

VI. FINDINGS: DIANE, ALAN, ELLEN, FRANK

How did these people, two men and two women, come to know the organization in which they worked? More specifically, how did these people come to know and to participate in the creation and recreation of strategies of discourse which are our organizations? Here it is not the generic, generalizable experiences—and I don't believe that there ever are such—of the newcomer which concerns me. It is those experiences where we come to know by doing which give us insight into the "relations of ruling" that are my concern, relations which are expressed in language. How do we struggle to find our place, how do we struggle against being "put in our place"? How are we enmeshed by the contradictions, impossible to reconcile, which are inherent in our place of work, those contradictions between what we are told and what we come to know through doing our work?

The four newcomers whom I talked to over a period of a year worked in law firms, educational institutions, and consulting firms. Their specific firms and institutions provided the context, undoubtedly important, for how they came to know, but that is not my focus. To use a somewhat imperfect analogy, it is not the topography of the landscape, however fascinating it might be, but the traveller— the one who creates and is created by the strategies of discourse which are our organizations, and the one who knows, that knowledge a construct of gender and power—whom I wish to place first and foremost in this discussion.

Each of the people whom I talked to told me, usually by returning to the same point again and again, how they constructed their own way of understanding this new organization in terms of what became of concern to them. None of them walked into the new organization saying "This is how I will understand it". Rather, their understanding developed in conjunction with what became important to them as they went about doing their work. In a different organization, their understanding would have

been different. It was through this concern, then, that they perceived the form that the relations of ruling took, as they themselves participated in the creation and recreation of the strategies of discourse which are our organizations.

DIANE

One woman spoke of coming to know the organization in terms of how impossible it was to fit into the organization if she did not act like the dominant males who controlled the organization, a well-placed law firm. Since to be subordinate was, in the firm's terms, to act like a woman, to be dominant, and in a complex equation, successful, one had to act like a man. To Diane* that meant putting status and hierarchy first and foremost rather than her own notions of rationality and efficiency. It meant, for example, coming to know that she could not work with the female support staff [there were no men] in the egalitarian and rational way that initially made sense to her, but to distance herself from them—to dispense with gender allegiances, and to work within the hierarchical structure of the firm. It meant treating her own work as a priority and being prepared to fight for that rating, whether or not it was in actuality, which initially to her had seemed quite silly. And for her the most difficult of the firm's terms meant recognizing that allegiance to one's workmates, expressed in a number of ways, but primarily through time, was more important than allegiance to one's own family. Finally, it meant that not only did she need to subscribe to these tenets; she also needed to advertise that she accepted, moreover believed in, them. As Foucault would argue, subordination, in order to be complete, must be internalized.

However, she only slowly discerned how important it was in the organization to act, to talk, to think, to value doing things in ways that recognized the pre-eminency of how the men in the firm understood the world. In an organization that paradoxically enough

*All names and certain identifying features have been changed to protect the respondents' identities.

depended on the written word, which literally could not be what it was without its disputatious and therefore litigious possibilities, there was very little feedback or direction given to newcomers—and what little existed, was either critical or nebulous. In this case it could be argued that the lack of any explicit feedback or direction is a situation which benefits those in power because unwritten rules can constantly be manipulated to maintain the status quo, but written rules invite challenge or dispute—and who better to know than lawyers? Diane spoke of how difficult it was to determine either how she was doing, or even what she was supposed to be doing, particularly with the support staff, who were all female. What she found was that her work was either criticized or it just "disappeared", and she was caught between hoping that no feedback meant that everything was fine, she was doing well, or that it simply wasn't bad enough to warrant criticism. Performance appraisals, seldom given anyway, were either negative or carefully neutral; newcomers like Diane were forced to depend on the development of their own sources to find out what they thought was "really going on", what people "really thought" about how they were doing. But this lack of feedback also meant to her that she felt constantly off-balance, never sure if she was interpreting the situation correctly. She told me how uncertain she felt about where she stood, how she was doing, and what she was supposed to be doing, how she felt caught between her own assessment and her lack of knowledge about what the others really thought:

I think I do a reasonably competent job. I've compiled my day book and I'm debating whether or not to let anybody see it, but I would really like some honest feedback, for someone to look at it, and say, yes, this is good work, [or] it's s— work, or whatever. Because I've had none whatsoever during the wintertime to know exactly where I stand. . . . At Christmas-time one concern they had was that I wasn't results oriented. And I have asked lawyers, I have said, 'What is results oriented?' And they go, 'I don't know what it is'. . . . Well, I do know what the client needs, I don't see where I've a problem in that. . . . So how can they say I'm not

results oriented? I think I am. And there's so many ambiguities. And [such] vagueness in terms of what I thought they wanted, versus what they thought they wanted versus what they got—there's so much vagueness there. They're not willing to give adequate feedback, they certainly don't give it in a constructive fashion—they're good managers, they're bad [teachers]. . . . You need to teach people systems on how to accomplish a goal. And that is precisely what this [problem was]—in terms of my struggling with what am I allowed to give support staff without offending them, how do I research a problem effectively. . . . "

Thus in a milieu where feedback was sparse or nebulous, where even the few written appraisals did not reflect what was actually said in partners' meetings, which is what one of the female lawyers reported to her, Diane struggled with what she thought would be the correct thing to do in terms of dealing with the support staff, and what was actually the thing that should be done in order to fit in, to be one of the lawyers. Although seminars were held by the support staff to indicate what they did, according to Diane they were never clear about exactly what they did and did not do—and neither was anyone else. By never specifying, by keeping what was said about what was to be done deliberately blurry, Diane maintained that this "great grey area" worked to keep the hierarchical structure of the firm intact. As she said, "Because status and hierarchy are such an issue in that firm, I am particularly sensitive about treading on others' toes. . . . But in a lot of respects I'm inhibited by my own actions for fear of offending these other people, because I might be asking them to do something that by rights I should be doing". Diane felt that she had to be extra careful not to offend anyone, but this also worked to keep her in her place. The firm manipulated women's feelings that other people's feelings were sacrosanct to keep women from exerting the authority necessary to show that they were partner material*. In an environment that stressed that the firm

*This is similar to Arlie Hochschild's (1983) argument in *The Managed Heart*.

was "one big happy family" it was difficult to confront the daddies with issues that made everybody uncomfortable, particularly when women in general are to smooth things out, and not be confrontational. Blurring the lines between what the support staff did and what she could ask the support staff to do kept Diane in line—should she be doing this, rather than the librarian or the secretary, questions about power that remained carefully unanswered by the lawyers as well as by the support staff.

