Feinberg 1993). As manufacturing positions have become less available, the service economy has grown. In part, this is fueled by an increase in the need for additional services no longer provided by the traditional roles of the heterosexual nuclear family, given the number of women who now work (McDowell 2009).

While the service economy has grown to encompass a range of positions at all class levels, it is importantly marked by jobs where the worker serves as a broker between the company and the customer. Instead of engaging in production, service labor is focused on facilitating successful consumption with the goal of profit for the company. In a service position, the body becomes integral to that process through its intimate involvement at the moment of sale. Within this context, McDowell argues that service work is constructed as feminine (2009). The characteristics most commonly associated with providing service are placed in direct opposition to masculine rationality. Service work is marked by caring, a focus on relationships, and service with a smile. As I will demonstrate, laboring lesbian bodies strive to provide excellent customer service that enacts many of the feminine characteristics of service work. Beyond the point of interaction between the laboring body and the customer, there are additional job responsibilities necessary in staging customer service. These responsibilities mirror patriarchal expectations that woman's domain is in the home, such as cleaning and stocking the shelves.

Several authors have documented that lesbians are not typically contained within a heterosexual nuclear family model reliant on a male breadwinner (Dunne 2000, Wright 2010). As a result, they propose that lesbians need to work in order to support themselves. Given the assumption that they need to work, one question explored throughout the literature on lesbians at work asks how their sexuality impacts their career choices (Colgan et al 2008, Wright 2008). Some argue that lesbians select masculine occupations due to higher wages and/or lesbians' ability to exhibit masculine characteristics (Dunne 2000, Wright 2011). However, I find that there are limited employment options for entry-level workers within today's world of work regardless of their race, gender or sexuality. Service positions comprise the majority of positions available for any working class body with limited education and

training. So, in this case, the question for working class lesbians becomes not what sector of employment, but rather which site of service will they choose?

In fact, almost every laboring lesbian I interviewed had worked within the service economy since she began working. Importantly, I want to distinguish that not all of the laboring lesbians I interviewed would be classified as working class workers. Though clearly the gas station is a working class site of employment, the various roles within the gas station carry differing levels of professional status and earnings. Gas stations are staffed with five to seven employees depending on the size and volume of the store. There is an on-site manager who would be considered a professional employee and often holds a bachelor's degree. In addition, there is at least one assistant manager who earns an average of \$12 an hour and who is eligible for benefits, though not bonuses. The remaining employees are entry-level workers who are either classified as sales associates or senior associates depending on their length of employment and success within the position. I interviewed lesbians at all levels of this hierarchy. Assistant managers are often promoted internally from sales associate positions. Though increasingly rare, according to Gretchen, assistant managers can be promoted to manager. One of the managers I interviewed had worked her way up from sales associate to manager, though she has since left the company. Two of the managers I interviewed had started work at a professional level rather than working their way up through the organization. In fact, they are a couple, own a home and are raising a family. One of the entry-level sales associates I interviewed is from a middle-class background and has worked at two different gas stations over the past four years while she goes to school part-time at a local community college. Importantly, despite the various levels of classed positions within the local store, within everyday practice given the size of the staff, laboring lesbians at all levels are engaged in providing service.

While I have been describing the site of my research as a “gas station,” there are wide variations in my participants’ understanding of and relationship to the company, which are more clearly marked by their work position and class status. The gas station is a working class environment, though this characterization can be complicated by the enormous resources of the company and the wide range of customers. Gretchen is in her forties and has worked for the company for over ten years, beginning in a professional position as a marketing representative who supervised store managers. She has a bachelor’s degree in physical education, owns her own home, is in a committed relationship and has three young children. She is currently serving as a store manager for one of the larger stores in the district. This store also serves as a training site for new managers in multiple regions due to her expertise as a manager and her understanding of the company. She makes almost \$70,000 per year plus bonuses, which can equal another 10% of her salary quarterly. I was reminded of the differences between laboring lesbians when Gretchen reviewed my consent form as we prepared to interview for the first time. As she read the form I heard her say, “Women who work at gas stations...huh.” My heart jumped and my head turned as I realized something important had just happened. As she began to tell her story, she made sure to subtly correct my faux pas. She did not work at a gas station. She worked in the retail division of a major energy company. I had already come to respect and be astonished by the workplace responsibilities of these women, but her meaning was clear. It was an important distinction for her that a gas station had a very different social meaning than the retail division of a multinational corporation. Interestingly, Gretchen’s first job was in a local gas station as a teen-ager and though her current work life takes place in this working class context, it is with far broader responsibilities.

On the other hand, Alyssa never finished high school. She is in her early 20’s and has worked for Hess for two years. Prior to working at Hess, Alyssa was a waitress. Her hours in that job were reduced over time, and she was forced to seek other alternatives. Alyssa identifies as half Puerto Rican

and half Italian. She lives with her girlfriend who is a short order cook and often works nights. This combined schedule allows them to share a car to get to work. Alyssa is an entry-level worker who makes \$9/hour and freely uses the term “gas station” as a descriptor for where she works.

Similarly, Kath is in her thirties and has worked for Hess for four years, beginning as an assistant manager. Like Alyssa, Kath did not complete high school either and lives in a studio apartment close to work. Through her commitment to her work, she was recently promoted to a manager position moving from an hourly wage of \$12 an hour with benefits to a salaried position of \$34,000. She is proud of working for Hess, and switches back and forth between identifying herself as working at a gas station and working in a retail convenience store. These varied relationships to the company, varied positions within the organization and varied educational backgrounds having bearing on the laboring lesbians’ sense of identity and status in the workplace. However, they are all working to earn a living within a classed and feminized working context toward one common corporate goal: to increase sales.

SALES EXPECTATIONS: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LABORING BODY

In recent years, exciting work has emerged from the sociology of work literature outlining the importance of servicing bodies (Berstein 2010, McDowell 2009, Wolkowitz 2006). This literature informs my own work. Specifically, this work argues that service requires a bodily commitment as the body is a critical element of market exchange. However, much of this research is within the context of an informal economy such as sex work and domestic work. My work is positioned differently as it is directed at waged service positions within a corporation. The important distinction is the absence of company-wide missions and, therefore, the work itself is not driven directly by an institutionalized capitalist agenda. In the gas station, every responsibility of the laboring body within the workplace is centered on increasing sales. These responsibilities cover the gamut from keeping the gas pumps

working, taking out trash, cleaning the store, stocking the shelves to providing excellent customer service. While these duties take place within the local setting, the sales expectations are set and measured by a centralized system.

The level of detail that is actively and daily tracked is surprising. Quarterly and weekly sales expectations are set by the company for each individual store, but it is not as simple as an overall target that must be reached. Sales are separated into specific categories including gas, cigarettes, lottery, beverage, and food, as well as a number of convenience items. In addition, there are company campaigns focusing on specific products at certain times when customers are “upsold.” Upselling is a common marketing term describing the process of encouraging the customer to buy additional items beyond their initial purchase intent. A more recent example is a company promotion for employees called “Focus on 5” outlined by a spiraled colored “playbook” describing the sales goals. The playbook is full of masculine football references from an introductory “kickoff” meeting, to “Running the Play.” The sales goals include the following: “Take Back Tobacco,” “Leverage Lottery,” “Make Good to Go Great,” “Build the Basket,” and “Embrace the Hess Way.” These priorities center on increasing the sales of the four top selling products within the convenience store including cigarettes, lottery, prepared fast food, and snack food. The fifth focus is a customer-service philosophy that I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. The corporate-wide goal is to deliver over a billion dollars in sales this year. Managers receive a weekly “scorecard” outlining their progress in each of these areas, which are color coded to inform the manager where they are exceeding expectations and where they are in danger of not meeting the goals. It reminds me of my son’s color-coded behavior chart in his kindergarten class.

Within this context, the company sets specific goals for sales of a particular product and this product’s sales are tracked on a weekly basis both at a central level, as well as at the local level, to determine if the sales goals are being met. One example of this type of sales goal includes a corporate

deal with a tobacco company to sell an eCigarette item to every 75 cigarette customers. According to the playbook, “electronic cigarettes are the fastest growing segment of the tobacco category,” and managers are encouraged to take advantage of it. The playbook also states that “tobacco is the #2 traffic driver after fuel and contributes 28% of the profit per store.” These sales goals drive the structure of the physical labor. But this profit motive also effects the ways in which the laboring body is effectively and efficiently monitored.

COUNTING COMMODITIES: TEMPTATIONS

Leidner’s (1996) research on McDonald’s focused on front line working class service positions and contributed greatly to the sociology of work literature. One of her arguments is that principles of routinization, borrowed from manufacturing, have been applied to the service sector to promote speed of delivery and uniformity of product. However, she importantly notes that it is the body at the center of a service moment which is much more difficult to control. I want to suggest that in the case of gas stations, some of the routinization is put in place by management not only to increase efficiency and uniformity, but to discipline bodies through surveillance. Within the hectic daily routine of work within a Hess Express- the very name highlights the emphasis on quick service- the cadence of the day is most fully marked by counting. Importantly, the primary reason for counting is to deter theft.

Every product in the store is counted quarterly during an external audit process. Internally, beer, soda and energy drinks are counted weekly. Alyssa describes one particular experience of counting.

Alyssa: So I have to do the energy count [a count of energy drinks]. I do that on top of my beer count on Monday, which is every can of Monster, every can of Rockstar, every can of all the stuff, like every different size has to be in its own category. If we’re really short on it one week, like we have like a theft thing at our store because people go in there all the time, we’re always really busy, we’re not standing there all the time, you know what I mean, so they just take it, umm...so we were like \$800 short in energy drinks.

First, I want to note that counting cans and packs of cigarettes is time-consuming and exacting. It is not unusual to have to count twice to ensure the number is correct. Though the cash register measures how much is sold on a given day, this number has to be balanced against what inventory is physically present in the store to determine what has been lost, misdelivered, keyed incorrectly on the cash register, or more likely, stolen. Although customer theft occurs as Alyssa's example highlights, employee theft is more common within the gas station. Gretchen discusses the company policy on theft, noting that the majority of theft is from employees. In fact, she notes that she has a budget line specifically for theft.

Gretchen: We have like cigarette controls and money controls and lottery controls but it [theft] still exists. I mean, I have cigarette and lottery tickets that customers can't even touch and I'm missing \$120 in lottery tickets and 40 packs of cigarettes but they don't have legs. They're not walking out the door. So in our business, 80% is from our employees. So if we can get them to steal only 40% just think about how much money I would save.

You know this store, we've done I don't know, like 2.8 million dollars in sales a year. And my loss control is \$16,000. But I'm 2.7 million, I should be able to lose \$27,000. You know, one percent. But I don't lose that.

Specific products that are sales leaders, such as cigarettes, alcohol and lottery are counted more frequently. As Gretchen notes, many of these products are securely kept from customer's reach. Individual packs and cartons of cigarettes and lottery are counted at least three times a day. They are counted both for the purpose of measuring sales and as a disciplining routine to discourage employee theft. Hess has a "loss control policy" that includes an "employee no-grazing policy," which has to be signed by every employee. The no-grazing policy states clearly that theft is not allowed, including damaged or outdated items from the store. Additionally, employees are encouraged to attach receipts to items they purchase, and discouraged from providing service to their own family members.

Clearly, employee theft is a form of resistance. Terris and Jones (1982) conducted a study on theft within convenience stores. Their research argues that employee theft is motivated first by financial

need and second by getting back at the company. Hodson (1995) terms the latter as “pilferage as empowerment” where employees use theft as a way to push back against an oppressive system. My focus is not on why theft happens, but rather on how employee theft results in how bodies are disciplined through surveillance. That said, employee theft is directly connected with a working class setting where employees are not paid a livable wage. Gretchen offers one explanation of why employee theft is a routine aspect of her position as a manager which addresses issues of class:

Gretchen: These people some of them make only \$8 an hour and you try to make money off of \$8 an hour. You know it's not my fault that, that's the path that they're on. I mean, I give them what I can to help them out but I'm not the one who got them there. You know, or that they didn't go to school, or have poor upbringing, no family, I mean abusive relationships, you hear it all here. Umm...and you just try and you know, I let them understand that I know things are tough but you know we still have to abide by Hess standards, so they take that for what's it worth and they may steal half as many. Then I'm better off. Will I ever stop it all- no, once you turn around, someone else is doing it.

In essence, counting is built into the daily and weekly routine with the specific purpose of sending the message to employees that the company is measuring theft. As Gretchen articulates, it is difficult to be surrounded by so much money, so many convenience products, and to be paid \$8/hour and not be tempted. I would echo Gretchen's analysis that the process of counting is an illustrative example of the class context within this working environment, where individuals are paid so little while assuming a mantle of responsibility in managing a significant consumptive arena. They have onerous counting responsibilities so that employees know they are being watched. The importance of the working class environment is felt in other ways that discipline the body.

CREATING AN IMAGE: COMPANY POLICY ON APPEARANCE

Many scholars include a cursory reference to dress codes when describing an interactive service position (McDowell 1997, Leidner 1996, Witz et al 2003). Dress in the workplace constitutes one important form of corporate discipline exercised on laboring bodies and is rarely limited to just clothes.

First and foremost, the company uniform is designed to present a branded and consistent appearance across multiple geographic locations. Though not specifically connected to dress code, McDowell (2009) provides an analysis that clearly pertains to dress and the laboring body's overall appearance, arguing that bodies in interactive service positions are meant specifically *not* to be noticed.

In many forms of interactive service exchanges, the heterosexual matrix, defined by Butler, operates to associate deference, servility and an appropriate degree of 'invisibility' (that is, servicing without being noticed) with differently raced, classed and gendered bodies (McDowell 2009: 191).

In other words, bodies must appear as blank as possible. Applying this to the dress code, I would suggest rules on appearance are a link to the professional presentation desired by the corporation, which reflects the class context of that business and provides a cloak of "invisibility" to optimize the service role. The company has very specific policies regarding employee dress and appearance, adjusted for gender. The company mandates a clean-cut appearance with androgynous leanings. For example, the company uniform is a khaki pant with a collared polo or t-shirt. The shirt must be tucked in and a black belt and black skid resistant shoes are required. Employees are also allowed to wear company specific baseball caps. Employees will be sent home if they wear a hoodie or sweatshirt unless they are just coming out of the cooler that is refrigerated. Additionally, they are limited to only wearing white, gray or black under t-shirts.

As a representation of class divisions, managers have button up collared shirts, although they are required to absorb the cost of these shirts personally. All employees are issued polo shirts. The men's shirts have buttons, while the women's shirts do not. I asked Kath what is enforced in terms of clothing and she responds, "Some things are more forgivable than others, such as a white shoe rather than a black shoe. No one enforces black shoe." In addition, accessories are limited. Wedding rings are acceptable, but not additional jewelry for men other than a watch. Make-up and jewelry are to be kept to a

minimum for women, including no lipstick other than a gloss. Fingernail polish is not allowed as it can flake off in food.

But the expectations of the employee do not stop with specific clothing, make-up and jewelry. The body is also expected to conform to Hess standards. There are considerable rules about hair and these are taken very seriously. In discussing the expectations of hair, Kath says, “A person’s hair says a lot about them.” Hair cannot be colored an unusual shade. It must be pulled back or up and needs to be behind the shoulders regardless of what position the employee holds. Men can have a trimmed goatee or trimmed mustache with the emphasis on facial hair being neat and clean cut. Men are not allowed to have beards or chin straps, although mutton chops and sideburns are permitted, so long as they do not extend beyond the bottom of the ear. Their hair cannot touch their collar. If a man has long hair it needs to be pulled back in a ponytail or braided.

These standards are closely monitored. Linda recounts the story of a regional manager walking into a store, glancing at the young man who was working at the cash register (whose hair was touching his collar) and saying, “You are fired.” The young man was forced to go home and get a haircut before he could return to work. Kath has seen one of her managers pull out a travel shaving kit, which she keeps in her office, and hand it to an employee as he arrived for his shift, telling him to go shave before punching in.

Company policy also addresses tattoos, piercings and other body modifications. I called Kath while writing this chapter to double-check my notes on the dress code. She talked nonstop for almost twenty minutes about what was expected. For example, visible tattoos are not officially allowed and indeed, in practice, they are frowned upon. However, the company will not hire anyone with tattoos on his or her face. But there are some exceptions. Kath hired someone who had a tattoo on her neck behind the ear, telling the new employee that she would need to conceal it with her hair if someone

higher up in the company visited the store. In fact, Kath was promoted to manager despite having visible tattoos on her arms which is against company policy.

Facial piercings or tongue rings are not allowed. Some employees have been hired with facial piercings, but these employees must remove the facial jewelry while working. Indeed, I learned that there exists a small clear spacer that can be placed in a piercing to keep it from closing. The company policy also addresses extended ear lobes. People have been hired with minimally stretched earlobes, but typically, this is disallowed and non-negotiable.

Jackie acknowledges this attention to professional appearance, and makes connections to her own military background. This connection speaks to the uniformity that is provided through a strict dress code where bodies do not stand out within a service space.

Jackie: They are very big on professional appearance. And that brings me back to the military. But at the same time, I can see their point. Um...I don't think an eyebrow ring killed anybody. But they want to project an image that regardless of whether we are gay or straight or what have you, we are here to service the people that want to come into the store. So, I think that is what their ultimate reasoning is behind it.

