Gender Regimes in Finance: The Social Organization of Money Work

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Abstract

Informed by intersectional theory and gendered organizational studies, this dissertation uses qualitative interviews with 35 money workers to analyze gender inequality in the financial services industry. Within this field, I examine how local workplace practices and broader economic trends produce gendered performances and organize the money work that is performed by financial services employees. Specifically, I compare the labor processes and organizational practices at large wire houses versus small and independent firms and explore how the “gender regime” is built into the social organization of money work. The research focuses on answering the following questions: (1) How is a “gender regime” built into the social organization of money work at large wire houses versus small and independent firms? (2) What type of work culture is valued at large wire houses versus small and independent firms and how are gendered performances produced by the demands of the local workplace context? (3) In what ways is the “Great Recession” impacting the gendered performances of financial services workers and the social organization of money work? My findings demonstrate that the organizational practices of large wire houses are more detrimental to woman working in the field. Specifically, the compensation structure, gender discretion and bias by senior male employees, and the organization of partnerships at these firms contribute to the gender wage gap and are advantageous to men working at these organizations. While I could find no industry-wide statistics to demonstrate that small and independent firms have more gender equality, based on my findings, it appears that the small and independent
firms are less likely to have labor processes that explicitly disadvantage women. My findings also demonstrate that the type of organization (large wire house versus small and independent firms) impacts the overall work culture and impacts the type of gender performance that is produced. At large wire houses, workers refer to the atmosphere as a “boy’s club,” that views men as naturally better equipped to be financial advisors. These organizations construct a competent advisor as one who performs in ways that are aligned with traditional constructions of masculinity. However, small and independent firms demonstrate that there are alternative ways to do money work. Workers describe a culture that is more egalitarian. To be viewed as a competent advisor at a smaller firm, advisors are expected to “build relationships with clients” and “give good advice.” Competence is not constructed in masculine terms; therefore, gendered performances for workers are more flexible. Findings also suggest that the “Great Recession” is impacting the social organization of gender at financial services firms. In particular, the economic downturn is contributing to increased pressure to conform to transnational business masculinities at large wire houses as well as encouraging emphasized femininity at small and independent firms. Global capitalism and the economic retraction is contributing to what Acker (2006) describes as the “inequality regime.” While women advisors are disadvantaged relative to men, particularly at large wire houses, my results also indicate that the recession perpetuates inequality between female money workers. As job insecurity and the demands of the work have increased, women in advisory and management positions are outsourcing their labor, particularly their domestic and administrative work, to other women in order to succeed. This research contributes to our understandings about how gender inequality is produced in the finance industry,
particularly at large wire houses. In addition, it explicates the ways gender is constituted by both the local workplace context and larger economic retraction.
Gender Regimes in Finance: The Social Organization of Money Work

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Introduction
A new employee, once he reached the trading floor, was handed a pair of telephones. He went on line almost immediately. If he could make millions of dollars come out of those phones, he became the most revered of all species: a Big Swinging Dick...nothing in the jungle got in the way of a Big Swinging Dick...that was the prize coveted...everyone wanted to be a Big Swinging Dick, even the women. Big Swinging Dickettes. (Lewis, 1989: 42-43).

Michael Lewis, former sales associate at Salomon Brothers, describes the attitudes and behaviors that he routinely saw while working on Wall Street. One glance at the New York Stock Exchange or the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) and it becomes apparent that most finance jobs continue to be dominated by men. Although women have made progress in the industry over the past twenty years, many inequalities remain intact. Women continue to make less money than men, even when they perform the same job (Roth, 2006). In addition, few women are promoted to leadership positions and many face discrimination, harassment, and at times a hostile work environment.

In this dissertation, I use qualitative in-depth interviews with 35 money workers, who are employed within the field of financial services, to analyze gender inequity in this male-dominated field. Within this field, I examine how local workplace practices and broader economic trends organize the labor process and produce gendered performances. Specifically, I compare the labor processes and organizational practices at large wire houses versus small and independent financial services firms and I explore how the
“gender regime” is built into the social organization of money work performed by financial services workers. Connell’s (1987) concept of “gender regimes” refers to “the state of play in gender relations” in any social institution. Specifically, in this research, I examine the “internal structures, processes and beliefs that distribute women and men into different tasks and positions” within financial services firms (Acker, 1994: 117). I investigate how the organizational structure at large wire houses and small and independent financial services firms organize the lives of those who work in finance in gendered ways. Further, I examine how individuals say they and other similarly-situated women and men “do gender” in their interactions on the job and the type of work culture that is valued at large wire houses versus small and independent financial services firms (West and Zimmerman, 1987). By doing so, I am able to illuminate the ways that gender is constituted by the labor process. Finally, I examine how the broad economic context influences gendered work experiences. In particular, I explore how the current economic downturn is contributing to inequality at financial services firms and producing particular types of gendered performances, including transnational business masculinity at large wire houses and emphasized femininity at small and independent firms.