This was also a quandary that to Diane the men did not feel: secretaries acting as "office wives" to the male lawyers—but never to the female lawyers—were not uncommon in the firm[#]. What that meant for the male lawyers who had these "office wives" and the female lawyers who did not was quite complex. It meant both more work for the women lawyers than the male lawyers because the men had secretaries who did more work for them, and less power for the women lawyers because they did not have access to a servant/wife/secretary the way the men did. However, what the secretaries did was not necessarily seen as valuable work, although what they did, the men did not have to do. As Diane commented, one of the senior partners had an extremely competent secretary, but she was viewed in this way:

Jokes were made about A.B.'s secretary. . . . They say if she wasn't there, he would be lost in some foreign country never to be seen again—he's that kind of man. [He] never knows what's going on. . . . But here he is, he's in his early 50s, and he's got his wife, er his secretary, who's essentially taking care of him in the same way, but people accept it. . . . They say, A.B. has a brilliant mind. They justify his disorganization as a symptom of brilliance, whereas I think with a similar person . . . they would define it as complete disorganization and probably incompetent. I think some people privately do find it shocking, his behaviour, but it's accepted.

[#]This issue was thoroughly explored in Rosabeth Kanter (1977), *Men and Women of the Corporation* in her chapter on secretaries as office wives.

Thus within the particular cultural milieu of the firm it was easy for the women support staff to serve the men, for the men to expect it, and for no one to state that a great deal of extra work done by a secretary was anything other than what any good secretary would do. It was no reflection on the competence of this senior male lawyer although the work his secretary did helped to maintain his brilliant reputation.

However, although a different relationship needed to be forged between the female lawyers and the female support staff, considering that status and hierarchy were also inextricably linked to gender, determining a new relationship between a female lawyer and a female support staff-person was fraught with difficulty. If a female lawyer was egalitarian in her dealings with the support staff, as Diane felt she was, she trumpeted her allegiance to a complex equation where female gender and lower status were intimately linked. If she was not egalitarian, she was not necessarily rewarded with the support that many of the female support staff were both required to give and gave to the male lawyers. For example, it took Diane some time to understand how important it was not to do any kind of secretarial work. Secretarial work was women's work. It was important that even when she was not busy, and the secretary was, Diane not type her own work, or Xerox, or fax. Lawyers did none of those things; they used dictaphones, and fought over secretarial access as a way of proving how important they were. Not ever typing, no matter how pressing the deadline, advertised how busy the lawyer was, important when "billable hours" translated into success and money, the twin measures of status, as well as ensuring that gender hierarchies were maintained. As Diane stressed to me, she was uncomfortable with the hierarchy—she took "a very egalitarian approach to the division of labour"—plus she felt that it was a waste of time for her to sit and do nothing: "if I've got nothing to do, if I'm sitting around waiting around for her to put my revisions in there, there's no point in me interrupting her work . . . just so that I do not taint my status with actually doing something so mundane". But she admitted that if she did sit down and do what she needed to do to get the work out, ostensibly the most

important criteria to judge lawyers by, "the cues are there. . . . I would only sit down at the word processor . . . if there was really something that I wanted out right away. . . . But people would joke and say 'Hi, Betty. Gee you look different'—you know, it's always that joke, but it was pointing out that I wasn't really supposed to be there. . . . Or if I was typing a fax sheet in the mail room, then it's like, 'What the h- are you doing that for?' [The lawyers] asked those questions not in quite those words, and it was always done jokingly, but the message was the same". By pitching in and doing it herself she was advertising three things: first, that her work was less important because if it were really important a secretary would do it; second, that she must not be very busy if she had time to do it herself, and third, that she was expressing allegiance with the secretaries and not to the hierarchy within the firm. As such, by sitting down at the typewriter or sending a fax, or doing word processing, Diane, rather than indicating that her first priority was to get the work done, seemed in the eyes of others to be indicating that she was not really a lawyer [a man, or a person who acts like one by never doing mundane tasks] but was really a secretary [a woman, or a person who acts like one by doing mundane tasks].

Recognizing that she should not just sit down and do what was necessary, however, was complicated by an additional factor—the secretaries were busy, and senior lawyers took precedence over newcomers. As she describes the situation, when she found out that the secretary whom she shared with another, more senior lawyer was too busy to do her work, Diane tried to find other secretaries who would fit her work in. But, as she pointed out,

I had the unfortunate circumstance—and I don't like blaming other people for difficulties, but the secretary I was working with—Linda—was the secretary for myself and for Murray. Well, Murray is a little bit of a . . . nice martinet, is probably the best way to describe him, very uptight. Linda's like me—she has a relaxed attitude towards life—and wasn't too keen on getting stuff—I mean the rest of the

secretaries—I dealt with two other secretaries, other than her, and I could pretty much count on no longer than a 24 hour turn-around on my stuff. With Linda stuff stretched to ten days. And after a certain point, because I could not get stuff back from her, because there is a hierarchical thing that happens in the law office, the lawyer gets precedent on his stuff over Linda, so I recognized that and thought ok . . . Linda was conscientious, but she's inexperienced and just not that fast, and Murray's a real producer and being in litigation, probably had some pretty heavy files to deal with, and was pumping the work out, and I got . . . squeezed through the cracks somehow. So my solution to the problem was to go out and ask other secretaries if they had spare time would they mind doing this, and I would always preface it—I'd say Linda, and sometimes I would ask Linda to do it, I'd say, "Linda can you get this done for me, or would you prefer that I go and ask someone else?", and she'd be quite honest—she'd say, "No, Murray's got me doing something else, it would work really well if you could find someone. Come back to me if you can't". But there's always someone who's not that busy. I would have my pets, and I would . . . go to them, and say, "Look, Linda is really busy with Murray's stuff, could you possibly squeeze this in at all, and if not, I'll go and find someone else". . . . And I never had any feedback that I treated the staff poorly. . . . At any rate, I did that for a while . . . and I thought it was a good use of the firm's resources, to sort of spread the work around, use Linda as my primary secretary when she was available, [and when she wasn't available] go elsewhere. Provided the other secretaries didn't mind, I didn't see what the problem was.

