

“A Labyrinth of Snake Pits and Traps at Every Corner”:
Understanding Experiences of Canadian Women in Building and Construction Trades
Through a Feminist Existential Lens

By

Rhonda L. Dever

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Approved: Dr. Albert Mills, Supervisor
Saint Mary’s University, Halifax

Approved: Scott MacMillan, Committee Member
Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax

Approved: Dr. Meredith Ralston, Committee Member
Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax

Approved: Dr. Martin Parker, External Examiner
University of Bristol, Bristol

Date: April 19, 2021

Abstract

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Abstract: By 2010, women made up almost half (47%) of the entire Canadian workforce (Ferraro, 2010) and the majority of women work in the service sector with the highest concentration (82%) in the healthcare and social assistance sectors. While the number of women in the workforce has been increasing, there has not been an increase in the number of women in the building trades despite initiatives that have been steadily encouraging women to pursue careers in trades as a viable option to earn a living.

The stories of ten female tradespeople were examined using narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008) through a feminist existential lens using the work of de Beauvoir (1976, 1989). Women choosing to pursue a career in trades face much different consequences for their choice than their male counterparts. Through a feminist existential analysis, I argue that the basis of these issues stems from women being viewed as the Other. The major themes that arose from this study were ways in which women are both openly objectified and oppressed at work and how those actions limit their choices, and in turn their existential freedom, creating a space in which they end up working in bad faith.

April 19, 2021

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my son, Lincoln Robert William Dever. You are the only person who sacrificed more than I did during this endeavour. You have always been wise beyond your years and our 'old soul' allowed you to cope with the missed adventures and missed time from your youth we will never get back. You handled it in a way most children would not have been able to. You will always be my moon and stars. You light up the darkness and provide a sense of direction that allows me to stay on track and to never give up. Hearing you say "I love you a million times more than whatever you say next in the whole wide world" will forever fill my heart. Dancing in the kitchen with you is always my favourite thing to do. Remember that life is not a linear path, but instead a journey; a journey that will be as unique as you are. I love you, son.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Prologue

I worked for a construction management company while living in Calgary, Alberta, Canada in the early 2000s. I worked on site with hundreds of other tradespeople from various backgrounds: electricians, plumbers, pipe fitters, flooring installers, sheet metal workers, and various other tradespeople. I recognized that there were very few women, but never really put much thought into it until years later. There was one woman who worked as a flooring installer and one who hung drywall that I remember seeing on a regular basis, but they were the only two other women who worked out on site all day every day, during my time there. The other women who were on site worked for the construction management company, myself included. One worked as a safety officer, who walked around the site daily in order to ensure safety standards were being met; one worked as an administrative assistant; and myself, who did some office work but was required to be out on site interacting with various tradespeople to record specific information. Although this was my first experience working in this type of setting, it would never have occurred to me not to accept the job simply based on the fact that I was a female. My thinking was simple: I needed a job, and this paid better, on an hourly basis, than my other work as a server.

That was my first experience with any trades-based work and the workers who make up the industry in what is still a male-dominated field. Fast-forward almost 20 years and I now study gender in organizations as an academic. Now I view my experience through an entirely different lens. This research project was born out of this reflective change within me as well as an impactful conversation I had during a social event at work with a female instructor who teaches at a trades school. During the conversation, I asked, “Do you mind if I ask why you

didn't stay in the industry? Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't the money much better out there (in industry) when you have a journeyman (person) ticket?" She replied that "After I had my second child, they didn't give me my old job back." "But they can't do that. It's against the labour law," I interrupted. "Oh, they paid me the same, but they made me do work that was way below my ability. I couldn't stand it. I was bored. So, I left," she replied. I was surprised by her answer as I believed that an organization would not penalize an employee for taking maternity leave. Beyond that, from a business perspective, I could not understand how an organization could rationalize underutilizing a skilled worker. Why would you pay someone more to do less? Our conversation moved on to a discussion of how many women in trades leave for a wide variety of reasons, most of which caught me by surprise. Many of the reasons this woman mentioned highlighted family choices, such as maternity leave, child-care, and many reasons related to less-than-ideal working conditions. I had expected to hear stories of overt sexual harassment or stories of finding it difficult to get hired because of one's gender. But the story she was sharing was much more interesting and insightful because it highlighted the subtlety of the gender bias; a subtlety that is much more difficult to grasp, understand, or see. I suspected that there was more to be uncovered than what could be told during our conversation and curiosity settled deep within my mind. This woman had provided me with glimpses of female narratives from someone who had worked in a trades-based occupation, and that insight piqued something in me. These were stories and issues I had never heard before.

While I had never worked around the construction industry prior to my experience in Calgary, it was not hard to see that I was a minority, but it did not bother me back then. I got along well with everyone on site, the men invited me to go out for beers with them after work on several occasions and it was fun. It felt easy compared to previous jobs I had held in industries

with a predominantly female workforce, such as in the service and retail sectors which seemed to me a more competitive environment. In those industries my experience had been that women often viewed each other as threats instead of allies, and there seemed to be constant drama in one form or another. In my case, I was never treated in a negative manner while on site, at least not to my face. I did, however, overhear how the men on the site talked about the female safety officer. I heard her being called a wide variety of expletives, such as *bitch* and *dyke* along with very negative comments regarding her personal appearance. Some of the men would refer to her as *butch* because she did not meet their standard of beauty; she was not seemingly demure or delicate, and they assumed she must be a lesbian. Her 'presumed' sexuality was discussed openly by some of the men on site.

Looking back on that time, I have to wonder why it should matter. How could this woman's sexual orientation be of any significance to the worksite or other employees? She had no problem engaging in a screaming match with the men on site who were not complying with safety standards, and she could swear with the best of them, so maybe that lack of *fear* was exactly what the problem was. Maybe it was about control and power? I do not think I really understood the magnitude of that type of gender discrimination, nor did I do anything to stop it. How could I stop something I did not understand? I also remember the female flooring installer who was viewed as very attractive by many of the men on site. Because she worked with her boyfriend at the time, she was never directly harassed to her face, but that did not stop the other men on site from making sexually explicit comments about her when she and her boyfriend were not around. I also remember walking into the trailer that belonged to one of the crews on site, and the walls were covered in pictures of semi-clad and naked women taken from magazines, newspapers, etc. It was somewhat awkward, but since I didn't want to make them

uncomfortable, I said, “It’s no big deal.” Why would I create or cause an issue when I did not even think an issue existed? There was a part of me that was working to fit in, to be less defensive, less sensitive, and have a so-called sense of humour. However, hearing stories from other women, such as the one I previously mentioned, caused me to stop and reflect on my own experiences in a completely new way. That reflection is what led to this research project about women’s stories within trades-based occupations.

The Need for Trades Research

Several countries have reported construction workforce shortages, including the US (Menches & Abraham, 2007), the UK (Ness, 2012), Australia (Jenkins, Bamberry, Bridges, & Krivokapic-Skoko, 2019), and Canada (MacIsaac & Domene, 2014). A lack of skilled trades workers is a global issue with significant impacts on the construction industry. This shortage stems from an aging workforce, an insufficient number of new workers being trained, and difficult immigration policies (Menches & Abraham, 2007). Women’s skills and abilities are underrepresented in high-paying occupations, such as trades (Ericksen & Schultheiss, 2009), thus pointing to the need for further research in this arena, particularly when women are viewed as an important possible solution to meet future demand in an industry that lacks enough skilled workers (Menches & Abraham, 2007). With that said, it is important to note that the uptake in organizations looking to recruit women in to trades, appear to be doing so in order to meet a presumed looming labour shortage in countries around the world. It could be perceived that this is an attempt to use women to fill a job until such a time that there are enough men to fill those positions. This is reminiscent of the war times when women were used to fill roles left vacant by men who were actively participating in the war efforts.

According to Build Force Canada (2018), the Canadian construction industry faces a loss of nearly a quarter of a million construction workers who are expected to retire during this decade. That tells us it is necessary to increase recruitment initiatives that focus on new Canadians, women, and Indigenous people in order to address the shrinking construction labour force. This statistic would indicate that there are a plethora of opportunities for women to join the trades. If this is the case, one could imagine that the industry may work on becoming more welcoming to their potential workforce solution. It would seem as though, in the case of women, they simply need to make the choice to enter trades. If the construction trades are an equal opportunity industry, a woman's choice to enter the field would (should) be no different than a man's. In saying that, however, previous research shows us that Canadian women tend to work in industries that parallel traditional gender roles in occupations that involve caregiving (Moyser, 2017).

There are several programs and initiatives that have taken place, or are currently taking place, across Canada in an attempt to attract women to the trades. For example, there are programs such as *Women Building Futures* in Alberta; *Skilled Trades Employment Program (STEP) for Women* in British Columbia, *Women Unlimited* in Nova Scotia, and *Partners Building Futures (Council, 2010)* in New Brunswick, to name a few. The creation and implementation of these programs shows the interest in recruiting women into trades in order to attempt to fill the looming labour shortage.

Women in Trades in Canada

By 2010, women made up almost half (47%) of the entire Canadian workforce (Ferraro, 2010), and the majority of women work in the service sector with the highest concentration (82%) in the healthcare and social assistance sectors (Government of Canada, 2015). According to the Government of Canada, women remain underrepresented in traditionally male-dominated professions such as skilled trades, forestry, fishing, mining and the oil and gas sector. In 2012 women held only 11.8% of jobs in construction and accounted for only 14% of registered apprenticeships. Of those apprenticeships, women were focused within hairstyling (80% of all hairstyling apprenticeships are female) and culinary trades (30% of all culinary apprenticeships are female) (Status of Women Canada, 2015). Women accounted for only 1.9% of plumbing apprentices and 2% of carpentry apprentices (Status of Women Canada, 2015). This demonstrates an even further under-representation in trades typically referred to as 'blue collar' or manual labour positions.

There is little research examining women's experiences in trades, particularly within a Canadian context (MacIsaac & Domene, 2014). According to MacIsaac and Domene (2014), the majority of research surrounding women in trades has been done in an international context and conducted a decade or more ago, before we saw the implementation of programs that have been developed to encourage women to pursue careers in trades (MacIsaac & Domene, 2014). Wheaton (2008) did, however, conduct a study looking at the experiences of women in trades and technology in Atlantic Canada. This study revealed that much of what prevents women from entering trades and technology is a lack of information about the opportunities available, lack of support, and the need to prove themselves repeatedly. Recognizing that few women pursue careers in trades, despite trades work providing a potential path to financial independence,

MacIssac and Domene (2014) examined why young women begin trades training in Canada. Their research focused on ten women, eight of whom were in pre-employment programs, and two of whom were enrolled in apprenticeship programs. The authors emphasized that there is a lack of research available, particularly within a Canadian context, for those trying to support women in trades such as career and school counsellors and those in the industry.

The trades industry is unlike other domains in that there are constant changes involved simply due to the nature of the work. This is an industry where people are constantly moving from job site to job site, and many times during those transitions crews will change as well, depending on the size of the organization. Smaller organizations may find crews changing less frequently. This means that people will not always work with the same people on every job, thus creating a space in which women have to constantly and repeatedly prove that they belong. Due to the constant changes of the job site and having to create new relationships on each new site, women in trades have to continually prove themselves “without the full benefit of their prior accomplishments” (Denissen & Saguy, 2014, p. 384). Even with women openly discussing their successes (and failures) on the job, the pride they feel in the work they do, and earning what they deem to be “men’s wages,” we still find a shortage of women working in the trades.

There have been suggestions on how to recruit more women into trades and what can be done to make the industry more appealing to women, and yet that shift still is not happening. We have employment equity legislation that is supposed to allow women equal opportunity to join this type of work, and yet the number of women in the trades has not increased. Despite many changes in legislation, initiatives, and research that seeks to attract Canadian women into entering trades, the majority of Canadian women are choosing to work elsewhere particularly in the areas of health care and the service sectors (Government of Canada, 2015). According to

Moyser (2017), most women in Canada are employed in traditionally female occupations such as health care, teaching, social work, sales and service, and other administrative work. The reluctance of women to enter the trades is due, partly, to the overwhelming “maleness” associated with the industry and the resulting environment (Eccles, 1994).

Masculine Nature of Trades Work

The trades have historically been viewed as “men’s work,” and it has typically always been men who fill these positions (Cockburn, 1985). Looking at previously captured stories from women working in trades occupations, it seems that gender biases and masculinities are “deeply entrenched and highly resistant to challenge and change” (Hulme, 2006, p. 144). It can be said that a traditional image of trades work was of men doing so-called “dirty work” that involved brute strength. The overarching idea was that women were not physically strong enough for such work:

Heavy manual work calls for strength, endurance, a degree of insensitivity and toughness, and group solidarity. Emphasizing the masculinity of industrial labour has been both a means of survival, in exploitative class relations, and a means of asserting superiority over women (Connell, 1995, p. 55).

Ness (2012) reminds us that the identity of tradesmen is wrapped up in masculinity and that *real work* or *men’s work* is often dirty, dangerous, and physically demanding.

Eccles (1994) suggests that women avoid male-dominated industries to avoid discrimination and harassment and tend to avoid time-consuming occupations. Eccles (1994, p. 586) explains that too often our standards of success and achievement are male dominated, leaving researchers to ask the question, “Why aren’t women more like men?” This also leads us to ask, “Why aren’t women selecting the same occupational fields as men?” Eccles (1994) also explains how both men and women make choices to pursue careers based on achievement-

related behaviours even if the outcomes are heavily influenced by societal norms and social pressures. Eccles (1994) goes on to explain that occupational choices made by women are not made in isolation and that women tend to consider their future choices of marrying, and having children, when choosing a career path. She notes that because of the socialization of women into a dual role (outside employment and unpaid domestic labour) women tend to choose female dominated occupations. Thus, we might assume this socialization would deter women from pursuing careers in trades work.

Research Questions and Approach

The objective of this research is to increase our understanding of women's experience in trades and provide insight into the factors, environments, beliefs, and relationships that influence women, and their choices. The main research questions are: Why do women choose to go into the trades? What are women experiencing on site? Secondary to those questions, and not my official research questions, was a curiosity that created other questions. Why are there still so few women in the trades? Why are women not choosing this type of work as a viable option, particularly when there are organizations and government funded initiatives from coast to coast that are trying to encourage women to go into these occupations? While sexism and structural discrimination appear to be key factors to explain why women may not go into the trades, women's agency is an underexplored issue. If men and women make the same career choice, will their careers paths be the same, or will their individual choices have very different outcomes?

To investigate these questions, I interviewed ten women working in various trade industries. I then analyzed the interviews through a feminist existential lens using narrative analysis (Wallace , 2009a). The use of a feminist existential lens combined with narrative

analysis (Wallace, 2009b) provides an examination of the individual experiences of women working in an industry characterized by hegemonic masculinity.

For the purpose of this research, I am defining Women in Trades as those who work in what is typically referred to as construction and skilled trades (MacIsaac & Domene, 2014). Trades that fall under this umbrella include construction, welding, steam fitting, pipe fitting, sheet metal work, boiler making, electrical: typical male, blue collar work. The occupations that are also considered trades that were excluded from this research are hairdressing and culinary arts. Those occupations are not considered building or construction trades and, as previously mentioned, tend to have a much higher percentage of women than men as opposed to typical blue-collar trades (Government of Canada, 2015). Tradespeople are typically labeled by the years of training they have completed. People in trades referred to as ‘first years’ are in the first year of training and education, moving up one level (year) after attaining their required hours of schooling and hands-on experience to eventually become a Journeyman [*sic*] and finally ‘Red Seal certified’ if they pursue that level (Thompson Rivers University, 2019). The participants in this study have all worked within their fields for a number of years (ranging from five to thirteen years), some of whom have already completed their journeyman certification, and in some instances are dual-ticketed (have completed their journeyman ticket in more than one trade).

Global research on the topic of women in trades, Canadian legislation, and Canadian initiatives generally strives to solve the problem of women being underrepresented in the trades without understanding the unique starting point and position from which women make decisions. It is this idea of choice and consequence that is the foundation of this research and the reason for using a feminist existential lens. Existential philosophy is focused on the individual’s choices, resulting experiences and subsequent reflection. Feminist Existentialism starts from the unique

standpoint that women are the absolute *Other* (De Beauvoir, 1989), that which is not male, therefore recognizing the world is not a place of equality and that women will start from a disadvantaged place. De Beauvoir recognized that the male was configured as the natural, the normal, the universal *Subject*. According to de Beauvoir, women do not have the same freedom of choice that men do, simply because they are not in a position from which to make choices the same ways in which men are because of their status as women – the *Other*. In *The Second Sex* de Beauvoir (1989) reminds us that although women are individuals, they are not considered equal to men, and in fact, they are regarded as ‘the *Other*’. She recognized that despite having legal rights to be equals, women are also disadvantaged economically because men “hold better jobs, get higher wages, and have more opportunity for success” and men hold the power positions in both industry and politics (p. xxxii). De Beauvoir (1976, 1989) highlights the economic and social forces at play that impact women differently than men in our society.

Narrative analysis is based on the assumption that human experience has an important narrative element (Kleres, 2010). Through narrative analysis we are able to understand “which aspects of experience matter to the narrator and how they matter” (Kleres, 2010, p. 184). This form of analysis complements existential theory as they both rely upon, and give weight to, the role of the individual or narrator. The narrative being sought in this case relates to the experiences of women working within the traditionally male-dominated, blue-collar trades of building and construction, the choices they have made to bring them to this point in their careers, and the choices that keep them in their careers. Narrative analysis is often viewed as useful when studying careers (Cohen, 2006; Kryiakidou, 2012). Some theorists have suggested that people come to know who they are in the telling of their own stories (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Kryiakidou (2012, p. 849) also suggests that “narratives have less to do with

the significance of specific institutions and events than with the ability of certain stories to make sense out of the individual lives”. It is through the analysis of these stories that one may begin to understand the extremely low rates of women entering and remaining in the trades despite the efforts made to attract and retain them.

Structure of the Study

This dissertation is structured as follows: Chapter two is a literature review of women in trades that develops our understanding of what we currently know about females’ experiences working in trades occupations. It includes a historical look at some of the women who first began to pave the way for women to enter trades, barriers to entry women still experience, and a closer examination of the literature that has offered suggestions on how to recruit and retain women in trades. Chapter three discusses the theoretical lens used within this dissertation, namely feminist existentialism and what we gain using these ideas when examining women’s experiences in trades work. Chapter four examines the methodology used for this project. The choices of narrative analysis and working with a feminist existential lens, and how these will be employed in the analysis of the stories collected, is also explained. Chapter five discusses the findings of this research as they relate to the existential themes of objectification, oppression, freedom, and bad faith. Finally, Chapter six discusses my concluding thoughts, contributions to the literature, potential suggestions for industry, the limitations of this study, and implications for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Recognizing that the overarching goal of this research is to understand the experiences of women in trades, I will look specifically at why women may choose a career in trades, why other women may choose to avoid the industry, and why women may not choose to take advantage of the many government initiatives in place to draw them to this career choice. In this chapter, I will examine the existing literature on what the industry looks like, in its current form, for women and more importantly, why women may not be interested in pursuing a career in trades. In my literature review I will provide a brief look at women's history with work, and more importantly with work that has been deemed as 'men's work', followed by a review of the women in trades literature.

I will show that despite many government and industry initiatives, women are still avoiding trades work. To understand why women may avoid the industry, I look at the barriers to entry women face including the gender role socialization process. Recognizing that women make up a very small percentage of trades workers, I will then turn to Kanter's theory of tokenism which may offer an understanding of the behaviours we see from, and towards, women in trades. In order to understand what makes the trades so unique in its lack of women, I will turn to the literature around gender and masculinities at work followed by a discussion of tokenism as a way to explain how other industries have changed and trades have not. In short, the participation of women in trades remains an unexamined area that requires further study (Ericksen & Schultheiss, 2009).

Women and Work – A Brief History

Recognizing that women have always worked in some capacity, for example, family-based agricultural work and domestic labour in and around the home (Frances, Kealey, & Sangster, 1996), the focus of this section of the thesis is on women in formal paid employment. Women have been involved in paid labour from the industrial revolution onward (Anderson & Zinsser, 1998). The number of women in the Canadian workforce has continued to increase since the 1880s (Frances et al., 1996) but mainly in traditional “female” work, such as nursing, teaching, domestic and caregiving work. This occupational segregation has been founded on the idea of a nuclear family where the male is the breadwinner, and the female (and children) are the dependents. This idea also supposes that the work that women traditionally do is in the privacy in their own homes and that work is unpaid. These ideas have also created a wage inequality whereby women’s work is deemed less valuable than men’s and therefore women are paid less (Frances et al., 1996).

During times of war women were often seconded to work in non-traditional roles in areas such as the manual trades (Buch & Gossage, 1997; Higonnet, Jenson & Weitz, 1987; Waller & Vaughan-Rees, 1989). When war ended these women were told that it was their patriotic duty to return to the home (Rowbotham, 1999). This meant leaving the workforce in order to open up paid employment opportunities for men who had actively participated in the war (Shewring, 2009). In Canada, during World War I, thousands of women worked in weapons factories and in industries, such as farming, to keep these industries functional while their male counterparts went to battle. During that time Canadian women were also employed in civil service positions, hospitals, and factories (Scullen, 2008). Although women were allowed to learn and practice the related skills when men were unavailable, they were then viewed as a threat when those men

returned and needed their jobs back. Women were simply expected to relinquish their positions (M. Martin, 1997). Industrial jobs were no longer an option for women until World War II (WWII) was underway. During the second world war, most military personnel were men, and openings were once again created for women to take up industrial work.

Out of a total Canadian population of 11 million people, only about 600,000 women held permanent jobs when WWII started. During the war, their numbers doubled to 1,200,000. At the peak of war-time employment (1943-1944), 439,000 women worked in the service sector, 373,000 in manufacturing, and 4,000 in construction (Government of Canada, 2017). The war offered women an opportunity to break into positions that would have previously been off limits to them (Baker Wise & Wise, 1994). As the number of men available to contribute to the Canadian workforce dwindled, it afforded women an opportunity that was previously unheard of. This opportunity included access to and advancement within the trades. For many women, these jobs provided an opportunity to earn income and to fulfill their patriotic duty while simultaneously introducing them to a newfound camaraderie with each other and their male co-workers; something they had not previously experienced in their domestic unpaid roles as housewives (Baker Wise & Wise, 1994). During the Second World War, Canadian women worked in what are often still considered non-traditional fields, such as automotive mechanics, welding, etc. and “most women enjoyed their work experiences because of the companionship with other working women, the good salaries and the chance to demonstrate their independence” (Scullen, 2008 p. 8). Unfortunately, many of these opportunities were then taken away again when the war ended and men returned having completed their service (Scullen, 2008).