I believe this research is socially significant for several reasons. My research adds to the literature on gender, work, and organizations. I examine how both local workplace labor processes, as well as the larger economic context, produce gendered performances and contribute to gender inequality. To date, there have been no investigations of how the type of financial services company (independent broker dealers versus large wire houses) impacts gender inequality or the production of gendered performances. In addition, since I studied elites, my research makes important
contributions to discussions on power, privilege, and oppression. On a broad structural level, this is an interesting time to be doing research in the area of finance. The majority of those who have qualitatively investigated finance work did so at a time when the financial markets were flourishing. For example, when Roth (2006) investigated gender pay inequity in finance, she did so during an economic boom. Over the past few years, the landscape has changed dramatically, which makes this a critical time to explore how finance work is being organized. I was positioned to be one of the first in the field to be studying how a recession impacts the social organization of money work. This has given me the opportunity to provide new understandings about how the current social, political, and economic context is contributing to the gender regime in finance.

Several theoretical discussions frame my study, including theories about the social construction of gender and sex, gendered organizational theory, post-modern theories about the body, and intersectional theory. The constructionist approach emphasizes the idea that sex and gender have no inherent essence, but must be understood in a cultural and historical context that exists within power relations (Weeks, 1991). Sex and gender are not essential traits, but are produced by institutional processes, social norms, and discourses about the body. Gendered organizational theory posits that gender is built into the structure of work organizations. To say that an organization is gendered means “that gender is present in the processes, practices, images, ideologies, and distributions of power in various sectors of social life” (Acker, 1992: 567). Within post-modern theory, the body is seen as a cultural (not just a natural) object. Bodies are produced “within a network of socio-historical relations, instead of being tied to a fixed essence” (Grosz, 1987: 1). Post-modern theories of bodies have
been important in revealing the ways “sexed,” “raced,” “classed,” and “sexualized” bodies become constituted through workplace discourse, knowledge, and power. Intersectional paradigms stress that social categories, like race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and ability intersect to organize an individual’s experience (Hill-Collins, 1990). In other words, individuals can be simultaneously situated in positions of power and oppression.

In this dissertation, I analyze how local workplace practices and broader economic trends constitute gender and often perpetuate inequality in financial services firms. In addition, by interviewing individuals in various positions with the hierarchy of the financial organizations, this research put me in a unique position to examine gender inequity between men and women working in finance, as well as gender inequity between women working in different positions within financial services.

Through my research I answer the following research questions:

- How is a “gender regime” built into the social organization of money work at large wire houses versus small and independent firms? Specifically, in what ways do organizational processes, such as compensation practices, gender discretion and bias by male senior employees, and the structure of partnerships produce the employee as a gendered subject and contribute to inequity?

- How does gender operate at the interactional level within the financial services industry? What type of work culture is valued at large wire houses versus small and independent firms and how are gendered performances produced by the demands of the local workplace context?

- In what ways is the “Great Recession” impacting gendered performances of financial services workers and the social organization of money work? How is the economic downturn contributing to gender inequality between men and women and also between women?
Theoretical Framework

My research starts from the premise that both sex and gender are socially constructed. Social theorists have provided an important look into the social construction of gender (Kimmel, 2000; Lorber, 1994; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Some of these theories grew out of a need to challenge the central position of the male body in society. Their work provides a rich line of theoretical inquiry and placed on the agenda new projects about the body. For example, sociologists have demonstrated that roles, feelings, and behaviors are socially defined as masculine and feminine and these gender differences are socially produced in ways that maintain male dominance (de Beauvoir, 1953; Connell, 1995; Lorber, 1994; Reskin, 1988). Early feminist theorists were interested in analyzing “women’s socialization,” “women’s issues,” and “women’s experiences.” Betty Friedan (1963) theorized about the “problem that had no name,” and explored the plight of the white suburban housewife, while Gloria Steinem (1983) exposed the oppression women faced working as Playboy Bunnies. These leaders in the women’s movement responded and reacted to the universal male subject by constructing a universal female subject. They revealed there was nothing natural about women’s corporality that could justify their public and private oppression. The body uncovered by these theorists was a biologically sexed body, which had been constituted within the patriarchal society in ways that limited women’s chances and choices.

One of the important things that feminist and gender theorists have examined is the performative aspects of gender. Gender is not an inherent quality that a person possesses, but is a set of activities that everybody performs. West and Zimmerman (1987: 107) state that a person's gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but, more
fundamentally, it is something that one does. According to their theory, we are constantly “doing gender” and we are oftentimes "performing the activities and exhibiting the traits that are prescribed for us" (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 107). The way a person performs gender depends on the social context. For example, the way a person does gender in a classroom will likely differ from the way a person performs gender on a date. In addition, a person’s social location might impact the way that person can perform gender. For example, a working class man might perform masculinity differently than a man who is upper class. Further, the way a person is held accountable for performing gender varies. In certain social contexts, a male who is performing femininity may face more severe consequences than a woman who is performing masculinity.