However, what might have seemed a logical approach to the problem of scarce resources was unacceptable in the firm: eventually the office manager went to the other—and more senior—lawyer, stated that Diane's approach was unacceptable, and said "You guys have to be able to solve this problem. We don't want Diane going

elsewhere". What was at base an issue of status remained that, and in a complicated way the status quo was reasserted, as Diane pointed out:

So Murray in a very nice fashion—he's a year older than me, and he was very fatherly about it, and I actually thought he handled it really well, he just . . . focused on the problem and said he didn't realize that I wasn't getting enough access to Linda and said "On occasion I've got things I have to have done and if you've got a problem please come and talk to me", so I lived with that, and actually that did work out—there was one instance where I absolutely had to have something done really quickly and I asked Murray if there was a problem—I mean there was an interesting control issue there about who gets to decide and status and all that jazz . . . However, the closer we got to Christmas, and I could never identify my stuff as being sufficiently pressing that it absolutely had to be done. My argument is that something shouldn't be labelled rush unless it genuinely is so don't cry wolf, because the secretaries know—I mean we'd make jokes about that—I'd tell them, I'd say, this isn't rush, and they'd say, well yeah, with some people everything's rush. And it's hogging resources that I think is really unfair. But at any rate, unfortunately with Linda my stuff would just literally [sit there]. George [one of her advisors, and responsible for one of her performance appraisals] would come in and say, "Do you have this done?", and I'd say, "Well, it's sitting on Linda's desk waiting to be typed and as soon as I can get it back from her I'll give it to you"—and it was really unfortunate in that respect . . . because the criticism of my work was that—they never seemed to criticize me for my analysis, but my timeliness has been poor most of the winter.

What Murray did by hogging all of Linda's time was to advertise to everyone how busy he was, and by extension, how important and powerful he was. What Diane did not realize until later was that 'rush' was a code word for status, for who had power in the hierarchy. She also learned what the firm wanted her to know—that work was done by

the secretaries on the basis of status, and that it remained at the discretion of the senior lawyer: Murray 'let' her work be done ahead of his, but she had to ask him, she just couldn't say to the secretary, do this right now. To Diane, to declare rush was to "hog resources" which she thought was "unfair" and the secretaries thought was silly. By hogging the secretary, of course, Murray was also asserting his power, and Diane acceded to that, by not fighting with him over the secretary's time. As she pointed out, she really had no choice: the "senior lawyer gets precedence" with the secretary, and lawyers don't do secretarial work. In this case, she found out both how hierarchical the firm was and how much you had to act like a man, even if you were a woman and the implications were quite different. As a man, if you deferred to your senior, you were indicating that you knew that by doing so, your time would come. But if you were a woman, your deference was taken for granted; there was no link, as there was for men, between deference and advancement. Ultimately, Diane's actions were in conflict with the ways things were supposed to be done at the firm. It was a challenge to a culture which placed a great deal of emphasis on status and hierarchy, not on efficiency, or rationality or teamwork or the kind of allegiances between women that might have developed if more egalitarian relationships had been fostered between the support staff and the lawyers. As it were, the secretary/wife/servant role of the female support staff and the gender hierarchy it underscored worked to keep all the women in the firm in their place, the female lawyers included.

The firm also saw itself, not surprisingly given the emphasis on hierarchy, as "one big happy family". This is perhaps a fine metaphor for men, because after all, when fathers die, the sons take the place of the fathers, but with its overtones of [sexual] subservience for women, it's not a good metaphor for women. According to Diane, this also required that the firm as "one big happy family" be understood as one's "first family". One's real family was of secondary importance. Work responsibilities and responsibilities to one's work mates—primarily in terms of time spent—took precedence

over family responsibilities, subtly expressed in a number of ways. For example, it was understood that lawyers had wives whose job it was to look after the kids; lawyers lacking wives, meaning female lawyers, had nannies. Daycares were for secretaries. Heathclub fees were picked up by the firm, but daycare fees were not. When the firm moved the establishing of a daycare on site had been rejected as unimportant, whereas establishing a smoke free environment was. The female lawyers, with the exception of Diane, used nannies; the male lawyers with small children had wives who stayed at home. In explaining all of this, Diane recounted a conversation with a senior male lawyer at the Christmas party: "Fred was asking me how my nanny problems were working out, and I laughed and slapped him on the arm and said, 'Fred, I don't make enough money to pay a nanny. My kid goes to daycare'. They become so out of touch they have no conception of what my reality is". It was important in the firm that someone other than the lawyer had primary responsibility for child care—no having to leave to pick the kids up. The hierarchy that existed was a gender hierarchy, not in the purely physical sense, but in the cultural sense, where how men understood the world structured the organization.

Finally, the form that "dues paying" in the firm took, although a subject of struggle, was generally one in which the women much more than the men found it difficult to participate. The male lawyers wanted a "rah rah team"; the women lawyers saw that as obsequious. As Diane commented,

There's some power struggles going on between the women lawyers and the male lawyers. The latest batch of students are mostly men, and the senior women lawyers are really offended by their glad handing, sucky attitudes towards the senior male lawyers—the male partners in particular. And the same problem occurred with the group ahead of us, who were again mostly men. We were mostly women. The male partners, the men, weren't particularly impressed by our particular group because they felt we were boring, dull and interestingly enough, they didn't define us as a very cohesive group. That was actually an issue that

arose before Christmas time. For whatever reason, they said that we weren't particularly cohesive. . . . And as Lorna [one of the senior women lawyers] said to me at one point, she said, 'You guys, you don't jump up and entertain the partners that really like that', but I think that what she was getting at was we weren't a bunch of sycophants. But the women [lawyers] couldn't stand the group ahead of us because they couldn't stand that sucking up. . . . the people who stand on the table, drink their faces off, and entertain [the senior men in the firm]. Make fools of themselves, basically.