Despite the reality that these choices and freedoms would be short-lived, the opportunity to work outside the home allowed women to contribute, innovate, and advance themselves in

meaningful ways that historically had not been possible. However, the opportunities that had become available to women were wholly contingent upon the country's involvement in the war, and the possible benefits experienced by women were a by-product of the war effort. The end of the war and the return of the men saw women leaving the workforce to return home and, in many cases, raise families due to the decrease in employment opportunities (Pierson, 1983). Given the reality that women's involvement in the workforce was to fill a void, it was never thought to be a permanent situation and it stood to reason that women would shift, or be shifted back, to the home. Pierson (1983, p. 25) reminds us that women were simply seen as a "convenient source of labour for both the private industry and public service" which shows us that women were simply used when needed by both the government and private sector organizations. Nonetheless, women had been exposed to new ways of participating in society and new ways of contributing. They experienced independence, autonomy, and financial freedom in a way that many women had not previously been afforded.

After World War II there was an increase in the number of women working in paid employment, but in sectors such as service and finance, because those jobs were now seen as "appropriate" for women and there was pressure for women to contribute to their family's income in order for the family to meet its financial commitments (Frances et al., 1996). In the mid-1950s two-thirds of women in paid employment roles in Canada were working in the service industry and those who found work in professional roles were typically working as teachers, nurses, and elsewhere in the public sector (Frances et al., 1996). That is not to say that women did not work in factory settings pre and post war, but they were typically limited to less physically demanding, and (viewed as) less skilled positions such as those in clothing

manufacturing and food processing plants. The more physically demanding factory work, such as in the automotive industry, was off limits to women (Frances et al., 1996).

Canadian women began to make demands to all levels of government during the 1960s as part of the second-wave feminist movement (England & Gad, 2002). This was brought on, in part, by the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) as well as a rediscovery of Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) (Rutherford, 2016). Friedan's writing brought to light the unhappiness many women were encountering feeling less than satisfied with their domestic role of mother, caretaker and wife. The idea of the privilege afforded to males was resonating with Canadian women (Rutherford, 2016). There was also a social shift happening in second wave feminism that would begin to address some of the systemic discrimination that women had previously faced in the workforce (Scullen, 2008).

Moving Towards Employment Equity

According to a report published by Human Resources Development Canada there are two distinct forms of discrimination: one being systemic and the other being intentional. Intentional discrimination is the view that women are limited by their physiology and are unable to do certain jobs or that because she is a woman, she would not fit in with a team of men due to the differences of personality and behaviours. Systemic discrimination, on the other hand, comes from a socialization process that tells us what women and men should be doing for work. This latter type of discrimination can be much more difficult to combat (Scullen, 2008). Employment policies are intended to remove intentional discrimination by removing previous barriers faced by women by providing them an equal opportunity for employment (England & Gad, 2002).

Moving to the 1970s, new opportunities would arise for women, at least on paper, in the way of affirmative action plans, such as those introduced in the United States in 1978, that were put in place to recruit women into the construction industry (M. Martin, 1997). At the same time, in Canada, the Canadian Human Rights Act was implemented in an attempt to forbid discriminatory policies that, in theory, would open new industries for women. An affirmative action strategy was implemented during the late 1970s in an attempt to reduce discriminatory hiring practices. This move by government indicated that there was a need to assist women in breaking through barriers in order for them to work in male-dominated occupations (Watt-Malcolm & Young, 2003).

Further to these efforts, the Abella Report was released in 1984 documenting the discrimination that was happening at work for many Canadians. The Abella Report would later become the foundation of the Employment Equity Act in Canada. The mandate for Judge (now Justice) Abella was to “inquire into the most efficient, effective and equitable means of promoting employment opportunities, eliminating systemic discrimination and assisting all individuals to compete for employment opportunities on an equal basis” (Abella, 1984, p. ii). In her report, Abella stated that if we are to have equity in employment, we must remove barriers and discriminatory practices and, in turn, create inclusive and fair practices that can accommodate different groups. The designated groups identified in her report included women, Indigenous people, those with disabilities, and visible minorities. Abella argued that employment equality cannot happen through forcing those from designated groups to assimilate into the current structure and culture of a workplace, but that the current structures and cultures need to change in order to remove the bias that favours able-bodied white males (Abella, 1984).

Abella stated that she did not want to work to an American “melting pot” model in which all people are treated the same. Instead, she argued, we should be mindful of our differences.

Also, in 1984 the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal made a landmark decision when it imposed an employment equity programme on an individual employer, five years after a complaint was filed by a women’s group known as Action Travail des Femmes. This complaint was centered around the apparent intentional discriminatory hiring practices by the Canadian National Railways (CNR). The Tribunal found that “the company had systematically prevented and discouraged women from working in blue-collar jobs” (Hulme, 2006, p. 146) by forcing female applicants to endure harassment on the job, earn irrelevant certifications, and take unrequired tests. The Human Rights Tribunal “concluded that the small number of women in non-traditional trades tended to perpetuate the exclusion and, in effect, to cause additional discrimination” (Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, *Action Travail des Femmes v. Canadian National* as cited in Hulme, 2006, p. 146). This case clearly indicates that there was both systemic and intentional discrimination at play that actively prevented women from being successful in male-dominated industries. Also, during the 1980s the National Training Act was, in part, supposed to increase the number of women in non-traditional jobs with a goal to fill those training seats with 20-30% women. However, the participation rate of women was only 2.2% (Witter, 1984 as cited in Watt-Malcom & Young, 2003).

There was an additional push in the 1990s to encourage women to explore careers in industrial occupations and for women to move away from traditional female roles such as administrative assistants, customer service representatives, etc. Unfortunately, this did not result in any significant change with few women making the transition (Hulme, 2006). Within Canada, other than during the world wars, we have not seen a large increase in the number of women

pursuing careers in trades, despite the implementation of government policies and initiatives (Watt-Malcolm & Young, 2003). It should be noted that even the Employment Equity Act did not create change for women in trades because the construction industry was exempted from having to comply. Although the authors do not indicate why the exemption was made, they note that private and public construction organizations were exempt and that is where the majority of trades people were employed (Watt-Malcolm & Young, 2003).

By the year 2002, the majority of Canadian women (about 70%) were still working in typical female occupations such as nursing, teaching, and service occupations (Cooke-Reynolds & Zukewich, 2004). Ericksen and Schultheiss (2009) noted that affirmative action laws, research, and advocacy have assisted women in making headway in the areas of management and other professional occupations which used to be male-dominated. The same cannot be said for trades and construction. For example, according to the Federation of Medical Women in Canada (2018), it took women over a century to achieve gender parity in medical school in Canada. In 2017, 56.8% of medical school graduates in Canada were women (Federation of Medical Women of Canada, 2018). Women have also made strides in other areas such as law. According to Catalyst (2018) women are now either the majority, or close to it, when looking at newly practicing lawyers (those with 0-5 years of experience) in many provinces within Canada such as British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Ontario. Women are, therefore, no longer tokens in occupations such as medicine and law.

Beginning to Understand the Experience

In 1998 Susan Eisenberg, who began her work in trades in 1978 as an electrical apprentice, published *We'll Call You If We Need You – Experiences of Women Working in*

Construction. One of her hopes in publishing this work was that it would “contribute to a conversation about what would be required to make a historically male industry truly as hospitable to women as it is to men” (p. 5). Through this work, she interviewed 30 women from 10 of the 50 states in the US beginning in 1991. Her participants were electricians, plumbers, carpenters, ironworkers, and painters; many of whom were among the first in their respective unions. She gathered their oral histories between 1991 and 1994, documented their experiences, and sought to bring to light what women had faced upon entering construction trades (Eisenberg, 1998b).

Eisenberg believed that the women who had entered the trades would create inroads for more women to join the field and that gatekeepers would “see the absence of women in the skilled trades as illogical, archaic, silly – an inequity to correct” (1998a, p. 23). She went on to note that despite the efforts of skilled tradeswomen, and organizations that supported women joining and remaining within the industry, the culture and industry make-up has remained male-dominated and full of double binds such that “a tradeswoman’s performance could become cause for other women’s exclusion, but not for their inclusion” (Eisenberg, 1998a, p. 24). Essentially this means that if a woman does not perform well, her performance may be used as an excuse to not hire other women, and at the same time if she does well, it does not encourage the additional hiring of women.

Reflecting on her own career, and on the research conducted for her book, Eisenberg explained that she was not aware of any legitimate reason why there were not more women in the trades. She knew the reason was not a lack of ability by women and noted that women who had built successful careers in the industry wanted other women to have the same opportunities to become successful in trades. She noted that women are deserving of the opportunity to work

in an environment that is respectful and comfortable to work in; essentially saying that the industry should be providing a workplace that works for both men and women. She called for an increase in union support for tradeswomen and suggested that there needs to be increased pressure from industry insiders, community development groups, and women's groups, for the inclusion of more women in the trades (Eisenberg, 1998b).

Eisenberg discussed how she had hoped government initiatives would create significant changes within the construction trades to a point where we may find women making up a quarter of that workforce during the start of the millennium. We know that is not what has happened, as shown by the continuing low number of women entering trades in Canada. Certainly, much has changed in the twenty years since Eisenberg's work has been published; unfortunately, as I will demonstrate, the industry has not changed in its acceptance of women, nor have the number of women in trades increased so as to make up a quarter of the construction workforce. Susan Eisenberg's work leaves us with more questions than answers; despite access, despite policies, and despite many other initiatives women continue to be grossly underrepresented in the trades.

Barriers To Entry

Much research has been done to identify barriers to entry that women face when pursuing careers in the construction industry. Many of these barriers are created by the very nature of the work itself and the overall culture of the industry, while others are a product of socialization processes that include gender stereotypes. During their literature review Menches and Abraham found that some of the top barriers for women in trades were slow career progression, issues of balancing their career and family pressures, having to switch jobs frequently, and attitudes of male dominance resulting from an "overtly masculine culture that consists of conflict and

aggression” (2007, p. 703). One of the biggest issues identified by Agapiou (2002), is the overall image of the industry. The overarching industry image indicates that in order to be successful one must have a particular level of physical strength, have the ability to work well in drastic weather conditions, and have the ability to handle the overall male dominated workplace and be able to tolerate the inevitable ‘bad language’ used in industry (Agapiou, 2002). Another barrier is the outdated idea that women are simply not strong enough to perform their work despite female trades workers finding ways to use tools in order to create leverage that allows them to perform heavy lifting (Scullen, 2008). Byrd (1999) found that some of the contractors she interviewed insisted women are not physically or mentally strong enough to do the work. Those interviewed all implied that women are simply unsuited for heavy manual labour and outdoor work nor were they (women) suited to the language and overall culture of construction work (Byrd, 1999).

In her research, Martin (1997) identified that women in trades face irregular hours which causes issues when attempting to negotiate childcare arrangements. Worrall, Harris, Stewart, Thomas, and McDermott (2010) discussed the issues around the lack of flexibility in construction work and noted that those who need flexibility tend to be women due to their family commitments. In an industry that demands long hours women are often penalized for making the choice to try to work part-time in order to retain some type of work/family balance. This creates a situation in which organizations lose experienced and skilled women workers (Worrall et al., 2010).

Other issues that deter women from entering trades are recruitment practices and internal labour markets that favour males, a lack of information about possible careers in the trades (Eriksen & Palladino Schultheiss, 2009; Hulme, 2006), and a lack of social support. Fielden,

Davidson, Gale, and Davey (2001) noted that age was also seen as a deterrent due to age limitations around training opportunities. As an example, the authors noted that certain government initiatives limited training to those under the age of 25. This impacts women more so than men as women tend to enter trades when they are older (Fielden et al., 2001). Simon and Clarke (2016) explored the barriers women face in beginning an apprenticeship and found that young women often receive advice (at school), about education and career options that reinforce stereotypical gender roles. Respondents in their study also noted that home and parental influences dissuaded them from doing what was considered men's work. Those who did enroll in apprenticeship programs tended to have a close family member in the trade (Simon & Clarke, 2016).

In a report published by Quay Connection (2014), it was found that although the selection criteria for hiring either men or women for a position in trades was for the most part the same, only 7% of respondents said there were no different considerations when it came down to hiring, meaning that there is an apparent bias when it comes down to the actual hiring of a candidate. The report did not specify what criteria employers were using to create a candidate pool. In the same report (Quay Connection, 2014) it noted that recruiters have to make a case to employers to take on a female apprentice, even within organizations that state they are committed to having a more gender balanced workforce. So even though the same criteria might be used to find potential candidates, women still face an unfair advantage when it comes to choosing a candidate to offer the position to. This, in turn, means that 93% of those conducting the recruitment and hiring of tradespeople would not view candidates equally and would still view men as ideal candidates for trades employment. One-third of those interviewed said they often question whether or not a woman could actually do the job - meaning would she be physically strong

enough to do the job (Quay Connection, 2014). Even in organizations that are working to create a gender balance in the workplace, they have to be encouraged, often by recruiters, to hire a female apprentice (Quay Connection, 2014).

Masculinity and Gender in the Trades

Wheaton (2008) found that no one single factor explains the lack of women in trades and technology. Wheaton (2008) did identify gender role stereotyping as the most significant factor that influences women's decisions to enter non-traditional work in a study that conducted focus groups of women in technology. Non-traditional work for women is typically associated with an industry or occupation that is male dominated. According to Catalyst (2020), for an industry to be considered male dominated it will have less than 25% women employees. Such an environment creates challenges for women because of the constant reinforcement of masculine stereotypes (Catalyst, 2020). Gender roles are internalized long before we begin our careers, so we grow up knowing what is considered 'men's work' and what is considered 'women's work'. Traditionally pink collar work has been dominated by women while blue collar work has been dominated by men (Grain, 1994). It is through this socialization that we understand what may be typical career choices for females or males and the economic consequences that go hand in hand with doing men's work or women's work, because the career choices often considered to be directed toward men are higher paying (Moir, Thomson, & Kelleher, 2011). Gender role socialization, stereotyping, discrimination, and sexual harassment are also said to be limiting factors that deter women from pursuing work in trades (Ericksen & Schultheiss, 2009). It has been noted that often the challenges women face in entering male dominated fields stem from the overarching gender roles that are prevalent in society (P. Martin & Barnard, 2013). Yet, as I

have shown, there have been inroads made in other previously male dominated industries such as business, education, and the medical field.

Several authors have studied gender roles, masculinities, and sexuality in trades occupations (Agapiou, 2002; Denissen, 2010a; Denissen, 2010b; Ness, 2012; Smith, 2013a; Smith, 2013b; Wright, 2013; Denissen & Saguy, 2014). Denissen (2010b, p. 1055) examined men and women in male-dominated trades and found that “gender is a constitutive part of doing work for both men and women” and that tradesmen [*sic*] often use gender differences to keep women at a distance. Men will tell their female coworkers to ‘do it like a man’, or not wear make-up. Or they will force them to take on physically demanding chores just to push the women to see if they can handle the tasks (Denissen, 2010b). The opposite side is shown when men treat women more gently as a way of doing/performing gender thus not giving women the opportunity to just be seen as an employee. When women do not ‘sit like women’ (i.e. sitting with their legs uncrossed like men typically do) they are accused of being unfeminine, and there are times when men will not let women do the job because they are afraid they may get hurt or that they cannot handle the physical tasks that are a part of the job (Denissen, 2010b). Subsequently, these behaviours also lead women into a double bind that suggests that being feminine and being effective at your job are mutually exclusive (Denissen & Saguy, 2014).

Gherardi and Poggio (2001) describe a double bind as the ways in which women are required to assume male behaviours at work while simultaneously holding on to their female characteristics. Due to the focus on the physical body while performing manual work there is a culture that links masculinity to the nature of the work. This creates a space where actions and language in the workplace often degrade the female body along with the homosexual or racialized body (Smith, 2013b). This demonstrates how the ideal worker for trades is still a

white, able-bodied, heterosexual male. In her research, Smith (2013b) found that almost all of the female trades people she interviewed divulged having been sexually harassed at work. This harassment came in the form of threats or actual physical touch. Women in Smith's (2013b) study described being subjected to pornography on site, and hearing continual sexist, racist, and homophobic jokes. Having to deal with an extremely masculine organizational culture can create a situation in which women do not feel as though they can confront the behaviours around them. Instead, some women will attempt to "hide" at work and remove themselves from the behaviour; however, this "hiding" also doesn't allow women to fully participate in the work being done and can impact their learning (Smith, 2013b). Some women who grow tired of dealing with the toxic culture will leave the male dominated environment to become self-employed, but this was typically done by older women who had already established themselves in industry (Smith, 2011). Other women have tried to hide their female bodies and femininity by altering their appearance in the form of gaining weight in order to make themselves less sexually attractive (Smith, 2013b).

It should be noted that the industry is not any more welcoming to openly gay males and in fact, female trades women view the industry as dangerous for openly gay males. Some men in the industry will use homophobic slurs in order to maintain the hetero masculine image and will often insult other men on site in order to establish a sense of dominance over other men (Denissen & Saguy, 2014). The ideas of gender and masculinity intertwine in trades in another way for lesbian women. Some research has shown that lesbian women are less of a threat to the masculinity in trades than straight women are. Subsequently some men will attempt to neutralize the perceived threat of women in trades by labelling them lesbians (Denissen & Saguy, 2014) thus lessening the perceived threat of women entering their domain. On the other hand, if

women present as more feminine, whether they are straight or lesbian, men will attempt to sexualize them in order to maintain some semblance of masculinity and control. Some tradeswomen have expressed the idea that being a lesbian allows them to be more accepted as one of the guys. Though all women are still viewed as a threat, lesbians seem to be less of a threat than heterosexual women (Denissen & Saguy, 2014). Even though lesbians may be accepted slightly more so than straight women it should also be noted that this comes with a cost. While being a lesbian may create a sense of community or partnership with their male counterparts, it seems to be conditional. Regardless of the sexual orientation, they will not be fully accepted because they are still female. Some men will make tradeswomen work physically harder or perform dangerous work in order to try to prove “they can work like a guy” (Denissen & Saguy, 2014, p. 390). Through this literature we can see that in order to easily “fit in” to the industry, it is advantageous to be a white heterosexual male.

Tokenism

Eisenberg (1998a, p. 33) had several suggestions on ways in which to initiate change in the industry. She noted that “because gender is so entrenched as a defining criterion in the construction industry workforce, the elimination of barriers for women requires vigilant external pressure”. She suggested that hiring goals be implemented, that regulations need to be federally enforced, and that reaching a critical mass of at least 15% women in trades needs to be achieved as soon as possible so that what she refers to as the “pioneering phase” ends. If that target had been achieved, we would no longer refer to the construction trades as being a non-traditional field for women, and the numbers would reflect the change.

It is helpful to interpret the vastly disproportional representation of female to male workers in the trades through Rosabeth Moss Kanter's theory of tokenism. Kanter (1977a) defines tokenism as a phenomena where a work environment has a ratio of 85:15 (dominants to tokens). Recognizing that women in trades are still at token status it is also important to discuss what it means to be a token within an organization. Tokens, for obvious reasons, get noticed. Their presence is obvious and there is a tendency for their differences to be exaggerated by the dominants. Dominants also have a tendency to create boundaries between themselves and the tokens in an attempt to keep tokens on the outside thereby preserving the dominants cohesiveness as a group (Kanter, 1977a). Because of their obvious visibility tokens are under pressure to perform at a higher level and are often more highly scrutinized than members of the dominant group (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009). Tokens have a tendency to overachieve in an attempt to prove that they belong while others may look for a way to blend in with the dominants and try to go unnoticed (Kanter, 1977a). Kanter (1977a) also suggests that there is a much higher turnover rate within the token group as they are scrutinized for any failures on the job.

Kanter (1977b) argues that the disproportionate number of dominants to tokens generates a space in which perceptions of the tokens by dominants, in this case male perceptions of female tradeswomen, creates particular pressures on tokens. Tokenism can be understood through perceptual ideas of "visibility, polarization, and assimilation, and their corresponding responses, performance pressures, group boundary heightening and isolation of the token" (Whittock, 2002, p. 451). Typically, the successes and failures of professional women are accepted as the result of one individual. One can argue that this is due to women reaching what Kanter (1977a) describes as critical mass in those sectors; meaning women have reached well beyond 15% token status. Today when we see female executives, doctors, lawyers, professors, and other white-collar

professionals, we do not view them as being unable to do the job (for the most part), and yet people still question whether women can perform in trades occupations. However, in trades, because women are still tokens due to their small numbers, and are highly visible, they are under intense pressure to perform (Kanter, 1977a). Tokens in organizations end up as symbols of a category as opposed to being viewed as individuals (Riordan, Schafer, & Stewart, 2005). Interestingly this is more of an issue for women than men. Other research has indicated that when men work as tokens in female dominated industries it can often work to their advantage and their token status can be a benefit due to the presumption of men's authority and leadership ability (Simpson, 2004).

In terms of critical mass, according to Kanter, there are four types of groups: uniform, skewed, tilted, and balanced (Kanter 1977a). Kanter (1977a) defines a uniform group as a group containing only one type of person that represents only one category of social type or a numerical proportion of 100 to 0. A skewed group will consist of dominants and tokens with a ratio of 85:15 accordingly. This type of group can have only one token (solo) but Kanter suggests that even with two tokens there is little chance of tokens forming any type of alliance in order to gain any type of power within the group. The next type of group is referred to as a tilted group with a ratio of 65:35 and the language used to describe members of this group changes to the majority and the minority accordingly. Once tokens have enough numbers to create a minority within a group, they then have the potential to become allies and to create a coalition. Doing so can then begin to change the culture of the entire group. It is at this level that Kanter (1977a) suggests that the members of the minority group will start to be seen as individuals, although still seen as members of the minority group. Finally, when the group's makeup shifts to a 60:40 ratio, it is what Kanter refers to as a balanced group. It is in the balanced group setting

that organizational members will see the overall culture and member interaction reflected by that balance. Although Kanter (1977a) does suggest that change can begin when tokens make up over 15% of the group moving them (previous tokens) to minority status, the closer we get to gender balance, or even a minority/majority group, the better the workplace is for those previously viewed as tokens. Kanter (1977a, p. 210) also suggests that one of the issues around tokenism is that when a group is predominantly male (dominants) and females are the token group, it can “set in motion self-perpetuating cycles that serve to reinforce the low numbers of women, and in the absence of external intervention, to keep women in the position of token”.

Why Women Choose Trades

Women looking to pursue a career outside of what would be deemed women’s work must have a strong rationale for doing so (Holder, 1996). According to Holder (1996), a woman who chooses to pursue work in a male-dominated field must be somewhat of a risk-taker who pushes boundaries. One of the top reasons identified as a reason for women to pursue trades is the financial incentive that allows women the opportunity to earn a substantial income (Walshok, 1981; Stringer and Duncan, 1985; Schroedel, 1990; Padavic, 1991, 1992; Erikson and Palladino Shultheiss, 2009). Occupational segregation is the number one factor that accounts for the number of women living in poverty and why many single mothers are considered to be working poor (Ericksen & Palladine Schultheiss, 2009). Recognizing that many working women live in poverty, particularly single mothers, (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2018) it would make sense that a career in trades would be appealing as a way for women to lift both themselves and their children out of poverty. Greene and Stitt-Gohdes (1997) note that women working in traditionally male-dominated fields have the ability to earn two to three times what women

working in traditional female roles do. Schroedel (1990) also indicates that in addition to financial incentives, one of the primary attractions for women to pursue careers in non-traditional workplaces is the opportunity to engage in work they enjoy that often allows them to work outdoors.