In essence, Jackie's observation supports my argument throughout this chapter that the body is a critical part of service. She uses service as a verb in this case directly linking laboring lesbians as servicing customers. The body is under surveillance within the gas station where the focus on a clean physical environment is transcribed onto a "clean" laboring body free of excessive decoration or hair. But it also literally means a clean body. In fact, training materials categorize the appearance policy under a commitment to clean and bright stores. Further, just as bodies are required to be "clean" on the outside, the inside is also subject to inspection. Laboring bodies in management are required to undergo mandatory drug testing upon employment. For example, Alyssa was offered an assistant manager position, but she asked for more time for training before she accepted the position. Her motivation for the delay was that she needed to quit smoking pot long enough to pass the drug test. Employees who are

hurt at work which results in a medical leave are also required to pass a drug test. Thus, the body is under surveillance on multiple levels for multiple reasons.

I now want to pursue connections with class in relation to the appearance policy and suggest that the dress appearance is so minutely detailed for two reasons. The first is to create an image that is clean and devoid of anything that would interfere with a customer interaction. But also, there is a class component that assumes the working class laboring body may not know the rules of professional appearance and therefore, it must be specifically written and enforced. Furthermore, within the historical context of the specifically masculine gas station, the company policy on appearance creates a specific space and script for the laboring lesbian body. In contrast to an office space where more feminine dress may be expected, the focus is on an androgynous presentation. While many of my participants have a butch appearance, there are many variations on the performance of masculinity and femininity among laboring lesbians. My argument is that the Hess dress policy may indeed be a more comfortable fit for laboring lesbian bodies which range from butch to femme. However, this androgynous allowance does not extend to the gendered expectations of customer service.

SITE OF SURVEILLANCE: THE REGISTER BITCH

It is at the site of the cash register where my analysis pivots from a focus on a classed masculine environment to feminized service. Of course, gas stations are replete with surveillance cameras, visible indicators of panoptic surveillance practices that monitor space where up to \$35,000 can change hands in a single day. However, I want to propose that the most critical site of disciplining surveillance is the cash register. As Leidner discusses, cash registers are a form of “technical control” (1996: 38). Modern cash registers are computers that are linked to corporate offices. Unlike fast food cash registers that include automated messages to encourage upselling, the gas station register focuses on enforcing laws

regarding highly regulated products such as alcohol. For example, at the moment of an alcoholic purchase, the cash register prompts the cashier to enter the purchaser's birthdate. The cash register is highly complicated, categorizing purchases by type, and thus measuring sales by these categories. Sales figures are then transformed into weekly reports that provide measures of performance, cataloguing which products are high sellers, where sales need to be strengthened, and how employees are performing.

I was struck by the fact that there is a term for the person who is working at the cash register: the register bitch. I stumbled on to this commonly used term in an interview with Alyssa.

Alyssa: I have to count the safe, and then normally like Heather will be my RB.

Amy: What's that?

Alyssa: Um (hesitating)...register bitch.

Amy: (laughing)

Alyssa: That means, when you're an RB; that means you stock cigarettes, you wait on customers, you keep the coffee fresh, the coffee bar full, you spot sweep the store.

According to Rachel, who has worked in multiple gas stations, the "Register Bitch" is not a unique term to Hess. It is a common descriptor used to denote the person who has to work the register. The use of "bitch" to describe this role is not accidental and it does not matter if it is a man or woman fulfilling the role. First and foremost, the use of the term signals the fact that the "position" is a feminine one. Not only is the register bitch feminized in the naming, but also in the duties which include cleaning, stocking the shelves, preparing coffee and waiting on customers. One gendered and sexed interpretation of the word "bitch" is being someone's "woman," implying a subservient role in relation to a man. However, it also has connotations of a woman who is mean and in charge, and then punished for that authority through the use of a derogatory name. Being the RB requires one to both

establish authority as well as be dedicated to service. Finally, as Alyssa describes, the RB is a multi-tasked service role within the context of the gas station.

Though the full term is commonly used within the store, the initials are most commonly used as a private code. During an interview, Rachel described a common greeting with a customer where she said, “Hey asshole” to one of her regular customers. Within the next five minutes of our conversation, she explained why they used the initials RB rather than register bitch. She said saying “bitch” in public would get them in trouble with management. Though clearly, the term “asshole,” a more historically masculine derogatory label was acceptable, “bitch” was not.

Leidner (1996) suggests that the fully automated cash register leads to de-skilling the cashier role, as employees do not have to know how to count money or remember how much things cost. Perhaps as a result of the perception that the cash register is doing it all for the cashier, the position actually requires the performance of multiple responsibilities. I would suggest that the role of the cashier, or register bitch, is the most stressful role within the gas station, given that one must learn how to properly use the cash register while attending to so many other duties. During my time working at the gas station for the summer, I was often put on register. I can honestly say I have never experienced a more stressful environment. This is particularly striking given that I have a master’s degree in student personnel and have worked professionally in higher education for twenty years, and I am intimately familiar with the stress of multi-tasking life responsibilities while managing to be a mom, a professional and a doctoral student. I also worked as a cashier at a drug store in my youth. None of these experiences prepared me for the role of register bitch in the gas station. I was consistently overwhelmed trying to keep up with the customers in line, paying attention to the gas pumps, desperately attempting to understand all the categorical distinctions between products, stopping occasionally to take cash out of the drawer and put it in the safe (which requires specific coding), making sure to ask for identification of

everyone who was already buying beer before noon and ensuring the coffee pots were full and the area stocked and cleaned.

During my tenure at the gas station, I had to rely on my fellow workers to do the lottery machine for me. I had difficulty remembering all the different types of tobacco available to customers and where they might be placed, which caused many customers to either be impatient with my searching or help me out by pointing to the appropriate location. Moreover, my gas station had an arrangement with a local car dealership such that employees working the register were supposed to keep an eye out the window and when someone was at the pump waving, employees would need to decide if the customer was from the dealership, find and swipe the dealership's credit card and finally turn on the pump. This arrangement constituted the only time employees were ever allowed to turn on a gas pump without the customer coming in and paying. And just when I thought I was keeping up one morning, a customer came in and dumped over \$30 worth of change on the counter as payment for gas. He expected me to trust the change reflected the amount he told me. After painstakingly counting the change, he scolded me by telling me I could turn on the pumps the next time he was in the store before counting the change. I later learned he was a regular customer who did this routinely.

The register bitch represents a very specific role within the gas station where various responsibilities merge, such as interacting with customers while cataloguing sales through the register. This is the most visible role within the gas station and almost everyone serves on the register throughout the day. Technology enhances surveillance here, as each employee has a code to log onto the register and the cash drawers are counted at the beginning and ending of each shift. This count is then compared against the report generated by the cash register to ensure accurate accounting of the money. The cash register serves as the hub of the enterprise. Though it is a site of immense responsibility, working as the cashier is also the entry point for new employees as it is critically important that everyone knows how to

use the cash register. The experience is perhaps also used to gauge whether a new worker can handle the stress of the environment while still providing excellent customer service. The RB demonstrates surveillance of bodies, but also indicates that employees understand the feminization of the job given the use of the label “bitch.” The label illustrates the fundamentally feminized nature of the work.

PREPARING FOR GUESTS: CLEANING THE STORE

In addition to counting, cleaning is the most consistent job expectation that threads throughout laboring lesbians’ workday. Cleaning is significant on multiple levels. As outlined in the previous chapter, Leon Hess emphasized a clean service station. Historically, there were multiple national marketing programs sponsored by the oil companies focused on clean bathrooms in order to appeal to a female market. Finally, cleaning is firmly established as a woman’s job within the home; when brought into the workplace, I argue that the work of cleaning feminizes the job and is also connected to class.

During one interview, Jackie recounted hearing a division manager say he promoted hiring lesbians, as they were the “hardest working employees you can hope to find, and they have a knack for cleaning.” Every laboring lesbian I interviewed talked about cleaning responsibilities. While there are the traditional responsibilities that one might expect such as cleaning floors and counters, there is also significant work to be done cleaning gas pumps, soda fountain dispensers, windows, parking lots, trashcans, and shelves. Everything gets cleaned on a regular basis. And while laboring lesbians were proud of how their stores looked, there was one area of cleaning that disgusted them: cleaning the men’s bathrooms. Cleaning these bathrooms was so challenging that employees went so far as to restrict access to the space. For example, Jackie made the decision to declare the mixed gendered bathroom out of order when she was pregnant and she couldn’t deal with needing to use the bathroom when it was so consistently repugnant to her.

Jackie: Every Hess is required to have a fully functioning bathroom for convenience of customers. But my customers are so nasty. Once I got pregnant, I seriously couldn't handle running to the bathroom, you don't even want to know, it was awful and so disrespectful. I just locked it. You don't get the greatest clientele at the gas station. The best customers are the ones that pay in the pump. But according to Hess, they want them to come in more.

The impact of class on the job responsibilities is illustrated in this statement. Jackie refers to the "best" customers as the ones who pay at the pump. Importantly, the ability to pay at the pump is class based. I describe earlier that it requires a checking account or a credit card. As Jackie indicates, the company encourages customers to enter the store because profit comes primarily from the convenience store rather than the gas pumps. This means that the majority of the clientele who enter the store are working class rather than middle class. In short, Jackie is asserting that it is the working class clientele who leave the bathrooms dirty. Linda also discusses how disgusting the bathrooms can get and blames it on the cab drivers who often stop to use the facilities.

Cleaning is a significant feminized aspect of work for laboring lesbians in gas stations. Moreover, presenting a clean store is something that makes laboring lesbians feel proud. Mairi reports, "But...I like the challenge. I like knowing that I can do a job. I...even when you are just sweeping the floor and it looks good. I am proud of that." As Mairi illustrates, she is proud of her ability to make the workspace "look good" and she is aware that a clean store will increase sales. In addition to clean bodies and clean stores, the store must also be stocked, which is another feminized function of customer service.

STOCKING THE SHELVES

Mairi: You know you can make money if you keep those shelves stocked. You can, there is so much you can do. Keep things clean so people will want to come back. And have a good attitude. Just by doing those things, people will return.

In chapter 4, I described my interview with a lesbian who worked for an engineering firm. She explained that every space is carefully planned with the consumer in mind, from the refrigerated beverage coolers along the back wall, to the stand alone kiosks near the register where certain products have a higher placement to encourage spending. Undeniably, the retail space of a convenience store is very specifically designed containing over 10,000 different products. Due to the geographical distance from the company, there is some autonomy in how a store is run. However, there is no autonomy with regard to how a store is set up. Gretchen described moving from a smaller local gas station to Hess saying, “At Hess, you have a lot more structure, you don’t have a lot of leeway. You have no control over any of that. Now it is you had better have enough [product] in that spot and this is where it goes.”

In addition to cleaning, running the cash register and counting products, much of the additional work of employees is centered on keeping the store stocked. Stocking the shelves is similar to keeping the pantry full at home, though clearly on a larger scale. Stocking the shelves includes keeping product in stock, arranging shelves for better product viewing, keeping beverage coolers full, making coffee as well as maintaining gas pumps. Stocking the shelves is necessary work in preparation for the proper reception of one’s guests.

Store employees are always active. While the duties themselves may sound relatively simple, their volume and strictly defined nature makes them time consuming tasks. Consider stocking the beverage coolers, for example. We are all familiar with the coolers in a gas station, which often take up an entire wall of the store. Behind the wall is a temperature-controlled room referred to as “the cooler.” On the outside, the drinks are arranged in neat rows for the consumer. But behind the wall, the cooler contains all the bottled drinks and food products that need to be kept cold. It is dark, devoid of any type of decoration, and stuffed full of boxes. There are at least 300 different types of beverages that must be stocked including juices, Coke products, Pepsi products, milk, water, tea, beer and energy drinks. The

cooler is stocked at least twice daily. The first challenge in stocking the cooler is to actually find the matching box of drinks that needs to be refilled, and ensure that there is not one already open. The second challenge for the employee is keeping warm. The cooler is an unusual space within the store as it is partially hidden from the consumer. Mairi prefers to stock the coolers because she is allowed to listen to her music as she stocks various beverages in a more private space where she can sing and dance. In my own experience, going to the cooler, although cold, was an escape from the constant performance of customer service.

Alyssa gives her interpretation of the multiplicity of her responsibilities and draws a domestic analogy to the responsibilities of the home, bringing together cleaning and preparing the store for customers.

Alyssa: Like you're there to make the people feel better. You're there to ease their minds and you're there to give them what they want with a smile, okay. That's easy. I think my job is easy. I think yes, we get a lot of shit and I think that we have to handle a lot. I think we do have to a lot, but it's basic normal things. It's just like you're going to your house and you gotta clean and you got visitors that you gotta take care of. It's like the same thing as that, except I handle money all the time and I'm like a server, a dishwasher and maintenance man all in one. Everyday. So, I could never do a job where it's just one. I have to, I need to be like all over the place.

The pace of the work at a gas station is constant, which appeals to the participants I interviewed. They enjoy the varied flows of the day and are in tune with the overall company directive of making money. In addition to the cash register, the employee tasks are centered on creating a clean environment to appeal to the customer, and ensuring consumer goods are fully stocked to meet consumer needs. And these preparations are not solely made for an external audience. Each location undergoes regular audits by internal personnel, where every item is accounted for, weekly inspections by regional managers who fill out a specific checklist and occasional tours by corporate staff. As Alyssa captures in her comments,

like a proper hostess who has cleaned the house, managed the family budget, done the dishes, stocked the pantry and prepared the food, the laboring lesbian is ready to welcome her guests.

GUEST SERVICES: SERVICE WITH A SMILE

The literature on the workplace highlights the importance of the customer in relation to an interactive service position (Leidner 1996, Korczynski 2003). Unlike a production centered working environment where the relationship centers on the employer and the employee, the introduction of a customer triangulates this relationship. While there are arguments concerning how much influence the customer has within a service exchange, it is generally understood that the customer is an active participant in two ways (Belanger & Edwards 2013). The first is that a service environment relies on customers fulfilling their responsibilities as consumers to keep the service moving quickly. For example, Leidner (1996) outlines how customers are trained to stand in line and order from the menu. Perhaps more striking, the customer also serves as a disciplinary force for the employee. In other words, customers have certain expectations of the service they should receive. If the service is not provided in the way they expect, they discipline the employee either directly or to the manager. While this relationship is described as a service triangle between management, the employee and the customer, it is an uneven one. Leidner points out that McDonalds uses the term “guests” to “make it somewhat easier for workers to accept the requirement that they remain politely deferential by invoking a familiar situation in which such behavior does not imply subservience” (1996: 34). Hess employs the same tactic. While I will explore the customer and employee relationship through the lens of emotional labor in more depth in the following chapter, I want to focus here on customer service as a feminized and classed duty and how service bodies are disciplined by the customer.

The company clearly states customer service expectations in multiple ways. An emphasis on customer service is evident throughout the annual reports that I reviewed. In fact, as early as 1964, Hess created a training facility in New Jersey specifically to train employees who interact with the public. Although the gas station of the 1960's does not yet have a convenience store attached to it, the consistent messages in the annual reports from this era are about quality of the product, cleanliness of the station and most importantly, the interaction between the Hess employee and the customer.

H= Hello **W= Wow! Factor**
E= Eye Contact **A= Always Present**
S= Smile **Y= Yes I Can!**
S= Sincere Thanks

Today, Hess materials still focus on outstanding customer service to distinguish the company from competitors. In a newly developing training program on customer service, internal company materials clearly state, “YOU are what makes us different.” And the messages about how YOU should act support the feminized

characterization of service. “The Hess Way” customer service slogan highlights classical feminine attributes of service. The training that I received as an employee of the company contained a section specifically on customer service: Hello, Eye Contact, Smile and Sincere Thanks. The information stated that the right attitude will equal the right atmosphere, which will result in customer loyalty. The “Wow Factor” is described as taking the extra step to know what customers expect and meeting their expectations through a clean and safe environment. This environment includes a clean body where personal hygiene is attended to daily. The “Always Present” slogan emphasizes staying focused on customers and anticipating their needs without prompting.

I asked Gretchen how much employees’ focus on customer service can affect profit of the store. Gretchen indicates that employees are critical to creating a profitable environment.

Amy: But do you think, one person, the manager, has that much influence that they can increase sales?

Gretchen: It's called environment.

Amy: What do you mean?

Gretchen: Environment, within a store, you get a feeling of it when you walk in. And that's by how your employees are.

The end goal of creating an environment is to create a loyal customer. The "Yes I Can" message centers on how to fix the environment when it goes wrong, including granting employees permission to offer complementary beverage as a way to appease disgruntled customers. The idea is to "make it right" through listening and allowing the customer to vent without blaming and ultimately proposing a solution. Of course, this "solution" has a \$10 limit and must be documented. At the end of my training module as a new employee, I had to sign a Hess Way Service Pledge stating that I would "commit to uphold my responsibility in providing customer service." These customer service messages are also upheld in practice as demonstrated by laboring lesbians.

Gretchen, a long-time manager, speaks to the complicated expectations associated with providing customer service in a working class context. Her description of customer service goes beyond the pleasantries expected within a service encounter to creating an atmosphere of genuine care and concern for the customer, which suggests an embodied commitment. She thoughtfully addresses the difficulties of first finding the right employee, who typically comes from a working class background, but who is not "disgruntled" with life in general, noting that employees are often going to be treated as "low life idiots" by customers.