Diane pointed out that the culture of the firm depended at least partially on drinking together as a form of bonding, but that was both too precarious and too difficult for the women—a woman who drinks may be sexual prey, not a drinking buddy—and many of the women had other lives, other duties, whereas the men did not. Fundamental contradictions within the culture of the firm itself meant that, by Christmas, Diane had figured out that "you could be a geek as a man, and still make it, and be pretty much an ordinary woman, and not make it". In the firm you didn't necessarily have to be a man to be a lawyer, but you did need to act in ways that the partners in the firm, eight out of nine who were men, were comfortable with, and that meant acting and thinking and talking in ways that they would have acted and thought and talked. You had to become "one of the boys", and in that statement, there's no room for women.

ALAN

To Alan, coming to know the organization was inextricably linked to the problem of ferreting out what needed to be done to fit in, to be like the others. In this organization that meant acquiring the necessary trappings of adulthood: marriage, a mortgage, and kids, but at the correct time, an important corollary. The organization was a place where stability was the pre-eminent value; as a young, single male he doubted that without

marriage and a mortgage he would be looked upon as having the necessary stability for advancement. Nevertheless, there was no irreconcilable conflict as there was with Diane; marriage and children, rather than a sign of doubtful allegiance, were seen in the firm as a sign of stability. As Phyllis Rose (1985) has noted in another context, the tensions between marriage and career, family and work which pull women in disparate directions, reinforce men, tensions which also serve to reinforce gender hierarchies both at home and at work.

Nor did he feel the same conflict that Diane experienced, either with the hierarchical structure of the organization or in his relationship with the wholly female support staff. What had been so conflictual, so problematic, for Diane, was hardly noticed by Alan. The conscious difference between what the organization demanded and who she was, a source of much conflict for Diane, was not at all apparent to Alan. When he described the organization and what it was, what it stood for, and who he was, there was no difference, only a sense that he had yet to acquire all the trappings of the others. Neither did he seem to experience that sense of never knowing quite what to do that was so noticeable for Diane as she came to know the organization. What Alan experienced, instead, was the affirmation of being welcomed, of being let in on how the organization worked, the structure of which he agreed with, that he could see the reason for. Once he acquired these necessary trappings of adulthood, he could see no reason why he could not participate fully as a valued and welcomed member of the organization.

How did he come to know the organization, then, and his place within it? Although he describes the firm as conservative, academic and "nerdy", he is not interested in their politics—what interests him is their common marital status. To Alan "everybody's kind of married, and goes home after work to their families—there's not a lot of going for beers after work". Stability is important to the firm, and marriage and a mortgage supplies that stability. He states that the firm wants "people to get tied down with a mortgage and kids and keep working—you have to keep making money. . . . That's how

I'd probably feel if I were a partner. As long as you're not committed to anything, there's nothing to stop you from, on a whim, saying, 'I want to go somewhere else, live somewhere else, do something else'. In contrast he's "young, male, and single". Although he works really hard—twelve hour days and most weekends—he doesn't see his obvious commitment to hard work as enough, not even with the success of his Christmas skit when his David Letterman take-off twiggged the firm's fancy. Hard work alone is not enough, as one of his fellow newcomers found out, a woman whom Alan admitted worked harder than the rest of them, but wasn't kept on. It has to be combined with the kind of stability that the firm values.

Because he's seen as "more socially active" than the others, this is a description that seems to him to be somewhat ambivalent in its possibilities. On one hand it conjures up the lack of stability that could be a problem in a "very conservative firm"; on the other hand his assessment of the organization is that it is slowly recognizing that it must change and that having someone who can bring in clients is an advantage. Although he admits that a lot of people "can't figure out why I'm still [unmarried]", he thinks that he's seen as "fairly bright", and as someone who would work well with clients because "I think they sense that there's kind of an ease in my manner with people", but he admits that "I don't know if that's correct or not". However, although he emphasizes that "we're going to have to be a little more aggressive in bringing in clients", and he sees himself as capable of that, he doesn't see the firm as making a concerted effort to hire more aggressive people. To Alan the new people being hired on as articling students "aren't a lot different" from him: "they're very bright, they're personable . . . but it's funny, I don't see any real conscious effort on the part of the firm to say, OK, let's get some business promoters in here". To Alan, "I think what they want to do is change internally and . . . to keep in the type of people that they've always brought in, but just subtly, maybe change the philosophy a bit", but it's so subtle that "quite honestly, I haven't seen a whole lot of that". To him change will be undertaken very slowly in this

firm. It will not involve changing the types of people the firm hires, but convincing the kind of people the firm has always hired and will continue to hire that they have to change their ways. What comes through so strongly is that he is just like all the others; what remains to be done so that whatever hint of instability there is, is effaced, is to become even more like the others—that is, to get married. And Alan concurs that that is a necessary step.

When I asked him how he came to know the organization specifically, he answered that it was by watching, witnessing the dynamics, overhearing a conversation: "in those 30 seconds you see how a decision can be made and how they go about doing it". Alan's anecdotes about conversations overheard imply inclusivity, unlike Diane's, whose point again and again was that she never really knew what was going on; she either heard messages that conflicted, leaving her to figure it out, or she heard nothing at all. Alan's anecdotes are about watching, listening, observing rules that everybody followed, rules that were not in dispute. Alan talks again and again about how comfortable he was made to feel, how much help he receives from the other lawyers, about the guy across the hall whom he runs in and talks to ten times a day and never feels like he "bugs him". Unlike Diane, he never talks about how unapproachable the senior people were. Alan talks about how much he was taught and nurtured so he would know what to do and how to do it the firm's way, which is something Diane never felt she knew, and always felt she had to figure it out on her own. Alan talks about those in the firm who were genuinely interested and friendly; what Diane talks about is how cold and distant they were, and how concerned they were about an image that Diane felt distinctly uncomfortable with.