While an analysis of gendered performances helps to demonstrate that gender is not a set of essential traits, it is also important to demonstrate how gendered performances are influenced by social structures and cultural norms. Gendered performances are influenced by the historical, social, and political configurations that constrain and enable certain behaviors. Joan Acker’s (1990) theory of gendered organizations points out that gender continues to be a formal bureaucratic concept in a multi-dimensional (intersectional) stratified society. She describes the “gender regime” of many social institutions, including the work environment. She states that gender is built into institutions and the organizational context has an explicit impact on the opportunities available to women. Leslie Salzinger (2003: 16) also discusses how gender is produced in workplace settings and argues that gendered labor processes are constructed “in the meaningful practices and rhetorics of shop-floor life.” In my
research, I examine the “gender regime” of financial organizations.

Theorists have demonstrated that masculinity and femininity are a social construction. For example, behaviors construed as masculine by one group of individuals may be viewed as feminine by another group of men. Purser (2007) points out, in her research on day laborers, that what is seen as “dignified” masculine behaviors by one set of men can be viewed as feminine submission by another. Connell’s (1995) conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity has greatly influenced gender studies. Connell argues that there are different and conflicting ways to be a man, but often one way of doing masculinity is seen as the most legitimate or valued. This form is referred to as hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1998) suggests that a current form of masculinity that is valued is “transnational business masculinity.” In the globalized economy, a specific type of masculinity is valued that is tied to increased egocentrism, very conditional loyalties (even to the corporation), and a declining sense of responsibility for others (Connell, 1998). Hegemonic notions of masculinity encourage men to fulfill this image of a “good man.” In addition, “transnational business masculinity” and hegemonic notions of what a “business person” looks like prevent women from entering into certain business careers.

The social construction of femininity has also received attention from theorists (Bordo, 1993; Hesse-Biber, 2006, Lucal, 1999). Society constructs and disseminates a hegemonic feminine ideal that is based on a white, heterosexual, young, graceful, athletic, thin body. This dominant version of femininity prescribes behaviors that women are expected to engage in to signal their femininity. According to Lucal (1999), the default reading of a non-feminine person is male. In other words, individuals are
assumed to be male unless proven otherwise and this is significant because it forces women to perform femininity. For example, women must adorn themselves and engage in body work. These behaviors serve patriarchal, capitalist interests as many women consume special diets, tanning, cosmetics, gym memberships, plastic surgery, hair dyes, and fashion in order to be read as “feminine” (Kilbourne, 2004).

My research is also informed by post-structuralist theories about the body. While feminist accounts demonstrate how gender is socially constructed, some continue to reinforce the notion of an essentially sexed-biological body. Influenced by Foucault, post-structuralist feminists argue that both sex and gender are constituted through discourse. Theorists such as Butler (1993) and Fausto-Sterling (2000) argue that sex, like gender, is not just a “bodily given,” but tied to “a process whereby regulatory norms materialize ‘sex’” (Butler, 1993: 2). In Bodies that Matter, Judith Butler (1993) points out that the concept of “sex” is “troubled terrain.” She argues that sex “is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize ‘sex’ and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms” (Butler, 1993: 2). Butler argues that there are battles taking place about what criteria should be used to distinguish between the two (or many sexes). For example, what counts as being a “man” or a “women” is now being challenged. In addition, there are power relations working in the formation and conceptualization of “sex.” It is important to note that while I refers to individuals as men and women in this research, I am starting my research with the belief that sex is an identity category, not an essential, static, characteristic of the participant.
Post-structural theorists have also contributed to our understandings about the way gender and sex is constituted through language, discourse, mediated images, and knowledge about the body. These theorists illuminate the ways in which language, knowledge, and discourse become sources of “common sense” understandings about how to “do gender.” According to poststructuralists (Foucault and others), language and discourse effectively construct, regulate, and control knowledge, social relations, and institutions. Discourse can be viewed as:

A group of statements, which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at, a particular historical moment. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language…and...since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do—our conduct—all practices have a discursive aspect (Hall, 1992: 291).

According to poststructuralists, discourses are produced by science, the media, the workplace, the family, and pop culture and they become powerful frameworks for understanding actions in social life. It is important to analyze discourse because it can constrain and enable social and cultural practices. For example, the way gender is represented has implications for how gendered behaviors can happen on a material level or the way finance work gets represented has implications for how people “do finance.”

According to Weedon, (1997) we are “subjects” who are exposed to competing discourses, which carry with them various and sometimes contradictory possibilities for experience, actions, and understanding. For example, a woman who is considering kissing another woman might find herself caught between competing discursive fields that construct two girls kissing variously as a sin, as a phase, as an illegal behavior, or as something to celebrate. How the woman comes to understand her situation and the
actions she sees available can be seen as a result of the competition between those various discourses. The action of the woman will differ depend on the woman’s access to various discourses and the relative strength of these discourses within the overall array of different discourses surrounding her (Weedon, 1997). In addition, the discourses we are subjected to and the actions/experiences we have available to us are grounded in the social, historical context in which we live. Therefore, “how we live our lives as conscious thinking subjects, and how we give meaning to the material social relations under which we live and which structure our everyday lives, depends on the range and social power of existing discourses, our access to them and the political strength of the interests which they represent” (Weedon, 1997: 26). The theoretical position informing my research assumes that the language used by participants’ and interviewers’ illustrates the range of discourses available and circulating in this particular historical, political, and cultural context.