It's tough to teach people customer service skills. Because you know what people are, who they are, and if they're already coming in and they're disgruntled people in life in general, they can't see the bright side of life. Then they carry that with them wherever they go and one little thing will set them off and they'll be poor customer service, then that just trickles down. Genuine concern and care and making a difference in a

customer's life when they come in. But most people don't see this side of the fence. They think we are, you know, low life idiots, uhh...uneducated individuals. And what we have to do is make a difference in that customer's life. And it could be a simple thank you or hello to change that buying experience.

You know our company is now going to this new philosophy of customer service with distinction. You know, Mobilie, Sunoco, A+, all these companies they sell Twinkies, they sell gas, we all have the same thing. So we need to make sure that you understand what differentiates us from them. And if you get a company like Hess who has people like me that can believe in those things, I convey them to or hire better people to convey that to my customers. So my customer continually comes back and has a great customer experience. And when they keep coming back Hess keeps getting their money. I mean it's a win, win.

Gretchen is aware of the characteristics she looks for in an employee who will thrive in this environment, always aware of the class dimensions enacted in a service position. She knows that customers treat employees as "low life idiots," a derogatory statement she quickly corrects by emphasizing instead one's educational level. Having managed a store that has met its increasing sales quota seven years in a row, she is also fully aware how much difference it can make to have employees who are able to provide excellent customer service. She also makes the point that providing customer service is more than following the steps of the Hess way, but characterized by genuine care and concern. She is strongly committed to creating an atmosphere where the disadvantages of the position are acknowledged, but not allowed to interfere with the mission of attending to the customer. Finally, she puts the laboring body directly between the customer buying experience and the profits gained by the company, which results in a win/win scenario. One of the most successful strategies employed by the laboring body to create an environment that promotes customer loyalty is the ability to anticipate a customer's needs without having to ask.

ANTICIPATING CUSTOMER NEEDS

Almost every laboring lesbian I interviewed was unequivocally committed to providing excellent customer service, quite able to articulate the importance of customer service, and proud of her ability to

deliver this service. At a fundamental level, delivering excellent customer service means anticipating the customer's needs. Anticipating customers' needs is decidedly a feminized characteristic of the job, reminiscent of the housewife waiting at the door with a martini in her hand after a husband's long day at work. In an environment that is motivated by profit, anticipating needs often means anticipating purchases. As Mairi points out during an interview, she is rarely able to remember names, but she almost always remembers what they buy. In fact, this strategy works quite well as Alyssa describes how customers will seek her out as they know she knows what they want. Alyssa is proud of her commitment to remembering customers and their consistent purchases.

Alyssa: Because I am so nice, I get a lot of sweethearts, you know. A lot of people like me, like they do like for me to wait on them, so I have a really good memory so they like that.

Like I know almost everybody's cigarettes, I know people's beers. Like, there's this one guy, he comes in, he always gets Budweiser, like if it's the weekend and he's not going to have a day off, he'll get an 18 pack, if it's not, he'll just get a deuce. And he'll get a tea and he plays his numbers.

I'll be like, dude, where's your tea? And he's like oh thanks, I forgot. Or like this guy Ray, he comes in, umm...for his lunch break at like 6:45 and I always ask him, do you need cigarettes today, sometimes he'll need them and sometimes he won't and things like that. But like I just like to remind people like, if you literally get the same thing all the time, I'm gonna be like hey, you are missing something, ya know.

From this example we start to see just how much effort is required to do well within this context. Work becomes gendered as Alyssa takes care of a man who has potentially forgotten something that he might need. She knows her customer's patterns, as evidenced by her description of "a guy" who buys a certain amount of beer if not working and less if he is working. I would venture she might even remember what lottery numbers he plays regularly. Kath, an assistant manager, captures it well while describing her understanding of the customer service expectations: "It is the personal perspective that I go to, when you can anticipate what cigarettes they will buy, it makes them feel important. It is our job

to make them feel special.” By making the customers, who are often male, feel special, employees guarantee they will return.

I had an experience during fieldwork that highlighted just how much these laboring lesbians attend to people throughout their days. I interviewed Alyssa for the second time two months after our first interview. I had not met Alyssa prior to interviewing her the first time and had been referred to her through another laboring lesbian. I invited her out to breakfast and as we were seated, I excused myself to go to the restroom. As I returned to the table, the waitress followed me with a diet coke in her hand and put it on the table in front of me. I looked quizzically at Alyssa, who smiled and said she remembered that I drank a diet coke the first time we had met months earlier. I was very surprised she had remembered such a small detail about me from our first interaction. Both Kath and Alyssa clearly articulate the careful attention they give to customers to create an environment that includes intimate knowledge of the customer’s buying habits to ensure they feel special. This sustained relationship is possible through customers who frequent the store almost daily. The regulars are an important part of the workday and the work of the laboring body

This type of anticipatory attention is often focused on “regulars.” While many other service spaces allow for opportunities for relations with regular customers, the gas station has a slight twist. The site of service at the gas station is different from a fast food restaurant or other sites of service where the interaction is often anonymous or characteristic of the McDonaldization of service marked by speed and disembodiment (Leidner 1993). There are patterns of consumption within a gas station that draw customers into the convenience store on a regular basis and this creates a particular type of intimacy. Regular customers are critical to the profit success of a gas station. Alyssa provides this definition of who counts as a regular customer:

Amy: So, who counts as a regular?

Alyssa: Umm...someone who's normally in there more than once a day. Every day. There's another guy, I don't even know his name, I feel so bad. He's the doughnut stick guy.

Amy: (laughing) He's a doughnut stick guy, what does that even mean?

Alyssa: Yea, 'cause he eats doughnut sticks (laughing)

Importantly, the laboring lesbian often doesn't know the customer's name, but rather she knows individuals by what they buy. Regular customers are crucial to a gas station, where profits are from sales inside the convenience store rather than sales at the gas pumps. Linda describes this more accurately as she recounts a regular customer who visits the store three times a day and spends approximately \$30 a day on a combination of beer, cigarettes and lunch, which adds up to over \$150 a week. Over the course of a year, this can add up to over \$5,000 from one regular customer.

Even as the company regulates all aspects of sales, from what products are available for purchase, to where they are placed, it is regular practice to go outside of these prescriptions to provide even better service for regular customers, always with the ultimate goal of increasing sales. For example, Kath describes a couple who buy two cartons of a particular brand of cigarettes every week. The specific brand of cigarettes is not part of the store's regular inventory, but Kath makes sure to order two cartons a week in order to provide services (and sales) to this couple. She tells the story of buying a specific brand of bottled tea that they don't normally carry for a woman who consistently buys two daily.

These examples highlight the complexity of feminized customer service within a working class context. I want to emphasize that providing service is always ultimately connected to the customer. This provides a specificity of service as influenced by the consumer. Within the context of a gas station,

the servicing body is temporally marked as working class and expected to perform feminized labor. The power dynamic held by the consumer highlights an environment where profit is the underlying goal. The laboring body critically and importantly matters in a sales-driven environment where expectations of performance and service are taught in training and highlighted by managers and reinforced by customers.

CUSTOMERS: DISCIPLINARY FORCES

The enactment of customer service is laden with intersections of race, class, gender and sexuality expectations. The focus on customer service is often linked with being “nice” as Alyssa indicated earlier. But it is often more than just being nice. Customer service includes close attention to the relationship with the customer. With this in-depth strategy, the space between customer and employee decreases as the multiplicity of identities of both parties collides in the service moment. The presence of real bodies complicates a gendered ideal of “service with a smile.” Macdonald and Merrill (2009) argue that multiple axes of difference influence what bodies can fill which service position. In addition, they argue that the “‘personal qualities’ of the worker, both as constructed by management and the customer and perceived internally by the incumbent, are inextricably interwoven with the nature of the service provided” (2009: 130). While I will focus more specifically on these embodied performances in my next chapter, here I want to focus on how laboring lesbians understand and experience customer service. They are aware of whom they are talking with and make adjustments at the very least based on the customer’s appearance. Kath demonstrates this understanding in her description of how she provides customer service.

Kath: ‘Cause everybody’s different, and in order for me to successfully be a customer service person, I need to be able to adapt to any conversation and be able to be knowledgeable, I mean, we go from politics to crap out of national inquirer, ya know what I mean, umm...I’ve said this to you before, it’s like you’re a chameleon, you have

to change your skin depending on who's in front of you. 'Cause you want them to like you, you want them to come back, umm...and a lot of this, the nice part about that is you get everybody's opinion, you get a thousand opinions a day from different perspectives, ya know, I could be talking to an older black women, umm...on, ya know, say even the school shooting that just had happened, ya know, I could be talking to a black woman who sees it from this perspective and then I'd be talking to another black woman, older black woman who sees it completely different. So...I actually learn a lot from these people, I take a lot out of what, the short conversations that I have with people but they're all different, ya know, and they all approach me, I start the conversation with "Good Morning" and it starts from there, "Good Afternoon, How are you today?" and it literally goes from there, it can literally spark up a five minute conversation from just saying "good morning" and you have no idea what's it gonna be about, where its coming from. And in order to socialize you need to be versatile, I guess.

Kath is responding to what she perceives as the customer's needs in order to provide customer service based on their physical appearance. Though she is making assumptions, she is consciously aware that she wants them to be repeat customers and is willing to engage in a range of topics in order for them "to like her." In fact, she says she learns from these interactions. What I want to focus on in this text is a very subtle disciplining process at work. In essence, Kath is paying attention to the customer she is serving and aligning herself with his or her interests.

I also want to be clear that providing excellent customer service is not all about feel good moments of care and attention. Interactions between the employee and the customer can also be memorably uncomfortable. Alyssa tells a story that illustrates her experiences of being uncomfortable in a transaction with customers, and highlights the class dimension of her position. This is a stunning example of being disciplined by a customer for not following the expected classed and gendered service script. In this interaction, the man refuses to make physical contact in the exchange of money despite her gestures of holding out her hand. This slight highlights the disparity of their positions within this service moment.

Alyssa: But oh yeah, I got a rude guy the other day, you get really nice old men and then you get really grumpy old men. I was like doing dishes or whatever and I hear him like, “hello”, so I walk out there, but I had to dry my hands off first and I’m like, “Hey how are you.” And he didn’t answer. I was like okay, this is already a bad start. And all he’s getting was like a box of chicken wings, just one box of chicken wings, I tell him his total and I put my hand over his money and he goes (bop) on the side of my hand (puts the money on the counter). Okay, you’re too good to put it in my hand I understand that, so I don’t say anything and I pick the money up and give him his change and I walk away. I don’t say thank you, have a nice day, nothing ‘cause that’s a little thing, you know what I mean.

So, he calls me back, “Excuse me miss”, and I go “umm...yes?” and he goes, May I have a bag.” I’m like, “Oh yeah, I’m sorry about that. Here you go.” And he says, “You got anything else to say?” and I was like. “No, I don’t think so.” And he goes, “How about thank you.” And I was just like, “Thank you, have a nice day.” And then I just walk in the back and I’m like god, way to start my day. First customer, I was like, are you serious. You just ruined my day but I just try not to let it bother me because you just get those people and they’re just like that, you know.

In this instance, the customer clearly disciplines the employee to bring her back into an expected service script. Alyssa described the customer as “really rude, just because you work in the gas.” During our conversation, she speculates that his behavior was connected to her being a woman, the color of her skin, and her working class job. The fact that he refused to touch her during the exchange of money marks her within this moment. During our interview, she describes how this happens often and says, “What’s the big deal, it is not like I have a disease.” This marked moment is spatially significant as it allows a particular gendered, racialized and classed encounter where one body is the consumer and one is providing service. It is easy to imagine that the raced and classed body of the customer would have a very different approach at a bank, for instance, where the person providing service is in a position of authority with a different set of expectations for behavior.

MASCULINE PLACE, FEMINIZED WORK AND THE LABORING LESBIAN BODY

Within the service economy, intersections of gender, class and sexuality matter very much due to the importance of the body. In this chapter, I have demonstrated that laboring lesbian bodies’ subtle

understanding of and willingness to comply with expectations of feminized service allows them to succeed. But this still leaves an unexamined question: why do they work in gas stations? In other words, why are there so many laboring lesbian bodies employed in this site within the service economy? I noted earlier in this chapter that not many opportunities exist for a working body that has limited training or education which limits the choices for these laboring bodies. One of the primary working opportunities available is within the service economy. As a result, it makes sense that there are laboring lesbians working within sites of service. But why gas stations? I propose that the historical and contemporary masculine place of the gas station in combination with feminized labor allows room for multiple expressions of gender and sexuality. In essence, the laboring lesbian body is rewarded here, not for her ability to express masculinity, but rather for her ability to embody femininity. The masculine spatial configuration of the gas station provides a complex context for a highly feminized job. In this sense, there is space for lesbian bodies to perform and inhabit multiple expressions of femininity and masculinity.

As I have indicated throughout my project, *where* something happens is as important as how and why it happens. It is the combination of the space of the gas station with the servicing laboring lesbian body that provides a porous space of employment. This case study of the U.S. gas station highlights the combination of a feminized service job in a working class context that is located within an environment that is constructed as masculine. As a result, I propose that this complex location positions this work differently in relation to other literatures on lesbians at work. Though the literature on lesbians at work rarely makes the distinction between the types of jobs and places in which they exist, the focus of these studies is often on lesbians working in masculine jobs within masculine spaces or professional feminized positions within feminized spaces (Dunne 2000, Frank 2001, Lippa 2002, Peplau & Fingerhut 2004, Wright 2008).

There are a limited number of studies that specifically focus on lesbians at work. Within these studies, much of the focus is on lesbians' experiences working in male-dominated jobs (Dunne 2000, Frank 2001, Weston 1996, Wright 2008, Wright 2011). Wright (2008) studies lesbian firefighters and proposes that those who come out face less sexual attention from their male counterparts. Furthermore, her work proposes that lesbians' masculinity challenges stereotypes of femininity. Frank (2001) studies lesbians in building trades and suggests that these women only carefully come out within the workplace as it may result in increased harassment. Weston's (1996) classic study of lesbian mechanics is not specifically centered on work as much as it is an anthropological study of community, but it is firmly describing a male-dominated job. While these studies do not specifically address the locations of work, it is easy to imagine that they are often equally masculine. In this respect, my work correlates with the literature.

However, contrary to what is suggested in the literature, I do not propose that lesbians' ability to perform masculinity strengthens their success within this particular workplace. Rather, I suggest that their subjective training as women serves them well in carrying out the expectations of the job, regardless of how they inhabit various combinations of female masculinity and femininity (Halbertstam 1998). Certainly, laboring lesbians embody and perform gender in multiple ways. While their gendered presentation affects their experiences within their job as I will explore in the next chapter, it does not relieve them from the primary work responsibilities that are feminized. As McDowell argues, "masculinity is often, if not inevitably, a disadvantage in interactive service employment at the bottom end of the labour market" (2009: 191). Instead, my point is that the masculine site of the U.S. gas station creates a complex gendered and sexualized context that allows laboring lesbians to be themselves while carrying out the very specifically feminized and classed expectations of a service position.

In Taylor's study on working class lesbians' relationships to gay "scene" spaces, she argues how they are both "in and out of place" in a middle-class space of consumption even if the space is designed specifically for lesbians (2008: 543). Though we have different purposes, her work illuminates how the intersection of race, class, gender and sexuality dance with constructions of place that lead to working class lesbians being "in and out of place." In the case of the U.S. gas station, I am suggesting that these contrasts allow laboring lesbians to find their place and, in fact, even flourish.

CONCLUSION

Kath: I run around and I bust my ass and people see that. They're like, "Don't you ever go home?" I say, "No I have a cot in the back." They go, "I believe it 'cause you were here at 10 o'clock last night and here you are at 6 in the morning." "And you're here as much as me apparently." And they're like, "Oh, you're right." (laughing).

Critically, almost every participant I interviewed spoke specifically about interactions with the customers as her favorite part of their job. The work within gas stations is often monotonous and detailed. It is the interactions with customers that provide pleasure to the work. Heidi describes how important the customer relations are to turning her day around in a work-life routine that involves doing the same things day after day.

Heidi: Um...I like customers. I like dealing with customers because you know at the end of the day if you're fighting with your coworker and your customer sees you're having a bad day, especially regulars that you see every day. That you know you can joke around with. You can say certain things to certain customers. They know how to make you smile. They know how to turn your day around. At least with your customers there's something different every day, even if it's doing the same type of work every day.

That laboring lesbians like their jobs translated into a heightened sense of commitment to their work. This is not to say that the amount of time spent at work was always consistent over the period of time that I conducted my research, personal circumstances such as having a baby or beginning a new relationship affected work hours and employment of many laboring lesbians. However, each one of

them felt a commitment to the success of their particular location. And often this commitment meant spending well over 40 hours a week at the store. Reminiscent of Leon Hess checking the cleanliness of his stores in the middle of the night in the early years, Kath described being obsessed with her store and returning to the store even when she is not on the clock, telling employees they need to empty trash or stock shelves.