How did Alan know how he was doing in the firm? Although Alan admitted that he didn't "get a ton of feedback, especially along those lines . . . you don't get, you really don't get a lot of feedback, other than, 'That's good', 'That's what I was looking for', 'Thank you, that will really help'", he thinks, just from how they act around him, that

they like him. This he puts down to the fact that he is a "pretty easy going type of person" and points out as evidence that "for the most part they're pretty relaxed and I find them pretty laid back, they're able to joke with me". Later he says that although they don't say he's a great guy, or that they really like him, he's "had pretty good feedback on my work so I sense . . . a certain level of confidence and ease". He describes two incidents: in one, he was in a lawyer's office, giving him some photocopies, and although he had worked for him on quite a complicated case, had heard nothing initially. But on this occasion, five or six weeks later, when Alan was moving to another area, the fellow said, "That's too bad, we're really going to miss you on this side. You really helped out, you did some good work". In another case, Alan explains how he knew that they had confidence in him, and implicitly, how they indicated that he was a valued member of the firm. He was taken to a client meeting, and allowed to speak on an issue. Then the client was explicitly told that he could contact Alan, that he had done the work and was the most familiar with the issue. This "pretty good feedback" and the joking around the lawyers do with him, indicate to him that they like him, that he's one of the group, that he's welcomed there.

And finally, what was a really important issue to Diane was barely mentioned by Alan. Unlike Diane who never knew what she was supposed to do compared to what the support staff was supposed to do, to Alan the support staff were supposed to be treated with respect—the firm makes a point of having occasional parties where everyone attends—but there's no question on Alan's part that a "secretary . . . does what the lawyer asks her to do", although he emphasized that you don't "always [walk] them through every step of the way". His concern was not with what he should do versus what they should do, Diane's conundrum. In his eyes, the support staff was there to help him, nothing more. There were no muddled allegiances, no talk of hierarchy. What Alan did stress, unlike Diane, was that the secretaries knew more than they thought they knew, including his own secretary, who had fifteen years experience.

To Alan, coming to know the organization rested, not on words, but on actions, conveyed through work: "like in anything, you judge people by their actions more than by their words. If they say nothing and give you work, you're happy". It's the work that is the key, "If they say, 'Great job', and never give you another file, I'd be a little worried". But fitting in, and ultimately becoming a partner, rests on more than that. As Alan commented, "I'm not a partner, I'm not privy to the meetings, but I don't think your billable hours are crucial". To Alan, "number one is ability", but after that "I think that what they look at is if you've made it through five years of working here, you probably fit in well enough, you're probably bright enough, smart enough, you're probably socially, er, you fit in the firm well enough, that you should be able to become a partner". In Alan's assessment of what the firm is all about, you don't get hired unless you're smart, but you don't get kept unless you fit in—and that means acting pretty much like everybody else.

ELLEN

Ellen's coming to know the organization was inextricably linked to the slow emergence, like a photographic negative, of a darker picture of organizational life. She had begun not knowing very much about organizations, other than a belief in everything working the way it's supposed to: if you work hard you get ahead; it's what you know, not who you are that matters; and found that that wasn't the case. Her coming to know was a slow process of disillusionment and disentanglement, of doors closed, opportunities constricted. As she states, "you begin where everything is rosy, and then everything isn't so rosy. That's like anything else—the more you come to know something, the more you begin to see, and I guess you begin to think about it more, as opposed to just accepting everything, where everything just glosses past your eyes, and what you see is what is, and maybe you're being bombarded with all these things, and then after a while

you begin to be more selective". Later she goes back to that issue of selectivity and belief, stating that:

It's like looking at something the first time. When you look at an inkblot all you see is black and white, and then the more you look at it, the more you discern shapes and nuances of black and all the rest of it. One thing's that interesting—when you first go into an organization you tend to accept what other people say about [the organization]—you take their word as gospel, whether it's related to people, or whether it's related to situations, and over time you begin to form your own opinions, or to see where your thoughts differ from what you originally thought.

How does that process of greater discernment work? To Ellen, partially through accumulation, partially through more nuanced observation: "There's a lot of history, there's a lot of gossip . . . your knowledge of an organization has to come from within. You have to feel comfortable, people have to feel comfortable with you. It's a slow accumulation of knowledge". As an example of more nuanced observation, she talks about the difference between what she expected, and what she found: "You like to think that everything works properly because I'd always been outside a structure. I took it for granted that structures worked the way you thought they did, but then you get in and quite quickly you see what you see and you don't . . . like the feeling". As to how that happens, Ellen notes that "maybe we begin to look at what we see and assign a value or a quality to it—you like what you see here, you don't like what you see there, relating to what your personal thoughts are, what your personal values are" and then she illustrates that with the following observation: "I see in our institution what is very interesting is our president and vice-presidents are all male, they have in common that they are all tall and slim and athletic, and not necessarily there because they have the biggest brains, or the best brains. . . . We are [in] the mold, the traditional mold still". She goes on to point out how much the continuation of that tradition initially surprised her, but concluded on a fatalistic note, that it was the same everywhere: "although people in

their 40s are basically the people in charge, they are perpetuating the values of an older generation. . . . All institutions are pretty traditional, and I guess that's an interesting thing to learn. Few women in the upper levels, and things work in the way they work in other institutions".

What she learned as she slowly came to know the organization was how political the organization was, how much depended on the art of hiding one's true feelings and thoughts, of the necessity of providing a surface. All of this surprised and disturbed her, as she relates in these following examples: "all I know is the number of times I hear around our department how someone is not doing a good job as an [administrator], not at all doing a good job, and yet to turn around and to encounter them the next time and there's the handshake and the smiles and the discussion as if you're totally equal and you think . . . that you can't really let people know what you think of them. So you have to put up with the others. And I wouldn't have known any of these things, and as I've said, in another year I will have learned more". However, she is not sure if she could participate in what to her is necessary deceitfulness, as she describes watching a manager operate: "After a year of watching what he has to put up with . . . I don't know if I would want to; I don't know if I could be as nice to people who deep down made me sick or turned me off as you have to do in that role. Smile at their face and deep down know that you just dislike them intensely, but you're forced to deal with them on a regular basis. Maybe I'm at the point in my life where it's not worth it".