Cultural researchers have begun to discuss the ways discursive frameworks impact gendered performances (Braun, Gavey and McPhillips, 2003; Butler, 1990; Messner, 2000; Wodak, 1998). For example, pop culture provides symbolic resources that are taken up and used to create ideas about the male and female sex categories. Shared immersion in a particular social context, such as a workplace, on a sports team, or in a class room, provides symbolic resources for the creation of categorical differences (Messner, 2000). Messner (2000) found that young soccer teams will choose gendered names and gendered colors that have been presented to them in media images as appropriate for girls and boys. Similarly job requirements, workplace rules, and the culture of the office present “appropriate” ways to be a finance worker. In my research, I
examine the various workplace norms, discursive frameworks, and symbolic resources utilized within the finance services industry to analyze their impact on money workers.

Finally, I draw from intersectional theories. Social categories like race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and ability intersect to organize an individual’s experiences. Hill-Collins (1990) argues that we need to understand the interrelationship of how oppressions are interconnected and form a matrix of domination. Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be linked to one fundamental type of oppression. For example, a white woman can be simultaneously privileged because of her race and class and oppressed because of her gender. *This Bridge Called My Back* (Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1981) is an apt metaphor about white women using women of color as a bridge to further their own success. Barbara Ehrenreich (2000) discussed the implications of white, middle class professionals using women of color to tend to domestic work while they further their careers at academic conferences.

I studied workers who are pursuing and achieving power in a high-powered sector of the work force. In general, they have high salaries with benefits and “job perks” that many do not experience in other jobs. In addition, with an average salary above the national average, many financial advisors occupy a privileged class position. Therefore, it was important to investigate some of the ways those who work in finance may simultaneously experience oppression while also experiencing privilege. For example, my findings reveal that women working in the upper echelons of the securities industry are shifting administrative labor to female client services representatives and domestic duties to women, who are hired to clean their homes and watch their kids. Financial services firms are organized in ways that “lift up” the women joining the professional
ranks of the companies while simultaneously “pushing down” women, who work in support rolls. One of the goals of my research was not only explore the gender inequity between men and women within the finance services industry, but I also attempted to learn more about how money work is organized in way that perpetuates class inequity between women.

**Overview of the Finance Industry**

The finance industry is an important segment of the labor market. According to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), the finance industry contains five subsectors (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2006). The first subsector is called the Monetary Authorities. These jobs perform central banking functions, including issuing currency and managing the countries money supply, as well as its international money reserves. The second subsector includes jobs that consist of credit intermediation and related banking activities. For example, these workers lend money raised from depositors and credit market borrowing. In addition, they facilitate lending by issuing mortgages and loans, generally in the banking sector. The third sector consists of insurance carriers; these are employees that provide insurance and other employee benefits services, such as underwriting annuities. The fourth sector is referred to as Funds, Trusts, and Other Financial Vehicles. This subsector does not include organizations with employees that manage the portfolios, but instead are the “entities (that) earn interest, dividends, and other property income, but have little or no employment and no revenue from the sale of services” (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2006). Examples of this subsector include legal entities, such as real estate investment trusts (REITS), trusts, and pensions. The final subsector, and the one that I
will be focusing on for my research, is the securities industry. These jobs involve activities such as underwriting securities and/or making markets for securities and commodities. In addition, it also includes brokers who act as agents between buyers and sellers of securities, individuals who provide securities exchange services, and employees who manage portfolios of assets and provide investment advice.

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), in 2006, there were 358,009 people employed in the securities industry. While more women are entering financial careers, men continue to dominate all professional positions within the field. In 2011, The Bureau of Labor Statistics found that women made up 31.2% of personal financial advisors and 34.8% of financial analysts. According to the Securities Industry Association (SIA), 80% of the industry’s managers are white men, as are more than 70% of investment bankers, traders, and brokers (Churchhill, 2004). In 2008, only 10% of mutual fund managers and 3% percent of hedge fund managers were women (Fabrikant, 2008). Women of color continue to fare the worst within the securities industry. In 2006, black women represented only 4% of professionals in the industry, while Asian women represent 5.3% of securities professionals (EEOC, 2006).

Statistics analyzing specific firms also show that there has been little improvement in the number of women employed as professionals in the industry. In 1999, Merrill Lynch had one female district director, 11 female regional Vice Presidents, and five female sales managers among a group of approximately 14,000 brokers (Churchhill, 2004). Merrill Lynch says that the number of women managing its offices had increased from 4% in 1997 to 15% in 2000. Morgan Stanley and Smith Barney had similar data. In 2003, at Morgan Stanley, 18% of the firm’s “sales workers” (financial
advisors) and 35% of “officials and managers” were women (Churchhill, 2004). At
Smith Barney, the percentage of woman “sales workers” increased at the firm from 26%
in 2000 to 29% at the end of 2003. Within the “officials and managers” category, women
climbed from 40% to 46% over the same span (Churchhill, 2004). Even when women
work in securities jobs, they receive less pay than their male counterparts. According to
the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, in 2010, the occupation with the biggest
gender wage gap for women was “personal financial advisors,” with men averaging
$1,647 in weekly earnings, while women made on average $962 per week (Hegewisch
and Liepmann, 2010).