I heard multiple stories of hourly employees “working for free” because there was more work to be done; they clocked out before they finished the job, otherwise the store would exceed the number of weekly labor hours rationed by the company. At times, someone would leave a store at midnight only to return at 4:30am to re-open the store. Two women described sleeping in their cars in the parking lot between shifts on several occasions. The managers and assistant managers were called at all hours of the day to address problems. It was not unusual for an interview to be interrupted by a phone call from the store that needed immediate attention. The participants who were assistant managers or managers were able to recite their sales numbers for a given month as an indicator of how well they were doing. For example, Michelle was an assistant manager who filled in for a manager. Under her management, the sales increased by 2% in one month. She describes being very proud of this increase, which resulted in a strengthening of her commitment. Laboring lesbians’ sense of commitment varied by employee. Michelle, for example, could see a clear connection between her work in the store and the sales figures which motivated her. Others described being motivated to work so hard because they wanted to please their own manager. Sometimes they articulated a sense of pride in their particular store. For managers, some are motivated by the opportunity to make a good salary.

Our lives are lived in relation to others. Nowhere is this more evident in a capitalist economy than in the workplace, particularly in a working class service position that requires interaction with the ‘public’ as opposed to the consistent set of characters typical of an office environment. The laboring

lesbian never knows who is going to walk through the door of a convenience store attached to a gas station. It could be the employee coming on shift that you are secretly dating. It could be a delivery person, whom you joined for a drink at a local strip bar, dropping off a load of beer. It could be the schoolteacher who lives in the neighborhood and stops in daily before school for a cup of coffee to bolster herself for the rush of ten year-olds. The contradictions and connections of public and private, straight and gay, masculine and feminine space clearly intersect in complicated ways within this workplace.

Within this crowded space, the power of the company inscribes itself upon the body of the worker. Indeed, the lesbian laboring bodies have varying degrees of power within the social hierarchy of the everyday life of gas stations. Managers have the power to make employment decisions and benefit from quarterly bonuses if they meet their sales quotas. Sales associates and assistant managers are hourly employees who must do everything from sweeping the parking lot to serving as the public face of the company. In this chapter, I have focused on the ways in which the labor is both classed and gendered and understanding how laboring lesbians receive messages about customer service and interpret those messages. In the following chapter, I will examine how they inform this complex space as much as they are informed by it. Ultimately, I propose that the gendered complexity provided within the U.S. gas stations allow laboring lesbians to find their place. Not only has society prescribed a certain way of being a woman, being a lesbian, but also the requirements of being a service worker. Like the gas flowing as it is pumped into a gas tank, the stream symbolizes the constant regulatory messages of how and what “to be” and at a very particular cost per gallon, I might add. The cost is just high enough to feel painful and just low enough to seem manageable. And yet the fumes escape, serving as a reminder of the leakages possible within the world in which we live.

CHAPTER 6: PERFORMANCE OF EMOTIONAL LABOR

INTRODUCTION

Imagine walking into a gas station, with the tiled floor smudged by dirt tracked in from the recent rain and stacks of beer neatly displayed under a large Budweiser sign. There are symmetrical rows full of chocolate, candy and potato chips. Coolers are stocked full, always full, with every type of drink imaginable. Customers from all walks of life come in and out of the store at a regular pace using the bathrooms, getting a doughnut, paying for gas with cash, stopping for a snack with their children.

The register bitch stands behind a counter that is filled with products such as gum, lottery tickets and special promotions to encourage customers to add a last minute addition to their original purchase. Stacks of cigarettes are on display behind her. And while this place feels familiar, you can also feel that it is different. It is not the same as being at Target or the grocery store, but you are not quite sure why. While you wait in line to purchase your desired convenience product, you witness the following exchange involving a butch lesbian wearing khaki pants and a green polo with the Hess emblem branded on her breast. She has the body of a prepubescent boy and her breasts are barely visible beneath her shirt. Her hair is buzz cut. She has tattoos up and down her arms. Although you can't see it, she has a tattoo on her back that reads, "Fuck 'em all" which she had pierced into her skin the day she made the decision to cut off her long hair. In a quick glance, she could easily be mistaken for a young man. She approaches a 40 something year-old man delivering beer to the store, grabs his ass, and kisses him on the mouth.

Kath: "I'm coming home with you tonight."

Deliveryman: "I know you are."

Kath: "So you better tell your wife, she better get outta the house for a couple hours."

Deliveryman: "I'm on the phone."

As I argued in the last chapter, employees are expected to socially interact with the public and put forth their best faces with the primary goal of developing relationships within the gas stations in order to increase sales and hence increasing company profits. As Kath's performance illustrates, social interaction can take on many forms. The delivery man is servicing the store and in return, Kath is playfully offering to service him. In this chapter, I want to further highlight the complications within the workplace where the lesbian body is an explicit part of the market exchange for the project of queering emotional labor. It matters that this is a specific environment molded to the needs of a multinational corporation. Image is crucial to oil company profits within a society where every mode of transportation relies on gas. Furthermore, image matters as the automobile serves as a sign of independence, economic wealth and "civilization."

As I have just demonstrated, within the masculinized gas station, the feminized servicing body is marked by class, sexuality and gender. Bodies are measured by a socially constructed ideal which in the U.S. is white, woman, heterosexual, thin, and attractive. Butler (1990) argues that gender is not an independent mantle of identity, but is rather a performance produced through repetitious acts over time, thus challenging the essentialist, natural "woman." Butler (1993) also considers how gender performance is mediated through powerful historical social constructs that effectively discipline different expressions of "woman." In contrast to the previous chapter, I will now explore how the local laboring lesbian body continually mediates

her labor within a space that is constantly produced by pre-existing heteronormative expectations.

To illuminate the multiple strategies laboring lesbians engage to mediate these expectations, I will utilize concepts offered by geographies of sexualities to draw attention to how space is heterosexually structured. I am not only concerned with highlighting the privilege of the heteronormative body, but also exploring how the laboring lesbian body disrupts presumed heteronormative space through a performance of service. As with gender, space is sexed through relations between bodies within a specific location. I will demonstrate how moments of interaction between the public and laboring lesbians disrupt heteronormative space. Up to this point, I have attended to the multiplicity of power relations that form the particular location of the gas station, including the histories of gas stations, the histories and constructions of the company itself, and the practices and procedures that constitute laboring lesbians' daily working lives. In this chapter, I will wrestle with the disorder of sexualized space which is formed through interactions with customers where sexuality is temporally visible, noticed, brought forward, highlighted, and subverted within the framework of the labor of service.

I propose that emotional labor (Hochschild 2003) is a significant aspect of work for laboring lesbian bodies, building from the basic premise that one is required to sell oneself in order to increase company profits. However, Hochschild's work on emotional labor presumes a heteronormative body. I will interrogate the performance of emotional labor by attending to the social construction of gender and sexuality. Recognizing that laboring bodies are critical to the production of profit in the gas station, I propose building on Hochschild's work by utilizing Butler's concept of the performativity of gender, which she argues is always in relation to sexuality (1993). While Butler (2004) argues that the performance of gender is primarily

involuntary and unconscious, she does leave room for the contestation of normative expressions. Butler refers to this as the “practice of improvisation within constraint” (Butler 2004: 1). In order to understand how laboring lesbians perform “improvisation within constraint,” this chapter has several aims.

One of the significant charges of the study of geographies of sexualities is to “understand the mundane processes by which everyday expressions of heterosexuality are (re)produced in social space” (Browne et al 2007: 11). My overall goal is simply to demonstrate the ways in which this specific aspect of work is sexualized, and hence, illustrate how sexuality matters in the workplace. Within that goal, my first aim is to explore the constraints. In other words, what happens when the lesbian body does not meet the ideals of the heteronormative servicing body and what disciplinary exchanges does she experience that marks her difference and how does she respond? Secondly, I aim to explore the ways in which laboring lesbians play with a chameleon coat of gender, sexuality and class to build relations with customers, hence inspiring consumer loyalty to the company. Ultimately, my intention is to capture moments of laboring lesbian bodies’ improvisation for the project of queering emotional labor. As I apply the concept of performativity to ideas of emotional labor as experienced by laboring lesbians, I argue there is a strategic gendered and sexed performance of emotional labor that supports, is subject to, and plays with heteronormative expressions of the servicing body. It is these performances of gender and sexuality that I define as queering emotional labor. In other words, I attend to the multiple ways in which laboring lesbian bodies disrupt heteronormative assumptions of service. I do not mean to imply that disruption always equals resistance, but rather I am using disruption to highlight when bodies are not consistent with expectations. It is at this juncture that fissures occur and laboring lesbian bodies have developed strategies to respond.

THE COMPLICATED STAGE OF EMOTIONAL LABOR

Gretchen: You know, we're dealing with human nature, people's feelings, opinions, economic conditions. There's a lot of variety and diversity that comes through our doors every day.

Gretchen captures the essence of emotional labor in this statement. Importantly, she establishes a relationship between "dealing with human nature" and "economic conditions." Emotional labor is happening within the context of a capitalist environment. She is also aware that there is "a lot of variety and diversity" in the customers that implies the need to respond differently depending on who is coming through the doors. Given the varied relations of power within the workplace that I have described to this point, I want to complicate Hochschild's (2003) important ideas of emotional labor in several ways. First, noting that this work was originally developed in the early 1980's, it is not surprising that it primarily rests on uncomplicated representational constructions of femininity and assumes a heteronormative body. Isolating "woman" from other aspects of identity creates a falsely unified definition that often reifies patriarchal constructs (Bordo 2003, Crenshaw 1991, Mohanty 2003, Valentine 2007). Critical to my project today, within feminist theory, identity is now understood as an intersection of dimensions that complicate simplistic, essentialized notions of singular categories like "woman." However, despite deconstructing categories such as "woman," powerful normative ideals of gender and sexuality remain significant disciplining forces today.

Secondly, jobs in the service economy have been largely described as routinized and carefully scripted to ensure that skill is not needed and that any body can fulfill the role (Leidner 2006). In this model, emotional labor would require no more than what Hochschild would refer to as "surface acting", i.e. a polite smile and a simple hello that is spatially distant from a "real"

self. Labor within the gas station shares some of the characteristics of other feminized service work, such as fast food establishments, where there is a reliance on a simplified form of exchange with the customer that requires very little emotional labor. However, I propose that the performance of emotional labor is actually a significant aspect of the work. It has been argued that laboring bodies in front-line service work are the mediators between the company and the customer, and that their bodies themselves are part production and part consumption. In other words, bodies are delivering service which makes them part of the product. And because they are part of the product, their service is consumable. Hochschild (2003) argues that a more engaged form of emotional labor, referred to as “deep acting,” is more common within more professionally oriented positions. My research within the service economy challenges that notion. It has also been argued that jobs involving a more sustained relationship with a customer require “deep acting” (Leidner 1999). As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, serving regular customers is a significant part of the laboring lesbian’s work. As such, the laboring lesbian body is actively engaged in both surface and deep acting depending on the customer and her own desire to engage. Thus the work required is actually more complex (Korczynski & Ott 2004). In my own research, laboring bodies performed emotional labor in multiple forms throughout a day, which supports an analysis of service work as more complex than it originally appears.

Thirdly, I further complicate concepts of “surface acting” and “deep acting.” Hochschild’s work has been critiqued for creating an artificial duality of the private and public self, where the company wins through the ultimate “transmutation” of the worker’s emotions. Thus the worker is alienated from her true self or the employee is left with the exhausting labor of demonstrating a fake persona (Brook 2009, McClure and Murphy 2007). Relying on a strict separation of public and private does not attend to the complexity of human experience and the

intertwining of public and private in daily life. Hochschild, herself, acknowledges the disintegration of public and private spheres which she describes as “marketized private life” (2003: 203). My research suggests that within the gas station, Hochschild’s (2003) concept of “surface acting” can be seen as an oversimplification of the dichotomy of “deep acting” versus “surface acting” in relation to servicing bodies. Rather than focusing on the constructs of surface and deep acting, as this binary assumes a space outside of disciplinary structures, my interest lies in critiquing the idea of an internal private self through Butler’s (1990, 1993, 2004) ideas of performativity. This theoretical positioning does not negate the harm experienced by the laboring lesbian body per Hochschild’s original political intentions. Rather, this positioning does recognize an internal self as already produced through a filter of regulatory normative systems of power.

Arguing against notions of a naturalized essence of gender, Butler convincingly proposes that the very idea of the interiority of self “is itself a publically regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication” (1990: 279). In other words, our own expressions and experiences of emotion, labor, self, identity must always be situated within historical context and spatial locations. Hence, feminized emotional labor is already produced through disciplinary structures that are then further interpreted and highlighted by company policy. While laboring lesbian bodies are actively producing emotional labor in ways that can be described as both surface acting and deep acting, my point is that surface and deep acting are false constructions that are not as useful to my analysis of emotional labor. As I move through the strategies that laboring lesbians engage, I would instead suggest that albeit a performance, their emotional labor is often experienced as a genuine reflection of themselves and not easily separated into categories of surface and deep acting. Instead, my focus is on the ways in which laboring lesbian bodies

interpret and conform to regulatory expectations of emotional labor and, at times, queer emotional labor.

Finally, Hochschild's (2003) work has been criticized for not fully contextualizing the pleasure of emotional labor (Bolton & Boyd 2003, Jocoy 2003). Leidner (1999) describes emotional labor within service work and acknowledges customers as co-producers of the service encounter. She uses the term "interactive service work" to describe people who work directly with the public (Leidner 1999: 83). Through her observations of workers at McDonalds, Leidner proposes that "extreme routinization of the job and standardization of the interactions made it easier for workers to avoid taking mistreatment personally or seeing themselves as deserving the low regard in which many obviously held them" (1999: 92). She argues that workers did not always resist the emotional labor required of them and did not necessarily suffer psychological harm from these demands.

In this project, I suggest that the performance of emotional labor is a laboring expectation that is regulated by both the employer and customers, but that there are also spaces of interpretation that inspire play. In fact, Hochschild (2003) has also been critiqued for the assertion that the company successfully and completely mediates the worker's emotional labor (Bolton & Boyd 2003). In response to these critiques, Brook (2009) effectively utilizes Marxist theory to support Hochschild's work showing that her theoretical positioning does indeed allow for individual agency. Discussing the connections between Marx's theory of alienation and Hochschild's emotional labor, he writes:

"As alienation is borne of the inherently antagonistic wage-labour relationship, which generates contestation over workers' systemic separation from the design, control and ownership of their emotional labour, it is never a complete process. Consequently, workers mark the experience of alienation by their continual search

for the means to ameliorate, and even resist, its effects, which, in turn, corrodes their self-reification (transmutation) of commodities and with it, the possibility of ‘absolute’ management control” (Brook 2009: 544).

Drawing on Brook, I will argue that laboring is partially subject to individual interpretations and re-creations mediated through the body within the context of the company. Indeed, I was often struck by the playfulness of laboring lesbians’ performances of emotional labor for the purpose of creating relationships with customers. I will rely on partiality as described by both Butler (2004) and Brook (2009) to animate laboring lesbians’ interpretations and experiences of emotional labor. In the end, my intention is to highlight both the pain and pleasures of emotional labor through the laboring lesbian body. It is at this time that we enter the gas stations where laboring lesbian bodies are at work building relationships with customers.

DISRUPTING FEMINIZED DELIVERY OF EMOTIONAL LABOR

Alyssa highlights the complicated specificity of providing emotional labor as she discusses her attention to customers’ emotions on an ongoing basis.

Alyssa: But I also hate it. You know what I mean cause like you come into my store, you see me, I say, “Hi, how you doing?” I can either be your mom, your therapist, your best friend, your worst enemy, your ex-girlfriend. I could have ruined your whole entire day just by standing there, you know? Anything. It’s like a huge assortment of things and I just, you have to like learn how to read people to know. Cause some people don’t want that chipper girl. They don’t want that bubbly, “Hi, how you doing?” They don’t even really want you to say anything to them ‘cause they’re having a bad day. Some people wanna have a conversation with you, you know. It’s all about how you like read them. I’m really good with body language. And I think people are very transparent, their, your face tells everything. So if you read someone’s eyes, they never lie, ever. So...I know I used to wanna be a therapist, yeah. But...

Alyssa is aware that she has to “read” customer’s “body language” in order to know how to provide effective service. Importantly, Alyssa is also aware how customers’ project their

needs onto her when she describes how customers see her as being their mom, therapist, best friend or ex-girlfriend. She is aware that customers bring their own temporal sense of being, and she works to “read” that being and respond accordingly. This understanding highlights how the performance of labor fluctuates customer by customer. I also assert that the performance of emotional labor is dependent on who is providing it. As a result of these ever changing complexities, emotional labor requires a sensitive and active engagement with “reading the customer.” I outlined in the previous chapter how job responsibilities within the gas station as a site of service are feminized. Emotional labor is also feminized. Just as emotions are considered a primarily feminine trait, emotional labor is considered primarily a woman’s job (Hochschild 2003, Buchanan 2006). Hochschild asserts that emotional labor is laden with primarily feminine skills, highlighting all the historically appropriate attributes of femininity: patience, grace and kindness within the masculine world of work (2003: 163).

I stated earlier that Hochschild’s work assumed a heteronormative body. Where she does address sexuality, it is by invoking the feminine archetypes of the “mother” and “sexually desirable mate” (2003: 182). Given that the gas station provides converging contrasts between the spatial masculinity of the gas station and feminized service, I argued that this historically and contemporary specific space creates borders and boundaries for differing bodies to exist that also specifically embody various combinations of gender and sexuality. In this context, the presence of the laboring lesbian can force the social construction of femininity and masculinity to the surface (Halberstam 1998). In order to complicate this heteronormative assumption, I want to examine the performativity of a gendered and sexed emotional labor through the laboring lesbian body. Specifically, the laboring lesbians’ performance of emotional labor can engage multiple masculinized and feminized presentations that play with a feminized delivery of emotional labor.