Despite the barriers discussed previously, there are women who make a conscious choice to enter trades likely knowing the barriers they will face as well as the physical demands of the job (Menches & Abraham, 2007). Although being a minority at work is a challenge, many women who choose trades say they are comfortable working around men despite often being unwelcomed when they first arrive (Quay Connection, 2014). Dabke, Salem, Genaidy, and Daraiseh (2008) found that women who were working in construction felt pride in their work and enjoyed the nature of their jobs and seeing the final projects constructed. The women in their study expressed their desire to make a change for the next generation of women coming behind them despite encountering some coworkers and supervisors that were less than welcoming.

Discussion

While there is a body of literature that has focused on women working in male-dominated fields, those studies have typically focused on female engineers and women working in science and mathematics. Much of the research done on women in construction has focused on construction management positions and other professions, such as architecture or engineering, rather than on women working in manual positions. While that literature may offer insight into women working in male-dominated fields, there is an important distinction between professional male-dominated fields and construction trades. It has been said that construction trades are the last of the masculine workplaces (Ness, 2012) into which women seem unable to make inroads.

While a career in trades may have much to offer women, at least on paper, it's still very much a "man's world" and many people may not be aware of the overt discrimination that still exists in the industry (Scullen, 2008).

Reviewing the literature, we can see that previous policies and initiatives for getting women into the trades have not been successful. Except for women's roles in war-time trades work our history has shown us a multitude of iterations of the same idea that women are objects to be used to bridge a gap or hold a place, and that women largely are not seen as potential workers unless white, able-bodied men are unavailable. Currently, women are still seen as a stop-gap fix who can be used when needed such as now that the industry is facing a looming shortage of skilled workers. Trades work is still viewed as inherently masculine where men are seen as the ideal worker. Maintaining this ideal creates a workplace that is littered with barriers to women, who often face outright harassment, making it a wonder why they would ever pursue these types of careers.

The idea behind government initiatives appears to be an attempt to create a space for women – a space that had previously been created by war – to do work that was typically seen as men's work. This positioning creates only the illusion of choice for women, where their access to the industry extends only to the point men are willing to offer. Again, women do not possess a position wherein they are free to choose an industry to the same degree that their male counterparts may. It is assumed that men own the roles and it is only through government interference that women will gain entry to the areas that had previously been off limits. We will see through this research project that the illusion of choice has repercussions for women that are much different than for men. While the research on gender and masculinity in the trades gives us an understanding of how the trades remain elusive to women and how men maintain their

stronghold over the industry it does not yet offer an answer as to why this hasn't changed over the years like many other professions.

Kanter's theory of tokenism helps to predict the behaviours of men and women at work when one is the token and the other the dominant; it doesn't contain an explanation as to why this happens. Kanter's work on tokenism also helps to explain ways in which tokens attempt to reduce their visibility "from keeping a low profile to attempts to become assimilated in the world of men" (Lewis & Simpson, 2012, p. 147). Kanter's (1977a) theory of tokenism further highlights the importance of giving voice to individual women's lived experiences, understanding that simply by virtue of their underrepresentation in the industry their experiences are necessarily different from their male counterparts. Eisenberg (1998) noted that the pioneering phase for women in trades had already been going on for twenty years, and yet I am writing this dissertation twenty years after she published her book and women, by the numbers, are still in the same phase. That means that in 40 years, there's been no significant increase in the number of women in trades. Why? In the time since her work was published there have been countless initiatives, laws, and policies created in an attempt to draw women to the trades, and despite the policy and twenty additional years we have yet to see the end of the "pioneering phase" where women make up more than 15% of the construction trades. It would make sense that all the government and industry type initiatives could be viewed as what Kanter referred to as external intervention but through this literature review, I have shown that these types of interventions have not created changes. The only times when we've seen more women in trades is during times of war when the government has little choice but to use women to fill a gap left by men who are temporarily unavailable.

Conclusion

Throughout my literature review, I did not find any studies that started from the existential standpoint of choice or any studies that started from an existential philosophical point of reference. One could argue that choice, and consequences of choice, needs to be addressed. Specifically, if women make the same choice as men, will they be subject to the same outcomes? It is this idea of choice and consequence that is the foundation to this research. While other theories may include choice to a degree, Feminist Existentialism starts from a place where women are the *Other* (De Beauvoir, 1989), that which is not male, therefore recognizing the world is not a place of equality and that women start from a socially disadvantaged place. This theoretical lens will be explored further in Chapter three, where I argue that in order to move beyond this space, we can turn to feminist existentialism as an alternative to better understand women's experiences in trades.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Lens

When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in an eternity before and after, the little space I fill engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces whereof I know nothing, and which know nothing of me, I am terrified. The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me. (Blaise Pascal, Pensees)

Introduction

There has been a renewed interest in applying an existential philosophy in recent years that allows for a new space from which to study issues in contemporary organizations and today's management thought (Agarwal & Malloy, 2000; Tyler, 2005; Lawler, 2005; Ashman & Winstanley, 2006; Yue & Mills, 2008; Wallace, 2009a; Blomme & Bornebroek- Te Lintelo, 2012; Lawler & Ashman, 2012; MacMillan, Yue, & Mills, 2012; Kleist, 2013). In this chapter I will first discuss Existential philosophy and then the feminist existential framework I am using, specifically the philosophy developed by Simone de Beauvoir focusing on specific themes – Choice, Objectification, Oppression, Existential Freedom and Bad Faith. These ideas will be discussed and developed from the viewpoint of women as the Other, which was an integral component of de Beauvoir's philosophy and understanding of the world. According to Guignon and Pereboom (2001) some of the ideas that are central to existentialism are human existence, being-in-the-world, freedom, and authenticity. These ideas will be explored in order to provide a basic understanding of existentialism before moving specifically into de Beauvoir's writings.

Existentialism

Existentialism, in the broadest sense, encompasses the philosophies and philosophers concerned with human nature and is perhaps best understood through some of its common themes including existence, freedom, anxiety and alienation. Existentialism is born out of the idea of homelessness and an overall sense of loneliness in the world. Referring to the quote from Pascal that introduces this chapter, he points to the idea that we do not step into an ordered universe where all 'things' have an inherent role and meaning but instead, we are one of many, on one planet among many, in one galaxy among many. In this quote Pascal describes the anxiety that comes from understanding ourselves to exist as a lone entity in a vast and immeasurable universe - a universe that does not have an overarching pre-given meaning through which we ought to understand ourselves and our existence. Existentialism determined that we are ultimately alone, isolated individuals, tasked with Being, making sense of the world and creating meaning for our existence. Existentialism was born from a long Western philosophical tradition that can be traced all the way back to Socrates; however, the term Existentialism as we know it today tends to be more closely associated with having roots in the nineteenth century philosophies developed by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (Flynn, 2006).

When considering the ideas of existence, freedom, anxiety, and alienation as general ideas of Existentialism, it is also important to remember that Existentialism is not one united set of thoughts or ideas developed by one philosopher (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Instead, Existentialism had several major figures: Jean-Paul Sartre, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Soren Kierkegaard, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Albert Camus (Flynn, 2006). Although these philosophers may have differed in their ideas and ways of thinking, they shared an overall concern for the ways in which humans lived their lives (Burrell

& Morgan, 1979). The philosophy of Existentialism focuses on our individual existence that is founded in our ability to make choices and to pursue our absolute freedom. Its focus on human existence is bound up in the idea that there is no predetermined purpose or meaning in our life and it is up to each of us to make rational decisions in an irrational world. Recognizing that there are various stands and ideas in Existential thought, my focus has been on what has been coined French Existentialism that was developed throughout the 1940s and 1950s in post-war Paris, France. The French Existentialism school of thought is linked to writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus (Baert, 2011)

Often referred to as the father of French existentialism (Macey, 2000), Sartre's perspective was grounded in the notion that an individual begins from the subjective position and the world is created by their own thoughts and choices. Speaking to the theme of existence, we find that Sartre's existentialism is founded on the principle that "existence precedes essence" (Sartre, 1943) meaning that we, as individuals, are active in the creation of our own world and do not simply watch the world around us, we engage with it (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The idea of existence preceding essence is the basic idea of human existence mentioned above and goes against the idea that people have a human soul that precedes their consciousness. Fundamentally speaking, we create our essence through our choices and subsequent experiences and reflections upon those experiences. From an existential standpoint, human beings simultaneously create and define themselves by making conscious choices and by way of their interactions with others (Wallace, 2009a). Existential philosophy is underpinned by the idea that we are nothing more than the choices we make and our humanness arises out of those choices. Our lives are not predetermined, there is no human nature, we are only created by the choices we make, and

continue to make throughout our lifetimes until such time as we cease to exist. Our essence, from a Sartrean perspective, is our own creation.

When speaking to freedom it can be said that freedom is closely related to the theme of existence in that not only do we exist as individuals, we are free as individuals. This absolute freedom creates an ability to choose freely in order to make our lives whatever it is that we desire regardless of the world we find ourselves thrown into. However, with this freedom also comes a sense of anxiety and a feeling of alienation (Crowell, 2020). This connection between freedom and a sense of anxiety and anguish is summed up by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (1943, p. 186) where he states “Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does”. The very idea that we, as individuals, are responsible for each of our own choices, and therefore our lives means that we are responsible for our outcomes. In existential terms, absolute freedom becomes overwhelming and creates a sense of anxiety. Realizing that our lives have no meaning beyond the meaning we give it through our choices and actions, creates a sense of loneliness, recognizing that we are trapped within our own absolute freedom.

It is important to note that the purpose of this research is not to debate and discuss differing views on Existentialism, but instead, the purpose is to show how the works of one particular philosopher can be applied to management phenomena in order to increase our understanding of said phenomena. In saying that, this research is based on a feminist existential framework focused around the work of the French existentialist, Simone de Beauvoir, and more specifically, her writings within *The Second Sex*.

Simone De Beauvoir

If Sartre is considered the father of French Existentialism (Macey, 2000), then Simone de Beauvoir must arguably be considered the mother. De Beauvoir was a part of the French Existential movement and she worked closely with Sartre, Camus, and Merleau-Ponty. She was also the life partner of Sartre and their relationship continued until his death in 1980. Although she herself never considered her works philosophical contributions, and referred only to herself as an ‘author’, her writings made contributions to several different fields including ethics, politics, existentialism, phenomenology, and feminist theory (Bergoffen & Burke, 2020). Arguably her most widely recognized text is *The Second Sex*. Upon its publication in 1949 it was considered controversial to the point that the Vatican put it on the index of prohibited books and yet this text continues to be a foundational text within the study of philosophy, women’s studies, and feminism (Mussett, 2021). Interestingly, de Beauvoir did not immediately align herself with the feminist movements of the time until she became a part of the group of Marxist Feminists that founded the journal *Questions feministes* in 1972. She still did not consider herself a philosopher, despite having published several novels, essays, etc., and referred to her works as simply being elaborations of Sartre’s work (Bergoffen & Burke, 2020). The existential themes chosen for this study, as previously mentioned, are: Choice, because it is the foundation of Existentialism; Objectification; Oppression; Existential Freedom; and Bad Faith, as these themes are prominent within French Existentialism and more importantly for this research, topics covered by de Beauvoir in her writings.

I did find it challenging to speak to de Beauvoir’s ideas without at least mentioning Sartre due to their strong connection, both personally and professionally, lasting until Sartre’s death in 1980. Their ongoing relationship throughout their lives and their achievements, both

individually and together, made them in to what Fullbrook and Fullbrook refer to as “two of the most internationally significant intellectual figures of the twentieth century” (1999, p. 45) Interestingly while de Beauvoir openly talked about being influenced by Sartre and their mutual philosophies, Sartre seldom did the same (Simons, 1986) According to Simons (1986) an important part of de Beauvoir’s work, and an area where her influence on Sartre can be seen, is that she was the first to discuss the idea of the Other. The idea of the Other would later be discussed in Sartre’s writings as well.

The Second Sex and Woman as the Other

When *The Second Sex* was published in English it was comprised of two volumes (Book One and Book Two) published as one text. In Book One, titled *Facts and Myths*, de Beauvoir focused her analysis around various perspectives such as biological data, psychoanalysis, historical materialism as well as other disciplines in order to show that none of these perspectives can fully explain why women have been positioned as the Other in society. For example, she states that although men and women are biologically different, and therefore have different experiences, it still doesn’t explain why those differences placed women in a subordinate position in relation to men. De Beauvoir also recognizes that because women are in a state of subjection “woman sees herself and makes her choices not in accordance with her true nature in itself, but as man defines her” (1989, p.138). She then sets up the discussion to analyze women through a set of myths that show us the various ways in which men view women and to reiterate that being a woman is a social construction that ends up creating double binds for women. De Beauvoir noted that it was important to understand those particular myths because those myths contribute to a woman’s situation, her being in the world, ultimately impacting her existential

freedom; her choices in the world. While Sartre would argue that one's situation does not impact our existential freedom, de Beauvoir argued that women are restricted in their pursuit of existential freedom due to their position as the Other.

In her discussion on Myths she tackles the idea of there being multiple myths of women: the mother, the virgin, the motherland, etc. and how this works to create the 'Eternal Feminine'; a notion of what it means to be feminine. De Beauvoir tells us that these myths create unrealistic ideals of what a woman should be. Her discussion of the Myths about women shows us how women are simultaneously desired and loathed creating a strange paradox (double bind) for women. Part III (Myths) of Book One opens with the line "history has shown us that men have always kept in their hands all concrete powers; since the earliest days of the patriarchy they have thought best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against her; and thus she has been definitely established as the Other" (De Beauvoir, 1989, p. 139). While de Beauvoir uses the term Other beginning in *Pyrrhus and Cineas* (1944), it isn't until *The Second Sex* where de Beauvoir begins to discuss the idea of women as the Other. She would later go on to use the Other to explain societal views on aging in *Coming of Age* (1970) (Bergoffen & Burke, 2020). Arguably, the most memorable line from *The Second Sex* is "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (de Beauvoir, 1989, p. 267) that opens Book II (Woman's Life Today). She then goes on to describe how women are shaped, not specifically by their own independent choices, but instead by society's influence. "No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature...Only the interventions of someone else can establish an individual as an "Other" (de Beauvoir, 1989, p. 267 emphasis in original). It is here that we can begin to understand how and why de Beauvoir's interpretations of existential

themes and ideas differs from those of her male counterparts as she openly discusses the situation of women.

While existentialists in general will argue that we are not born ‘anything’ and we only become what we are through choice, de Beauvoir recognized that women begin from a unique starting point. Women learn their role / place in society from men, and presumably other women who have essentially taken on their ‘feminine’ role as well, and that this had little to do with any differences based on biology, psychology, or intelligence. In fact de Beauvoir declares that “...the situation of woman is that she – a free and autonomous being like all human creatures – nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the state of the Other” (de Beauvoir, 1989, p.xli). Book II includes discussions of childhood, sexuality, motherhood, abortion, etc., and concludes with a discussion on the Independent Woman. Throughout her writings she worked towards dismantling the idea that women are born with a feminine essence. Simply put, she argues against the idea that being a woman, for example, means one, by default, has maternal instincts. De Beauvoir uses the ideas of these myths to show that they create traps or binds for women in that myths create unrealizable ideals for women and in doing so, minimize a woman’s freedom to choose freely.

In *The Second Sex* (1989) de Beauvoir discusses ‘scripts’ that are available for women to follow that are created by external social forces. Essentially her choice, if she was a typical middle or upper-class woman, was to follow the feminine destiny she describes throughout the text. That destiny is to become a wife and have children; the dominant script during that time. Limiting “scripts or social roles are not simply ones that women freely adopt from a range of possibilities” (Knowles, 2019, p. 249) but are instead limited by social forces. De Beauvoir knew that as the Other, women had a prescribed narrative thrust upon them because they were

biologically female. Because this script is created for women and not by women, de Beauvoir also points out that these scripts become internalized starting at a young age and because both men and women are taught them, women begin to believe it and work at ‘becoming’ a woman. I will use this idea to demonstrate that in trades work there is also a dominant script that women can choose to follow and what happens when they choose not to.

Choice

Existentialism holds that the starting point of all philosophical thinking must be with the individual, more specifically the experiences of that individual, while emphasizing individual freedom and choice. Sartre argued that life is simply a series of choices made by us and that we are the result of our choices, and therefore we are responsible for our actions (Sartre, 1943). He emphasized that to not make a choice is in fact a choice in itself. Sartre would argue that we are free to choose, and with this freedom comes a sense of anguish. We are, in the words of Sartre, “condemned to be free” (Flynn, 2006). While this idea of choice may seem oversimplified, it is here where I turn to de Beauvoir to recognize that freedom of choice for women differs from freedom of choice for men. De Beauvoir’s philosophy around choice recognized the impacts of the social world. She recognized that women are socialized into a world that was not created as a space for them to choose freely, and that their ability to become authentic was limited by an external situation and a woman’s place as the Other.

Objectification

The idea of objectification, in its most basic form, is to reduce someone to their physical body; to treat someone as an object rather than a complex and autonomous subject (K. L. Morris & Goldenberg, 2015). Objectification strips a person of any type of individuality, making them into a 'part' that can be used by another (Andrighetto, Baldissarri, & Volpato, 2016). Viewing women as nothing more than particular parts of their body is not a new idea and it is typically associated with sex and pornography (S. P. Morris, 1999). Objectification theory proposes that women are sexually objectified and treated as objects to be used by others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). When women are seen as physical objects of male sexual desire and are viewed as only parts of their body separate from who they are as a person (Bartky, 1990), they are being objectified. Sexual objectification is ever-present in our culture and found almost everywhere, whether through the media, our day-to-day interactions, or women's interpersonal experiences (Szymanski, Moffit, & Carr, 2011). Sexualized gazing has been described as the 'potential' for sexual objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)

De Beauvoir and Sartre both wrote about objectification, but from differing standpoints. Sartre's view of objectification was considered to be gender neutral and a necessary part of human interactions. Sartre argued that we learn about ourselves when we are objectified by others. From Sartre's perspective two people 'looking' at each other would view each other as equals and they could simultaneously objectify each other while remaining the subject themselves. De Beauvoir, however, recognized that objectification had a different meaning for women. She agreed that if the two people interacting with each other are equals, for example two women, Sartre's view may hold true. But she argued, counter to Sartre, that in a male/female encounter a woman would not be able to objectify a man while remaining the

subject herself. She would instead be only seen as the Other by default, simply because she was a woman.

Sartre claims that because we lack accurate self-reflexivity the only way we may become more aware of our situation is when it is pointed out to us by someone else. Put simply, we must be objectified by others in order to gain self-awareness. While we may not like how others view us it is through this act of objectification that we gain awareness of our own behaviours, goals, and actions. We move from being the subject to being the object when others 'look' at us. According to Sartre 'the look' is what gives us the awareness that we exist to other people (S. P. Morris, 1999). While he seems to recognize the impact others can have on us, he did not consider the different power structures at play between men and women, as argued by de Beauvoir.

De Beauvoir agrees with Sartre's position with regard to the idea of objectification; however, her ideas of objectification take a different approach. Bergoffen (1992) sums up the difference between Sartre's and de Beauvoir's ideas on 'the look' when she discusses their differing perspectives. She explains that Sartre's perspective comes from a place of being the subject; the one doing the looking at others. Sartre suggested that we could look at each and simultaneously be both the subject and the object while retaining our absolute freedom knowing we are the subject. De Beauvoir would disagree. Sartre's objectification was typically discussed as a form of recognition that there are other conscious beings around us who are objectifying us while we objectify them. Bergoffen (1992) goes on to say that de Beauvoir's perspective begins from the place of the one being looked at – the object and as someone who has not ever been the subject. Sartre's work tends to assume universal masculine equality and sees 'the look' as mutual and simultaneous. De Beauvoir, on the other hand, shows that when power is unbalanced, two

may 'see' each other but only one will be 'looked at'. It is through the eyes of other people that women become women, based on their socialization from the time they are infants. However, de Beauvoir focused her examination of objectification around the dominant forms of patriarchal power relations. De Beauvoir argued that male/female difference was used as a means to create a system of inequality for women. Essentially de Beauvoir was recognizing and acknowledging, what is now referred to as the male gaze and its impact on women in society at large. In reference to "gender and feminist studies, the male gaze is invoked with reference to the patriarchal surveillance of women's bodies" (Glapks, 2018, p. 87). De Beauvoir did not deny sexual difference, but instead called for it to be validated (Bergoffen & Burke, 2020). That is to say that she thought that if we acknowledged male/female differences we could then move forward, and men and women could be viewed as equals.

Oppression

Some of Sartre's discussions of oppression were written within his text *Portrait of the Anti-Semite* (1948), an exploration of what it would be like to be an 'authentic' Jewish man, an anti-Semite, a democrat, or an inauthentic Jewish man. In his discussion of the anti-Semite and the Jew Sartre explains that the 'democrat' pushes towards a world of assimilation, but in that assimilation, they deny differences between groups. In Sartre's discussion of freedom, he recognizes the problem with attempting assimilation and the idea of universal 'man' (Green, 1999). Essentially, he was aware that if a democratic, liberal society pushed for assimilation this would allow a Jewish man to be seen as a man but would remove the label of being Jewish; assimilation would take away what made the Jewish man unique. Sartre recognized that assimilation was not the answer. With that assimilation comes subtle oppressions that are no

different than the overt oppressions practiced by regimes in which the ideal humanity is held up as white, male, and Christian (Green, 1999).

Although Sartre did mention that “the position of the Jew who is female differs from that of a Jew who is male,” he did not devote much of his time to exploring what the differences might have been, addressing this idea only in passing (Bell, 1999, p. 128). In de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* she also explores the ideas of oppression but in relation to male and female relationships and the oppression that exists between them. According to Green (1999, p. 177), de Beauvoir challenges Sartre’s assumptions that “relations of otherness are conflictual relations between two equal freedoms”. De Beauvoir also tells us that “there can be no effective individual freedom in the face of oppression” (Green, 1999, p. 178). While Sartre recognized that liberation was an important component of ending oppression, he never spoke directly to the oppression of women by men (Murphy, 1999). De Beauvoir, however, noted that women’s oppression exists only because it has been created and maintained by men, with women as the Other.