Along with a lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion, the industry is known as an
environment where women face discrimination, harassment, and sometimes a hostile
work environment. In 1995, Smith Barney was sued after women endured 10 years of
harassment in the now infamous “Boom-Boom Room” (Roth, 2006). The boom-boom
room was a party room in the basement of the Garden City office where male employees
held parties and maintained a “fraternity-house culture.” Women in the case reported that
men hung toilets from the ceiling, routinely invited strippers to attend parties, and
subjected women to unwanted fondling and lewd sexual remarks. The case settled before
going to court; the company accepted no culpability. Although the firm enacted new
sexual harassment and diversity policies, ten years later, in 2005, the firm was sued again
for gender discrimination.

Along with Smith Barney, other Wall-Street firms have had similar types of
gender discrimination cases filed against them. In the late 1990’s, 900 female employees
at Merrill Lynch filed a suit based on discrimination in wages and account distributions
(Roth, 2006). Arbitrators awarded Hydie Sumner $2.2 million in 2004, which was the first legal ruling that found Wall Street guilty of engaging in systematic discrimination against women. In 1999, Allison Schieffelin filed a gender discrimination lawsuit against Morgan Stanley for failure to promote her to be a managing director of their international equity sales divisions. In 2004, the company settled the suit out of court for 54 million dollars (Roth, 2006). Again, in 2007, the company agreed to settle another class action suit filed by thousands of female employers who alleged discrimination in wages and promotions (Shapiro, 2007).

Within the past several years, the financial industry has gone through tremendous changes. Major firms have filed for bankruptcy and others have merged, resulting in downsizing and large layoffs. In September 2008, Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy, Bear Sterns was purchased by JP Morgan, and Bank of America acquired struggling Merrill Lynch in a deal engineered by the federal government (Swonk, 2009). In October 2008, Congress passed the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), which allotted 700 billion dollars to buy up “toxic” securities from troubled banks (Swonk, 2009). Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs are now the two largest Wall-Street giants and both have changed their status from investment banks to bank-holding companies.¹

Recently, the numbers of securities industry jobs has decreased dramatically. The Bureau of Labor Statistics found that between the second quarter of 2008 and the second

¹ Bank-holding companies gain access to a stable source of funding by taking customer deposits. Investments banks traditionally relied on borrowed money, rather than deposits, to make a profit. By becoming bank holding companies these firms gained access to the Federal Reserve’s emergency lending facilities. However, in return for access to this liquidity the firms now have stricter capital requirements (Chu and Waggoner, 2008).
quarter of 2009 the national securities industry lost 9.3% of its jobs (Rainy, 2009). In New York City alone, the same report indicated that the securities industry shed 27,300 jobs or approximately 15% of the labor force. In March 2009, Forbes reported that several women who had lost their jobs in the securities industry filed lawsuits against their former employers claiming they had been unfairly fired (Raghavan, 2009). In my own research, I investigate the impact the recession has had on employees working in the industry and examine how the economic downturn is contributing to gender inequality within financial services firms.

**Organization of this study**

In chapter two, I review the literature relevant to my study. I draw from the literature on gendered interactions and discuss relevant studies that explore how workers “do gender” on the job. Researchers have begun to examine the culture of finance and the types of gendered performances that are valued in the field of money work. I also draw from the literature on gendered organizations. These studies explore the ways that gender is built into job requirements, workplace policies, hiring practices, and managerial practices. Finally, I describe the relevant studies that examine the impact of broad structural changes, including globalization and recession, on work experiences. I conclude the chapter by describing how my research adds to our understandings of each of these domains of inquiry, including the ways that my research fills gaps in the literature and addresses unanswered questions on gender and work.

In chapter three, I discuss my commitment to feminist methodology and what those commitments are, including reflexivity and a commitment to social change. I discuss why I chose to study finance workers and the importance of researching elites.
also describe my research design. For this research, the primary method of gathering data was through semi-structured in-depth interviews. I interviewed 35 individuals working in the finance services industry who were employed at two types of organizations: Large wire houses (20) and small or independent financial services firms (15). A wire house refers to a large financial organization that connects multiple branches electronically. Any company, such as a bank, that has branches that are able to get information from a common source could be called a wire house. However, the term has become commonly associated with large brokerage firms. For my research, I included the following companies: Morgan Stanley-Smith Barney, Merrill Lynch, JP Morgan, Wells Fargo, UBS, AXA, Edward Jones, Prudential, Mass Mutual, Raymond James, Lincoln Financial Group, and MetLife. Fifteen of the respondents I interviewed worked for small and independent firms. For my research, these firms include independent registered representatives, independent Certified Financial Planners (CFP), family firms, and small local financial services firms. I decided to split the research into these two categories after the first few interviews. It was after talking to my first few informants that I recognized that there are important differences in the organizational settings that impact gendered experiences.