As Alyssa described her personal analysis of delivering emotional labor as intimately connected to the customer, Kelly plays with a gendered and ultimately sexed performance of emotional labor in response to two different customers. During my fieldwork, I watched Kelly move from a feminized performance to a masculinized performance of emotional labor in reaction to two different customers. Kelly and I were hanging out in the parking lot catching up. Though we were socializing, she was never idle. She would stop to pick up a cigarette butt, throw out a piece of trash, or sweep up debris. As we walked around the parking lot, I heard someone call, “Hey sweetie! How are you?” I turned to see a middle-aged black woman at the gas pumps. Kelly smiled broadly and returned the greeting, “Hi sweetheart! Are you on your way to work?” They spent the next minute exchanging the details of their daily lives. I was amazed at the level of knowledge they had about each other. Kelly and I then proceeded to go into the store so Kelly could get a soda. As we came back outside, Kelly slammed both hands to hit the back of the sedan that was sitting in front of a different set of gas pumps and loudly exclaimed, “Hey, fucker!” My eyes followed the direction of her voice to see a young white man. He returned the greeting calling Kelly by name. Though their interaction was brasher and explicitly masculine, it was equally affectionate. This example illustrates how laboring lesbian’s performance of emotional labor within the gas station disrupts labor that is traditionally linked with a display of feminized qualities. In this example, the startling performance serves as a queer disruption of emotional labor. I am not suggesting that emotional labor is anything but a systematically feminized aspect of service as even in this example, Kelly’s motivation is about close attention to the customer. But I am suggesting that laboring lesbian bodies play with a presumed heteronormative delivery of emotional labor. I will now turn to how bodies can disrupt heteronormative expectations of emotional labor.

DISRUPTING THE HETERONORMATIVE BODY: “SIR”, BELLIES AND BODIES

The women I interviewed presented gender and sexuality in multiple ways and their physical presentation had an impact within the workplace. Most specifically, those who troubled normative idealizations of femininity were more easily read as lesbian and had different experiences than those who were not as visibly lesbian. Bell et al (1994) take on this very issue while wrestling with the disruption of heterosexual space. They propose that if queer bodies disrupt heteronormative space, then the logical conclusion is that space is authentically and enduringly straight until it is again queerly disrupted. They argue, “Heterosexuality is a performance, just as constructed as homosexuality, but is often presumed and privileged as the original” (Bell et al 1994: 33). In order to illustrate their point, they use examples of the presumed heterosexual femininity of the lipstick lesbian and the presumed heterosexual masculinity of the gay skinhead to illustrate how space is not simply and originally heterosexual, but produced through relations of power. They are attempting to determine if a straight appearing homosexual person can disrupt heterosexual space merely through being in it if she is not perceived as other than a normative sexuality.

Ultimately Bell et al declare that the lipstick lesbian and gay skinhead do not disrupt patriarchal, heterosexual space because they are not visually marked as queer (Bell et al 1994: 44). While they importantly demonstrate that space is constantly produced and performed, they also argue that queer sexuality must not only be visible, it must be noticed. “Noticing” requires bodies in relation to each other. From my own work, I would add what it means to be visible as a lesbian is surely dependent on *who* is noticing. In relation to this project, bodies are noticed at particular moments and visibility is an important factor within the context of service.

In the previous chapter, I described how laboring lesbians' bodies are marked as workers through their costuming and the regulation of how they can decorate their bodies through jewelry, make-up and hair. Given that their bodies are part of the aesthetics of the local store, laboring bodies are judged by how well they assume the expectations of the consumer. In the following examples, Kath's body is noticed by masculinity. Alyssa's is noticed by bellies. While we are all under surveillance of regulatory gazes, this consumptive environment, enmeshed with the performance of service, gives rise to critical comments that discipline laboring bodies. In response to bodies being disciplined, I explore the multiple strategies that laboring lesbians utilize throughout their days at the gas station to counter hostility, surveillance and just downright rudeness.

The notion of "aesthetic labor" will prove useful to this part of my project (Bohme 2003, Hancock & Tyler 2007, Witz et al 2003, Hancock 2005). Arguing that the literature on emotional labor ignores the embodiment of labor, this concept expands the idea of emotional labor to incorporate bodily aesthetics. Aesthetic labor is the stylization of workplace performance that includes mannerisms, dress, body shape, grooming and attractiveness (Witz et al 2003). While I am not convinced that Hochschild's original work ignores an embodied self, importantly, this concept furthers an analysis of the commodification of the body in the workplace arguing that corporate branding extends beyond the workplace to the employee herself.

Kath is one of several women I interviewed who identified as butch and embodied a masculine or androgynous appearance. Being called "sir" was a common experience; in most cases, it was a fact of daily life for these women. They knew it was going to happen on a regular basis and made decisions in every encounter regarding whether to correct the customer or not. As a butch laboring lesbian, Kath's presentation of sex and gender creates a dissonance between

her nametag and her body. The nametag serves as a gesture of personalized service for the company, but also as a symbol of compulsory heterosexuality where gendered names are matched with appropriate bodies. In this case, the customer reads her as a man and she identifies as a woman.

Kath: And then I have some [customers] that after almost 3 years, still call me sir and I have corrected them...umm...some of them didn't believe me (laugh), literally do not believe me that I am a girl. Some were completely embarrassed; some were just downright rude. Umm...I had a customer and it wasn't a regular, nobody I would ever recognize again, asked me if my parents hated me and I said, "Excuse me?" And they said, "Your parents must really hate you to give you a name like that." And I go, "Excuse me, my parents love me very much and they chose this name for a reason." I go, "My name is Katherine because I'm a female." And he said, "Bullshit, I'll let Katherine know you wore her name tag."

This example highlights Butler's disruption of the naturalness of gender, where Kath is "performing one's gender wrong" which "initiates a set of punishments" (1990: 279). Furthermore, Butler proposes that "policing gender is sometimes used as a way of securing heterosexuality" (1999: xii). Put into the context of service at a gas station, Kath easily embodies the company uniform whose androgynous style suits her bodily display. However, the nametag secures heterosexuality within this androgynous context. But clearly, sex and gender are more than the clothes one wears. Kath goes on to describe her decision to change her nametag to her full name in an attempt to reduce the number of incidents of this heteronormative confusion. Her full name of "Katherine" is more difficult to translate to a male name:

Kath: I actually had to change my name on my name tag. Because I'll introduce myself as Katherine so there's no misunderstanding as to what I was saying. But I changed it so that when I introduced myself, I used to use Kath and they would be like oh Ken, no...Kath...Keith...no...Katherine...like I would have to break it down or not break it down, just say my full name like cause they couldn't get it, cause they see...they don't see Katherine...they see a Ken or a Keith.

I asked Kath what impact she thought her butch appearance had with customers. She acknowledged that her masculine gendered presentation has been brought to her constant attention throughout her life. She then questioned why it matters, particularly in the context of her work.

Kath: Hmm...I think sometimes [looking butch], I can't imagine it wouldn't, how could it not, when it affects so many other people. And for what reason that it affects them, I have no idea. What do you care what I look like? As long as I smile and say "Have a good day" and give you the right change you should be happy with that.

Of course it does matter. Kath's butch body challenges the very ideal of "woman." Her presentation as a masculine woman is automatically equated with being a lesbian that challenges a heterosexual ordering that is so inherent in a feminized world of service. However, I would propose that it is here where the masculine space of the gas station collides with the feminized and sexualized expectations of service where Kath's body is both disciplined by constructions of gender and sexuality as well as allowed to be the body performing the service. Within later sections of this chapter, I will describe how Kath plays with these very same heterosexual assumptions of service. My point here is to stage the performance of labor where Kath feels she needs to change her nametag in order to establish her gender more firmly and hence, her abilities to perform feminized service.

The laboring lesbian body is punished in comparison to a naturalized ideal of "woman" in other ways, as well. Alyssa describes a moment when a customer touches her stomach and lectures her on not gaining too much weight, equating being heavy with being less heterosexually desirable.

Alyssa: Someone, a regular customer, umm...he's not my favorite anymore, I really did love him but he, he started, I don't know, started to make me feel bad.

Amy: In what way, what happened?

Alyssa: Umm...I'm a chubby girl, okay, so you know and I love it. But I since I worked at Hess, I've gained a substantial amount of weight. Umm...and he comes up to me and he's like, "What are you doing?" And I'm like "What do you mean?" He grabs my stomach.

Yes, yes, I know. He's so old and I'm just, I can't bring myself to say anything and he pinches it and he goes "What's this?" I just, I don't even know what to say. And he goes, "Oh, you should stop that." He's like, "You're too pretty to get any bigger." And I'm like ohhh...and then like the next day, and he knows I'm a lesbian cause I've had conversations with him, he goes "What, are you pregnant?"

I was so horrified. I just walked away and like I will never wait on him ever again. If I see him, I just walk away. 'Cause like he comes, he's so like backwards, he's like "I'm just trying to make your day, hey beautiful, I wanna make your day." Well, don't call me chubby and don't touch me.

In this instance, the customer has violated Alyssa's personal boundaries and, in doing so, gone from a favorite in Alyssa's eyes to someone with whom she won't engage anymore.

Importantly, identifying as a lesbian does not relieve her from the expectation of the idealization of the female body. She is still measured by those standards. This example also illustrates the intimacy of the service environment. Within this space, the customer clearly assumes he has the right to visually consume as well as physically grab the body of the laboring lesbian. While in this scenario I am specifically attending to how bodies are disciplined and consumed, Alyssa is also demonstrating a strategy of refusal of service that I will outline more fully within this chapter.

NAME CALLING: WHEN SERVICE GOES WRONG

Kath estimates that she interacts with 500-600 customers a day during an eight hour shift. As I described previously, there are many services provided by the gas station. And because this environment sells highly regulated items such as alcohol, cigarettes and gas and involves

significant exchanges of money, a lot can go wrong. The gas pumps can break down, a gas spill can happen, coolers quit cooling, the soda machine quits working, doughnuts are delivered late, credit card machines go offline. All these disruptive events have an impact on providing customer service that has to be managed by the laboring body. Almost everyone I interviewed was able to quickly recount a story when asked if a customer had ever made an issue of their sexuality in the workplace. While these name calling incidents are not constant experiences that happen on a daily basis, they do happen, and are clearly remembered.

Korcynski (2003) argues that companies purposefully structure service interactions to support the idea of the customer as a powerful consumer. He writes, “The key sign-value that customers consume during service interactions is the enchanting myth of their own sovereignty” (2003: 57). He goes on to suggest that “enchantment may easily turn to disillusionment in the moments when the individual customer’s lack of sovereignty becomes starkly apparent” (2003: 57). Behind this “disillusionment” is the recognition of the “continuing, rationalizing, bureaucratic imperative of production” (Korcynski 2003: 57). It is here that I would like to further explore the impact of “disillusionment” on the laboring lesbian body. In short, I argue that the laboring lesbian body is marked at precisely that time when service goes wrong and a heteronormative model of service blows apart. In the following, Kath describes being called a “dyke bitch” as a result of a service moment gone wrong.

Kath: And he’s like “this is fucking bullshit, you dyke fucking bitch, I want your fucking name.” And I said “right here sir, here you go.” And uhh...I gave him my name and I told him exactly what number to call if he had an issue and he was going on and on and I said “now you just need to leave the store, now you’re just being irate, now you can get outta the store. If you don’t leave I’ll have you arrested for trespassing.” And he said “You can’t have me arrested.” “Yes sir I can, leave now” and he did...but yeah, he called me a dyke bitch. Once he called

me that, that's when it was pretty much done, the conversation was over, don't insult me.

When Kath is called a “dyke fucking bitch,” she describes how her heart was pounding during and after the incident. The women I interviewed told multiple stories of being called derogatory names when they could not provide service to a customer or when service went wrong. It was not unusual for the response by the customer to focus on insults meant to put the laboring lesbian body in her place. In other words, the customer was mad and he aimed his anger at the laboring lesbian body. Furthermore, the classed context of the gas station allowed a freedom of expression not normally found in a professional setting. The customer reached for epithets that would highlight the difference of the laboring lesbian body from the ideal representation of the heterosexual, thin, attractive woman. The epithet, “You Dyke Fucking Bitch” ensures that both gender and sexuality are violently marked in the same breath.

In another example, Linda describes an interaction with a young male customer, who calls her a “fat fucking cunt” because she wouldn't give him matches.

Linda: I wouldn't give this one dude matches. And I was like, no dude, I need an ID, I'm sorry. He's like, umm, that's fucking ridiculous. I'm 22 goddamn years old, blah, blah, blah, you fat fucking cunt, this, that and the other. I was like thanks have a nice day. You know, it's like you can't make me feel bad about myself. Please, please, come on now, you gotta try harder, you gotta try harder. Hit me with something better. That was weak.

Though clearly this exchange did bother her, Linda further explains that this customer didn't know her or anything about her. Recognizing that distance, she is able to partially depersonalize his remark. While Linda's body is not marked specifically as a lesbian within this example, “cunt” is an obscene term that connects gender and sexuality through the term's reference to female genitalia.

In another example, Jackie recounts stories told by other managers who are called dykes. Jackie freely uses the term dyke, though is rarely called a dyke herself, due to her feminine appearance. She describes using the word both to reclaim it as well as to be included as a dyke among other lesbian employees in the company.

Jackie: I hear stories from the other managers and they get called dyke by um...customers and if something is wrong with the store. "I can't believe this fountain soda is out, you dyke, go fix it."

Relations of power become significant as described by Jackie's statement of "go fix it" as though being ordered like a servant. Here, the term "dyke" is meant to call attention to socially constructed hierarchical ordering of who has power and who does not. And "dyke" is often near the bottom of the list. Differences are highlighted and words are used that are meant to sting. These remarks are felt by the employees even as they try to discount their power. Sometimes the vehement marking of categories goes further than being called names.

STRIKING OUT: VIOLENCE

Several times during my ten year research period, I described my research to acquaintances and colleagues. One of their first reactions was to voice concern about these women being robbed while at work and fears for their personal safety. During my research, I found that there were incidents of theft including "drive-offs," where someone was able to get a gas pump turned on and then drove off without paying, men sneaking in the back and carrying off boxes of cigarettes and, of course, theft of products within the store. However, contrary to what one might imagine, there were no reported armed robberies. I asked Linda if she was concerned about being robbed. She quickly replied "no." She reports that everyone knows that Hess doesn't keep very much money in their drawers and armed robbery simply did not happen.

Through my research, I came to understand that there are other threats to their safety that are far more personal.

There are many products for sale in the gas station that require strict regulation. For example, alcohol contained in less than a 12 pack has to be put in a bag at the time of purchase. Lottery tickets cannot be bought using a credit or debit card. Most importantly, the laboring body has to carefully ensure someone is old enough to buy any of the regulated items. This puts them in a position of authority which can be at odds with providing flawless customer service. As Korczynski (2003) describes, production is highlighted and the limits of customer power become starkly apparent. If it were discovered that an employee sold alcohol to a minor, the store could be fined and ultimately lose its right to sell alcohol, which would have a significant impact on sales. As a result, employees are fired if they do not follow the rules of requiring valid personal identification for certain products.

While this process sounds relatively simple, I found the reality of the “ID-ing” someone stressful during my stint as a laboring lesbian. Almost always, it involved a young person, often male, who was resistant or unable to present identification. Sometimes, the results can be explosive and violent. Kelly recounts a woman jumping across the counter to punch her and calling her a “stupid dyke.”

Kelly: Um.. I ID'd the bitch for buying beer. And she came across the counter and punched me. Right in the face and called me a stupid dyke.

In this case, the laboring lesbian body is marked by verbal and physical violence. In the telling of the incident, Kelly relies on the same rankings of power by using “bitch” to describe the customer. Kelly easily classifies the woman as a bitch in a retaliatory tone to both the violent action and the “dyke” epitaph.

With tears in her eyes, Linda recounts an encounter that has left a physical scar on her chest. One time, she refused to sell beer to a young, white man. Later she went outside to smoke a cigarette. The customer ran up to her with a lit cigarette and pushed the burning end into her chest. During our interview, she opened her shirt and showed me the perfectly symmetrical mark still visible on her skin.

Both women experienced these violent encounters years ago and were still working within the service industry. In both of these cases, the laboring lesbian body was designated to serve in a regulatory function and appropriately refused service to a customer. They were doing their jobs as they had been taught to do, ultimately with a personal interest in protecting their jobs. Again, while these are not everyday experiences, it is important to note that laboring lesbians are working in potentially volatile environments where customers can and do physically lash out.

STOPPING THE PERFORMANCE

Now I would like to turn specific attention to the strategies employed by laboring lesbian bodies within the performance of emotional labor. Given the range of laboring lesbians' experiences in the performance of emotional labor, I often asked laboring lesbians about their reactions to specific incidents. It became clear to me that they employ strategies both with the customers and with themselves in order to continue with their workday. For example, when Kath is called a "dyke bitch" by a customer, she realizes she is done with serving the customer and doesn't care anymore what he thinks about her customer service skills. She also employs laughter to ease the tension of being insulted.