De Beauvoir tells us that men’s oppression of women is often much subtler as opposed to the overt regimes that Sartre discusses in his earlier writings. Examples of more subtle forms of oppression include double binds and double standards of sexuality, behaviour and language choice. If women act freely on their sexual desires, for instance, they are often labeled as whores and sluts, and yet women who choose to abstain from sex are uptight and frigid. Women who are quiet and timid are considered weak, and yet on the flip side, women who are outspoken are considered bossy or obnoxious. Previous research has shown that women in trades even face a double bind regarding their language choices. Women are teased at work for both swearing and for not swearing (Denissen, 2010b). This type of environment creates a multitude of double

binds that work to create a space where women are objectified and oppressed and ultimately, set up to fail. Women, as I will show, are in a no-win situation because they are female: the Other. It is these more subtle forms of oppression that will be the focus of my inquiry.

De Beauvoir (1989) explained that women are typically expected to marry, carry and raise children, and stay home in order to do unpaid labour. Women who marry and bear children are likely to receive affirmation from men as they are doing what is socially expected of them (Bell, 1999). This is contradictory to what is meant by the idea of freedom of choice existentially speaking. Women may choose to actively follow a predetermined role, but if they feel that is their only choice, are they freely choosing? An existentialist would say no. If women stay home, raise a family, and maintain the household by doing all the unpaid labour, they are staying within their 'natural' place, according to de Beauvoir. Women who act within the socially accepted framework would be viewed as non-threatening as they are in compliance with a submissive role linking back to the idea of the oppressor and the oppressed. Compliance with the socially accepted roles of men and women does not threaten the order of work and/or home. Women are not threatening so long as they stay put in the oppressed roles under which they have been placed by men. Women who choose not to take on the socially scripted roles created by society, are said to be operating in the space that de Beauvoir refers to as the 'margins' (Nye, 1989). Choosing to live in the margins means that a woman has made her own choice and has chosen not to buy in to a socially constructed script created for her by external forces.

Existential Freedom

Central to the idea of existentialist freedom is the act of willing oneself an open future solely through choices and actions. These actions are what, in turn, create our value and meaning. We simultaneously give value to, or take value from, someone, something, or a particular situation, through our choices. When we are faced with decisions, we must recognize that “because existence precedes essence we are nothing and become something only through our choices”(Hoagland, 1999, p. 157). Simply put, through actions we call ourselves into Being and create a value framework. Sartre’s philosophy around absolute freedom, explored in *Being and Nothingness*, focused only on individual existence and its relation to freedom of choice. From Sartre’s perspective women are just as free as men because they have the ability to make choices. This suggests that to accept anything other than their own absolute freedom women would be living in bad faith; living an unauthentic existence.

A Sartrean take on freedom relies on the notion that all parties choose or access choices in the same way, while de Beauvoir conceptualizes that inequalities create different situations, ones in which two people’s freedoms are not equal (Kruks, 1987). Although Sartre later developed ideas on the social factors that impact freedom, his early work created a point of departure for de Beauvoir (Kruks, 1995). De Beauvoir was working from a place where she recognized the difference in women’s and men’s ‘absolute freedom’. She was aware that a relationship between freedom and situation exists, and that not all situations are equal (Kruks, 1995). Kruks (1987) explains that de Beauvoir’s view of freedom included acknowledging social reality and that these ideas can be explained through her concepts of Otherness and situation. De Beauvoir recognized that there could be different types of situations in which the idea of freedom could be examined. One type of situation would include two people who

viewed each other as equals and recognized each other's freedom. The second type of situation occurs when one of the two parties views the other person as unequal, due to social situation or construct, thereby creating a type of otherness and oppression (Kruks, 1987). De Beauvoir suggested that there are social powers at play where otherness, oppression, and freedom are concerned. She accepts the idea that femininity is not the natural essence of a woman but is instead a construct thrust upon women by men. Subsequently, much of what women experience in their own lives is a result of social constructs chosen for her, not by her. This becomes the position from which all of her other choices must then be made. Women approach the ideas of choice from a position of already being constrained, and therefore are not free to choose in the same way as their oppressors, in this case the men they work with.

De Beauvoir (1989) argues that we are all originally in a state of freedom but that we often deny that freedom and end up in a situation of bad faith, or creating a situation of self-deception where one has not chosen in accordance with their own authenticity. De Beauvoir suggests that our freedom also comes when others recognize us as free. She suggests that we can begin to avoid oppression when we recognize the freedom of ourselves and the freedom of others. Freeing the Other is imperative to our own individual freedom (Shabot, 2016) in so far as both individuals experience freedom when they recognize the other person as having their own freedom. In this case, both individuals would be the subject and neither would become the Other. De Beauvoir moves beyond Sartre's ideas of freedom, arguing that freedom is a source of value, and that working towards a goal of becoming a moral human and working towards our own freedom are intertwined

In *Ethics of Ambiguity*, de Beauvoir explains that there is an interdependence of freedoms between oneself and others and that if our freedom is dependent on others then we must also

recognize that our freedom can be jeopardized by the actions of those on which our freedom depends. In *The Second Sex* de Beauvoir distinguishes between two different degrees of freedom, particularly when discussing Otherness (Kruks 1995); there is a distinct difference when the other is our social equal versus our social unequal. This inequality creates a space of oppression rather than a space of reciprocity between two people, and de Beauvoir explains how woman is the Other. According to Nye (1989), de Beauvoir's feminist existentialism can offer us an analysis of women's oppression and freedom because existentialism views humans first as subjects, therefore we can begin to understand women's subjectivities. At the foundation of her philosophy are the ideas of ethics and freedom. De Beauvoir saw freedom as the key to political action (Shabot, 2016). According to de Beauvoir, there is no simple way for women to escape the situation of being a woman in a patriarchal society, but she did make four suggestions on how women could work toward becoming 'free' and not the Other. In order to move out of their oppressive position, she suggested, women should work outside the home, become intellectuals, push for social reform, and refuse to internalize their otherness.

Bad Faith

As a philosophy, existentialism has no preconceived or predetermined categories by which to label or sort people or ideas. Existentialism has a focus on individual choice and individual experience, and from a Sartrean perspective "a man [sic] becomes what he chooses to be, and what he becomes does not follow automatically from heredity, environment, pre-established personality traits, or social structures. What he becomes depends upon his freely made decisions to act and to think in a certain way" (Nye, 1989, p. 79). If an individual does not

accept the consequences of her choices and lies to herself about what she has done, then she is acting in “bad faith,” according to Sartre and de Beauvoir.

Sartre (1943) used the term ‘bad faith’ to explain a form of self-deception where humans take on pre-existing identities and engage in the denial of their own individual choice and freedom under pressure from external forces. “Being or acting in bad faith means that we try to pretend that we are not free, that we are part of the inert given situation” (Tidd, 2004, p. 26). Simply put, when we behave in a way that contradicts our true selves, we are said to be acting in bad faith because we failed to choose for ourselves and are therefore acting inauthentically. Sartre also tells us that “to exist is to choose and to cease to choose is to cease to be” (Flynn, 2006, p. 57). Acting in bad faith is to trick yourself into thinking you only have one option and denying your own freedom, (not living authentically), in order to justify a choice you’ve made. However, if we recognize that women are socially constituted as the Other, and we acknowledge that they are limited by external social forces and scripts, are they in a position to avoid bad faith as freely as men?

De Beauvoir (1989) would argue that women are not completely free because of the societal constraints of what it means to be a woman and therefore she moves beyond Sartre’s idea of bad faith. Kruks (1987, p. 114) explains that “from woman's perspective, this situation can be experienced as a ‘destiny’ ... such an experience of her situation is not necessarily a choice of ‘bad faith’ on the part of a woman. For although her situation is indeed humanly created, *she* is not the one who has made or chosen it” (italics in original). Simply put, what it means to be a woman (her situation) has been defined by men. De Beauvoir would agree that a woman has the ability to make her own choices, and should do so whenever possible, to avoid

bad faith. She also argues, however, that a woman should not be considered to be living in bad faith where no real choice exists (Kruks, 1987).

Discussion

If women are to challenge female myths and push back on the idea of having a domestic destiny, de Beauvoir suggests they should “avoid marriage, never have children, escape the trap of home and family, and take their place in the world among men” (Nye, 1989, p. 86).

Recognizing that today, women make up almost 50% of the workplace, these ideas are relevant when we discuss women in trades because they still make up such a small portion of the industry. Women are operating on the margins in another way: working in a male-dominated space. They are choosing to work outside the home, which we know is much more common now than it was during the time *The Second Sex* was written, and additionally, they are choosing to work in a space in which they are much more obviously Othered while attempting to ‘take their place among men’.

Feminist existentialism allows me to delve deeply into the experiences of women working in an industry characterized by masculine hegemony. In *The Second Sex* de Beauvoir suggests women do not enter this world with any prescribed boundaries, but instead they are socialized to become a woman taking on a dominant script. Women have choices as individuals, but de Beauvoir also recognized that women’s choices were limited and constrained so they were not as existentially free as men. She argued that women are trained to become women and they learn from a young age what is expected of them as women: what career and life choices they should make based on their gender. It is our socialization that creates us and the choices we make that define us. Existentialism reminds us that we are nothing outside of our choices *and* there is a predetermined narrative that we end up taking part in. Therefore, when our society

creates men and women in the ways we do, we are creating our people, our workforce, our problems, and our solutions.

Because De Beauvoir's feminist existential philosophy is bound together by the ideas of women as the Other, and their lack of choice in determining their fate, her philosophy is well suited to this research project. De Beauvoir's idea of the Other will be used as the foundation for discussing the existential themes mentioned above, but also throughout my analysis chapters.

In an industry where women are underrepresented, like the trades, each woman seems to exist not as an individual but as a representative of all women. Subsequently, the failure or weakness of one woman is interpreted as the abilities and capabilities of all women. The notion that one woman is generalizable to all women would certainly detract women from entering the trades from an existential perspective. The existentialist demands that people be considered as individuals, independent, and autonomous. To assume a woman's choice is reflective of all women is fundamentally at odds with the notion of an individual's ideas of self in existentialism.

As mentioned earlier people are typically not surprised to see women in professional roles and to find a successful female in a white-collar industry is not unusual, yet people still question whether women can perform in trades occupations. Is this due to the fact that women have historically had little representation in the trades and therefore not attained critical mass needed to cause the environment to change (Kanter, 1977a)? It appears the construction industry has not kept up with changes that have happened in other industries where women have been able to make inroads into other professions that had been previously male-dominated, such as those mentioned above.

In recent years, there has been a call to revisit de Beauvoir's work, and Calas and Smircich (2000) highlight the fact that de Beauvoir's 'forgotten' contributions can strengthen

organizational research in areas such as gender and power. The fact that so few women are employed in trades-based occupations makes their jobs a prime location to uncover issues surrounding gender biases and power relations. To that end, de Beauvoir's ideas and philosophy can arguably help to provide a useful and relevant methodological approach to understand women's experiences in this industry.

Barnes (1999) tells us that Sartre does not believe that we are only products of an overarching discourse; rather, language comes to us in a manner that is already structured by other people, and that language has the ability to alienate people. De Beauvoir has been recognized as one of the key influences in the critical feminist research area where her contributions to the study of women's life experiences have been noted (Prasad, 2005). De Beauvoir's ideas are focused on gender issues and seek to help us understand women's otherness. Through this, she encourages women to raise themselves up from 'second-class status.'

According to Fullbrook and Fullbrook (1999a), de Beauvoir uses fiction through which to tell a philosophical story, as evidenced by her novel *She Came to Stay*. What is significant here is that she recognized the importance of storytelling and what can be gained by it; hence my choice in using her philosophy along with narrative analysis. While using an individualistic philosophy, I believe it is necessary to point out that we can still yield pragmatic benefits, insofar as building solutions for industry, offering suggestions, and identifying problems, without needing to rely on a 'universal truth' about the true essence of women in the trades. I would not attempt to take stories from a relatively small number of women working in trades and presume that their experiences apply to all women in trades, any more than I would presume to take my

own personal experiences at work and assume all other women in similar positions would tell the same story. I recognize that my experiences do not tell the story of all women.

It was de Beauvoir who highlighted the implications that sex and gender have on existential freedom. She tells us that people who are marginalized in society may actually be in a position to identify and understand what is false and destructive from their outsider vantage point. De Beauvoir recognized that the experiences of women (and minorities) are important because they offer us individual accounts of what happens within society (De Beauvoir, 1989). De Beauvoir acknowledges that a woman's situation is drastically different from that of her male counterparts, particularly when it comes to the physical body and reproduction (Nye, 1989). De Beauvoir argues that just because women have achieved a place where they have the right to vote and own property, this place still does not afford them the same privileges as men. Simply put, women can be viewed as equals on paper, when in actuality they are not.

De Beauvoir's philosophy demands that we become aware of the fact that when we engage in any type of philosophical activity, we start at a particular vantage point, much in the same way Harding (2007) suggests we do in her writings on Feminist Standpoint Theory. Both Harding and De Beauvoir recognize that we must have a very clear idea of our own starting point and a strong understanding of our relations to the world. De Beauvoir rejects apriorism and understands the power of an individual story because it causes the reader to undergo a thought process that raises questions, casts doubt, and takes sides that create a way of knowing and understanding that cannot be gained through doctrinal teachings (Fullbrook & Fullbrook, 1999a).

Conclusion

In order for me to lay a feminist existential lens over my thematic narrative analysis, I needed to put forward how I have pieced together this framework. This framework draws heavily on the philosophies of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. To develop this framework I focused on the *Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Paul Sartre* (1999) and de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (De Beauvoir, 1989). The strong links between de Beauvoir and Sartre remain after their deaths; however, it has been recognized that their philosophies differ in many important regards. Although their philosophies overlap, de Beauvoir identified ways in which men and women are existentially different as shown throughout this chapter. While conducting research in a space that seeks to give voice to marginalized individuals, it seems fitting to draw on philosophies of someone (de Beauvoir) who seems to have been marginalized and written out of many accounts of existentialism (Murphy, 1999) and organizational theory (Calas & Smircich, 2000). While feminist existentialism provides a lens through which I can analyze interviews, it must be accompanied by a relevant methodology for a more thorough understanding of the material. In order to do this, I will also use narrative analysis, and more specifically, thematic narrative analysis, to complete my research. This dissertation analyzes experiences of women in trades by unpacking their decision to enter trades (choice to enter) and continues to look at how that choice ultimately impacts their experiences on site. In the following chapter I will describe my research methodology.

Chapter Four: Methodology

*A man is always a teller of tales;
He lives surrounded by his stories and
The stories of others; he sees everything
That happens to him through them,
And he tries to live his life as
If he were recounting it.
(Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea)*

Introduction

Meshing feminist existentialism and narrative analysis creates a strong pairing because of the focus they both place on examining the lived experience (Grako, 1999). Feminist research has been instrumental in bringing women's viewpoints forward in organizational research thereby creating a space for women to share their experiences of work. Narrative analysis provides us with a way to make sense of language when analyzing stories told to us, and also encourages multiple truths to come to the surface (Riessman, 1993). "Among feminist researchers there has traditionally been a particular interest in documenting individual women's stories" (Elliott, 2005, p. 53). Recognizing that existentialism, feminist research, and narrative analysis all reject finding 'one truth,' these ideas work well together for this research project. In this chapter I will discuss my research position and methodology: the use of interviews, narrative analysis, participant recruitment, and interview analysis.

Research Position

For this research, I have chosen to work within a feminist, postpositivist paradigm (Prasad, 2005). While the definitions of postpositivism can vary, postpositivist research rejects

positivist assumptions of social reality and knowledge production (Bryman, Bell, Mills, & Yue, 2011). Postpositivist research tends to approach the study of social science “from a more problematized vantage point, emphasizing the constructed nature of social reality, the constitutive role of language, and the value of research as a critique” (Prasad, 2005, p. 9). In the case of this research then, women who have worked in a construction trade would be able to answer questions surrounding their desire to enter the field and what their day-to-day working experience entails. Feminist research falls under the overarching umbrella of critical research that concerns itself with both the exploitation and invisibility of women in both public and private spaces.

Within feminist research, there is a scholarly tradition that focuses on women’s voices and experiences that was heavily influenced by de Beauvoir (Prasad, 2005), making feminist existentialism an ideal lens through which to examine the current research. Bracketing is another important concept in feminist research and is the practice of acknowledging any preconceived notions about the phenomena being studied (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Bracketing is an important step in conducting feminist research because it pushes the researcher to put aside her own previous ideas or feelings towards her research. Doing this allows the researcher to be open and receptive when listening to the participants’ stories so that she, the researcher, can “perceive women’s lived experiences with greater existential depth and breadth, and to see hidden sides and meanings of women’s lived experience” (Osborne, 1990, p. 171).

I also recognize and acknowledge that I am simultaneously grounding my work within feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory recognizes that the knowledge we create is socially situated (Harding, 2007). This viewpoint is important for this research in that it addresses the need for diverse and marginalized perspectives in the creation of knowledge and

recognizes that a plurality of perspectives is what ultimately increases our knowledge of the social world. Harding (2007) points out that feminist standpoint theory recognizes there is a connection between one's social situation and their physical world that cannot be removed. Therefore, there is no such thing as completely objective research because both the researcher and participants come with their own biases. Harding (2007) also argues that feminist standpoint theory can minimize our biases, although not completely remove them.

Prasad (2005) reminds us of the importance of feminist research when she points out that we live in a world that is socially constructed, and the social constructs around us have been created in such a way that the male experience is viewed as the norm. She notes that the overarching goals of studying women's experiences and giving women a voice allows us to recognize, privilege, and celebrate those different experiences. Only through such celebration can we attempt to make changes to what is viewed as a social norm (Prasad, 2005). Shifting the focus to the individual experiences of women in trades is necessary if we are to begin to remove the socially constructed lens through which their experiences have been understood and evaluated. This focus is necessary to understand and explore women's lived experiences and ultimately understand the choice to pursue, or not pursue, careers in the trades. Without understanding these experiences, we cannot fully understand why legislation, initiatives, and research reports are not resulting in a greater percentage of women represented in the trades. Therefore, the exploration and analysis must take place through an individualizing theory such as feminist existentialism, and the research methodology must not rely on generalizations or pre-existing constructs of interpretation. Thus, a postpositivist analysis is supported. Existentialism is focused on individuals and how they act within any given circumstance, thereby allowing me a

new way to study tradeswomen that has not been done before, adding to our knowledge and understanding of women in trades.

The importance of women telling their own stories has been noted by Etter-Lewis, (1991), where she states that “oral narratives offer a unique and provocative means of gathering information central to understanding the multiplicity and ambiguity of women’s viewpoints” (as cited in Essers, 2009 p. 43). Feminist research recognizes that women cannot be reduced to one group and that there is no one best method, methodology, or epistemology that best suits feminist research (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). My goal is to simply give voice to those participants I interviewed. Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007, p. 3) remind us “that most feminist views and perspectives are not simply ideas or ideologies but *rooted in the very real lives, struggles, and experiences of women*” (emphasis in original).

Conducting Interviews

Interviews are one of the most widely used methods in qualitative research. They are often used in ethnographic research and in case studies. Interviews also complement both discourse analysis and narrative analysis (Bryman, Bell, Mills, & Yue, 2011). Within qualitative research the use of interviews allows researchers to focus their interest on the interviewee’s point of view and gather information about the interviewee’s perspective of the research topic. Qualitative interviewing is preferred when asking respondents about their life or oral history (Bryman et al., 2011). The strength of using interviews as a means to uncover a thick description (Geertz, 1973) from participants, and the use of an unstructured interview, is summed up by deMarrais (2004, p. 52):

Qualitative interviews are used when researchers want to gain in-depth knowledge from participants about particular phenomena, experiences, or sets of experiences. Using interview questions and follow-up questions, or probes, based on what the participant has already described, the goal is to construct as complete a picture as possible from the words and experiences of the participant. This can only be accomplished when the qualitative interview is open-ended enough for the participant to provide a depth of knowledge on the research topic. The intent is to discover that person's view of knowledge on the research topic. The intent is to discover that person's view of an experience or phenomenon of study.

Unstructured interviews were employed in order to allow for a conversation to take place and to allow the women being interviewed to feel more comfortable during the interview process and to allow for flexibility (Bryman et al., 2011). Unstructured interviews allow for the interviewer to develop a rapport with the interviewee and to treat each interview as its own unique experience (deMarrais, 2004). It is important, in feminist research, to allow women to "describe their experiences in their own terms" and to then allow the participants to add to the research questions when they are sharing their own experiences (Taylor, 1998, p. 366). My initial questions acted as a guide, as I wanted to allow each participant to remain active in the experience of the interview, and I wanted to allow myself to become a part of the conversation.

In their discussion of data collection during the interview process, Gill and Goodson (2011) suggest that using in-depth interviews allows the researcher to develop a trusting relationship with the interviewee which encourages flow through the interview. This, in turn, helps to reduce the issue of researcher power. Although they caution that this power can never be completely obliterated it does encourage a conversational flow. Gill and Goodson (2011) also bring to light the use of intuition by researchers when analyzing and interpreting data, reminding us of the intimacy between the interviewee and the researcher.

As suggested by Essers (2009), in order to create a relaxed atmosphere for the interview process I began the interview with a general question asking the women to tell me when they

became interested in working in trades, and (following Wallace, 2007) to tell me about their experience of working in the trades. I began collecting stories using unstructured interviews in order to allow the conversation to flow and to assist me in gaining better insight into the stories being told. I asked all respondents a consistent question to start the conversation: “How did you first become interested in working in the trades?” My next question would be formulated to gain clarification to a previous answer (Hesse-Biber, 2007). I did not ask about sexual orientation, race, or class, because those things are not the focus of this research; however, some participants did discuss their sexual orientation. I also asked participants how long they had worked in trades. If particular information did not come up during the interview, such as age, years of experience, family and marital status, those questions were asked at the end of the interview to increase my understanding of the participant as an individual and to shed light on her perspectives of work and family/home life. The answers to all of these questions typically came up spontaneously during our conversations. Interviews provide a platform for participants to share their stories and experiences and to receive some of the recognition they deserve. This dissertation will explore, analyze, and interpret their stories through a philosophical lens that will help name the experiences and uncover possible reasons why so few women choose trades-based work. I will do this while maintaining a regard for the individualism of each voice and experience. It is through the analysis of these experiences that one may begin to understand the extremely low rates of women entering, and remaining, in the trades despite the efforts made to attract and retain them.

Narrative Analysis

There appears to be no one best way to conduct narrative analysis (Kramp, 2004). Narrative analysis is a research approach that seeks to analyze the stories told by individuals (research participants). Narrative analysis allows researchers to understand social life from the perspective of those living it who then tell their stories. Narrative analysis has a long tradition in social research, mainly in anthropology, life history, and psychology, and has been used in education (Kramp, 2004), social work (Riessman & Quinney, 2005), nursing (Beal, 2013) and the study of organizations (Boje, 2001; Czarniawska, 1998). To understand the purpose of narrative analysis and the analysis of stories, we must first understand why stories matter, more importantly, why individual stories matter. Narrative analysis is part of what has been coined as the ‘narrative turn’ (Riessman, 2000) and is based on the assertion that human experience has an important narrative element. Through narrative analysis we are able to understand “which aspects of experience matter to the narrator and how they matter” (Kleres, 2010, p. 184).