Part of coming to know the organization was learning both about what her job actually was, and thus where she was placed within the organization, how hierarchical the organization was, and how cavalierly the organization communicated such information. She learned that she was not in faculty development and thus an academic staff member as she had initially thought, but in instructional development and thus a member of the non-academic staff, with all its attendant status anxieties. As she says, "Two weeks after I started . . . somebody said, are you going to the faculty barbeque, and I said 'No, I

hadn't got a notice about it', so I asked [my boss] and [he said] 'You can't go', and I said, 'Why not?', and he said, 'Because you're not faculty'. And that's when it really hit me, the difference between faculty and non-faculty. And then it slowly sunk in that yes the secretary and I were level, and I would be getting these notices for the non-academic staff association. . . . The other half of it is, when you put non in front of any word, it becomes a very negative association".

Just as Ellen learned that her job was less valued than she had thought, so she learned how low salaries were for women, and ultimately, how arbitrarily they were assigned. She points out that: "One thing you know, the value that the institution puts on us, is what they pay us [the women] for what we do. That tells us what they think of us, and at [this institution] that's not a very good feeling because . . . we're not paid very well". She told me how a department of all women, unable to find anyone suitable for a managerial position [only women had applied], "raised the salary by \$10,000, readvertised, interviewed, and hired a man. So now we have this very young nice looking fellow, sitting in [this managerial position] the salary is nice and high, people who applied the first time would not think to apply again"* . This sense of the essential arbitrariness of salary as it is related to credentials was compounded for her by an incident that she relates at length:

We had an interesting thing happen—it discouraged me, or made me feel sad that it could happen, and that's when we were hiring for a new position in our department. . . . We advertised it . . . as wanting a Ph.D but we didn't get anybody with a Ph.D but we did get a number of people with a Masters so we decided that the Masters would be the minimal criteria so we had a selection committee of six people, and at the end of the interview process we had two people selected. The three of us who worked in the department selected one who had finished her

*Naomi Wolf (1991) has written that employers admit that they weed out women applicants by readvertising the job at a higher salary.

Masters, and the other three selected the second person. And so when it came right down to it, [her boss] made the choice that the one who we had to work with would be chosen. At which point he went up to [his boss] and his boss said, 'Fine, this is the salary I'm offering' and her boss said, 'But that's not the salary we had going for the position'. And in fact what happened, if we had selected the one [the senior administrator] wanted, she would have been paid \$5000 more a year than the one we did select. In other words our senior administrator just arbitrarily said, 'Pick the one I want, she gets \$36,000 a year; pick the one I don't—and this is [the one] with a Masters, eh?—'pick the one I don't, she gets \$31,000 a year'. . . . I hate to think that can happen anywhere, and I hate to think our organization doesn't have something to prevent that lack of, that inconsistency. So this woman to me is being totally underpaid, not that she's making that much less than I but I still think it's a kick in the teeth, and the fact that he is able to say, 'I'll pay this one this much, and the fact that the one he chose had not completed her Masters . . . whereas the one we had [chosen] had completed her thesis, which was one of the criteria for the job. So no matter what, no matter what your structure, no matter how rigidly it's defined, still up there, people can do what they want to, there's a certain leeway granted".

This same sense of arbitrariness is reflected in Ellen's assessment of how experience as it translates into salary is understood in the organization, and how her experience could be discounted when a very narrow definition was used. To Ellen, "the one thing that's coming to me recently is that to be older and more capable is not necessarily good in an organization. . . . I think capability gets you the job in the first place. I think in my own case it had to be capability because my age was against me given that some people in applying would have been a good ten years younger". Ellen believes that her experience is of value to her work, but it is not valued by the institution, and that affects how she feels about herself. Ellen comments that "the sum

of my parts does not give me much experience in their eyes. Now one thing I'm learning is that you're dealing with a piece of paper that tells you what a salary structure is. I think my experience stands me in very good stead because my varied experience equates to the varied aspects of my job but your director of personnel or whoever that is says 'Sorry, you have only contract work', doesn't give you any years of experience and so on and so forth. So I'm learning about the organization".

If how salary and experience are awarded is essentially arbitrary, if credentials do not necessarily translate into more money and higher status, what does one need in order to advance? In an institution that is not what it seems on the surface, what Ellen is finding out is this: "I'm finding that someone who does very little work but who has a very good appearance, who is a young, handsome, well-spoken male who's a slack tit—I have heard him referred to as a potential president of the [institution] by at least three different people . . . People really like him, and therefore they think that he's going to do well, and yet to work beside him is very difficult because he doesn't do much".

Since this fellow is also her co-worker this rubs two ways: not only is he rewarded because he's young, handsome and well-spoken; he's also rewarded because he's a male in a technological field and therefore people presume that he knows more than her, and is in fact in charge. As she explains, "I guess that I'm aware [of this] because I worked in technology a lot" and because of that became aware of "how few women there are at anything related to technology". Nevertheless the unfairness of the presumption still angers her, compounded by the fact that she cannot set the record straight. People's—usually men's—perceptions prevail. For instance, she states, "When you have a meeting related to technology, and I'll go with my cohort . . . and he and I will go to a meeting together and because I've done as much or more in computers than he, he is hardware, but I have a more general understanding of the whole thing because I've done more in various areas, so he and I will go to a meeting, and he and I will meet with usually another male because that's the way it is, and we can meet for half an hour, and I can

say more than any of the other two, and yet the affirmation is directed to my male counterpart in the sense of what we are doing next". She goes on to state ruefully that she's not taken "anywhere as seriously as my male coworker simply because I'm an older female, and in my generation there's a lot of people out there saying, 'Me? I won't touch a computer!' or 'I'll never touch a computer'". Here she is, in her own mind technically very knowledgeable, but unable to assert her expertise because she's not young, not male, and she doesn't have a Ph.D: "I've programmed COBOL, I've programmed CAI for micros—I've done all of those things, but my coworker, who's only a nuts and bolts type of computer person is still the one that people will look at when anything comes. In my case I don't have the doctorate in front of my name, I don't have anything that might make these people know that in fact I am the knowledgeable one of the two of us". What she is learning about the organization, it seems, is how if you do something that is outside the expected roles that men and women play, roles that seem to be heightened by age, people literally do not see what your capabilities are. As Ellen points out, all it leads to is frustration: "in fact I am the knowledgeable one of the two of us, so I sometimes think that I tend to overreact, but it doesn't do me any good because all it gets you is this perception: "Why is this lady talking so much?"