Kath: I had to laugh about it because if I let every time someone pissed me off and every time someone yelled at me or called me a name, you know I've been called a bitch and whatever, if I got mad every time, I would hate my job. 'Cause it happens a lot, it happens, you get an irate customer at least once a day. I think you still need to have fun, if you don't have fun don't go to work. Like that's no place to work, if you don't enjoy yourself, even a little, you'll be miserable and you won't enjoy your job.

At the same time, she describes a boundary that has been crossed and she is no longer just a laboring body willing to smile through adversity. When she orders the customer who called her a "dyke bitch" off the premises, she clearly shifts the moment from providing service to protecting both herself and the environment of the store by asking him to leave, eventually threatening him with a higher authority if he does not comply.

Gretchen described a similar reaction where she became less concerned with the customer relationship and the resulting sales when her body was subject to a judging gaze. According to Gretchen, the male customer reacted to her talking about her young kids as he read her as too old to have young children. She was offended when a regular customer showed surprise when she was talking about her children. In reaction, she "didn't care what I said after that."

In Gretchen's case, her body did not meet the ideal of being a mother to young children. And because she was offended and isn't putting the customer relationship at the center of the interaction, she comes out to him by explaining that her partner biologically carried the children. At the same time, she was also conscious that she thought she had lost a regular customer and was relieved when he returned and they carry on with their established banter. In the end, when it becomes too personal, emotional labor is stopped, and in fact, service is often stopped.

Stopping the performance of service is one strategy employed. Though as Gretchen notes, there are potential consequences in regards to profit, so this strategy is used sparingly.

KILL THEM WITH KINDNESS: PERFORMATIVITY OF SERVICE

Heidi: Hey, I like people. Most people. There are certain stupid people that I just can't stand. I'd love to bounce their head off the counter but I don't. So, I kill them with kindness and it irritates the crap out of them. Like we get customers that will be irate with us and we'll just smile and say have a nice day and they absolutely hate it. And you know it gets under their skin, so that's why you do it. What are they going to do? Call and say, oh well, she said to have a nice day.

In Hochschild's (2003) work, the concept of surface acting, where there is a definitive split between the public presentation of service and the private self, is applied to a fast food worker. At first glance, surface acting could describe Heidi's strategy for dealing with difficult customers. However, I suggest that aligning a philosophy of "killing them with kindness" with the concept of surface acting simplifies the service moment. Rather, I propose the strategy of "killing them with kindness" is a performance of service employed specifically during moments of conflict. With resonances of camp (Meyer 1994, Newton 1993), the exaggerated performance of feminized kindness as a form of service certainly provides a boundary between the customer and the self that prevents it from being too personal. It is a hyped up version of service where service with a smile is playfully, yet ironically, engaged in a moment of conflict.

Heidi effectively illustrates the contradiction between wanting to "bounce their head off the counter" and "killing them with kindness." She uses this strategy for several purposes, including retaliating at the customer, knowing it will be irritating, as well as ultimately protecting her job. She is aware that an irate customer can call her manager and complain, and she will be held accountable.

Linda also uses these terms “kill them with kindness” to describe her strategy for dealing with difficult customers. She describes it as acting like she has taken “happy” pills.

Linda: Always, I always kill them with kindness. It doesn't matter like even the dick people. Even like, unless I'm having a bad day, and I try not to have a bad day at work. I act like I'm on drugs, like I act like the doctors are giving me like really good happy pills. Not just the 20 milligrams of Paxil and 50 milligrams of Cerapol that I got.

In her case, she uses the analogy of artificially stimulated happiness through pharmaceuticals to give life to the idea of an accelerated kindness. Returning to Hochschild's ideas of emotional labor, it is clear that these performances are not indicative of how the laboring lesbian really feels which supports the idea of surface acting. However, their descriptions of “killing them with kindness” is so exaggerated that it suggests something else entirely. It is a strategy employed during conflict that meets the company expectations of service, but with an added twist. There are other performances that are regularly employed in order to provide effective service.

FLIRTING: STRATEGIC EMBODIED PERFORMANCE

In addition to “killing them with kindness,” laboring lesbians employ flirting as an emotional labor strategy. Flirting is described by laboring lesbians as playful, fraught with sexual innuendo, or more simply a gesture of affection. On another level, the laboring lesbian openly and specifically adds her sexuality to the encounter. When laboring bodies reveal a lesbian sexuality, they disrupt a presumed heteronormative relationship between the customer and the laboring body. I want to suggest that, at times, flirting with men is a strategic embodied performance that is a common experience in the gas station for laboring lesbians. I am using the phrase “strategic embodied performance” to suggest that the production must be staged; the

laboring lesbian body carefully chooses the actors, act, and time. While this definition is consistent with the concept of surface acting on some level, flirting is enacted through the laboring lesbian body and intimately connected to her sense of self. As such, while it is a staged production, it is also an embodied one which is more engaged than surface acting. Linda animates this idea as she describes a typical interaction with one of her favorite customers who she affectionately calls her “favorite asshole.”

Linda: I’m like, “Hey, it’s my favorite asshole.” He’s like, “Good to know I’m still on top.”

Then I’ll flirt with him, I’ll be like always, “You know I don’t swing that way.” And he knows I’m gay, too. He’s like, “You’re still my favorite homo.” I’m like, “You’re still my favorite straight man.” I don’t get offended by that ‘cause I know he’s not being serious and he knows I’m not being you know. I don’t think he’s an asshole and he’s not being an asshole to me. You know, we’re just playing...

Linda and the customer use the categories of “straight man” and “homo” to mark each other. Certainly, the identifying markers fit the actors. At the same time, making them visible through the lens of flirting partially disrupts the very categories they are meant to produce. As Linda emphasizes, they are playing.

As I indicated earlier, not every body is able or willing to visibly assume the mantle of heterosexuality. However, that doesn’t mean these bodies are relieved from performing the emotional labor required of service. As such, I am suggesting that these masculine lesbians strategically perform emotional labor through flirting with male customers. This is possible for two reasons. The first reason is the gas station provides a stage of masculinity which allows the laboring lesbian body to perform differently than a more traditional feminized service environment. The second reason is that the very expectation of feminized service alongside the

laboring lesbian body which does not always embody normative femininity requires creativity in order to establish relationships with customers

Gretchen describes “adaption” as her own strategic performance of emotional labor, as she searches for an understanding of the relationship between the lesbian body and men in this masculinized service environment.

Gretchen: Then I have another nice guy, he’s very flattering and he’s always huggin’ on me every day. He comes in and looks around for me. I don’t know. Sometimes, I think lesbians get along well with men. Maybe cause we’re not intimidating to them. Maybe cause we like the same thing. (laughing) I don’t know. We can adapt very well. We are who we are.

Gretchen wonders if it is a shared internal fantasy of “woman” with the customer, meaning they are both thinking about women in their flirtatious banter. Thus she laughingly acknowledges that it matters that the male customer and the visible laboring body “like the same thing.”

On the stage of emotional labor, the visible laboring lesbian body flirts with regular male customers who feel safe as a form of relationship building. They provide fodder for the male imagination and their own fantasy of “woman.” I don’t mean to suggest that the sexualized banter is not an authentic form of communication and labor between the two parties. In fact, I would assert that this is a form of pleasure for them both. However, it is always in the context of providing service, which I would argue is never far from the laboring lesbians’ realm of consciousness. Gretchen’s response that “we can adapt very well” underscores the strategic embodied performance. Hence, the laboring lesbian body adapts and improvises performances of gender and sexuality in the form of emotional labor with bodies in relation to each other.

MANAGING MEN: FLIRTING AS A SELLING STRATEGY

During the opening vignette of this chapter, I asked the reader to visualize the space of the gas station and an interaction between a laboring lesbian body and a deliveryman. The words exchanged are taken exactly from an interview with Kath and framed within my own participant observations. This is a playful performance framed by a service environment. Kath is not proposing that she actually have sex with the deliveryman and the deliveryman is well aware that Kath is a lesbian. But this interaction is indicative of their genuinely fond greeting, some variation of which happens weekly. As Kath says, “I freakin’ love that guy. He’s the nicest guy in the world, and like I doubt he even flirts with anybody else like that but me, like he just doesn’t even come off that way.” It is his very niceness that makes him safe for such an exaggerated performance. While Kath is flirting with a deliveryman in this instance, there are explicit company messages that encourage store employees to foster positive relationships with vendors. Vendors are an important part of the convenience store business given that they ensure that product is delivered promptly and accurately. So while this example is not directly a customer, it is certainly a form of emotional labor. But it raises the question, why the sexual banter in the first place?

In proposing that organizations engender jobs, Hall (1993) argues that flirting is an expectation of good service. In the case of waitressing, flirting is an expectation specifically between female workers and male customers. In addition, Hall suggests class context matters, flirting is specifically located in “low-prestige restaurants” (1993: 464). While I do not explicitly focus on class in this chapter, I have previously described the labor within gas stations as working class. While flirting is an element of many service environments of all class contexts, my research indicates that flirting is common within gas stations and sometimes brasher.

McDowell describes flirting as an expectation to make a client feel “special” and makes a connection with providing service and sexual attraction (1993: 91). While all the laboring bodies I interviewed had recounted some types of flirting, it was the butch body that displayed the most direct and sexualized banter with male customers. Similar to “killing them with kindness” it was a hyped up version of flirting and form of performance between a male customer and a butch laboring lesbian body. The butch laboring body plays with a performance of heteronormative sexual attraction as a strategy of emotional labor. Emotional labor is queered through the very embodiment of the masculine lesbian body flirting with men in the workplace which disrupts a heteronormative exchange.

Kath articulates her motivations for flirting at work. She describes flirting as her selling strategy which is directly tied to her work performance measured against the success of the store.

Kath: I don't want to do a lot of things but I do it because it needs to be done. And I take pride in what I do and as long as that store is doing good, I know I'm doing my job. So I flirt with these people, and I smart mouth with this group, and I'm really soft with that group, I have my groups of people where I change my skin tone to accommodate that person. Yeah, absolutely. It's like my selling strategy.

She makes decisions throughout her day about how she is going to ‘act’ with a particular person with the goal of establishing a connection pulling from a range of gendered and sexualized performances. She is very clear that flirting is a strategy directly related to the “store doing good” and takes pride in her contribution to that success. Interestingly, Kath is very specific about the people with whom she flirts:

Kath: I do not flirt with women. Never.

Amy: Why do you flirt with men?

Kath: They're easy. I think I flirt with men because even though we're flirting, we both like the same thing. And so even though it's our flirt, we're both thinking of

it in the same way. Like I'm not thinking- you know...I'm not thinking about him, I'm thinking about it being with women. And so we relate, I guess is a better word for it, and it makes it easier to flirt. I mean I call men and women "honey," or "ok hon" however you do whatever. But with the guys, I am one of the guys. I can be very professional, 100% professional and then I can be playful.

Though Kath states she is one of the guys, I would suggest that she is instead partaking in a queering of emotional labor that disrupts presumed heteronormative service. She is clearly not one of the guys and is using sexual banter as a form of relationship building, with the presumption that they are not thinking of her and she is not thinking of them and therefore safe. However, she is actively participating in a sexualized performative form of service. Kath also makes a distinction between flirting with men and women. While a risky game that would require an astute reading of male bodies, flirting as a strategy is a queering of emotional labor as it is primarily delivered to those customers who would safely fall outside her lesbian desire. Flirting is not meant to illicit direct sexual response, though certainly it is provocative. In my own fieldwork, I certainly experienced flirtatious emotional labor both within the interview setting and as a customer, but I would suggest it was because I was read as a lesbian and therefore firmly within her lesbian desire. Kath also gave an example of flirting with a lesbian co-worker that matched the level of flirting I described in the opening vignette. It is straight women with whom Kath avoids flirting and who would not be considered safe beyond affectionately calling them "honey."

Linda gives another example of flirting with male bodies in the workplace and makes distinctions about whom she can flirt with and whom she cannot. She likens her flirting with a customer to him being a "secret boyfriend."

Linda: I flirt with Frank. I'm in love with him and I call him my secret boyfriend and that we're getting married someday he just doesn't know it...and I flirt with

him constantly (laugh.) And then some of the deliverymen think that I'm a bitch because they are incompetent and I call them out on it so then those ones I'm unable to flirt with...those ones. I enjoy flirting. It's fun and it builds- I think it works- it builds friendship. First there's the friendship then there's the flirting. And uh...but there's a mutual respect, ya know.

Linda is carefully aware of when and to whom she can playfully employ flirtatious emotional labor. She is aware of those that consider her a "bitch," which she attributes to their incompetence. In these instances, she no longer assumes the role of playful lesbian, but rather of a woman holding a man accountable in the workplace which is read as being a "bitch." Just as Kath describes Frank as being one of the nicest guys she knows, Linda looks for a sense of mutual respect prior to a more engaged relationship of flirting.

Previously, Kath described the practice of calling customers "honey." There is a sense of familiarity with calling someone "honey" that also carries remnants of a woman faithfully handing her husband a drink after he enters the door after a long day of work. Though in this setting, laboring lesbians have his cigarettes and lottery tickets on the counter waiting for him. Linda also frequently calls the older men "honey."

Linda: Yeah, a lot of old guys but I flirt with them back, just because they're old guys, I don't care. I am like "Hey honey, how are you?" or "Hey handsome, how are you today?" Umm..."Fine good looking, you know, you were a dish in my day." That was one of my favorites. It's like, why thank you.

In return for her compliments, she is entertained with reciprocated gestures of affection that make her feel good. Again, I want to call attention to the importance of bodies in relation to each other and to physical presentations of self. Linda, Kath and Kelly all embody various interpretations of masculinity and femininity. They are able to perform emotional labor in all its expected feminine glory as well as have fun with providing service. Critically, however, they are aware that this is a "selling strategy" that requires developing relationships with customers.

Their stories also highlight the depth of awareness required in providing emotional labor within an environment that changes rapidly.

COMING OUT: THE ASSUMPTION OF HETEROSEXUALITY

Gretchen: I mean some people don't even know. You look surprised but it's true. I mean I got straight men coming in here, giving me kisses and huggin' on me and you know "Hi sweetheart." And I mean these guys are genuine. This one guy found out and he's heartbroken. I almost thought I lost him as a customer.

I stated earlier that not all bodies are read as normatively performing femininity in the service environment. Now I would like to turn my attention to those bodies that can; in other words, those bodies who are not immediately read as lesbian. In a response to Bell et al's (1995) article on the naturalness of heterosexual space, Probyn (1995) pointedly refers to the presumed invisibility of the femme. She outlines a scenario where the "lipstick lesbian" enters a bar and is scrutinized by the masculine gaze. Though this is not her focus, she inadvertently supports the importance of visibility and recognition through an example where the "lipstick lesbian" has to act in order to become visibly lesbian by kissing her lover. It is through this action that bodies are noticed as Bell et al (1995) articulate.

In my own research, feminine laboring lesbians had to act, perform, or come out in order to become visible. Critically, this choice was sometimes a forced one, in response to providing emotional labor so well that customers crossed personal boundaries. Describing laboring lesbians as feminine covers a broad range of gender presentations. While some would certainly describe themselves as femmes, others would not. For example, I open this section with a quote by Gretchen. She is responding to my surprise that some of her customers do not immediately read her as a lesbian as to me it is quite clear. I would affirm that who is noticing matters.

Clearly, I am deeply interested in lesbians who work at gas stations as well as identifying as a lesbian. As a result, my gaze is different than others. Within the space of service, many customers do not even entertain the possibility that the laboring body is anything but heterosexual.

I would assert that every laboring lesbian body, regardless of her gender presentation, was quite skilled at providing emotional labor. She was aware of customers' emotions and responded accordingly through performing care and attention. However, in contrast to flirting as a strategy to increase sales by butch laboring bodies, other laboring lesbian bodies' success at providing emotional labor meant that the customer misinterpreted that performance as sexual interest. For example, Alyssa described a scenario of giving a male customer free pizza because she was going to throw it away anyway and she knew it would make him feel special. On his next visit he tried to hug her and said he missed her. In describing this encounter, she talked about wishing the customers would understand that they are there frequently and so she is nice to them to make a connection. In other words, she is doing her job. As a result, the laboring lesbian makes a choice to identify her sexuality to counter an assumption of heterosexuality in hopes of putting space between herself and the customer. It is the action of coming out within a space of service that provides a disruption of heteronormativity. Though there are variations of preferences among these laboring lesbians, the majority, even if not easily bodily identifiable, want to be identified rather than being assumed heterosexual. For example, Mairi described how a male customer once whispered to her that he knew the lesbian that worked at her store. Mairi responded with, "I'm one too. Now you know two." Given the opportunity, she reveals her sexuality. As another strategy, Linda wears a braided rainbow bracelet to mark her body.

Alyssa has long dark hair that is naturally curly. Her body is curvaceous. She describes herself as half Puerto Rican and half Italian which results in a darker skin. As described by her lesbian co-worker, “Alyssa has big boobs and beautiful eyes and guys fall for her hook, line and sinker.” Alyssa describes a common experience of men flirting with her and how she counters this unwanted attention by coming out to male customers.