When conducting narrative research, one does not seek to formulate a scientific explanation, but instead, seeks to understand a given phenomenon or to increase one’s understanding of the experience(s) of one or more individuals. Employing narrative research allows us to use a research method that is arguably less exploitative than many other methods, because it gives voice to people who have been traditionally marginalized and focuses on context and relationships (Hendry, 2007). Hendry (2007) suggests that when dealing with narratives we must have faith in both the storyteller and the stories being told to us. He points out that the typical ways in which we listen to stories being told to us is filled with both doubt and mistrust. The reason for the doubt and mistrust is that we are typically trying to figure out what we are missing: what does this all mean, what is really going on here? What needs to be remembered is

that our primary goal is to capture and represent the experiences being told to us by our participants. Narratives are how we establish our identities, and as Hendry (2007, p.495) reminds us, “we are our narratives”.

When an individual tells a story, she brings experience into a narrative form and she creates a narrative, positioning characters within a particular space and time, and attempts to make sense of what has happened. In the process, she tries to normalize what has happened (Bamberg, 2012), meaning she is simultaneously telling us a story while making sense of what she has experienced. Researchers working within the narrative tradition aim to understand that the purpose of examining narratives is to understand the meaning of an experience for the person who had it and who, in turn, tells their story. Kramp (2004) warns us that narrative inquiry can appear deceptively easy but reminds us that it cannot be reduced to a specific formula with an itemized list of components.

One of the keys in using narrative analysis as a method is the recognition that reality is socially constructed and that there are sociocultural, historical, and political influences at play that in turn influence human actions (Gill & Goodson, 2011). Social life can be viewed as an enacted narrative (Czarniawska, 1998), and Gill and Goodson argue “that life and narratives are inextricably related and that human life is interpreted in and through narratives” (Gill & Goodson, 2011, p. 158).

In creating a space for women to tell their stories I am creating an opportunity for individuals to share their perspective of the world. Narrative research allows the researcher to give voice to members of a group who are traditionally marginalized while highlighting how society and culture shape individual lives as well as how individual lives simultaneously shape culture and society (Hendry, 2007). As noted by Riessman (2000) narrative analysis is often

employed in the study of disruptive life events such as divorce, infertility, and chronic illness; however, it is also useful in studying macro-level phenomena, social movements, and political change.

In conducting narrative research, one must consider reflexivity. Reflexivity, in this case, refers to the researcher acknowledging and becoming aware of their own identity and self, and subsequently how it relates to the research process. Reflexivity refers to the researcher being able to critically examine and analytically reflect upon the nature of research and the role she plays in writing up the research for a given audience. Narrative analysis privileges subjectivity and does not assume objectivity (Riessman, 2000). It allows the participants' stories to remain intact and as told in their own voices (Riessman, 2008). Allowing women's experiences to serve as the basis for this research, and attempting to employ, as far as possible, an unbiased examination of these stories, feminist existentialism served as the ideal lens through which to conduct the analysis. Because existentialism is focused around the idea of individualism and creating one's own reality instead of being an objective observer (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), it becomes a natural fit when examining individual experiences within organizations. Analyzing the experiences of women in building and construction trades through the lens of existentialism does not propose any notion of discovering a universal 'truth' regarding women who work in male-dominated occupations. Rather, it serves to uncover the factors that influence their decisions to pursue such careers and what they encounter on the job site. Therefore, feminist existentialism provides the best lens for this project while narrative analysis allows me to unpack the themes in the stories of work as told to me by the participants.

Employing Narrative Analysis

The term narrative is often used synonymously with the word story. Stories create a space for the storyteller to share what she deems as important and she connects events into a sequence and in such a way as to leave the listener with a ‘take away’ (Riessman, 1993). The following section includes a discussion of the different ways in which narrative analysis can be used, followed by the approach I deem is best suited for this dissertation.

According to Riessman (2008), there are three ways to employ narrative methods: thematic, structural, and performance. In thematic analysis, the analysis is focused on what topics and themes surface within the content of the story. Structural analysis is more concerned with the linguistics and sequential composition of the narrative. Performative analysis includes both the structural and thematic components, but also asks “who an utterance may be directed to, when, and why, that is, for what purpose” (Riessman, 2008, p. 105). I employed a thematic analysis to the stories told to me. Themes are essentially the patterns found when examining a data set, or in this case, interviews that explore a particular phenomenon. Thematic analysis made the most sense for this research because the stories told to me were examined for the existential themes explained in chapter three.

Beal (2013) reminds us that narrative analysis does not need to be kept within a tight framework and that often multiple approaches are combined when the analysis is conducted. To begin the analysis, I employed a thematic (categorical) approach (Riessman, 2005) in order to understand how women make sense of their current work, or previous work, within trades-based occupations by identifying topics brought forward throughout the stories.

Conducting narrative analysis does not produce generalizable data, nor does it claim to. Although it is laborious and very time consuming, the value of the research lies in the ability to

uncover previously unknown experiences of a smaller group of people. Although narrative analysis may not seek to uncover generalizable data, it is important to seek out individual stories because individual narratives allow “for a plurality of truths to become known” (Fraser, 2004, p. 181). This allows us to gain a deeper understanding of what the participants have experienced, how these experiences can inform future studies, and how that information can be used to create change within organizations and to their organizational cultures overall.

There is never just one interpretation of a story. Therefore, when working within the narrative analysis method it is important that the researcher understands and shows awareness that “each story has a point of view that will differ, depending on who is telling the story, who is being told, as well as when and where the story is told” (Riessman, 2000, p. 698). It is through the researcher that the story is told and retold. I am mindful that it is my responsibility to accept the stories told to me, regardless of my own opinion on the matter, and that I am not seeking to find one truth, but instead multiple meanings and experiences. I am simply bringing voice to the women who have trusted me with their stories. It is important to remember that the narrative interview data is open to interpretation and, in fact, several rounds of reinterpretation during the research process (Wallace, 2007). The benefits of employing an in-depth interview approach and narrative analysis out-weigh the potential drawbacks. These approaches allow me to gain access to and understand the information I am seeking and create rich data from which I can draw.

Participant Recruitment

After having gained approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB) of both Saint Mary's University (SMU) and of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), invitations to participate in this research were emailed to female trade students at NAIT. Because this contact point is linked to women in various stages of their education and careers, it allowed me access to women already working in their respective fields who were well into their apprenticeship training. I also contacted two women I knew who worked in trades at the time to inquire as to whether they would like to take part in the study. Prospective participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary, that all information would be kept confidential, and pseudonyms would be used in the write up of the research material if they preferred to remain anonymous. All participants were required to sign an informed consent form. Female trade students at NAIT were sent the invitation email (Appendix A) from the Student Engagement Apprentice Facilitator inviting them to respond to the email if they were interested in participating. If participants were interested, they responded to the email invitation. I contacted each participant to set up a mutually agreed upon time and place to conduct the interview. Some of the potential respondents were unable to participate due to their work schedules, family commitments, and geographic locations at the time of the study.

Atkinson (2001) notes that most people need to tell their stories, and that sharing personal stories can help improve self-image and self-esteem while allowing people to release particular burdens. I hoped that the women who participated in this research would also benefit from sharing their stories. Eleven women participated, two of whom I knew personally as I mentioned above, and nine who were recruited through the email invitation sent through the Women in Technology and Trades (WITT) program at NAIT. One participant was removed from the data

as her employment does not fit into building trades, so I was left with ten. All of the women agreed to sit down for a recorded interview. Interviews ranged between forty-five and ninety minutes and were conducted in whatever space the participant felt most comfortable. Some were held at restaurants, some in an empty classroom at NAIT, and two participants felt most comfortable coming to my home as I had known them previously and we had met through mutual friends.

Participant Profiles

The women who participated in this study ranged in age from 29 to 52 years of age at the time of the interviews. Three of the participants were married, three were in common law relationships, and the others were single. Two of the participants had children, one had stepchildren, and the others did not have any children. These women worked as welders, electricians, carpenters, boilermakers, and plumbers. Several of them were dual ticketed (having journeyman status in more than one trade), with one participant having four tickets. The women had no less than four years of work experience, with many having more than ten years in industry. The names of all participants have been changed in order to protect their identity and to conform with ethics regulations. The names of their employers have been redacted as well. Katherine is a 30-year-old electrician who has been in the industry for almost five years. She was single at the time of our interview. Chelsea is a 35-year-old carpenter with five years of experience in the field. She has no children and is in a common law relationship. Vicki is 36 years old and has over 13 years of experience in trades, being ticketed in plumbing, gas fitting, welding, and steam fitting. Kristene is a 37-year-old welder who also has five years of experience in the field and is married with two children. Anita is a 31-year-old plumber who has

over ten years of field experience. She is also a self-identified lesbian and she has no children. Lori is a 52-year-old boilermaker who is also back in school to complete her welding apprenticeship. She is a stepmother to two adult children and has been working in the trades for almost ten years. Corinne is a 41-year-old electrician with no children. She is in a common law relationship and has been in the field for four years. Sandra is a 31-year-old carpenter who has been in the trades for 12 years. She has no children and was recently single at the time of the interview. Dena is a 23-year-old welder who was awaiting her Red Seal marks after having already completed her journeyman ticket. She has five years of experience in the field. She has no children and is in a common law relationship. Lastly, Elli is a 38-year-old journeyman welder and pipefitter with over ten years of experience. She is in a common law relationship with no children. All of this information reflects the participants' situations at the time the interviews were conducted.

Interview Analysis

My interviews were initially transcribed by a transcriptionist. I then listened to the interviews, adding notes that may have been missed. The decision on how to carry out the transcription process is informed by the type of analysis the researcher intends to do (Elliott, 2005). "In most cases, the aim when transcribing in-depth interviews is to find a method for preserving some of the additional meaning that was conveyed by the speaker's use of intonation, pauses, rhythm, hesitation, and body language" (Elliott, 2005, p. 51). After listening to the interviews while reading through the transcriptions, I determined that the long pauses and inflections did not have an impact on the stories being told; therefore, quotes from the participants may be shortened when included in the analysis.

When I first began to sort through the interviews it was quite overwhelming. I uploaded the transcribed interviews to Nvivo 11 software and began to ‘tag’ sections while simultaneously creating categories (nodes). After the first round, I realized I had several categories including Advancement, First Job in Trades, Mentors, Physical Demands, Physical Body, and Sexuality. I realized quickly that these categories would need to be collapsed into each other wherever possible. Many sections of interviews were double tagged, i.e., were tagged in more than one node. As an example, an excerpt such as the one below would have been tagged in more than one category, such as gender roles and coworker interactions.

I was cleaning up this joint and making it look good because that's why girls are good at what they do. They have an eye and we're picky and I was just making it look really nice and he was like, uh what are you doing? I was like, my job, making this look good. And he was like, pfft, women. And I was like excuse me!

I did not end up using Nvivo in the way I thought I would (as a tool to conduct the analysis) and instead simply used it as a means of searching back through the data with a particular theme. For example, if I was looking for information regarding physical body and sexuality, I could simply go back and see what interviews had mentioned those items. I quickly learned that it would have been just as effective and efficient to use my own handwritten notes and a colour coded system with Post-it notes. What I wanted to ensure I did not do was reproduce parts of the stories out of context, thereby taking away some of the meaning, or lose the essence of what was being said. For me this was challenging because how do you only talk about portions of an interview? Would the words have the same meaning when removed from the story in its entirety? To avoid this, I have provided a brief note on what was being discussed when the quotes from the interviews are used in this dissertation. When I went back to Nvivo to find quotes and discussions relating to a theme I pulled up the interview to see what was being

talked about when the quote was given and work to ensure that context was not lost when the quotes were used.

While sorting through the interviews for the third time, I recognized that much of what was said by the participants were actually examples of choices made at work, objectification, oppression, and a lack of existential freedom that ultimately created situations of bad faith. When I later reread the participants' stories from a feminist existential perspective, their stories showed themes of oppressive behaviours by their colleagues, ways in which they were continually objectified at work, and subsequently how they ended up acting in bad faith in order to continue to work in the field. The need for changes within the industry in order to make it more appealing for women was also a prominent theme. While the participants may not have used the words oppression or objectification, it became clear to me that this was what was taking place on their job sites.

Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, and chapter three, feminist existentialism paired with narrative analysis, allows for an analysis at the individual level and provides the opportunity to conduct my analysis around several existential themes: choice, objectification, oppression, freedom, and bad faith. In this chapter I discussed my research position and methodology – the use of interviews, narrative analysis, participant recruitment, and interview analysis demonstrating how these will be applied in chapter five.

Chapter Five: Unpacking the Stories

Introduction

Using de Beauvoir's idea of women as the Other gives us a way to understand that consequences differ between women and their male colleagues when making seemingly similar decisions to work in trades. Throughout this chapter I will show that what women experience on site is drastically different from the experiences of their male colleagues, namely the ways in which women are both objectified and oppressed at work. I will examine the ideas of choice and consequence, and the points of departure that de Beauvoir takes from Sartre's philosophies, in order to further our understanding of choice and consequences for women in trades from a feminist existential view. I will examine the reasons for the women's choices followed by a discussion that focuses on the consequences of choosing a career in trades. From here I will demonstrate how the objectification and oppression these women face, then leads to a lack of existential freedom, thus forcing them into bad faith.

Stories of Choosing Trades

As discussed in chapter three, one of the foundations of existentialism is choice, therefore it is important to examine why the participants in this study chose a career in trades. More importantly for this research is to understand the consequences of that choice and how these women are impacted, on an ongoing basis, at work for making what one could argue is a simple career choice. I am not suggesting that choosing a career is a decision that is made lightly, but I believe that, with all else being equal, the average person is likely to assume that one's career choice would have similar outcomes for all individuals within a particular field. However, as I

will demonstrate throughout this chapter, the outcomes, or consequences in this case, are not equal for men and women when it comes to trades work despite having similar reasons for entering the trades and having the same education and industry qualifications.

There were a variety of reasons presented to me when I asked participants how they first became interested in trades work. Several indicated that the opportunity to earn a large salary was one of the reasons they chose to pursue employment in the trades. For example, Dena enjoyed having horses and realized that she was going to need a good paying job in order to support that passion. She discussed her desire to earn a large salary in what she referred to as a ‘respectable way’. I concluded that she was referring to making money without the use of her sexuality or physical body as she later went on to discuss the fact that many female welders she met had actually been exotic dancers prior to entering trades, or had continued to engage in that work while putting themselves through school. She had a family member who was a welder, and he suggested she try out the trade to see if she enjoyed that type of work. Lori also mentioned the financial incentive as a reason to pursue an apprenticeship. She’d had a job working in an office where she handled some of the payroll duties for a large organization that employed a vast number of tradespeople. When she was in that position, she saw the wages being earned by first year apprentices and decided that she wanted the opportunity to earn those types of wages. She believed there was a mentality that women working on a building site belonged in the office, and she told me that she felt held back by being a woman working for that company. She then took the initiative to speak to people on site to inquire about the different trade options available to her before deciding on becoming a boiler maker. Sandra also spoke to the financial incentives of the work. When she was young, she had worked with a road construction crew and was making almost three times an hour more than her female peers working in traditional ‘women’s work’.

Although she would experience other jobs before moving into trades and pursuing a career as a carpenter, she knew she liked working with her hands. Sandra also spoke about what she viewed as typically female jobs, such as office work, and how that work did not interest her at all.

Corinne and Kristene had similar backgrounds in Information Technology (IT), though they chose different trades. Corinne saw overlap in what she did as a cable installer and what an electrician did. The move towards the trades seemed like a natural fit for her once jobs in IT became difficult to find. Kristene, on the other hand, chose welding. She made the choice after hearing how good the money was in industry, and so she pursued the trades after losing her job in IT yet again.

Katherine and Elli were both working in bars before they entered the trades. Katherine was tired of working in the service industry, and a couple of chance encounters saw her find her way into the trades. She was speaking to a neighbour one day and mentioned that she was looking for a new line of work. During their conversation her neighbour asked if she would consider working in the oil field for a mobile crane company. She took the opportunity and immediately liked the work. A downturn in the economy ended that job and she then went back to working in the service industry. Another chance encounter, with a customer this time, found her pursuing an electrical apprenticeship. Elli, on the other hand, was brought into trades by working in a bar that was frequented by tradesmen. At the encouragement of her regular (male) customers, she began to seek out what trade she might be interested in. This indicates that encouragement from men in industry may be a key to attracting more women into the trades. She had worked in construction when she was younger, so she knew she liked labour intensive work. She later settled on welding because she identified in it a creative element that appealed to her.

Family members were key factors in the decision made by both Vicki and Anita. Anita had started her post-secondary pursuits in a business school, but she quickly realized that she was not interested in that area. She had a family member who was a plumber. He suggested she try it out and helped her land her first job in trades. This is another example of the ways in which support from men may play a vital role in the recruitment of women. While it is unclear as to whether or not this fact impacted their experiences on site or not, because none of these women worked with the men who had suggested they get into the industry, it does speak to recruitment. For Vicki, however, the suggestion actually came from her mom who owned an older home in desperate need of some repairs, particularly to the aging plumbing. Her mom suggested she learn to be a plumber so she could come back and fix the house. Vicki knew someone who worked in the administrative side of a plumbing company. She was able to get her foot in the door that way in order to begin working on her apprenticeship.

Chelsea first found her interest in hands-on work in high school. During that time, she took classes such as wood-working and shop. Although she enjoyed the work, she doubted her own ability to do the work as a career. Many years later, while working in a grocery store, a discussion with a female co-worker piqued her interest in trades yet again. She found out about an organization that was working to help women get started in trades. She applied to the program and began her apprenticeship in carpentry.

Summary

As we can see, there are a variety of reasons these women pursued careers in trades. Financial incentives, suggestions from friends and relatives, random encounters with colleagues and customers, enjoying manual labour, working outside, and with their hands, led them into

industry. Previous research has shown that financial opportunity is a prime reason women pursue trades (Ericksen & Schultheiss, 2009), as well as a strong sense of self and a desire for independence (Greene & Stitt-Gohdes, 1997). I believe that men enter trades for the same reasons. It is important to remember that the choice to enter trades is seemingly simple, yet I will argue that it is the consequences of that choice that differ so greatly between women and men.

Understanding the Experience

In chapter two I brought to light the double binds women find themselves in with respect to trades. If one is seen as too feminine one is viewed as being too weak to do the job, and if another is seen as too masculine they are accused of being a lesbian. I also noted that women are not given any real choice to simply be seen as an individual worker. These can be interpreted as ‘scripts’ women are given when they join the trades. I will show that there is also a dominant script in which women are subjected to oppression and objectification at work and the overarching script is that women do not belong in trades. As discussed in chapter three, de Beauvoir understood that women and men do not start from a place of equality and that a woman’s choice is limited simply by being a woman (de Beauvoir, 1989). Below I will show that when women and men do make the same choice, the outcome / consequences can be very different. De Beauvoir understood that the oppression women are subjected to, by men and through no fault of their own, is simply because they were born female; the Other.

Kristene spoke of how being a female led one male coworker to assume she would also be doing the unpaid work in her home, and he insisted she must be a bad homemaker because she didn’t move a particular piece of furniture while sweeping. “Oh ya. And I didn’t move one

cabinet. There was no way that I really could move it without it falling over. So it didn't get swept underneath exceptionally well. My boss turns around and looks at me and is like, 'is this how you clean your house?' And so I turned around and told him that because of my shift, my husband does most of the housework. He looked at me like I was making the biggest joke in the world".

This example also shows how different white-collar and blue-collar work is particularly in discussion of gender stereotypes. Based on my own experiences I cannot foresee that type of interaction happening in a professional white collar setting any more, and if it did, I doubt it would be tolerated. I am not saying that it was tolerated in this case, as Kristene did respond to the inappropriate comment. What I am saying is that I believe the repercussions for her boss would have been much greater had he done this in a professional setting. In a white-collar setting more mechanisms would likely be in place to both discourage such statements, and provide women with avenues of complaint without the fear of being 'blacklisted' in the industry. This interaction also suggests that because she is female her boss assumes that she should be good at cleaning. He also implies that she is the one who should be doing it at home; not her husband. This demonstrates how there are men in the workforce who still believe a woman's role should consist of being a homemaker, and that having a husband who engages in doing unpaid labour at home is still a foreign concept to some. It disrupts the norm and has women working outside of their typical female roles when they go against the social scripts created for them as discussed by de Beauvoir. This shift towards working in the public sphere subsequently challenges the current male/female power dynamic. Women working in trades may inadvertently be changing the ways in which men on site view them, and it is then that we see the oppression take on a different form. Although Kristene's boss did not come right out and say it,

he does suggest that her 'natural role' should include domestic unpaid labour and that in not doing what he viewed as a good enough job at sweeping, she was not living up to that expectation; that myth that women belong inside the home. This demonstrates a subtle form of oppression in that her boss thought it was appropriate for her to be doing the stereotypical 'women's work' of cleaning and made the claim that she should be doing it better both at work and at home. He also made the assumption that because she is female she would automatically be doing the unpaid domestic work at home.

When analyzing interviews I found that several participants referenced instances at work where they were clearly objectified and reduced to being mentioned in relation to their female bodies. It was not always a direct comment to the participant. Participants also mentioned some of the ways in which parts of the female anatomy were used as a form of insult. There were also several stories told to me that indicated ways in which these women were oppressed at work although they did not name it as such. Throughout the following sections I will draw out these themes and discuss the impacts of these kinds of behaviour. I have chosen to look at these ideas together because, as I will show through the remainder of this chapter, these topics are fully intertwined and should be analyzed together. I will demonstrate that the objectification these women experience acts as a form of oppression. This oppression then limits their existential freedom thereby forcing them into bad faith.

Stories of Objectification

During my interview with Dena, she mentioned several instances where she had been clearly objectified. She was discussing how at times she has found herself in situations where she does not have a separate locker room from the men she is working with, and how

uncomfortable that situation can be. Unfortunately, this creates a situation that acts as an open invitation for her to be objectified.

So lots of times I would either go later than the men or earlier than the men to change and then sometimes, people would already be up in the locker rooms. If you were wearing anything low cut or short or anything tight, somebody will have something to say right off of the bat. Which is fine, it's like haha, ok that's funny but then they go to their buddy, and their buddies go to theirs and it spreads across the room that Dena was wearing something inappropriate at work.

Looking for clarification as to what would be deemed inappropriate clothing to wear at work she explained to me

Like anything really. And the past couple of months at work they were a lot better but at first, it was like, just anything, like my pink thing underneath here [pointing to her tank top] just little stuff like that. It's like oh did you see what Dena's wearing today? Oh, you should check her out when you go in the locker room. Ya you gotta see her. And then it became a game of who's in the locker while Dena's changing.