The majority of my interviews (31) were done with female financial services workers between the ages of 29 and 62 years. I chose to spend the majority of my time talking with women because, on average, women continue to bear the brunt of gender inequality within the industry. I conclude the methods chapter by discussing various methodological challenges that I encountered during my research, including the challenge of gaining access to research participants in the finance industry.
Influenced by Joan Acker’s (1990) theory of gendered organizations, in chapter four, I explore how the “gender regime” is built into the social organization of money work. This chapter begins by examining the current “state of play of sexual politics” within the finance industry by providing a “structural inventory” of the sexual division of labor and power (Connell, 1987: 98-99). In my research, there was a clear, although not complete, sexual division of labor within the industry. This was particularly apparent in large wire houses, but also in small and independent firms to some extent. At both types of firms, women continue to be clustered in the lower-paying positions in financial services, such as the client services associate position. At large wire houses, men fill the majority of upper-level financial advisor jobs, such as Presidents and Vice Presidents. At small and independent firms, the majority of the individuals I interviewed worked independently as advisors; therefore, they were working as their own bosses. However, small firms were more likely to have women in senior management positions than large wire houses.

My findings reveal the labor processes at large wire houses are more detrimental to women than those at small and independent firms. Specifically, the traditional compensation model, gender discretion in handing out accounts, and the social organization of partnerships at large wire houses are contributing to gender inequality. The traditional model of compensation focuses on sales rather than on advising, which values a masculine gendered performance and disadvantages women. In addition, at the large wire houses, many workers are organized into “advisement groups,” which perpetuates gendered work. In the majority of these groups, men are the controlling parties who determine work responsibilities and compensation. I found that many men
become primarily responsible for managing money and women become primarily responsible for client interaction. Client interaction, which is viewed as something women will be naturally better at, is constructed as less valuable than the work the men are doing in these partnerships; therefore, women are being compensated less. In addition, in these partnerships, women are primarily responsible for the care work and emotional labor required by the job.

In chapter five, I examine how gender operates at the interactional level, within the finance industry. Specifically, in this chapter, I focus on the type of work culture and gendered performances that are produced within the organizations. During the interviews, participants gave extensive accounts of their day-to-day interactions with co-workers and clients. They provided valuable information about how they perform gender on the job and also how the overall work culture, particularly at the large firms, continues to perpetuate inequality. For example, respondents at large wire houses described the atmosphere as a “boys club” and “a frat party,” while those working at small and independent firms described their offices as “collegial” and “benevolent.”

I also demonstrate that the way gender is constituted varies significantly at large wire houses versus small and independent firms. At the large wire houses, the job of a financial advisor is constructed in masculine terms. Respondents suggested that to be a competent financial advisor at a large wire house meant “being aggressive” and “being strong,” and the type of aggression and strength described by participants contained a covert gendered logic that values a masculine performance. The work of a financial advisor is constituted differently at smaller independent firms. Rather than constructing the job in masculine terms, competence was more likely to be associated with activities
traditionally associated with femininity. A competent financial advisor at an independent firm is someone who can “connect with clients,” “give good advice,” and “help people meet their financial goals.” Based on the construction of competence that prevails, gendered performances for workers at small and independent firms are much more flexible. For example, female participants were less likely to state that they needed to deemphasize femininity or suggest that they needed to become “honorary men.” These results demonstrate the ways in which gendered performances are produced by and vary based on the demands of the local workplace context.

In chapter six, I examine the impact of the current economic and political landscape on money work. Within the past three years, the financial industry has gone through tremendous changes. Major firms, such as Lehman Brothers, have filed for bankruptcy and others (Bear Sterns and JP Morgan; Bank of America and Merrill Lynch) have merged, resulting in downsizing and large layoffs. The workers I have interviewed describe increased surveillance, job insecurity, and strained work/non-work lives. In this chapter, I discuss how the “Great Recession” is impacting gendered interactions in finance. Participants reveal that the depressed economic conditions encourage a range of gender patterns. At large wire houses, the labor process produces performances that resemble what Connell (1998) refers to as “transnational business masculinity.” However, at small independent broker dealers, the economic downturn is perpetuating performances that encourage emphasized femininity, as workers attempt to calm the nerves of weary investors.

Additionally, I examine how the recession is impacting the social organization of gender in the industry. The economic downturn proved particularly hard on women who
bore the brunt of the layoffs that hit the finance sector (Izzo, 2012). My results demonstrate that the recession has impacted the gendering of work responsibilities. At both types of organizations respondents describe additional emotional labor and care work, performed predominately by women. Respondents reported more client “touches,” including phone calls, meetings, and e-mails, to reassure weary investors. However, my results demonstrate that although emotional labor and care work increased at both large organizations and small firms, the additional labor was described as particularly problematic by women working at large wire houses.

In this chapter, I also investigate the ways the economic crisis and competitive global capitalism has contributed to what Joan Acker (2006) has termed “inequality regimes” in the industry. My data suggest that the current “Great Recession” is contributing to and perpetuating complex inequalities between money workers. My findings reveal the ways that the recession has increased inequality between men and women, and also between women. Finally, I conclude the chapter by analyzing some of the resistance strategies being used by workers to challenge the gender regime. For example, at one large wire house, women have teamed up to attempt to make changes to the organizational structure.