Alyssa: When they get beyond that point when you can tell they’re flirting with you. When they give you that certain smile. Or that certain look or they tilt their head a certain way and you know, like they’re trying to get something out of you and so normally I’ll talk to them in conversation. Like if it’s a regular or I see somebody about to hit on me. I’ll like talk to my co-worker, like you know, “Donna and me are going to be going to do this after work.” And it like squashes it before it happens ‘cause I don’t like to make people feel uncomfortable. Some guys get really upset, like when you tell them that you’re a lesbian. They think that you don’t really want anything to do with them.

Alyssa purposefully identifies herself as a lesbian within earshot of the customer to her colleague to indirectly place herself off limits as a heterosexual interest. The indirect approach is used as a protection to deflect when “guys get really upset” so that the male customer does not read this as an outright rejection and become upset or uncomfortable. Within a service context, Alyssa is purposely attempting to not alienate customers. Jackie is also rarely read as lesbian and actually prefers that customers do not know except to deflect unwanted attention from men. One of her strategies is to get her employees to “out” her on her behalf to reject unwanted attention.

Jackie: Because they would ask me out and you know, she is awfully cute, what is her story? And so, we had a [written] list of about five or six customers. I just put on there, “Customers to please tell that Jackie is a lesbian.”

And I didn’t have names for any of them. But one was motorcycle guy with all the stickers on his helmet and...um...Costa Rican coffee guy. I mean, we just had

different names for them. One guy kept coming and asking me to go to lunch. I was like, “Will somebody please tell him I am gay.”

Jackie also recounts how one man went out of his way when she changed stores to continue to see her because she was so cute and he didn't care if she was a lesbian. Jackie's statements demonstrate the laboring female body available for consumption. Her sexuality does not place her outside of the masculine gaze. Indeed, even after he knows she is a lesbian, she is still a visual aspect of production within a service environment, as well as providing a comfortable familiarity where his needs are anticipated. She questions herself in the interview about why she does not often come out herself and makes reference to potential violence.

Jackie: Why I don't do it myself, I don't know. But I watch a lot of court tv and I don't want someone to like shoot me or something, I know I am not like a drag queen surprising a guy, but...at the same time, I think about the violence in today's society in coming out. And being proud. You know. I don't think I hide it. But, I don't think...it is not a priority for me that every person has to know.

In addition to a concern about violence, Jackie is concerned that her identification as a lesbian would affect her relationships with her customers and as a result impact the sales of her store. However, she also feels a tension in this privacy. For example, she discussed being pregnant and deciding not to identify that her partner was a woman rather than a man.

Jackie: I have some favorite customers that I get along with who do not know I am a lesbian. Most of my customers don't know I am a lesbian. I think that any relationship there is kind of surface level. They love me to death, but if they knew I think it would be a different story. Especially being pregnant, how long have you been married, what does your husband think, blah, blah, sometimes I want to say well, she...

In this case, Jackie describes how her customers “love her to death,” but that from her perspective, the relationship is certainly on a surface level as she does not feel comfortable to

freely share the details of her life. In addition, being pregnant allows many customers to make assumptions about her sexuality.

While sometimes the customer's reaction is to avoid the laboring lesbian due to feeling rejected, another reaction is to attempt to bring the lesbian body back into the heteronormative fold. For example, Mairi describes a customer offering her \$1000 to sleep with him after he found out she was a lesbian. After rejecting the advances of a customer, Alyssa comes out and becomes a "challenge."

Alyssa: And they're like, "Oh well, what your boyfriend doesn't know, won't hurt him." And I say, "no actually, my girlfriend would mind a lot." And they're like, "Oh my bad, my bad." And he still, he's like "Oh that's okay, you're my challenge, you're my new challenge."

Poignantly, Alyssa describes another interaction with a male customer where she is providing service as expected and the customer interprets the attention as personal interest rather than doing a good job through anticipating needs.

Alyssa: Like he was flirting with me I can tell, he was like, "Oh, this pizza, why don't you ever make cheese pizza? Why don't you make one for me, I don't like this stuff I'm going to have to pick it off." I'm like, "Oh, I'm sorry, I'll work on that for next time." I said, "When you come in tomorrow, I'll have cheese pizza for you." He comes the next day and I was like, "I made that cheese pizza for you." Now you see how that could be, like, oh, she tries to please me. That's what they think, 'cause they're men. And umm...so he's like (laughing), "Oh, see you're a sweetheart, you should let me take you on date." I said, "Oh, no, I'm really sorry. I'm engaged."

Though Alyssa does not identify the gender of her fiancé in this example, she is clearly stating boundaries that she is not available. More particularly, the customer does not make the connection that she made the cheese pizza so he would buy it rather than as an indicator of interest in pleasing him.

Gender and sexuality provide a minefield of contradictions and complications within the workplace. The laboring body is an expected performer in the world of service and is part of the heteronormative service offered beyond the products that are sold. There are two points I want to draw from the experiences of the assumption of heterosexuality for laboring lesbian bodies that are not easily identified as lesbian. The first is these laboring lesbians' experiences highlight how laboring bodies represent aesthetic labor where the body becomes a commodity within the service exchange. Customers walk into the gas station looking for service, not only in the form of a fountain drink, but carrying the swagger of the power afforded a customer in a space of service settling his gaze on the aesthetic servicing body. Certainly, this is not a ground breaking revelation. But when a laboring lesbian body is the one providing service, commotions occur as these workers navigate the expectations of providing excellent customer service with customer reactions that can sometimes read this as sexual interest. It is at these junctures where the laboring lesbian body responds through coming out that I argue emotional labor is queered if only partially and momentarily. Secondly, the experience of a customer expressing sexual or romantic interest to a laboring lesbian body was a fairly common occurrence. I would suggest that given the strategic importance of the laboring body within a direct service context, coupled with expectations of providing excellent customer service, boundaries are often blurred. Laboring lesbian bodies were then in the position to consistently navigate this complicated landscape, balancing protecting themselves while furthering the company's mission of increasing profit.

PLEASURE: RECIPROCAL SERVICE

Previously, I discussed how Hochschild's (2003) work has been challenged for focusing solely on the harm to employees either in the form of "transmutation," where the inner self

becomes aligned with the expected emotional labor in the workplace, or a separation occurs between the “real” self and the inauthentic performance required (Korcynski 2003, Bolton and Boyd 2003, Erickson 2004). Many examples in this chapter point to the harm, danger, and uneasiness experienced by laboring lesbian bodies as they perform emotional labor. However, the critique of the focus on harm is that it ignores the pleasure of providing service (though always within constraints as Butler might add (Butler 2004)). My research suggests that performing emotional labor is both painful and pleasurable. Within this section, I would like to further explore the multiple forms of pleasure of the performance of emotional labor within the gas station. Lesbian laborers described a sense of family, felt pride in their work, as well as describing that interactions with customers was one of their favorite parts of the job. As a result, pleasure takes many forms.

Often, laboring lesbian bodies reported a sense of family atmosphere among their fellow employees. This is similar to Korcynski’s (2003) description of “communities of coping” where employees turn to each to find support within a service environment (2003: 58), Though they are fully aware they are at work, many of my participants made references to the workplace as family. The number of employees at each store depends on the location, hours and sales expectations. The typical range is 5 to 10 employees per store which is a relatively small number to generate over a million dollars of sales annually. Kath describes spending so much time at work that she feels a sense of family working toward a shared mission of taking care of the store. When both the assistant manager and manager were both lesbians, there were also references to the assistant manager and manager positions as a “work marriage.” Some described their fellow colleagues as sisters or brothers. Michelle also describes the work environment as a family

within the context of needing to get the job done together as a group. This sense of family and home makes work a more fun and caring place to spend their days and earn their paycheck.

In addition to relying on each other for support, laboring lesbian bodies received pleasure from customers. Similar to Linda's experience of a customer telling her she was "a dish in my day" by a customer that made her feel attractive, Alyssa describes the same experience.

Alyssa: Then there's this one, older guy, he's like an old man, like grandpa status. He like, he wears a black coat and kind of like a fedora, type of thing and he just thinks I'm the most beautiful thing in the whole world. He just makes me feel so special. (laughing) Cause he just, he just, I don't know, he's just old and I'm like, hey handsome, and he's like gosh you're beautiful, you are so beautiful and I'm like thanks. Even on my worst day, he tells me.

She makes sure to call him handsome and make him feel noticed. In return, the customer seeks her out and tells her she is "so beautiful," even on her worst day. In the telling of this story, Alyssa radiated. It was as if she could hear his voice in her head telling her she was beautiful and even the memory of it made her feel good. Clearly, both of these examples are moments of safe flirting and I would suggest that both Alyssa and Linda find pleasure in these exchanges.

Consistently, laboring lesbians confirm that working with customers is the favorite part of their job. Others recount the satisfaction from the challenge of providing excellent service, as Linda describes:

Linda: I love making someone's day. I just love it. I'll get compliments like "Your manager needs to know you need a raise." I get such strange, well not strange, but really high compliments. Like you're the nicest person here, you know just really high, really nice compliments. You know and umm... I don't know, I just, I try to always just put a smile on someone's face, they'll come in and they'll be having a bad day and I'll be like "What's wrong, honey?" and I try to greet them. I just want them to put a smile on their face even if it's the only

smile they have for the day. I want them to be like, you know, it's not so bad after all.

For Linda, there is a clear reward from the emotional labor expected. In return for the effort of putting smiles on people's face, she gets a sense of personal satisfaction as well as an acknowledgement of how good she is at providing service. Kath echoes this sentiment when she states that she likes making customers happy and putting a smile on their face. Heidi also discusses how working with customers is her favorite part of the job as they know how to make you smile.

Heidi: They [customers] know how to make you smile. They know how to turn your day around. That's just generally working with the public. I'd much rather deal with the public than to be stuck sitting in an office. And not talking to anybody except on the phone. Or being stuck in a factory, and doing the same thing every day. At least with your customers there's something different every day, even if it's doing the same type of work every day.

Clearly, Heidi is describing a reciprocal relationship with customers. She works just as hard to make customers smile and turn their day around. And in return, she benefits from their attention. Heidi is in her early 20's and has worked at multiple gas stations. Importantly, she compares her work in a direct service environment to what she would imagine in a factory. She emphasizes how the customers ensure that each day is different in her service positions, even though she is doing the "same type of work every day." Mairi has worked in a factory previously and discusses the difference between that type of work and working in a direct service environment.

Mairi: I do like that every day is different. You don't know what some customer is going to come and do or say or your fellow employees. I have to say, when I worked at a factory for over seven years, it got dull. All I did was I went to work crying. I went home crying. I hated every second of it. But this one, it is not that hard. Okay...I mean, I get to use my mind, I like to come up with solutions.

Mairi describes how working in a factory was dull for her to the point that she cried daily. Within the space of the gas station, she is able to use her mind to deal with customers such as handling crisis when the computer goes down or responding to a gas spill. For her, it is the challenge of the customer that keeps her interested in her work.

Kath: People think you work in gas stations it is easy peasy. There are safety regulations, laws to follow. Making sure my people were following that was important. People came to me for advice, even in their personal life.

Kath notes that people think her work is easy because it is in a gas station. However, she notes the complexity of the work from safety regulations and laws to offering advice to customers who engage with her on personal issues. This is in addition to the flirting and sexual banter that Kath engages in and clearly enjoys with customers.

Perhaps most fitting with gas stations as a place for bodies who are othered, Gretchen describes freedom to be whoever she wants to be within the gas station.

Gretchen: Well, I mean. Like I can be whoever I want here. Lesbian or not. I'm able to be who I need to be, as long as you're kind, friendly, honest and hardworking. How can people not wanna be, know you, or say "hello" to you.

In her summary, she lists the desired qualities of being kind, friendly, honest and hardworking as the most important aspects of her performance of service. If she can provide all of that, then she has the freedom to be who she wants. All of these examples highlight the complexity of the work of the laboring lesbian body in U.S. gas stations that includes a performance of emotional labor. They are all aware that each customer can present a different problem for which they need to respond which requires significant attention to customers. Laboring lesbian bodies experience pleasure through multiple performances of emotional labor even as they are constantly aware or constantly reminded of the function of their work

concerning service, ways their bodies do or do not fit dominant ideologies, and the need to earn a living which means supporting the ultimate focus on profit.

CONCLUSION

The gas station is a highly sexualized workspace from the historical construction of gas stations that rest upon ideologies of the heterosexual, middle-class, white nuclear family to the specifically feminized job duties that mirror responsibilities of the home. In this chapter, I have explored the strategies that laboring lesbian bodies have developed to resist, play, and conform to expectations of gendered and sexualized emotional labor. All these examples highlight the heteronormative expectations of feminized service. As I argued in chapter five, the job responsibilities themselves are designed as feminized where the laboring lesbian body is expected to anticipate needs, smile in the Hess Way, and ensure the store is properly cleaned. Adding the feminized and sexualized layer of emotional labor strengthens the heteronormative expectations of the work.

As I demonstrated, when a laboring lesbian body is the producer of the work, multiple disruptions of heteronormative service can occur. I have pushed against the heteronormative body presumed within an analysis of emotional labor and argued that the delivery of emotional labor is dependent on who is engaging. As a result, I have focused on the multiplicity of experiences in providing emotional labor for the gendered and sexed lesbian body at work. Recognizing that the laboring lesbian body does not always easily fit within normative regulations of gender and sexuality, my interest has been in exploring what happens when bodies don't fit within a service environment. I argue that laboring lesbian bodies both voluntarily and involuntarily queer emotional labor by disrupting heteronormative space within a service

environment. Per Massey's (2005) definitions of space, I am suggesting that this queering of emotional labor is temporary and partial and does not attempt to explain the performance of emotional labor in totality. I am suggesting that queering emotional labor is found within minute interactions where laboring lesbians must interpret, play, conform, and be subject to a particular heteronormative space. Returning to Butler's argument, I explore how laboring lesbian bodies perform emotional labor through "improvisation within constraint" (2004: 1). Finally, these improvisations provide a working environment that is both painful and pleasurable for laboring lesbians.

My research supports the view that sexuality does matter in the workplace, particularly in a service environment where the laboring body is part of the production of work through direct interactions with customers. Because laboring lesbian bodies are part of the production, in circular form, they become part of the product. This dual role ensures that the laboring lesbian body is subject to a regulatory gaze both by the company and the customer. Furthermore, it requires significant improvisation in order to provide excellent customer service.

Laboring lesbian's work in the U.S. gas station is more complex than it would appear and they enjoyed the challenge provided by that complexity. I have demonstrated that laboring lesbian bodies creatively engage in intricate emotional labor through a specifically sexed and gendered body. Clearly, this is not a role that comes without costs, as the examples of name calling, the threat of violence and in some cases, demonstrations of real violence. But there are also moments of pleasure that validate the laboring lesbian bodies' own sense of worth and help them feel successful in their work.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

One of the unique aspects of a service position within a capitalist corporation is how the laboring body is centrally placed within the exchange between the company and the customer. From the beginning, I have been intrigued by the term “Hessbian” as it invokes a critical understanding that bodies actively inhabit the space of production within the workplace. My research demonstrates that laboring lesbians know their bodies matter at some level within their work. And given that their bodies matter, sexuality matters. In order to more fully understand the specific embodied everyday experiences of laboring lesbians within U.S. gas stations, I have engaged in an interdisciplinary focus that allows me to examine sexuality within the workplace.

As I also argue throughout my project that place matters, I have examined the constructions of this specific workplace through a historical analysis of U.S. gas stations as connected to an ideological neoliberal agenda that continues to privilege heterosexual ideals of race, class and gender. This framework then allows me to make connections between this capitalist ideological project and the contemporary expectations of labor within the U.S. gas station which firmly illustrate how the labor is gendered and classed. Upon tracing these structures of power, I am then able to analyze in what ways laboring lesbian bodies are specifically informed by ideologies of class, gender and sexuality. Finally, I reach the heart of my project where my analysis centers on the multiple of ways in which laboring lesbian bodies interpret these often unexamined expectations.

Within my own work, I have demonstrated that the place of U.S. gas stations is connected to a powerful industry that has literally shaped our material landscape. Further, this material landscape is based on heteronormative ideals of American success. This definition of the good

life is defined by specific gendered, raced, classed and sexed ideologies and viewable through branding and marketing efforts. The U.S. gas station is firmly established as historically masculine both as connected to the oil industry and to the men who lead the company. Though I argue that the addition of the convenience store allows women to enter as laborers more consistently, through a combination of the historical overtones of masculinity, the current clientele and the products for sale, the U.S. gas station remains a primarily masculine place.

In addition, within this site of work, my project confirms how customer service is indeed feminized labor. Further, I have shown how additional duties within the gas station beyond customer service are also shaped by gendered and classed expectations. The feminization of labor is evidenced through gendered duties ideologically expected of women within the home that are loosely mapped onto the workplace. These feminized work duties include cleaning, stocking the shelves, as well as serving as the register bitch. My research overwhelmingly demonstrates that laboring lesbians take pride in their work and often are committed to providing a clean and stocked environment, as well as providing excellent customer service. As such, I propose that laboring lesbians are successful within the workplace due to their abilities to perform feminized labor in multiple ways.

Finally, customer service is not only classed and feminized, but sexualized. Given that emotional labor is a significant aspect of customer service, my work illuminates the multiple ways that laboring lesbian bodies resist, conform, re-interpret and play with heteronormative assumptions of emotional labor. Within the masculine gas stations, laboring lesbian bodies knowingly engage with flirting as a strategy to develop relationships with customers. Even though heterosexual banter is a commonplace occurrence during the workday, there are important moments where laboring lesbians purposefully move outside this playful performance.