What else she was learning is the double standard: if you are the fair haired boy, you can do no wrong: if Ellen's coworker was doing no work, the response from her boss was "now lay off, the poor boy has a lot on his mind, he's turning thirty and he's getting married this year", but the problems she was experiencing in her own personal life "was not affecting my job, and I don't think it was being used as an excuse for me not doing stuff", and adds that "that's been one of the things that's impacted me a lot this last while, was [her boss] making excuses for the only other male". Those excuses are not made for her; she's seen by some of her co-workers as someone who can be "dogmatic", and "a little testy", comments passed on to her by her boss, and she says "and I thought to myself how atypical that would be if I were a man". And Ellen did not only

deal with a double standard, but favouritism, both based on shared gender. Ellen perceived her boss as "taking [her coworker] under his wing", as seeing "him as his younger brother . . . he's really sort of spawned him", but backing off on his initial encouragement of her as a potential manager.

In explaining how she came to know the institution, she recounts what it was like to work with an older man who has difficulties accepting women as equals, but who seemed to be emblematic of the institution itself and her own understanding of where she fits in it. As she recounted, he's "57, he's been at the institution seventeen years, he knows how his courses should be taught, and he hates the fact that we are being called in to revise his courses, plus we're 'girls', and he doesn't like that". To my query that does he actually call them girls [both women are in their 40s] Ellen replies that

Yes, well, he's an old school type. He doesn't call us girls, but I know he thinks of us as girls. . . . He's a chairman who will sit and talk at you, and ask you if you have reached consensus with what he's thinking, and you say, 'Well no, not really, Here's what I think', and he'll take what you think and turn it around until he hears what he wants to hear and say how's that?. . . . So he perceives us as nice people, we've got masters [degrees] just like him, so we're equal, we're in the right place, you know, ladies know how to, but he's number one, boss man. If we keep him happy he will tell people we did a good job. He calls me partner right now because he thinks we're on the same wavelength: Hello Partner! My name is Mrs. Peterson . . . [he] would say, I think, as long as I do things the way he wants them, he'll say I can do my job.

FRANK

Unlike Ellen, to Frank the value of his previous experience—both life and work—was inestimable, both to himself, and particularly to his new employers. It was his "experience" which allowed him to ascertain what the new organization was all about, as

he stressed, and then he elaborated: "I've worked a long time". He stated quite explicitly that no one told him any stories about "this is how things work around here"; he knew what to look for because he was the "most experienced manager who came across" from one organization to this new one* . His experience gave him the extra edge through which he was able to ferret out exactly which rules applied and when, and precisely which form evaluation would take. He focused on the "rules" of the organization, and in discerning those rules, his long experience stood him in good stead. And even in this new organization which had a large number of young "high achievers, overachievers" who were hired right out of university, Frank was careful to stress the advantages of his "long term" organizational experience: "And because I have more years of organizational experience, and know more about the inner workings of [his previous organization], that's one of the things that I bring to the group that no one else does". This long term experience in the field as a whole as well as his greater life experience meant that when there was change in the offing, "traumatic" for some, he was able to deal with it, as he stressed: "That's why [the change] made business sense to me right from the very beginning. I could see the rationale, I could see why it was good, which allowed for me to have much less trauma and stress in my mind". But for others it was not so easy; in a period of intense change, people without both work and life experience understand change as "unsettling". To Frank,

*A group which had previously been responsible for all internal computing work for employer 'A' was hired by company 'B' which was sub-contracted by employer 'A' to provide what had previously been done by this group. Most of the people were hired by company 'B' to do the same work which they had been doing for their old employer, 'A'. The work did not change, but their employer did. For a revealing discussion of "outsourcing", or "the transfer of part or all of an organization's existing data processing hardware, software, communications network and systems personnel to a third party" (Due, 1992, p. 78), and its attendant emotional costs to the employees and the possible productivity losses to the company, see Richard Due's recent article.

there's a period of uncertainty, these people are going to be placed into a situation which they do not have any preknowledge or preawareness of, where they don't have the same knowledge or base of maturity which I would have. Some of these people had been working a year, maybe just a little bit more with [the organization]; they didn't have a lot of prior work experience. . . . Maybe they had only worked for one employer, they had never had life experiences that would have allowed them to be able to cope with stress, but they had, they did not really have an influence over whether it was going to happen or not. What influence they had was going to be very little, it was going to be stressful whether they decided to leave or whether they decided to come across there was going to be change and they couldn't control that. My assumption would be that some people had never been put in that situation.

He noted that his life and work experiences gave him the necessary distance to analyse change, but that analysis was unavailable to the others: "I don't think that other people really thought that deeply into it. I don't think that other people would have formed their opinions from such a stand-off, such an independent view". His lengthy experience gave him a sense of control in a new situation that others lacked.

And even faced with people much younger than himself, hired because they were hard-working and very bright, very much on top of a field that had changed tremendously in the last twenty years, his experience stood him in good stead because he had life experience, which they did not. He states that these "very aggressive" overachievers see him as

Stable. Someone who has a lot of experience, but it's a different type of experience than learning experience—some life experience I suppose. Someone's that's able to help them understand how to deal in a political situation—maybe to protect them or give them advice about how to, different ways to, they come in to bounce ideas off me. They've got a difficulty with a staff member, and they say

'this is what I'm planning on doing, what do you think about it'? Things like that.

They believe that I have useful information because of the experience that I have not only in the organization but just general work experience.