In chapter seven, I provide a summary of my research findings. I also discuss some of the strengths and the limitations of my study. I suggest future research that could expand on the topics I explore in this dissertation. Further, I describe the implications of my study and suggest both organizational and cultural changes necessary to ensure more gender inequality within the financial services industry. I end the chapter with some concluding remarks and research reflections.
Chapter 2:

Literature Review
The literature on work and occupations, including studies that focus on gender and work, is vast. In this chapter, I review the broader literature related to the study of work. Specifically, I focus on three major areas of investigation: interactional, organizational, and structural studies of work. I provide an overview of each of these areas of investigation with reference to key studies, theories, and empirical findings that help ground and organize current sociological thinking. After the general overview of these major areas of inquiry within the field of work and occupations, I discuss how the existing literature on the sociology of gendered work and gendered money work has thus far drawn upon and/or contributed to the broader literature regarding each of these major areas of investigation. I conclude with a discussion of how my research can add to our understandings of each of these domains of inquiry, including the ways that my research fills gaps in the literature and addresses these unanswered questions:

- How is a “gender regime” built into the social organization of money work at large wire houses versus small and independent firms? Specifically, in what ways do organizational processes, such as compensation practices, gender discretion by male senior employees, and the structure of partnerships, produce the employee as a gendered subject and contribute to inequity?

- How does gender operate at the interactional level within the financial services industry? What type of work culture is valued at large wire houses versus small and independent firms and how are gendered performances produced by the demands of the local workplace context?

- In what ways is the “Great Recession” impacting gendered performances of financial services workers and the social organization of money work? How is the economic downturn contributing to gender inequality between men and women, and also between different groups of women?
Literature Review

Social Interactions at Work

The centrality of work in our lives is mirrored in the prominent position occupied by the study of work in sociology. Early studies in the sociology of work, sometimes referred to as “human relations,” emphasized organizational functioning and researchers were interested in problems related to workplace relations, worker morale, and productivity (Simpson, 1989). Many were influenced by social interactionist theories and examined social relations within the workplace. For example, Elton Mayo (1933) studied worker turnover and demonstrated that in certain occupations, such as “mule spinning,” turnover was higher than it was in textile plants because the workers in the textile plants were more likely to come into contact with each other and build social relationships. Mayo then began his famous Hawthorn studies at The Hawthorne Plant of the Western Electric Company, where he hoped to identify conditions for improving worker productivity (Simpson, 1989). He argued that social aspects of the job had an impact on productivity. For example, he found that relationships among work groups affected worker productivity. In addition, Mayo claimed that working class culture was at odds with managerial notions of efficiency. This led to a movement away from impersonal management approaches that had been popular at the time (Simpson, 1989).

Researchers from the Chicago School also studied the impact of work groups and social interactions on workers’ experiences. Everett Hughes sometimes called the father of the sociology of work was one of the first researchers to subject work and occupations to sociological inquiry (Chapoulie, 1996). Similar to Mayo, researchers from the Chicago School were interested in the impact of social interactions on workers.
However, unlike Mayo, who critiqued working class culture for decreasing productivity, Hughes and his followers argued that occupational cultures helped workers cope with problems on the job (Chapoulie, 1996). Less productivity, he argued, was a rational response to managers failing to provide adequate working conditions. Hughes and his followers argued management was not providing the vital materials and equipment necessary to get workers to meet the managers’ expectations.

Human relations studies received some criticism. For example, Bell (1947) referred to human relations studies as “cow sociology” because he felt that the emphasis was on making workers more satisfied in order to make them more “efficient.” Bell felt this was like making cows more content so they would give more milk and he did not see this as a worthy goal of sociology. In other words, some researchers argued that there was too much emphasis on helping managers and not enough emphasis on helping workers. Regardless of the criticism, human relations studies turned the sociology of work into a viable line of research. Simpson (1989) suggests that had the human relations school not existed, it is doubtful whether other bodies of research on workers would have developed.

In this research, I explore how social interactions impact professionals who work in finance. This has been a topic that has been underexplored by social scientists. I located one study that examined how professional traders make their trading decisions. Beunza and Stark (2004) conducted an ethnographic study of an arbitrage trading room on Wall Street to examine how the trading room was organized and how traders made decisions about what trades to execute. They were interested in examining how traders “recognized opportunities” in the market. They found that traders are impacted by their
social interactions with other traders. For example, they pointed out that a person’s trades are greatly influenced by their discussions and interactions with other traders. In addition, they show that the trading “tools” specific to each work group, such as mathematical formulas, impact trading decisions. Beunza and Stark (2004: 371) equated the trading room to a laboratory and argued that traders conduct experiments and “deploy an array of instruments to test the market.” What was particularly interesting about their work is that, when they described the traders in their article, the authors referred to all of the traders as men. It was not clear if all of the traders in that particular arbitrage firm identified as men or not. However, one of the shortcomings of their research was that it was written with a normative assumption that trader = men.