When customers go beyond the boundaries of the laboring lesbian either through inappropriate touch or aggressive behavior, service is stopped. In other moments, when a customer interprets flirting as personal interest rather than customer service in action, the laboring lesbian may reveal her sexuality as an attempt to declare her unavailability. Perhaps predictably, this redirection happens to different bodies at different moments. Ultimately, I argue that laboring lesbians queer emotional labor through disrupting heteronormative space. I do not claim queering emotional labor as a lasting transformative rewriting of heteronormative space, but as partial interruptions that momentarily re-stage heteronormative expectations of service. These strategies explicitly confirm that analyzing feminized labor requires more than just a focus on gender. In other words, gender and sexuality are inseparable even within the workplace.

IMPLICATIONS

Several academic implications arise throughout my analysis. In particular, I want to draw out three interwoven strands that follow the organization of this work. The first point is that attention to the geography of the workplace strengthens an intersectional analysis of work. The second implication is to propose a more nuanced approach to how we study lesbians at work. This includes both an investigation of the gendered and sexed constructions of gender of the place of work, as well as the duties of work. Thirdly, my work contributes to furthering the still relevant theory of emotional labor through situating this aspect of labor as a performance.

Within feminist sociology of work literatures, it is common practice to provide an analysis of the ways in which work duties are gendered. More unevenly applied, some of these analyses also include intersectional attention to multiple axes of power that investigate the ways in which jobs are classed, racialized, and sometimes sexualized. This body of work has furthered

our understanding of women and men's experience in the workplace. In continuing this important academic inquiry into the world of work, I propose that attention to the geographies of work is equally important in understanding the intersections of power that shape our experiences. For example, while the work of a cashier would share commonalities across multiple service sites, the specific type of business and geographical location provides a more specific layer of understanding to the experience. At the simplest level, the geographic location of work significantly affects which structures of power are most salient. As I trace structures of power within this project, I have been able to demonstrate that the place of work critically informs the ways in which work is structured by gender, class and sexuality which ultimately inform the expectations of service. I would suggest that through tracing a particular industry within a larger capitalist agenda, we are able to understand broader connections that remain unexamined at the local level. In other words, and in support of Foucault's work, we are always connected and informed by structures of power and an investigation of place in connection to the everyday experiences of work strengthens an understanding of these interconnections.

The second implication of my research builds on this premise. I propose that an analysis that includes attention to intersections of power of both the place of work *and* the duties of work provides a more complex understanding of the experience of work. My work is intentionally committed to furthering our understandings of lesbians at work. As illustrated in this project, I demonstrated that the work itself is primarily feminine even as it occurs in a masculine context. As a result, laboring lesbians are successful in the workplace specifically due to their ability to perform feminized labor. Within a working class context, this analysis counters much of the literature that focuses on lesbians at work within masculine occupations which implies an almost essentialist connection between lesbians and their ability to perform masculinity.

I am suggesting that it is the combinations and contrasts between these competing expectations of masculinity and femininity that open spaces for laboring lesbians to find a fit within this specific site of work. From this perspective, an analysis concerning lesbians at work is not limited to their ability to perform only masculinized labor but also feminized labor. This theoretical orientation opens the category of lesbian beyond being often closely aligned with masculinity within the world of work and allows for multiple possibilities for gender expressions, presentations and performances. When this concept is applied beyond this specific project, this approach provides a more nuanced context to investigate the ways in which power is perhaps more complexly embedded in everyday practices.

The third implication for my research relates to furthering the analytical concept of emotional labor. Normative ideologies of race, class, gender and sexuality are powerful constructions that affect the expectations and delivery of emotional labor. At an uncomplicated level, analyses of emotional labor must attend to the specificities of the bodies that are performing it. Moreover, when normative expectations are mapped onto bodies, connected to place, and populated by customers, we begin to see the complexity of providing emotional labor today in the U.S. workplace. Indeed, we must also attend to the fact that there are real consequences for laboring bodies that are unable to do it well.

As I investigate emotional labor in action through specific bodies, it becomes clear that emotional labor is not only gendered, but also performed within a context of heteronormative expectations. By positioning emotional labor as a performance in relation to categorical social constructions, the debate within the literature concerning a private self and surface acting is removed. What instead becomes the focus is the multitude of ways that bodies interpret, resist, conform, play and perform emotional labor in context with and in response to gendered and

sexed expectations. Ultimately, what remains salient is that gender and sexuality are indelibly linked within the context of the workplace.

LIMITATIONS

A specific limitation of this project is an incomplete analysis of race. Race is present in multiple ways within the place of U.S. gas stations. First, gas stations have a specific raced, classed and gender history as it relates to a specific socioeconomic connection with automobiles which was initially limited to a privileged population. Additionally, oil companies fostered a hegemonic ideological alliance with defining the good life in the pursuit of profit. As a result, front line service expectations in gas stations are imbued with these intersecting hegemonic ideologies that are materialized in social relations. Each body that inhabits this space, whether that is the laborer or the customer, is marked by his or her class, gender and sexuality that are also racialized. In this project, this includes being white that is often perceived as the absence of race. Further research that attended more fully to racial relations of power as experienced within front line service would further this analysis.

A second limitation is that my research on the history of gas stations is limited by availability of resources. Given the commonness of gas stations which lends to their invisibility, there has been limited scholarship on gas stations. As a result, I relied extensively on secondary sources to construct a narrative of a specific historical aspect of gas stations and the company as it relates to my project. My hope is that this work that focuses on gas stations as intimately connected to oil companies and a neoliberal agenda that is raced, classed, gendered and sexed will provide a foothold for future scholarship.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Not only is labor within the U.S. gas station dependent upon ideologies of race, gender and class, but also sexuality. Given that sexuality within the workplace is most often presumed heterosexual, the laboring lesbian body must respond to these presumptions. In other words, laboring lesbian bodies are clearly subject to heterosexual expectations of labor. The results of living and working within this context for laboring lesbian bodies are varied. My project demonstrates that laboring lesbian bodies simultaneously conform to these heterosexed expectations, endure punishment, actively resist at times, and find open spaces of playful imagination within them. While this project is specific to lesbian bodies, laboring bodies of all kinds are subject to multiple forms of power that dictate expectations of labor. As such, implications for further research would include other bodies' laboring experiences within the context of the U.S. gas station. Attention to other bodies could include gay men, heterosexual men and women and men and women of color.

In addition, bodies that participate in the production moment include the laboring bodies, but also bodies of customers. As recommended by other researchers (Korcynski 2013), customers are an integral aspect of the service encounter. Further research that more explicitly included customers' experiences within this context would add to the overall analysis.

Finally, I narrowly and purposefully focused on laboring lesbian bodies that work within one particular oil company. However, my research on the development of U.S. gas stations would suggest there is a shared historical foundation among gas stations. Furthermore, the relatively recent widespread use of convenience stores has become a niche industry with shared professional publications. I would suggest this common history alongside a common understanding of industry standards would present a working environment with more similarities

than differences. As a result, I would propose that future research could be expanded to include lesbian bodies who labor at any U.S. gas station.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In summary, this is a project about lesbians at work. But I am also arguing that attention to the site of work provides a richer analytical understanding of the workplace. Though my project demonstrates a political commitment to women who identify as lesbians, attention to how geography and occupation work together opens possibilities for how others experience service work, as well. For example, I would propose that highly effeminate men also do well within the space of U.S. gas stations for much the same reasons as lesbians. In fact, though I was not able to interview him, one of the assistant managers at a gas station was a gay man who was also actively involved in the local drag queen circuit. Ultimately, I would argue that only through an analysis of the multiplicity of the geography with the specificities of the job responsibilities can we more effectively trace structures of power while opening up new understandings of complex lives at work.

In the spirit of the feminist and postmodern traditions, I am reminded that labels, words, terms, do not so cleanly capture our humanity. The everyday lived lives of these laboring lesbians are thicker than I have described. And the application of theoretical ideas does not quite capture the essence of these women. In their daily lives, these women are working to live. Certainly they are participating in a capitalist economy. Certainly they are abiding by the rules of the company for which they work in order to be successful within their work environment. Certainly they are also creating something different outside- or perhaps within- the environment where they spend up to sixty hours a week. Certainly the term lesbian is a slippery slope. I have

tried to attend to ways in which contradictions creates spaces of possibilities. In minute and temporal ways, the laboring lesbian emerges in all her complex, visible glory.

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AMY J. TWEEDY

Education: **Ph.D.:** Social Sciences, Maxwell

Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, September 2004-May 2014

Masters of Science: Counseling and Student Personnel Services

Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, May 1995

Bachelor of Arts: Public Relations

Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX, May 1992

SELECTED TEACHING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- Instructor, Introduction to Gender Studies, Skidmore, Spring 2014
- Instructor, Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, Master of Liberal Arts Program, Empire State College, Spring 2014
- Instructor, Social Science Research Methods, Empire State College, Spring 2012
- Instructor, History of Sexuality, Empire State College, Fall 2012
- Presenter, "Connections and Tensions: Teaching Sex in the City", American Association of Geographers, Spring 2010.
- Co-Instructor, community-engaged combined graduate/undergraduate seminar on Sexuality and Space, Syracuse University (SU), Spring 2009.
- Instructor, 2-credit group study for Women's Studies Residency, Empire State College (ESC), January 2008.
- Presenter, "Place and Space", Women Studies Residency, ESC, March 2007.
- Guest Lecturer, undergraduate course in geography on Place and Space, SU, 2006.
- Designed Sexuality and Space course for newly created LGBT minor, SU, 2006.
- Presenter, "Queering Empire State College: Learning Goes Beyond Traditional", ESC All-College Conference, March 2004.
- Instructor, 2-credit group study on Africa and America: culture, history and politics, ESC, Spring 2004.
- Instructor, 4-credit independent study on race, class and gender, ESC, 2001.
- Evaluator, Credit for Life Learning, ESC, 2001-Present.

- Planned retreats focusing on team building, organizational effectiveness and goal setting for professional staff comprised of twenty individuals, NYU, 1998, 1999, 2000.
- Served as a facilitator at All-University Leadership Weekend, NYU, 1999.
- Instructed a twelve-week Resident Assistant Class, NYU, 1996.
- Presented program "Urban Campus" at Association of College and University Housing Officers Conference, 1996.
- Served as a facilitator at All-University Gender Weekend, Student Life Office, NYU, 1996.
- Co-Instructed ABSED 3092, a two credit hour course for new Resident Assistants, OSU, 1992.

Professional Senior Assessment Specialist-CDL

Experience: Empire State College, Saratoga, NY January 2012- Present

- Manage ¼ individualized student degree portfolio degree portfolio documentation, review
- Convene ¼ assessment meetings
- Maintain and transmit records and communicate with college offices regarding degree portfolios, amendments, degree program reconciliation, etc.
- Serve as liaison with the Office of College Academic Review (OCAR).
- Communicate effectively with individual students and mentors regarding assessment activities and results
- Collaborate with the CDL assessment team to provide training and oversight for mentors and staff related to assessment and degree planning
- Work with other assessment professionals to maintain consistency in assessment outcomes
- Develop innovative strategies for new approaches to PLA.
- Review completed prior learning evaluations
- Oversee selection, training, supervision and coordination of payment of prior learning evaluators
- Communicate effectively with individual students, mentors and evaluators regarding prior learning assessment activities and results
- Assist with mentor and evaluator training and developing by designing and offering workshops related to PLA.
- Develop prior learning assessment related resources for faculty and students

Director of Academic Review

Empire State College, Syracuse, NY, February 2008-January 2012

- Manage center assessment process, portfolio review and degree program reconciliation processes.

- Monitor and provide leadership in support of consistent academic judgments that comply with relevant college policies and procedures.
- Serve as an expert resource for center faculty regarding relevant college and center policies and procedures and best practices in higher education.
- Provide leadership to faculty and staff on academic quality and student service issues related to advanced standing credit, degree program design and approval, and graduation review.
- Assist with faculty training and development related to educational planning, prior learning assessment, portfolio review and graduation review.
- Supervise selection, training, supervision and coordination of prior learning process and staff.
- Maintain and transmit student records and communicate with college offices regarding degree portfolios, amendments, and degree program reconciliation.
- Serve as a liaison with the Office of College-Wide Academic Review.

Assistant to the Dean

Empire State College, Syracuse, NY, January 2005-January 2008

- Provided high-level screening, referral and problem resolution in response to inquiries to the dean's office.
- Supported the Dean's development and fundraising activities.
- Supported the Dean's external relations initiatives.
- Represented the Dean internally and externally as assigned.
- Coordinate meetings, public events and programmatic initiatives
- Administered external contracts.
- Supervised Coordinator of Students Services, Outreach Coordinator and Coordinator of Special Projects.
- Facilitated effective fiscal managements and administration systems.
- Facilitated enrollments management initiatives through data analysis and report writing.
- Coordinated center tracking and communication with students and faculty regarding student academic progress and academic standing.

Coordinator of Student Services

Empire State College, Syracuse, NY, March 2000-December 2004

- Coordinated the improvement of academic and student services in collaboration with faculty, staff, and central administration.
- Assisted the Dean in resolution of issues and concerns generated by faculty, staff, and students.
- Served as ombudsperson for faculty and students for intake and processing of student grievances and academic appeals.
- Served as an advisor and liaison to the Dean, faculty and staff and students on student satisfactory academic progress issues.

- Assisted the Dean with correspondence and special projects including enrollment management, retention, articulation agreements with regional community colleges, development of policies and procedures as they relate to students.
- Utilized student information systems to systematically improve and assess student satisfaction and retention.
- Responded to prospective student inquiries by providing information, answering questions, referring to appropriate resources
- Attended outreach and community events as representative for the college.
- Responded to interpersonal, administrative, academic, financial and personal concerns raised by students.
- Served as disability contact for Central New York students, faculty and staff.
- Coordinate scholarship nominations and process for the Central New York Center.

Area Coordinator for Staff Administration

New York University, New York City, NY, July 1998-January 2000

- Supervised 4-6 full-time professional Residence Hall Managers (RHM's), 4 Administrative Assistants, 9 union Residence Hall Receptionists, 7 Graduate Assistants and 80 student staff members in a residential area of 3,000-4,500 students.
- Developed policies for 10,000 on-campus students as member of a management team.
- Managed and oversaw \$3.5 million budget. Responsibilities included forecasting needs, coordinating purchasing processes, implementing consistent budget program for RHM's, monitoring petty cash site funds and serving as department liaison with Budget office.
- Planned training and staff developments for all levels of staff.
- Coordinated professional and paraprofessional recruitment and selection.
- Served as liaison with Human Resource Office. Responsibilities included hiring, evaluating, probationary reviews, discipline procedures and training staff on union protocol.
- Oversaw administrative processes for residence hall offices including monthly reports, duty rotations, policy procedures and occupancy.
- Oversaw operation of 6,500 participant summer housing and conference program.
- Served on duty rotation and crisis response team.

Residence Hall Director

New York University, New York City, NY, August 1995-August 1998

- Managed twelve-month residence hall of 600 co-educational, predominantly first-year students, two health awareness floors and one Professor in Residence.
- Supervised 1 full-time professional Administrative Assistant, 2 full-time union Residence Hall Receptionists, 14 Resident Assistants, 15 Desk Attendants, and 2 Office Assistants.
- Allocated, controlled and accounted for \$133,545 budget for programming, payroll, supplies and other miscellaneous areas.

Residence Hall Director, Graduate Assistant Position

Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, August 1992-May 1995

Professional Development:

- Co-Convener, Assessment Group, 2010-present.
- Member, Office of College-Wide Academic Review Website Task Force, 2011-present.
- Member, IPLA Implementation Team, 2011-present.
- Member, Graduation Application Task Force, 2011-present.
- Member, Blue Ribbon Panel, 2010.
- Member, June Academic Conference Planning Committee, 2010
- Member, Climate Survey Task Force, 2009-2010.
- Member, Presidential Task Force on reviewing Academic Calendar, 2009-2010.
- Chair, Policy Development on Pre-Evaluated Learning Committee, 2008-2010.
- Member and former chair, Women's Studies Residency Committee, 2004-2010.
- Member, college-wide Residency Development Committee, ESC, 2007-2008
- Member and former chair, Student All College Conference Committee, ESC, 2005-2010.
- Member, Title III grant development committee, ESC, 2003-2004.
- Board Member, The Learning Place, Syracuse, 2003-2004.
- Member, SUNY Disability Services Council, 2003-2005.
- Member, Senate, ESC, 2002-2005.
- Member, Central New York Dean search, ESC, 2002.
- Chair, Central New York Center Representative, college governance Student Affairs Committee, ESC, 2001-2005.
- Member, Northern Consortium working towards increasing the recruitment and retention of Native American students, ESC, 2001-2004.
- Volunteer tutor, The Learning Place, Syracuse, 2000-2002.
- Treasurer, Coalition of Adult and Continuing Education, Syracuse, 2000-2002.
- Chair, Departmental Technology Committee, New York University (NYU), 1998-99.
- Co-Chair, RA and Professional Selection Committee, NYU, 1997-98.
- Housing Coordinator, Oklahoma Special Olympics, OSU, May 1993, May 1994, May 1995.
- Co-advisor, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Community Association, OSU, 1994-95.