From a legal standpoint this behaviour could likely be classified as sexual harassment, but that word never enters our conversation. What was even more revealing was the way in which Dena seemed to justify the behaviour because it was not as bad currently as it had been in the first month of her employment. Again, she chooses not to complain to anyone, and that inadvertently allows the behaviour to continue. It is conceivable that she will not be the last target of that type of behaviour because the perpetrators are never confronted. Dena goes on to say

I don't know. It's just a game. It's just something that boys do I guess. And I've become a lot like the guys too. I've had to change a lot of my ways to be like them to try and understand them... to try and get in their head because at first it used to hurt me lots like what guys would say and everything or how they would treat me but then I had to understand if I was a guy, seeing a woman for the first time or whatever, then I had to respect them and what they felt. Because men, we all know only have two feelings, they're either hungry or horny so are you going to make them a sandwich, probably not. So you appeal to it, and I've just learned that I appeal to a guys' fantasy side and that's fine. Don't touch me, don't let me catch you staring at me but whatever. I know what I am to you. That's fine.

When Dena makes the choice to ignore the comments and stares or allows them to continue so long as she does not catch them in the act, she also allows for these types of behaviours to continue. Dena has self-imposed constraints on her behaviour. She has had to modify or change her behaviour or values in an effort to fit in or align with a group she does not agree with. Through this act of submission, she silently, though understandably, perpetuates the gendered roles of men and women on her worksite. This again demonstrates women position as the Other at work; she has become an object to be stared at and viewed in a sexual manner. At the same time, Dena provides a reductive understanding of men as capable only of two states of being, i.e., hungry or horny. This appears to be a coping mechanism that allows her to assure herself that the clearly inappropriate behavior is involuntary. It's as though she strips the men of agency because the alternative is too painful: that they are willingly and actively doing this to her. It is with this understanding that men are objectified by women in a way that serves to support their behaviours, i.e., boys will be boys. Dena mentioned that these types of incidences used to hurt her feelings, and when I questioned what her male colleagues would say that would hurt her feelings she replied, "Just like anything like oh Dena's got her tits out today, everybody look sort of thing, I'm like you guys, that hurts. Why would you say that? My tits aren't out, and you don't need to look at them." I was curious if she ever called them out on their inappropriate behaviours, and then she discussed how learning to deal with it forced her into a position of beginning to act more male and giving in to the dominants' behaviour, as suggested by Kanter's (1977) tokenism theory as well as the dominant script.

They're like oh don't be so sensitive. It's instantly like it's my fault. You learn to be like a guy. So any time that they'd make rude comments toward me I'd be like oh ya, well I see your ass crack, pull your pants up. Quit being a dick. Then I just learned how to be aggressive back without being mean. Without calling them out on their bullshit or being like, where's your wife? Quit being such a fuckin dick. I don't know, you just learn to be a lot like a guy.

In Dena's experience in the workplace she has experienced objectification and harassment and has repeatedly been reduced to her body parts. When she expressed a dislike for this behaviour, again she was not viewed as a whole person with fully realized goals and preferences. She was reduced to nothing more than a stereotype of the 'overly sensitive woman'. From there Dena adopts the same type of objectification. In an attempt to respond, she reduces the men to their body parts which could be construed as an attempt to move herself from the Object to the Subject. However, because Dena is the minority and is grossly underrepresented on the site, her participation in the narrative only serves to further strengthen the problem. While I do not believe she is actively seeking to perpetuate the problem, she is in a situation that leaves her little choice. Recognizing that there are laws and workplace policies in place, she should not be in a position where she has to defend herself. There should be an onus on both her colleagues to follow these laws and policies, as well as her employer who should be enforcing said policies.

When I spoke with Elli, she brought to light how much of the harassment women face on site will go unreported. Again, this demonstrates how some men are choosing this type of behaviour but do not face any real consequences for their actions, seemingly due to the acceptance of this behaviour within the industry. Elli was telling me a story about another woman on site and how she thought maybe she overreacted to the unwanted comments made to her by a male colleague:

Just a guy commented on her boobs or something like that and she has every right to do that but I guess it's a bit of a double standard. Women know that if you constantly go and try and charge guys with harassment to either get them out of the work site or get them fired you kind of get blacklisted. It's kind of the same with a guy though. If you're going to be whining about everything then no one is going to hire you because your name does go around eventually to different companies. Some of these guys are buddies from company to company. They know each other. Blacklisted means like they won't hire you because you're getting a bad rep.

Elli is bringing to light how close and connected many people in the industry are and how if a woman speaks up, as she has every right to do, this could limit her career and find her blacklisted. If Elli, or another woman in trades, gets blacklisted, they will struggle to find work in industry simply for speaking out against behaviour that is clearly unwarranted, and at times illegal in terms of harassment and legal standards in place to protect workers from that type of behaviour. Blacklisting a woman in trades acts as a form of oppression by limiting her ability to continue in the industry, either by remaining employed or finding another job. Again, this demonstrates how women are controlled and oppressed in this type of work environment by the men in control of their careers.

During her interview, Chelsea gave an example of having to deal with inappropriate behaviour by a male colleague. She said that she usually gives the men she works with one chance to rectify their behaviour. If she feels that what they are saying or doing is inappropriate, she reacts quickly:

One time I was drilling a hole and I was kneeling down to drill the hole in the concrete and there was a guy that was standing here and he said, while you're down there... And I'm like NO, that will not be tolerated because...and then he instantly realized what he had done. I find with the construction there's a lot more hard rules on how you conduct yourself around women. They have already pre-established that sexual harassment or any kind of innuendo like that will not be tolerated so the men are almost afraid to say what they want in front of the women which I'm completely new to because coming from being a waitress and getting harassed all of the time. To not be harassed in the construction site more than anywhere else is like mind boggling to me because there is mostly men there but they've all been told, the women are coming (so) act accordingly.

Here Chelsea points out that there are policies in place and yet above we see instances where those policies do little to protect female trades workers. Her way of coping seems to be to face the situation and directly confront her coworkers. Simply put, both the men on site and employers are aware of said policies, but little is done to enforce them. Her choice of words in saying "the women are coming" indicates ways in which men may feel threatened by the

increased number of women entering trades careers. Chelsea went on to describe what she meant by “the women are coming”:

You know, if I was a man I would be scared because women will change the dynamic of the work world. They will bring things to the table that the men never thought of. So as soon as the women get in there the world as they know it will no longer be the same. Just like the old boys, they can't wrap their head around doing all of the safety bullshit before. They don't want to fill out their field level risk assessments. They don't want to do any of that. They just want to go and do the job without any thought of safety and they are the hardest ones to train in this new safe way of working. It's easier for them to let women take over in the trades than it is for them to change their way of thinking. As those guys are going and dying off, the women are coming. It's true because it's only the older boys that think like this. I've had it where I was on a site with this much older man and he, what were we talking about, oh, how Walmart pays women less to do the same job that a man does and he's like, that's how it should be. And holy shit, oh he should not have said that. So, me and him got into this big verbal thing and by the end of it I'm yelling and telling him, you're going to be dead in the next 15-20 years and you know who's going to take your place, a woman!

In the example above, it appears that Chelsea is self-identifying as the Other from an interesting perspective that seems to somewhat disagree with de Beauvoir's perspective. She appears to view being the Other as powerful instead of viewing it as a form of oppression. Chelsea is not saying that men need to give up their power or change their story. Instead she explains, how from her perspective, some men are so committed to the current power dynamics, and their current roles, that they are failing to see women as a legitimate threat. While men are preoccupied with maintaining their power and status on the job site, they are simultaneously underestimating and undermining women. Women, in this example, are focused on learning the job and doing it better than the men. Her idea of ‘the women are coming’ suggests no one thinks women can do the work, and do it well, and that is exactly what is giving them the ‘in’ in some instances. She also mentions being harassed while being a waitress and that she is surprised that she isn't harassed more in trades. I was surprised that she would expect those behaviours in trades, but not in restaurants. Restaurants are notorious for forcing servers to dress in particular

ways that actually encourage objectification by customers (Szymasnski & Mikorski, 2017). It should be quite concerning that women expect to be harassed in any place of employment these days. This is yet another example of how current legislation and laws are not actually protecting female employees from experiencing harassment on the job.

Chelsea points to the impact women entering the trades is having and how it is changing the dynamics of the work world. What is of interest here is that her male colleague suggested that women do not belong in trades and that women are actually starting to hold the men on site accountable for issues around such things as safety which is intimidating to them. She clearly works at defending not only herself but other women as well. She also speaks to the importance of equal pay for equal work. When women are not paid equal wages for equal work this only serves as another form of oppression. In this case it would be considered a type of economic oppression which ultimately begins to limit choice.

During her interview Kristene also shared another story where the objectification was not directed towards her, but to other women on site or to women in general. She told me that women in trades are often referred to as 'split tails' and how frustrated she is with the term. The term is used as slang for a woman's genitals. She went on to tell me about overhearing male colleagues deciding where, or with whom, a woman on site should work: "Holy crap. Some of the stuff that they told me, oh ya, I was told by one of them was that ya no, she's fuckable. I want her working near me. Nope, that's a two-ply paper bag thick, she goes over there. And people wonder why I'm a feminist". She went on to apologize for complaining. I assured her that in telling her story she is not complaining. Here we can identify that women are clearly not encouraged to share experiences of their work, particularly if they are viewed as negative experiences. The fact that she apologizes for telling her truth is concerning. The behaviours she

is describing is showing the patriarchal system that is still prevalent in trades work. Despite much of the negative interactions she has had, Kristene also spoke of hope for a better, more inviting future for women in trades. She noted that she has witnessed more women entering trades since she started her career.

While it may not be an intentional act of trying to hide the fact that they are female, women in trades seem to be unable to mask their femaleness even when dressing in full gear which can be oversized and ill-fitting for women. While I was speaking with Lori, she explained how, as females in trades, women are under constant scrutiny at work in terms of both how they do the job and how they look. In a piece from her narrative, she explains that men are aware of the ways in which women are gazed upon at work and noted that men do not endure the same stares. She tells of a conversation with a male coworker who admits he would be very uncomfortable if he were the one being 'looked' at in that manner:

Because if you're walking through a building site, it doesn't matter if you got the heaviest coveralls, a high vis vest on and your hard hat and safety glasses on and maybe even a mask, they know that you're female. They know. We just won't walk like guys with your steel toe boots on. They know. I had a young man once say to me, 'Lori, how do you do it? How do you walk through the site when every single guy on every level of this construction site is watching you?' And I go, I just ignore it. They're just looking all of the time. And like the guys, they can't get over that. They're like, that would freak me out. Well, it would (freak you out) because we don't do that to you.

It seems as though on the job site women cannot avoid being objectified in some fashion. The sexualization of women continues despite their dress or behaviour and attempting to hide their female bodies. This would suggest that merely existing as a woman is cause for objectification on job sites in this industry.

Katherine recounted a day at work where she realized that something as simple as what she chose to wear when leaving the job site creates a negative consequence for her at work. She

was discussing what another woman working on site wore on her way home from work, acknowledging that what women wear impacts the way they are viewed on site.

We were actually working in [REDACTED] but it was an industrial site and she did really good. She never complained, she never went in for too many warm-up breaks, she always did her job, she worked hard, showed up every day even if she was sick. Then spring hit. The guys loved her, never had a single bad thing to say about her. You know like, oh Megan, she works hard, she's great, she's going to do a great job. Then spring hit and it warmed up and she took her coveralls off one day and walked across site in short shorts and from then on because I was in the office with a broken collarbone so they let me work in the office, and everything I heard in the office, oh Megan is a floozie after that. So, you really have to just, I don't know, but she walked across site in serious like Lululemon short shorts and I was like, oh girl, everyone's opinion of you just did a complete 180.

So even despite Katherine talking about Megan as being capable of her job and not being a 'complainer,' Megan ends up in a situation where clothing choice shifted how she was viewed as an employee. Megan essentially went from being a tradesperson to, in Katherine's words, a floozie, because the weather was nice and she wore shorts while walking off site. This idea that Katherine is acknowledging (the changes in other people's perceptions of Megan for wearing short shorts) is in line with another type of objectification: slut shaming. This term has been identified as "the tradition of besmirching women for presumed sexual activity" (Hackman, Pember, Wilkerson, Burton, & Usdan, 2017, p. 698). It was simply a clothing choice that somehow made Megan look as though she was promiscuous. The idea of slut shaming is "about sexual inequality and reinforces male dominance and female subordination" (E. A. Armstrong, Hamilton, Armstrong, & Seeley, 2014, p. 101). This is yet another double bind faced by women in trades. The consequence of choice of clothing would likely not have been an issue for men leaving site after work.

What Lori describes as her experience of being stared at and people at work knowing she's a female, despite her body being fully covered, aligns with Young (1980) when she

describes the differences in women's strides, how they swing their arms when they walk, and even the different ways in which women and men carry objects when they walk. In her article *Throwing Like a Girl* Young (1980) links phenomenology with de Beauvoir's existentialism and explores the ways in which women are objectified within society and often gazed upon as objects. Young (1980), like de Beauvoir, argues that objectifying women assists in keeping women in their place. To me this suggests that this type of behaviour will continue if nothing else changes. Some men could use this consistent objectification to prevent more women entering the trades, thereby maintaining their position of power and keeping their strong hold on the last male frontier that is trades. To follow on with what Lori shared with regard to being identified as female, despite wearing the same clothing as her male coworkers, Amy also expressed the desire to find clothing that would fit a female body, but without simultaneously announcing to everyone on site that she is female. She discussed the awkward fit of Carharts (coveralls typically worn in the field) and explained that she also struggled to find appropriate-fitting workwear. Another obstacle that she encountered was when she was trying to find work-appropriate clothing that did not make her stand out more than she already does. The issue in this case was the colour of clothing she found:

Do I need to announce to the world, look token vag here? It just seems that I go into Mark's Work Wear House to find boots. There is a plethora of boots for men. Different sizes, different styles, you got some that zip up the sides, different laces, it's awesome. Go over to women's, pink, pink, pink, pink and the only ones that will fit my feet are the wide ones and they got one style. They're steel toe. You can get composite and you know, it's like oh I got a choice of 6. Hard hats. You need a hard hat, oh don't you want this pink one. Oh, you need a welding jacket, a women's welding jacket, it's going to take 6 to 8 weeks for us to order it in and it's pink. Feminizing something doesn't mean making it pink. Feminizing means making available for women.

Her choices of pink, pink, or pink create a situation in which she is feminized through dress.

This makes her stand out more while she clearly wants to fit in. Following the discussion around

what women wear on site, Kristene also indicated a potential way in which industry suppliers can begin to make something as simple as work-appropriate clothing and personal protection equipment better suited to women without forcing them to stand out more by having to wear pink. This lack of access to gear that fits properly implies a lack of value placed on women's needs and wants in the workplace. Women do not have the same access to safety and comfort as men do. In this case, if a woman wants equal access to properly fitting safety equipment and workwear, she must be labeled by gender constructs and wear pink, pink, or pink. These are not options. Instead they create a lack of choice.

Stories of Oppression

During our interview, Corinne brought to light that to be 'more masculine' (stronger) than any of the men one works with can also pose a problem, creating another double bind for women in trades:

Like I lift heavyweight. I do it on purpose. I go to the gym every single day of the week and lift heavy weights so that when I'm out at work and something needs done, I can do it as well as any man if not quite a bit better. And I don't ever point that out. I just do it because you can't [point it out]. It's social suicide at work to point out to a man that you can do more than him. You can't do that.

Corinne counters the idea that women are not physically strong enough to do the job. Women are put in a position of having to worry not only about their own performance on the job, but also about not making men feel threatened by their presence. It may come as a shock to some men on-site that there may be women who are just as strong, if not stronger, than men are. This shock could conceivably create a situation in which women are viewed as more of a threat than previously thought, as a woman with physical strength would upset the gendered roles and

dominant script in trades. Corinne also avoids having any discussions with her male colleagues that may point out that she can actually do the job better than some of them. She referred to it as ‘social suicide’ but I would suggest this is another type of double bind for women in trades, insofar as if women cannot do the work, then men were right in saying that women do not belong in trades. Yet, if women do the heavy work as well as men do, women will be viewed as threatening. In her case, Corrine chooses to allow her male colleagues to believe they are better at the job than she is.

In Corinne’s example, she talks about being physically stronger than some of her male colleagues. In her case, she makes the choice to hide her strength in order to avoid a potentially uncomfortable situation where some of her male colleagues may feel threatened by her strength. Working in such a male-dominated field, Corinne is pointing out that it is conceivable that some men may feel threatened by women ‘taking their jobs,’ which may create a situation where some men work to keep women out of the industry.

Corinne compared working in trades to navigating a constant threat: “Oh it’s, being a woman in a man’s world. It’s a labyrinth of snake pits and traps at every corner. You get around one and there’s another one waiting right there for you to slap you upside the head with a reality check”. When she uses this example it seems as though, despite working hard at her job, having to prove herself constantly is a way of expressing a type of oppression as it exists on any given job site. Chelsea also spoke to the challenges involved with job sites being short-term and having to move around to different sites or work with different crews, bringing to light the idea of women being ‘tested’ when they start a new job:

Like I’m not trying to be one of those men haters or anything like that but we do things differently. We are queen multitaskers. So, you can throw a bunch of stuff at us and you know it’s all going to get done well because well one, we have more to prove because when a company hires on a woman to give them a chance and then that woman has to

fight for her keep. What I've seen so far on, like especially on the commercial site, because you have all of these superintendents and all these different jobs, so you work on one and when that job is finished, that is your make or break. So, you have that one project to prove yourself that you're worth to be sent on to another one. If you're no good then they lay you off at that point and a lot of people don't think about this because they think, oh well I did such a good job at the last site, I'm just going to coast at the next one but it's not the same because every time you show up at a new site, you have to prove yourself all over again and that's how you keep your job. You show them that you're valuable and that you're learning and that you want to do this.

Chelsea is explaining how simply being female creates an unfair advantage in that she has to prove she belongs in the industry every time she starts on a new jobsite or with a new crew.

Throughout this project it became clear that women face a very gendered situation in this type of work in that they will always be viewed as female first, the Other, creating a situation where a bias is formed when men encounter one negative experience working with a female tradesperson. For example, Katherine stated that, "Sometimes, with a new job you have to come in, you have to earn your respect and everything and show them that you know what you're doing. You have to make them respect you too though. It's hard to find that ground of joking around and letting it go too far".

Katherine also spoke of how a woman's actions can impact other women around them: "I just, the one thing that I wish girls would understand is that your actions go a long way in how you get seen and it's a small industry and word gets around. Like my reputation, for sure is that I'm mouthy. Because I don't put up with lazy people, I really don't. I do not put up with someone that is lazy. Especially if it is going to make me look bad."

During her interview, Anita explained how she has encountered a scenario where a male colleague implied she has somehow used her sexuality to get her job: "Well, you know, I think when most come out to site when you get brand new people, they are like oh my god. Like what is this, is this some kind of a joke? Or did I get my job because of I, you know, slept with

somebody or did anything? You know?” This is clearly an instance of women on site being reduced to being female. If the presumption is made that a woman has somehow exchanged sexual favours to advance her career it creates a situation that is simultaneously sexualizing, slut shaming, and assuming gendered incompetence. These types of comments about using her sexuality to get a job have nothing to do with her ability to do the work and everything to do with the fact that she is female.

During my interview with Anita, she expressed her thoughts and ideas, but first apologized for it with a caveat of not being a ‘man hater’ thus again expressing her loyalty or support to and for the dominant script. At the same time she outlined how this narrative forces her to re-establish her credibility and value every time she works with a new superintendent. Anita highlights the added pressure put on women for merely being women and explains how one female can become representative of all women, showing us how women are universalized within this field.

When a girl comes out to the site, I say you gotta work harder. Right? Because, it’s just (that if), one girl does one thing bad, it makes us all look bad. And we can’t get rid of it but it’s the truth. It’s the stigma. Like this chick (doesn’t) make it, it’s (on) all of us. But, I can say that I have a useless guy. Horrible right, but, we’ll just kick him to the curb or get rid of him. Those kinds of things.

I asked Anita if she thought she may reach a point where she will no longer have to prove herself every day.

I don’t know. I have a hard time thinking did it feel like I worked hard enough today? Or, you know, I don’t know if it’s just me being more motivated to just want to do a good job. It just feels like I have to prove myself too because I got into this position [as a foreman]. I don’t want to fail because a girl has never been a foreman at [REDACTED] before. A girl has never been a supervisor and when I fail it’s going to make us look bad. So, I feel like I really don’t want to fail because I don’t want to be that story. Oh, this guy, he couldn’t make it right [and indicates there are not consequences for other men at work]. Well, this girl didn’t make it, so we’ll never put a girl in this position again.

What Anita is expressing here is the idea that if a woman makes a mistake on the job site or does

not work out well on that job, suddenly men do not want to work with women, but on the other hand, when a male does not work out well, they simply fire him and hire another male, suggesting the industry is ripe with male privilege. This male privilege essentially says if a woman screws up at work, I now distrust all women and will not hire another one, but if it is a male that screws up at work, I simply fire him and replace him with another man. This privilege is also another type of double bind for women and can also be viewed as one of the subtle ways women are oppressed at work because from a Feminist Existential viewpoint, it is the subtle ways that women are oppressed that were a focus of de Beauvoir's work. On one hand, it's a universalizing impulse against the token, and on the other, it's the presumption of overall competence of the dominants. Interestingly she also uses the phrase "when I fail it's going to make us (all) look bad", and not IF I fail. She views herself as having to deal with intense pressure to be successful in her role so as to not have an impact on other women in the organization or in the overall industry. Again, the consequences of her actions go beyond herself and yet she describes how her male colleagues can make mistakes without impacting all other males in the industry. During our discussion, Anita spoke about being at on-site meetings and blatantly hearing supervisors saying, "I don't want any girls," meaning they did not want any women on their crews. Openly saying that women are not welcome can be legally labeled as discrimination, and yet it seems to go on unchecked in this industry. I inquired as to how she deals with these types of situations:

I was like just because you have had a bad one, one bad experience with a girl, and you didn't know how to handle it properly you feel that it's, it's ok to just brush everybody off. Brush all of the girls off. But then the other supervisors say, hey well, there's only one other, he said well I got this Sara, she's excellent, I want to move her up. So really, it is if you look at the big picture there is either the superstar, superstars or we just don't really keep them around.

What is interesting about this discussion is the pressure women feel. Not only do they need to do their jobs well, but they need to be, as Anita put it, superstars. Women must work harder in an effort to gain credibility for their entire gender. She spoke of warning other women, “If you are average, you may not last. You gotta tell her right. Because I always told her, maybe it’s not right for me to be saying that we gotta prove ourselves and make sure that we’re the best out there. Because there is no middle class for us.” The construction trades industry expects women to work twice as hard as what would be required of their male counterparts just to prove they are capable of doing the work.

Corinne also echoed the sentiment of how men in charge will often see women as a disadvantage, refusing to give women a fair chance or see them as equals:

Give me a chance. And maybe some people took chances and it went horribly wrong and now they’re burned forever. It happens. I know it does. I’ve seen train wrecks. I’ve seen it show up and I’ve heard horrible things said to me afterward like good thing you’re not like that. That’s why we don’t hire women. I’m one of them. I don’t know why you assume that I’m something different but...I’m just ya. I just feel like there’s something really important that I’m supposed to say and I don’t know what it is.