Not only did he value his life and work experience—it was explicitly valued by the senior managers in the organization, who made an exception for his lengthy work experience and concomitant accrued vacation time. Although he took pains to state that this new organization was not "paying for tenure", and theoretically gave everyone four weeks vacation no matter how much experience they had, with Frank they negotiated a secret clause, allowing him to keep his accumulated five weeks. He stated:

Everybody gets four weeks whether they had ten years experience which put you in the five week category or whether they had two years experience, which would have given you three weeks. So everybody gets one month. To me that sent a very strong message of common values. They were not paying for tenure. And that's an important message to send. And it directly said, for people that had tenure, it was going to be something less. And in my particular circumstance, I had more than four weeks vacation, I was sitting at five at that point, and I was going to lose a week's vacation coming across.

However, the organization, common values aside, negotiated with Frank, who admitted that "the only people that knew, they said to everybody the people that were, there were a couple of exceptions that they were going to talk to individually, and that's just the way they left it".

To Frank it was also his work and life experience which were crucial for him in discerning what made this new organization what it was: their particular hiring practices, and their evaluation practices. The organization hires "high achievers, overachievers" straight out of university and "[molds] their culture and their values and they take their basic set and they mold them the way they want them. . . . And the way they do work it is structured so it is to their advantage. That's why they have such well-structured

methodologies and ways of doing thing because they are easily able to change the players". However, these "well-structured methodologies" can work in two ways: they exist to let people know 'this is how we do it here', but they also exist to exclude, to keep people out. When Frank talked about how projects were managed in this organization, he talked about the necessity for very careful planning, for not having the unexpected crop up, which was seen as a lack of planning:

When you have work that is expected to be done, especially when you estimate that it's this number of work days to do this job, and it's been developed, then that's what you work to. And you work to that, and you build a schedule, and it's a schedule in an elapsed time frame, and you make a commitment that you're going to have the job done at this point in time, and so you work to that. You allow a little bit of contingency in your planning, and you manage your tasks but you're expected to be there, if you said you were going to be there, and you confirm and you keep confirming that you're going to be there, then that's when you're supposed to be there. . . . You make a commitment and people have a dependency on it. . . .

Although there seemed to be relatively little flexibility built into this form of scheduling, and a great deal of emphasis on grinding slowly forward, Frank noted that there was still the expectation that if something cropped up, people had to be available to finish things off at the last minute. And if you couldn't be there for these last minute emergencies, which seemed to be in all other senses actively discouraged, then your chances for advancement would suffer. As Frank pointed out, not being available for these emergencies:

would probably affect their job assignments. You'd have to make sure that your projects weren't exposed, if they run into something that isn't expected, if it's on a time deadline, you've got other people depending on that person to do a job, and there's no buffer there and they absolutely cannot or won't even consider some

time of arrangement if they run into a problem, and there's always problems when you have an assignment that runs two or three months, and it happens to be that you're the critical resource to do something, and you're not there to do the job, then I don't want to expose my project to that. So it will affect the type of work you'll get. You'll get put into situations where it's less demanding, where there's less chance for advancement or growth, you won't be put into a team where people depend on you, you won't be put into a leadership role because a leader can't disappear in situations like that, so it affects the work assignment.

The advantages of this were apparent to Frank, but they also said a great deal about the firm: it was very rules oriented, in ways that were sometimes conflicting. There were many possibilities then for various interpretations, or for the construction of a hierarchy of knowledge dependent on the power of the player.

The very precise evaluation system also ensured that everyone knew their place, as Frank pointed out: "you know what is expected of you, you know what the goals are, you know what the project is, you know what your role is, and you also are given an outline that says what will be considered behaviour that say that you have exceeded your performance goal". He used terms like "a report card situation to become part of the evaluation of the performance in that the service which is supplied by us [the organization] as a group is measured through a very structured process by [the client] so if [our organization] as an entity is not performing well then there are penalties, financial penalties which are associated, and if they are performing well there are bonus situations, so [the client] can directly influence not only our group's performance evaluation, but they will directly affect an individual's much more directly . . .".

This evaluation is very detailed, very extensive, and on-going. As Frank describes it, in the new organization:

They evaluate on subduties rather than large, bulk work activities, so if you're assigned five tasks, [on] each of those tasks you will be fully documented, because

there will be a performance meeting, there will be a goal setting before each meeting, there will be a meeting with the person's leader, whether that happens to be the project manager or the team leader, depends on which structure you are going into, with a project or assignment then that process happens at the beginning of an assignment.

He goes on to point out that:

Every three months they will be given a performance summary. It's written, it's reviewed with the manager, it's written by the direct supervisor, it's reviewed with the manager of the particular area, it's reviewed for consistency, and it is delivered. And it goes into the person's file, and so every six months there is a formal review that is done on their performance, and . . . all these project evaluations go into that. It's guaranteed to be, at least every three months with any significant assignment, such as a forty hour assignment, will get documented and put into the person's file. If it's a significant assignment, and it's open and it's closed, and you had this to do, it would be documented probably in a performance memo. If it's an assignment that's a month, two months, six weeks, whatever, it would be documented in a much more elaborate form in a project evaluation that actually takes apart all the components of whether you have done your job, and part of that is areas of strength and areas for improvement, and use specific examples that are behind the information that's on those. So that's a full cycle commitment to monitor performance and delivery very closely.

To Frank this evaluation was also fair: those being evaluated knew what they had to do because it was all written down: to "receive better than satisfactory, exceeds expectations, often exceeds expectations, consistently exceeds expectations". These expectations were linked to "different progress rates" and that is, therefore, what "they strive for". Everything, according to Frank, was out in the open; those being evaluated accepted the criteria by which they were evaluated, and as Frank noted, "these people

expect, that if they expect to advance, to move, to progress, they are expected to be rewarded for their strengths, and their weaknesses to be identified so they can work on them, so they can deal with them. They expect that. . . . This is almost like a written contract, this is what I'm expecting of you, this the minimum, and the minimum is satisfactory performance, this is what you can do, this is what I'm expecting, and the person, they know the rules, they can work it". What Frank does not talk about is how the rules are made, who sets them up, how the criteria are to applied. What he is interested in is the surface objectivity, the thoroughness, of the rules themselves, not how they are applied, or more importantly, how they were set up, and by whom, and who might benefit. There are no stories about that.