Lori explained that oftentimes women just have to put their heads down and do their work knowing that some of their male colleagues already see them as unable to do the job.

You know what, I had a superintendent..., he was little bit of a chauvinist and he was a dick and he just like, oh well, how are you going to lift this and how are you going to do that and I guess we are going to be carrying your ass and stuff like that. And I’m just like well you’ll see and I walked away. I’m like you’re a superintendent; you shouldn’t even really be talking to me because I was an apprentice at the time.

I asked how she dealt with the situation: “Oh I just, exactly what I said. I just well we’ll see and walked off. I can’t change people’s minds with words. I can only change people’s minds with my actions.”

When I spoke with Sandra, she also questioned if men on site are threatened by women entering trades:

I don't know. I don't want to think that men just don't like us because they are just like afraid of us. It's probably what it is. We are just competition. So like, I think that it's a lot of more awkward or man's men that work in trades so that's the thing too, I'm not like the girliest girl but I mean I'm still a girl. I still like wearing makeup and getting dressed up and I have emotions and I cry and stuff. I think that sort of clash, we are just sort of looked at like, I don't know, I just kind of have, a little speculation but I think that a lot of men are probably just like, ya women, they are all weak and what not and once you prove yourself to them then they'll see that you're good but I mean you always have to prove yourself first. No man is ever going to be like, oh yay, a woman. There's always like oh great, now we're going to have to do more work because we have this weak woman working with us or something. I feel that not all men must think that way.

Sandra is again showing us ways in which women are all viewed as both too weak and unwelcome in the world of trades. She speaks of having to continually prove herself simply because she's a female, and yet she speaks to the idea of hope that not all men think that way.

Because men in trades have always been the majority, they have not experienced objectification in a way that forces them to reflect on their own behaviours, specifically their treatment of women and their motivation for sexist behaviours. I argue that perceiving women as having goals and desires may feel somewhat threatening to some men because a woman's goals may conflict with men's goals. From an existentialist viewpoint, this can be linked back to the idea of 'the look'. Men may find themselves in a position that forces them to see women not as the Object, but as an equal, thereby recognizing they are not the only beings capable of being the Subject. Focusing in on a male-dominated industry, it is conceivable that men feel particularly threatened in this type of environment because they are being challenged on what has traditionally been their own 'turf.' "The male domination of trades is maintained through hegemonic masculinity..." (Smith, 2013a, p. 862), meaning that masculinity is used as a way for

men to maintain the dominant position in the industry, thereby giving them control. Men may feel as though allowing women into trades threatens their masculinity in ways they are unaware of. It is also conceivable that by allowing women on the site men can somehow be emasculated and their livelihood threatened. They are not only competing with other men, but now with women, for jobs, promotions, and praise. Having competent women around threatens the patriarchal order, the system that allows a culture of unchecked aggression, bad behavior and sexist language. It also presents a potential loss of power as women take on roles that place them in authority over men.

We know that jobs, masculinity, and work identity are intertwined (Livingston & Luxton, 1989) and it would stand to reason that trades work is one of those places where this would be most relevant. Some men on site may recognize a type of tension but cannot name it as feeling threatened. Some men may only now be viewing women as competition: competing for roles, salary, a challenge to the status quo. This perceived competition results in an understanding that women are somehow barriers or objects blocking access to the goals of their male colleagues. I believe that this sense of competition may lead men to a feeling of insecurity which, in turn, leads them to attempt to highlight women's weaknesses and femininity in an effort to devalue and undermine women's credibility. In terms of feminist existentialism, some men have continued to benefit from having women as the Other and having to 'look' at them as equals begins to undermine the patriarchal workplace. This creates a paradox in which men feel as though women are challenging their masculinity, so they turn around and criticize those same women for their perceived femininities. Men are not used to having to compete as equals with women and do not see them as a physical threat (S. P. Morris, 1999). Therefore, having them on

the construction job site may threaten men in ways they do not quite recognize or understand (Livingston and Luxton, 1989).

Dena talked about how men seem to view women as weak and incapable of doing the job they were hired for. “My first three months there, even though I was a welder, they wouldn’t let me weld because they didn’t think I was capable. I got hired on to weld, and they were like we need to toughen you up sort of thing. Here’s a grinder start grinding and I’m like, no not again. So, for 3 months I spent 12 hours a day grinding”. This was done despite the fact that she already had experience as a welder. Perhaps this can be identified as a way of forcing her out early. ‘Punishing’ her by giving her monotonous work that was well below her skill level, they may have been hoping she would give up and go away, thereby protecting their male domain.

Dena’s expression of independence and strength created a space where the men she worked with felt that they needed to control her. “I don’t know if it was my general foreman or who it was, and they thought that right off the bat. Holy crap this girl is really weak. She’s really quiet she doesn’t do anything. But then when me and my lead hand first started getting into it, they were like, she’s got a mouth on her. Either we need to control this or we need to direct her anger or whatever it was”. When she spoke out and defended herself, their views turned more towards viewing her more as an object that they needed to control and oppress. Only after standing up for herself was she viewed as a threat. Dena went on to explain that she had disputes with her lead hand (one of her supervisors) and that arguing with him was ultimately what changed how she was viewed. Originally viewing her as weak and timid and then viewing her as a threat. Neither of these views allows for Dena to simply be a welder doing her job.

When speaking to the difficulties in finding her first opportunity and how difficult it is for women to find an apprenticeship, Corinne identified another type of oppression on the work site: ways in which women are being denied the opportunity to learn and increase their skill set.

They used my data background so I was making spreadsheets and testing motors and recording data and organizing that data and presenting it in a legible form for somebody who doesn't do data. I loved it and I got to learn a lot about sizing conductors and breakers and fuses and the things that electricians are supposed to know about and then I finished that and the guy wouldn't let me touch a tool. He's like, no, you label things, you do the paperwork. I'm like Stan, you realize that I'm an electrician, right? I'm not your secretary, you need to do your payroll. You need to do that stuff. I need to learn how a wire connects into doodads because I don't work with doodads and I'm supposed to work with doodads and he's like, there's lots of time for that in your apprenticeship, don't worry. Sorry dude. I'm outta here.

She left after six months of work and reflected on how three months of her time working there was spent using a label maker. Corinne then went to another job and encountered a similar experience, but this time she saw it as a more obvious issue of choosing to teach and train male apprentices over female apprentices

... and he said that you're an apprentice and that's just what we got. I'm like, so we've got two apprentices on this particular crew, one of them being a 6'5 guy, first year, who wasn't really committed to being an electrician. He hadn't done the entry exam or anything. He eventually did end up getting punted out of the trade because he couldn't do the entry exam. But I confronted my foreman. I'm like, you've got 2 apprentices here. You've chosen to put me on management of cable and you've chosen to let this one (guy) terminate things and he's doing electrical work. Am I doing something wrong? What can I do to improve so that I'm learning my trade? He said, no no, you're doing a great job. I put you there because I could count on you. Ok. Thanks. Turned that frown right upside down [said in an obvious sarcastic tone].

Corinne's experience demonstrates how even when women are capable of doing the job, and completing the work competently, they are still denied opportunities to learn when tasks can be given to a male counterpart. She spoke on several instances of being treated "like a leper," and

how none of her male colleagues would allow her into their inner circle. Interestingly, she doesn't believe that all of the negative behaviours, or limiting her learning, is intentional:

I honestly think he was not trying to be a dick but missing the point completely. I'm an apprentice. I'm not here to learn to sort things alphabetically. I'm good at that. I've got the alphabet nailed by this age. I think it's an ongoing struggle for me of constantly getting put in this material handling box throughout my whole apprenticeship and now here I am, fourth year and I've done nothing but handle materials since June.

I asked Corinne how that would impact her apprenticeship and her overall learning at work:

I suspect that I could get my ticket whether I fix that or not but it's going to make me a terrible journeyman. I will have no confidence. I will have no skills. I will have no experience. I will have superseded the entire point of the apprenticeship program.

In her experience, we can see ways in which women are in an oppressive situation and are not given the same opportunities as their male counterparts. These women are being set up for failure that will likely lead to a situation in which someone could say that women are unable to do their job. In reality it has nothing to do with their ability and everything do with not being given the same opportunity to learn as their male counterparts which is a subtle form of oppression.

Corinne raises a very important point. The whole purpose of the apprenticeship program is to teach potential employees the practical skills needed to do their respective jobs in a competent and confident manner. However, preconceptions about female competencies are limiting women's access to appropriate training and subsequently crippling their ability to work confidently and independently once they are ticketed. The lack of investment by an employer may force women to seek alternate employment, in an effort to build greater competency, which instead may reflect negatively on their level of commitment.

Women are having to request or fight for their access to information and training, taking it upon themselves to learn what they need to learn in some other way, or leave the trade. Again, this could conceivably create an environment where women are discreetly pushed out of industry. Subsequently, these same women are then penalized for not having the same experiences as men when they have completed their education and are on the job site. This creates yet another double bind for women in trades and shows us how they are perceived in the industry and subsequently undervalued. If female apprentices are viewed as irrelevant and unworthy of teaching, their access to technical development is limited. Afterwards, women on site are viewed as less competent than men because they have less technical skill, but only because they have been denied the opportunity to develop their skill set on the job. This development of skills is an imperative component to completing an apprenticeship and going to a new job site ready and capable of doing the job they were hired to do. When this happens, we can see how women's 'Otherness' is systematically reinforced and then penalized, perpetuating the narrative that women are either not fit for the job or incapable of doing the work.

Dena found herself in a different type of oppressive situation. She agreed to work for a man without any kind of pay for a week, just to prove she was worthy of being taken on as an apprentice. That man eventually agreed to take her on as an apprentice, but not before he exploited her for free labour. However, she knew nothing about the process of tracking an apprenticeship or the requirement of having your hours signed off on in a Blue Book (a requirement for apprentices). She did not realize these requisite aspects of the apprenticeship process until she overheard other tradespeople talking about their Blue Books. When she finally asked to become an apprentice (and at that point she was running the shop and had two other people reporting to her that she had hired and trained), she found out he had been 'red flagged'

or unable to legally train her as an apprentice. She then looked for other work where she could legitimately work towards her apprenticeship hours. Despite being overtly taken advantage of, Dena was not deterred from continuing to work in trades.

Summary

The focus of this section of my analysis was to identify both the overt and, more importantly for this research, the subtle ways in which women in trades are subjected to objectification and oppression, all while recognizing that choice is limited for women in the industry and the consequences of choice for them are much different than those of their male counterparts.

Through the analysis of the narratives I was able to identify themes of Otherness as it relates to the workplace, and the differing ways in which women are not only objectified and oppressed, but inadvertently end up objectifying and oppressing each other while sticking to the dominant script that has been created for them by men in the trades industry. In many instances discussed in this chapter we see how women are openly viewed as nothing more than female: the Object, the Other.

Despite the legislation and laws that have been created to encourage women to enter trades work, women still face outright harassment while working in the trades. What we learn through this chapter is how both objectification and oppression are being used as tools to keep women in the role of the Other. When a person is not free to choose, they are in a state of oppression. De Beauvoir's idea of women as the absolute Other prevents women from being authentically free and free to make choices. Without freedom women cannot escape oppression.

As noted in the previous example from my interviews regarding a woman at work wearing 'short shorts' while leaving the site, we saw how another woman immediately

acknowledged how the employee's decision to wear those particular shorts would change her coworkers' opinion of her simply because of what she had chosen to wear, not while working, but merely while leaving the site because it was hot out. Women are then engaging in the same type of objectifying behaviour that we tend to see as a male activity, and yet in the case of this type of work environment we see women taking part in the objectification of women as well. This begins to also unpack the ways in which women interact and engage with other women in the trades. While this act of objectification may be unintentional, it can be said that the woman in the interview who was telling the story about another female on site was in fact objectifying her and contributing to a dominant script where women are viewed merely as body parts and physical objects of sexual desire. In the case of women objectifying women in trades it could be argued that part of that is due to women still being tokens on site and in the industry. As mentioned earlier, Kanter (1977a) notes that tokens will often take on the actions of the dominants in an attempt to fit in. It would be plausible that women who have been in trades longer have been indoctrinated into the dominant script and begin to engage in the same behaviours as the dominants as a means of survival. In doing so they inadvertently end up objectifying and oppressing other females at work. In the following section I will demonstrate how these experiences then put women in a position in which their existential freedom is limited and they subsequently end up working in bad faith.

Stories of Limited Freedom and Bad Faith

In the previous sections I showed how women are both objectified and oppressed at work. In this section I will show how and why these experiences ultimately limit their existential freedom. Because their existential freedom is limited, there is little choice for these women but

to work in bad faith. I will also demonstrate that it is women's Otherness that creates a lack of choice and subsequently limits their freedom.

Men are not born with an idea of women as Other or as less than, but they learn that behaviour through our socially constructed reality. This reality is then further enforced by working in an environment dominated by men, where men are free to choose to objectify women because they are following what de Beauvoir would call the dominant script. According to Sartre, men are in a position to exercise their absolute freedom through choice. What I am arguing is that the impact of men's choices on job sites creates and maintains the inequality between men and women. This inequality continues to give preference to men over women, ensuring women do not have the same access to 'choice.' Hekman (2015, p. 148) summarizes de Beauvoir's work as the recognition that a woman cannot be separated from her situation in society and that "this situation defines everything: her identity, the possibility of freedom, and the possibility of change."

To take this a step further, women's limited access to choice in an existential framework limits women's ability to become authentic Beings, thus forcing women into a position of otherness, anxiety, and existential inauthenticity. Subsequently, women are forced to live, or in the case of this research, work in bad faith. Men effectively choose to treat women a particular way, and when their behaviour is not called into question—if they are not 'objectified' by 'the look'—then, according to Sartre, there is no reflexive action on their part, so their way of conducting themselves stays as the norm or the natural (S. P. Morris, 1999). What becomes important here is that we recognize how women are forced into situations where they must engage in scripts not of their making. De Beauvoir speaks of a child who comes into the universe that is not of her making where she may choose to submit or resist the dominant script

(Hoagland, 1999). The dualistic choice of 'submit' or 'resist' translates easily to the experiences of women in the trades. During her interview, Dena suggested that women just have to deal with the situation, which is reflective of de Beauvoir's ideas that women are thrown into a work space that they did not create, nor one that they can control. I asked her if she had any ideas of how to handle some of the mistreatment women experience at work:

Don't start something that you can't finish. Because this is their world and if you're going to start that then they aren't going to be nice to you and that's not what you want. Thick skin and lots and lots of humour because there comes a point where if you deal with it long enough, they'll be like, oh ok, she's ok.

Dena is expressing support for de Beauvoir's option of submitting to the dominant script she experiences in the workplace, suggesting that resistance would result in an even less desirable circumstance. Implicit in this quote is the notion that resisting the script would not yield meaningful change to the current narrative. Dena's suggestion for women to have a thick skin, as means of survival in the industry, was echoed by several other participants such as when Anita was talking about the other women she knows who work in trades. "They are all thick-skinned girls. Don't let anyone say anything to them, right. Anything inappropriate or anything. They'll just give it right back to them. So, it's kind of like one of the guys right"? I then asked Anita if being one of the guys makes work easier and her response was a very clear yes. More interesting here is that women appear to accept the dominant script as the norm and may even recognize the consequence of their limited choices: submit, resist, or quit.

Corinne talked about how she identifies as a feminist but tries to minimize that part of herself while on the job site. When I asked about not going to work in that mindset she explained how she makes the choice not to focus on her feminism in order to avoid negative consequences:

You can't. You're the enemy if you do that. You're absolutely the enemy. Like God forbid that I point out that every single insult within this lunchroom that has to do with female genitalia. Can you not find a better way to insult a human being other than to refer to them as whatever female part that you pick today?

Choosing to use parts of the female body as an insult can be construed as a threatening stance towards women on site, showing yet another way to remind women that they do not belong and that they are the Other. I then inquired as to whether she ever responds to what is being said on site, or in this case, the lunchroom:

I try to keep my mouth shut because that ostracizing thing happens immediately when you do say something and I have to choose. Do I want to say the right thing or do I want to say nothing so that I don't feel like crap sitting with these guys every day because I do. I feel shitty. Once I get to that point and I've tested the waters a few times. You don't have a lot of give. It's a very tenuous relationship if you manage to get accepted into that little club. Very tenuous if you so much as peep about that kind of thing. It doesn't go well.

Corinne's examples highlight several interesting factors. First, Corinne does not feel free to act or choose as she would outside of her worksite, therefore she has placed self-imposed limitations on her freedom and subsequently her authenticity. These self-imposed limitations subsequently contribute to the ongoing narrative of the workplace, one where women and their bodies are viewed as the lesser, to such an extent that calling a man by a woman's body part is insulting. Second, Corinne clearly hates the dynamic of the lunchroom conversations but strives to be accepted by the group of men who enact the behaviour she despises. Arguably, Corinne's sense of self-preservation is observed in her silence and in her efforts to be accepted by the group. However, what she forfeits in an effort to achieve acceptance is her choice to do what she wants to do, as she is constrained by the gendered roles on site. From a Sartrean existential perspective, she acts in bad faith because she denies her own freedom; however, from a de Beauvoirian perspective there is no choice because of the constraints within the workplace. She has

convinced herself that she has no real choice here because she is aware that if she acts according to what she knows is the 'right' thing to do (i.e., speak out) there will be consequences for her actions in the form of being ostracized from the group.

While I was speaking with Kristene, she also mentioned needing to have a thick skin. "As a trades woman you're expected to have a thicker skin and that's understandable". When I asked why she thought a thick skin was needed she replied with a description about what 'normal' behaviour was for her male colleagues: "it's normal for them to be brash and it's normal for them to be rude and it's normal for them to be nasty." She also spoke to the fact that "everyone" told her that she needed to deal with inappropriate behaviours from her male colleagues, "...that brashness and profanity and sexism and racism and every other ism in the English language is par for the course and this is just how it is. You must expect this. You must learn to deal with this. Why?" When she added "why" on to the end of her sentence I told her that was a good question. She is clearly questioning the reasoning for this type of behaviour and questioning the dominant script. Kristene went on to say, "Because we allow it in trades. Would we allow it in business? Would we allow it in Education? Would we allow it in any other industry? But it's perfectly fine in this industry. No". Kristene went on to speak to how she feels as though the overall trades industry may never change its attitude toward women.

It's a boy's club. It's been a boy's club for darn near forever and don't expect it to change. In fact, just roll with it. Grow thick skin and who cares if they rip you up one side and down the other for nothing. That's how they do it to the guys (too). Just feel proud that you were one of them. No.

Here Kristene described how the "old boys" club expects her to just go along with the dominant script and in doing so she is pushed into a place in which she must work in bad faith. She acknowledges that she must behave one way in order to survive. From an existentialist

perspective, she is an autonomous person, and therefore has the choice to not participate in her own oppression. Therefore, it's not that she does so to survive, but she does it in order to survive in an industry that is predicated on the oppression and objectification of women as a daily part of 'masculine' life. She must choose a way of being that goes against her authentic self in order to keep doing her job. This really is not a free choice from a feminist existential perspective due to the forces at work that create pressure to conform.

In our interview, Vicki explained that she felt women were being encouraged to pursue trades for the financial benefits but noted that the trades are not for all women. This demonstrates that even women in trades seem unsure if women are equipped for the work.

You got to have a thick skin. It's still a male-generated venue. I find men are a lot different in the way that they treat people and themselves rather than you know how a female feels as though they should be treated. How can I explain this? There is still a lot of weirdness about sexual harassment and such. There is still a lot of weirdness about the way that people talk to each other, like, I'll be singled out a lot even though, I'll usually tell the people right away, I'm not really into that, I don't really care. I came into this as a journeyMAN. You know, that's the name. Having to say oh, journeywomen because it's politically correct and they've been smacked before for, you know, no you have to do this because otherwise, you're stepping on people's toes and stuff. Actually, I find that from all of them being politically correct and rules and such it's actually made it harder for me to be out there. Because instantly people don't want to work with you. Instantly people start paying attention to exactly everything that they say. They get nervous around you. It's harder.

In Vicki's example she is expressing support of the dominant script and subsequently for the notion of submission, suggesting that the impact of those who have resisted, those who have fought for a space to be created for women ("political correctness and not stepping on people's toes") have made it more difficult for her to work in the trades. Vicki may be suggesting that resistance on the part of any woman results in all women being ostracised. Interestingly, the result of ostracization is a stronger push by women towards the dominant script and working in

bad faith. Vicki's example identifies the desire to be viewed the same as men. It would give the impression that she feels that if women were viewed the same as men they would necessarily have the same value as men in that women could be seen as equals and no one would have to worry about 'stepping on anyone's toes' in that regard.

When I asked Elli about how she thought we may be able to attract more women into trades, her response again spoke to women having to rely on being 'thick skinned' and 'letting it go.' "You have to be able to handle it, obviously some of the guys are a little rougher, like verbally in talk. Like just the words they use and stuff like that. You got to let some of them slide. I'm not the type that I'm going to go running to my supervisor every time I hear the 'c' word or something like that. I think that you have to be a little thick skinned and a little tough. How would we get the girls into the trades? I don't know". She also stated that "You just can't get offended. Guys talk like guys do sometimes. If you're constantly surrounded by them, I know after a while I start, every second word coming out of my mouth is a swear word because that's just the way that they talk. A lot of it is just that, it's just talk". In expecting women to go with the dominant script and to "just go along with it" or to "grow a thick skin" as several respondents mentioned, we are limiting women's ability to be themselves. Ultimately women have a choice to either put up with industry as is or get out which really shows there is no real choice available. Interestingly when Elli mentions that it's 'just talk' it is not really just talk but instead it is a way of maintaining power over women. Using derogatory slang terms for women's genitalia as an insult to other men maintains a culture of misogyny and oppression. Elli echoed this idea again when she stated that

You can't be that girl. You can't be that woman who says I need special treatment, I need this, I need that because you're just going to get kicked out and no one is going to hire you pretty much. Because that goes around. You can't go running around like every time you think something is unfair towards a woman.

What Elli appears to be suggesting is that women have to put up with whatever treatment is bestowed on them regardless of whether or not they believe they are being treated fairly. Ultimately, this situation begins to limit their ability to choose: in this case, how they want to be treated at work. Insisting that people be treated with respect and dignity at work should not be considered 'special treatment' and to view it as such shows how women in trades have been indoctrinated into the dominant scripts at work. If women are forced into a situation where they have to accept being treated as 'less than' their male counterparts then their individual choice is removed, and they are forced to remain Othered.

These limited choices clearly do not align with Sartre's early concept of absolute freedom and are more in line with de Beauvoir's recognition that women are denied freedom in a way that is always a given for some men. When women are denied their absolute freedom they are forced to live in bad faith. The inherent notion of women as less valuable seems to creep into the workplace narrative, through the acceptance of women who simply do not have the same options as their male counterparts. Sandra spoke to the double standard women often encounter: "You have to work hard. Nobody you meet will ever say that I'm not a hard worker. I am one of the hardest workers around. But that's because you have to prove yourself." Sandra explains that despite her abilities and work ethic, she is still forced to continually prove herself.

Betty Canon (1991) speaks of bad faith and freedom in a way that is well suited to this research. Freedom includes the recognition that nothing has a prior status of value and that our everyday actions create value; we create value through valuing. When we value an individual or a particular thing, we choose to give it meaning, and on the other hand, when we choose to ignore it or in these cases, disparage it, we devalue the object. One of the examples used by Hoagland (1999) is violence against women. When we choose to ignore violence against

women, we devalue women and choose to continue the status quo. When we ignore or accept speech that normalizes violence against women, we do the same. The same can be said about racism and sexism. When we ignore the issue we devalue the object, or in this case women, and we further condone the behaviour as we do not subject the abuser, the racist, or the sexist to objectification, thereby not forcing the perpetrator to reflect on their actions. Essentially, we are then condoning an oppressive environment and are held within the parameters of the dominant discourse.

If we believe that overt sexism is ‘part of the job,’ we are then condoning the behaviour, and perhaps we should be shifting the focus to put the spotlight on men. By taking part in that behaviour that is demeaning or degrading to women, or simply choosing to ignore it, men are either intentionally or unintentionally continuing the status quo, thereby saying it is acceptable and normal behaviour.

Conclusion

In this chapter I identified how being the absolute Other at work creates an environment in which women are both overtly and subtly objectified and oppressed. I then demonstrated how the existential freedom of women in trades becomes limited and how that, in turn, can force them into working in bad faith because they often end up in a situation where there really is only one choice; deal with it. If their only other option is to quit, there is no real choice offered. As noted by several participants, women seem to be expected to develop what they describe as a ‘thick skin.’ If tacitly accepting verbal abuse is the ongoing narrative as a survival strategy for women in trades, we can understand how that creates the space for women to work in bad faith. Through the narratives, we are able to identify themes of Otherness as it relates to the workplace and the

different ways that women are viewed by men. There are obvious power relations at play in this type of work when we see men using their status as the subject to control women and inhibit their education, career progression, and advancement. Being the absolute Other in the workplace limits choice and absolute freedom for women. Through this chapter, we can see that choice becomes nothing more than an illusion thereby forcing women into bad faith. There is a different reality for women who pursue work in trades. They are not seen as equals and are not given equal opportunity. Looking back to Kanter's theory of tokenism and critical mass, change is not likely to occur until women reach at least 15% of trades workforce. Until that time, it appears as though individual women will continue to suffer.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The overarching objective of this research was to increase our understanding of women's experience in trades and provide insight into the factors, environments, beliefs, and relationships that influence women, and their choices. As mentioned previously, MacIsaac and Domene (2014) noted that there is currently a lack of research on women in trades from a Canadian perspective. The authors identified that much of the literature on women in trades is a decade or more older, and much of it comes from an international perspective. While MacIsaac and Domene's (2014) research focused on women preparing to enter the trades (and they obtained their data using focus groups), my work is focused on women who are working in the industry and who have 5-10 plus years of experience, (and my data was obtained through individual narratives). These differences offer us a look from the other side (women with many years of industry experience) as opposed to women who are just beginning their journeys. This dissertation fills part of the gap by adding stories from experienced Canadian trades women. Some of these women have multiple trades tickets, giving a much fuller perspective than women just embarking on their training or in the early stages of their apprenticeship programs.

I began this research project to add to our understanding of what it is like to be a Canadian woman in trades. The research questions that guided this dissertation were: Why do women choose to go into the Trades? What are women experiencing on site? As previously mentioned, I had other questions I was curious about, but these were not specific research questions for my dissertation. Why are there still so few women in the trades? Why are women not choosing this type of work as a viable option, particularly when there are organizations and

government funded initiatives from coast to coast that are trying to encourage women into these occupations? And finally, if men and women make the same career choice, will their career paths be the same, or will their individual choices have very different outcomes?

Using feminist existentialism, I aimed to understand women's choices, and the consequences of their choices, in relation to the work in trades. This analysis helps to understand why, despite many changes in employment equity legislation, initiatives, and research that seeks to encourage Canadian women to enter the trades, the majority of Canadian women are choosing to work elsewhere. In this final chapter I will discuss the study's theoretical contributions and practical implications followed by a discussion on the limitations and possible future research directions. I will end this chapter with brief concluding thoughts.

Discussion

Reflecting on this dissertation creates a curiosity and stirs an idea. What if our goal was to create a trades industry that would actually benefit women? What if we created programs that value women as individuals, rather than view them merely as an underutilized resource? This would include environments that are hospitable towards women and welcome them not as a female welder or a female electrician, but solely as a welder or an electrician. To achieve this, we must focus on the preferences and privileges inherent in the system we seek to correct, dismantle this privilege, and rebuild it with broader considerations. Any policies that are simply aimed at pushing women into the existing framework are innately flawed. We need to recognize that current efforts to encourage women to participate in the existing system starts from a place where women are the Other. Subsequently, it is impossible for women to make a free choice when presented with constrained options such as those they currently face at work.

As outlined in this research, much of what happens to women on site, and much of what women endure on a daily basis, goes unreported or undocumented due to fear of repercussions for speaking out against male colleagues. What is required then is more research that examines female experiences in order to bring voice to those in oppressed positions, such as the women who participated in this research. We need to open up the discussion, and a large part of that would include reframing the messages given to women when it comes to career choice, because in order to initiate change we need to bring to light women's experiences working in trades. We need to give these women an opportunity to speak freely and without fear of repercussions for choosing to do so. We cannot expect women to do that if it becomes a career-limiting move.

During our interview, I asked Corinne if she thought that change was possible. Her thoughts on the subject indicate it will take many more women to join the trades and construction industries for the environment to shift. With sheer numbers, I think if that workforce is 50/50 we might have a shot but even then, I think like I'm older right so maybe girls are being raised with a little more oomph than I've got. Maybe boys are being raised to be more human. To be more accepting. Make it fair across the board and put some onus on the employer to not be a jerk. Corinne's belief that we need 50% women in trades for them to have a shot at an even playing field indicates how outnumbered she feels at work. This also reinforces the need for women to reach Kanter's critical mass in trades in order for the industry to change. Corinne is also calling on employers to share the responsibility to ensure women are given the opportunity to work in a hospitable workplace.

Theoretical Contributions

Through the exploration of the existential themes of choice, oppression, objectification, freedom and bad faith, de Beauvoir's feminist existential philosophy allows us to take notice of the more subtle forms of objectification and oppression of women as discussed in chapter five. Using this lens we can see how women are not being given the same opportunities as men and can therefore never be completely free and authentic beings like their male counterparts because they are the Other. This research allows for an increased understanding of women's experience in trades and has created four theoretical contributions.

Firstly, feminist Existentialism gives us something unique, in that it provides us with an opportunity to understand, despite appropriate programs and initiatives, why women are making the choices they make in their careers when it comes to trades work. Perhaps their choices are entrenched in their understanding of gender roles, and social norms. Or perhaps policies and initiatives have not gone far enough to achieve Eisenberg's objectives of the creation of an environment that is as hospitable to women as it is to men, because even today it remains male dominated and women remain tokens. I have argued, instead, through the use of de Beauvoir, that women are being given the illusion of choice when they are being used as a means to an end, much the same as it was during the wars, to ensure that vacancies are filled, policies are met, and companies are avoiding litigation. That illusion of choice will have implications that impact a woman simply because she is still considered the Other. From a feminist existential perspective, there can be many external factors that limit a woman's ability to choose, and without unconstrained free choice, one is left without choice. Without choice, one ends up living, or in this case working, in a state of bad faith.

Secondly, feminist existentialism further allows us to explore the problem of objectification in understanding the process of recognition of self and other as well as the process by which women are reduced to their body parts, where their bodies are sexualized and used to judge both their value and credibility. Women in the trades are viewed as objects, tools to be used as a means to an end, to meet a quota, abide by a law, or simply as a way for an organization to avoid punishment. Based on the experiences of the women I interviewed, women seem to be understood as one-dimensional and interchangeable, lacking any type of individuality. They were not viewed as the subjects in their own lives. Instead, they are grouped together, whereby each woman's action or inaction is interpreted as the action or inaction of all women. Thus, women are finding they must continuously prove their own worth and value, as well as the worth and value of all women. The theme of the oppression of women was also identified as a serious issue. Several participants noted that their male counterparts are being given more learning opportunities than they are which limits any type of advancement or career growth, and in some cases is limiting their ability to complete their apprenticeships.

Thirdly, feminist existentialism allows us to explore the themes of limited freedom and acting in bad faith. In their stories, women continuously expressed the need to forfeit aspects of themselves and avoid expressing their beliefs, ideas, and values in an effort to 'fit in' with the group. This then leads to lack of choice, with the only choices being to accept the dominant script and work in bad faith, speak up and risk being blacklisted, or simply leave the industry.

Finally, feminist existentialism allows us to unpack the idea of social scripts that women are expected to adhere to at work. There is a script that clearly states women do not belong in trades and that in order to survive they must have a thick skin and tolerate toxic behaviours. If women are too feminine, they are viewed as too weak to do the job, and if they are too

masculine, they are accused of being a lesbian. These scripts are not only applicable to the generalized experiences of women, but specifically their work lives, insofar as women in my interviews repeatedly expressed the idea of submitting to the dominant script at work and having sense of being forced to go along with the objectification and oppression, or to leave the industry. Not only did they express the need to submit to the dominant script as a means of survival in the industry, but some went on to suggest that resistance by any woman makes the situation worse for all women.

Practical Implications and Recommendations

It is clear that changes to the industry are necessary in order to attract more women into the trades. Currently, there seems to be somewhat of a push/pull dynamic happening. On one hand large amounts of time and money are being spent on trying to recruit women into trades, and yet the experiences they are facing are likely pushing them away and deterring other women from entering the industry. Based on this research I am offering four recommendations to the industry.

Firstly, I suggest the industry limit the continual movement of people where they frequently find themselves working both with different crews and on different sites. Trades people argue that it is the nature of the work and nothing can be done about it. I suggest the industry needs to move forward from that position and work to find solutions to limit that movement. Recognizing that moving sites will always be a part of the job, changing crews all the time does not have to be, particularly within larger organizations. Even if the entire crew cannot stay together on jobs, it would be beneficial for women to work with a core group and move from job to job with that core group whenever and wherever possible. This would quickly

eliminate the constant pressure women face to prove themselves every time they switch crews and sites. In its current state, the industry already gives men the benefit of the doubt as far as being capable of doing the work, and yet women are not afforded the same courtesy because they are the Other.

Secondly, we need to create and put in place strategies that ensure women and minorities are afforded equal opportunity. Despite the laws that are in place to prevent discrimination against women in the workplace it appears the Trades industry still has a significant problem in attracting and retaining women. We must also ensure that choices offered to employees will yield similar outcomes. In the trades industry the focus of the job, and training, is skills based, therefore I suggest that organizations also create a hiring policy that is focused on demonstrable competencies. An example may include a situation where prospective employees are required to perform tasks that are relevant to the job. Let us say the organization is looking to hire a welder. The potential candidates would then have to perform three different types of welds. Once the tasks are completed the candidates leave the room. The hiring panel would then inspect the welds which would be evaluated based on requirements that were already laid out. Each candidate would then either pass or fail based on competency alone; not gender. This would remove any possible gender bias if the hiring committee was unaware of which potential employee did the work being evaluated. This simple fix would remove a woman from being in a position to be seen as the Other before she even started work with that organization. On that note, blindly reviewing resumes also removes the ability for employers to Other women based on the name on her resume. One of the participants I interviewed explained how she shortened her given name in a way that it could be read as being a 'man's name'. Once she did this, she began

to get callbacks for jobs she had applied for. When she initially used her full given name, she said no one would call her so she could not even get an interview, never mind a job.

Thirdly, I suggest the industry implements management training programs to ensure fairness in apprenticeship training. Women and men must have equal access to the on-the-job training that is a requirement in order for their apprenticeships to be successful. It cannot simply be about hours on site. As demonstrated in this study, women are often left with menial, repetitive tasks that add little value to their career development and training and leave them less prepared for any type of continued growth. Perhaps there needs to be a way to randomly assign tasks to crew members in order to eliminate male favouritism and allow female apprentices an equal opportunity to be successful in both their apprenticeship training and subsequent careers. As shown in my analysis, because women are Othered at work, they are often given tasks that are below their ability and at times, given jobs on site that mimic the unpaid labour done in a household.

Lastly, the industry needs to ensure that women have comfortable workwear that does not have a gendered construct attached to it. As discussed in my analysis, women frequently lack properly fitting safety gear for female tradespeople. It was also mentioned that a lot of the workwear available for women tends to be pink. If women are forced to wear pink, they are Othered the minute they walk onto the job site.

I recognize that many of these suggestions may be shrugged off by industry professionals, as these suggestions may go against the nature of the work; men's work in particular, and disrupt the social scripts de Beauvoir suggests women are positioned to follow. However, as Justice Abella emphasized, employment equity does not mean treating everyone equally. In fact, she argues against doing just that. "If you treat everybody the same, you won't

have ramps, and if you treat women the same as men, you don't take into account pregnancy, and if you treat whites the same as non-whites, you don't take into account racism, and if you treat Aboriginal (sic) people the same as me, then you don't take into account the disadvantages of what it's been like living in their disadvantaged circumstances" (Abella, 2009, as cited in Agoos, C. 2014, p. 20). What we can take from Justice Abella's remarks is that we cannot treat men and women in the trades equally if we want them both to be successful. The ideas again link back to de Beauvoir's ideas of women being the Other. If we assume men and women start at the same place, there will be no equity because as shown throughout this research, women and men do not start as equals in the trades. I believe that it is going to take a massive shift in the entire industry before we see a welcoming environment for women and it may even require government assistance, because currently the industry is not working for women.

Limitations

A large portion of this dissertation has looked at choice and, more importantly the consequences of choice, for women pursuing a career in trades. The purpose of doing so was to show that male and female tradespeople can make the same choice and not have the same outcome. I believe that to be true in this circumstance, but there is more to choice than what existentialists often put forward. It is important for me to acknowledge that the ideas put forth by existential philosophers around choice, may feel like an oversimplification of a rather complex idea. Of course, while we can say that as an individual we all have the ability to exercise free will, it would be remiss to think we have the ability to make our choices in isolation. De Beauvoir does begin to address this when she talks about the scripts for and myths of women. She realized that women, in this case, were limited in their choices due to the

socialization process women are exposed to from the time they are young. While I agree with De Beauvoir's recognition that women's choices are constrained, it is not only women who face constraints when making choices.

Recognizing that we do not live our lives in isolation we must acknowledge that our choices are influenced by external forces we cannot control at times, our 'choice' is not really a choice at all. Greenfield (2011) sums this up with an example of someone being given a choice at work. The 'choice' is to either have sex with your boss or lose your job. In absolute terms, this is a choice, but one can see that no real choice exists between these two options. Greenfield (2011) goes to give many examples of situations that present themselves where no 'real choice' exists because a person recognizes that either choice made has negative consequences. The author goes to say that while governing bodies limit our personal choice, the majority of constraints come from other forces sums it up well when he states "once we take into account the influences of biology, culture, authority, and economics, the scope of our choices is much narrower than we have long assumed" (Greenfield, 2011, p. 3). While this goes against the notion of absolute freedom and individual choice that existentialism tells us we have, it is much more in line with how individuals actually live their lives. For example, the influence of culture is strong because it creates the foundation for how we view the world. This relates back to de Beauvoir's work on the social scripts of what it means to be a woman in society and brings about a recognition that individual choice is never quite as simple as it seems.

In this study, I employed narrative analysis, which although appropriate for this research, is limited in that it does not create generalizable results. In recognizing this limitation, I believe it is also necessary to note that there was never any intention of developing a set of 'rules' that would apply to all women in trades. To do that would go against the underpinnings of

existentialism and its focus on the individual experience. Conducting research using a feminist existential lens was challenging in many ways. One of the most difficult issues I faced was trying to use an individualist philosophy and speak about women as a group without stepping into an essentialist or positivist position. The way I navigated through that was by recognizing that speaking about women as a collective does not include assumptions about all women. Using the philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir, with a particular focus on her writings in *The Second Sex*, provided me with a powerful and useful analytical tool to examine the lives of women in organizations.

When conducting this type of research, as with any research involving human participants, we run the risk of respondents telling the researcher what they believe the researcher wants to hear. I did experience this in one case. As the participant and I were finishing our interview I told her that I was happy to hear her experiences had been so positive and she responded by saying, “Oh! Did you want to hear the bad stuff too”? I explained that she was free to tell me anything she wanted to. She then went on to tell me about some of the less than pleasant experiences she has had at work. Because this was my first interview it allowed me to state, up front, to the remaining participants that I was interested in everything they had to say whether it was good, bad, or ugly.

Another concern that should be addressed is that the women who participated in this study are still working in their respective trades; therefore, we end up hearing from only those women who have made it or are in the process of making it in the trades. These women may tell a different story than those who are no longer working in the field. As well, all the women I interviewed were cis gender white women and so the intersectional problems of race, class and gender identity were not explored but could be in future research.

Future Research

I believe that the next step in this research project would be to speak with women who are no longer working in the trades. The stories of women who have left the industry would add a very important piece that will contribute to our overall understanding of women in trades. What were their experiences like? And more importantly, why did they leave? Another future direction this research could take would be an intersectional approach. All of the women who participated in this study were Caucasian, from all outward appearances. No participants self-identified as Indigenous or Black. Would they have the same stories to tell or would their stories include a very different set of dynamics, including racial elements? Recognizing the minorities are also viewed as the Other, I believe this is a logical next step for this research.

Concluding Thoughts

It has been argued that encouraging more women to enter, and remain in, trades will help meet future demand in an industry that lacks enough skilled workers (Menches and Abraham (2007). The idea of recruiting more women to trades would seem like a logical way to ‘fill the gap’; however, as I have emphasized in this dissertation, this will not work if women continue to be viewed as what de Beauvoir refers to as the Other. As this research on women’s experiences in the trades has shown, their choices are constrained, limited, and restricted, and their identities and freedoms are stunted and controlled. As a result, they find themselves acting in bad faith in pursuit of a career. Existentialists suggest we are nothing but our choices, and that our identity and our value is the sole by-product of the choices we make. The challenge then becomes that when a woman enters the trades she knowingly or unknowingly limits her own existential

freedom. “Women are still, for the most part, in a state of subjection. It follows that a woman sees herself and makes her choices not in accordance with her true nature in itself, but as man defines her” (De Beauvoir, 1989, pp. 137-138). More than seventy years after de Beauvoir wrote these words, women are still faced with situations in which their femininity is used against them when they are told they are not strong enough to do the work. Their femininity is then thrown back at them when male colleagues suggest they are not feminine enough. Repeatedly we see that the framework of choice offered to women is carefully constructed, offering only stunted options, based on the assumptions of those who created the apparent choice. Government programs and policies that attempt to attract and incentivize women to come to the trades in order to solve labour shortages or meet regulatory practices do not value women as the subject. These practices continue to push women into the realm of the Other, whereby they only occupy the space granted to them by men.

We need to start valuing women in their own right, and not simply as a tool to use for organizational success. We cannot think of them as needing to take something from men. Nor can we say men need to give something up in order for women to be successful. This continues to support this idea of the subject and the object and a state of inequality. In order for us to shift women into the realm of the subject, from an existential perspective, they must be viewed as such. Inevitably we need to evaluate all current practices that consider gender, regardless of whether or not they appear to be to the benefit or detriment of women. A woman cannot be free to become what she is through choice when the choice available to her is only an illusion. The industry is set up so that a woman’s only choices are to submit to the dominant script and suffer the constant objectification and oppression at work or leave the industry. If these situations are

allowed to continue, I do not believe we will ever see women become anything more than tokens in the construction trades industry.

While the recommendations made by government and industry, such as those described in chapter two, may be viewed as credible and valuable to those organizations looking to recruit women into trades occupations, they only result in slow, incremental change. The cost of entering the trades for women is too high. What the trades industry needs is a major paradigm shift. As suggested by Susan Eisenberg, the industry must work to become as hospitable to women as it is to men. The necessity of this hospitality is that it changes the very nature of the current dominant script. It adjusts the power and forcibly creates a space for women whereby they can freely choose to participate in the industry without forfeiting elements of their autonomy, their free will, or their individuality. Consistently, the stories told by women provide accounts of how women must reject and hide their identities, their bodies, and their values to gain or maintain favour with their male counterparts. Behaviours that challenge the norm or that align with these women's individual values are viewed as career limiting, which was clearly demonstrated by their fear of being blacklisted. Even well-intentioned government literature paints a less than appealing picture of what trades may offer women. A publication from the Human Services branch of the Government of Alberta (Government of Alberta, 2013, p. 4), created to encourage women to consider trades-based employment, includes a section titled "Myths and Realities". The first myth is, "Men don't want women on the job site". The response is as follows,

That's true only on some job sites. There are still some men who don't believe women can do the job or that women belong on a mostly male crew. And it can be intimidating to walk into a male-dominated workplace. The best way to handle stereotyping and criticism depends, in part, on your job and your personality. Talking to other women in similar trades can help you find responses that work.

The response also mentions how many employers recognize the importance of a harassment-free workplace and that employing women is one solution to the looming labour shortage expected in the province. I have two criticisms of how that information is presented. The first is that the report refers to women as the object— a solution that can be used to fill a looming hole in the construction industry. Women are the object, or in the words of de Beauvoir the Other, that which is not male. In this example, the value of women is based on their utility to fill a gap left by men.

Currently, it seems as though there is no onus put on the men in the workplace to be accountable for how they treat women. The focus is still on women and how they should deal with it, which then forces them to cope by any means necessary. Women are being advised that they should seek out other women who have been the victims of similar mistreatment to find out what response ‘works’. This type of narrative puts the onus on women to figure out how to deal with mistreatment in the workplace instead of shifting the focus onto the men who behave in ways that force women to ‘deal with it’.

Throughout this dissertation I have shown not only that women’s choices are limited in trades, but, more importantly, I have demonstrated how the consequences of women’s choices within the construction industry are not the same as those of their male colleagues because they are the Other. Through my analysis I show that when we ignore women’s perspectives we inherently devalue women. This devaluation supports the status quo and cripples women’s advancement. This is perpetuated by both men and women, within and outside the trades. If we continually ignore the experiences and struggles of women in construction trades, we continue to devalue those women and their daily work experiences. Inadvertently we then condone the ways in which these women are continually treated and allowing the workplace to remain a toxic,

misogynistic “labyrinth of snake pits and traps.” Simply put, if nothing changes, nothing changes.

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