Karen Ho’s ethnography of Wall Street also explores social interactions in money work. She investigates how investment bankers make markets and shape Wall Street financial norms through their daily practices. She deconstructs the notion that the booms and busts of capitalism are simply conflated with “the market” and instead argues that they “arise from the particular work place models, corporate culture, and organizational values of Wall Street financial institutions (investment banks, in particular) or the specific and personal experiences of those who work for them (Ho, 2009: 11).” She draws from Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of the “habitus” and argues that investment bankers, who are recruited from the Ivy League schools, are socialized to view themselves as the “best and the brightest.” These bankers must make big deals and increase their number of market transactions to succeed in a workplace of widespread job insecurity. She argues, “In this context of privilege and insecurity, investment bankers, on a practical level, are incentivized and learn to restlessly push more deals (usually short term
transactions intended to boost stock prices) onto corporate America. By thus pressuring corporations, bankers transfer their own models of employee liquidity onto corporate America and set the stage for market crisis” (Ho, 2009: 12). In other words, Ho believes investment bankers impose their culture and organizational practices onto corporations at large, thus contributing to market crisis.

**Gendered Social Interactions at Work**

During the 1970’s, the feminist movement drew attention to the fact that academic disciplines like sociology were ignoring women. Research on work and occupations was particularly inattentive to women (Wharton, 2004). Therefore, research began to explore some of the ways that gender (and other axes of embodiment) structures interactions, opportunities, and experiences at work. Interest in work group interaction and work cultures has carried over to research on gender and work. For example, researchers have demonstrated how workers “do gender” in their interactions (Wharton 1996; Pierce, 1995; Hall, 1993). In addition, research has found that a “masculine work culture” privileges men in certain organizations. For example, there have been a range of studies that have shed light on some of the social practices that take place on the “shop floor,” which have negative consequences for women workers (Cockburn, 1983; McDowell and Court, 1994; Levin, 2004).

Leslie Salzinger’s (2003) research was crucial in shedding light on the ways that the workplace interactions produce a gendered subject. Using ethnographic data from two years field work conducted in Ciudad Juarez, a Mexican border city, Salzinger
(2003) shows how gendered meanings emerge within the specific local workplace context. She studied four transnational export processing plants and found distinct gender practices on each of the shop floors. Her research on workplace interactions shows how managers produce the ways workers view themselves and perform. Her work demonstrates “the process whereby a subject is created through recognizing her or himself in another’s naming” (Salzinger, 2003: 17) and this operates as a primary way that managers control workers. Her work highlights the malleability of gender and adds to our understanding on the ways that gender unfolds in interactions.

Another researcher that has explored gendered interactions at work is Jennifer Pierce (1995). Pierce provided an important qualitative study of the legal profession. She spent fifteen months doing field work in one large law firm and one legal department of a large corporation. Both organizations were approximately the same size with 150 lawyers, 40 paralegals, and 40 secretaries. She also spent three weeks at the National Institute of Trial Advocacy observing lawyers who were at training sessions learning how to present cases in court. She conducted 60 interviews with a random sample of attorneys, paralegals, and secretaries from the two organizations. She also conducted eight supplemental interviews with personnel directors from other leading firms in the San Francisco Bay area.

During her observations at legal institutions, she was able to see the ways that workers interact and she uncovered some of the different types of emotional labor that are associated with specific jobs. For example, “Rambo litigators” are expected to be aggressive and dominate the court room. While “mothering paralegals” are expected to service male workers. Conceptions about women’s roles as caretakers forced women to
take on a disproportionate amount of emotional labor. She (Pierce, 1995: 85) noted that an important part of a paralegal’s job was to “support and maintain the emotional stability of the lawyers they work for, through deferential treatment and caretaking.” The paralegals themselves described their work in these terms. For example, paralegals described going into a “reassuring routine” when working with attorneys. In addition, the attorneys and those responsible for hiring paralegals were frank about suggesting that one of the job requirements for a paralegal was taking care of the lawyers’ emotional needs and women were better suited for that position. Pierce noticed that emotional labor did not go both ways. For example, in their interactions with each other, male lawyers rarely reassured paralegals or attempted to support women’s emotional needs.

**Gendered Social Interactions: “Doing Gender” in Finance**

Researchers have started to examine the culture of finance and the types of gendered performances that are valued on the job. McDowell and Court (1994) interviewed professional and clerical workers at merchant banks in London in order to examine gendered interactions and gendered performances. They describe the type of gendered performances that are valued in corporate finance jobs versus the type of gender performances that are valued in dealer and trader jobs. They point out that traders and dealers were less likely to have degrees and were valued for embodying a “macho” masculinity: “In the heady world of sales and trading the male culture that is established valorizes a more macho masculinity of “guts,” “iron balls,” and “killer instincts” necessary to overcome clients’ resistance, to make sales, and to conclude deals” (McDowell and Court, 1994: 241). Both the men and the women that they interviewed
noted that the culture on the trading floor was masculine. In addition, McDowell and Court (1994) believed that heterosexism on the trading floor was noteworthy. The authors point out that sexual harassment of both women and gay men was tolerated on the floor.

It is this version of masculinity that has become dominant in media representations of traders. McDowell and Court (1994) describe traders who seem to embody characters straight out of Lewis’s (1989) autobiographical account, *Liars Poker*. Lewis’s book details his days working in sales at Salomon Brothers in the United States and describes a work culture that is particularly unwelcoming to women. His account demonstrates the type of attitudes and interactions that are defined as appropriate in the world of trading. Trading is associated with power, glamour, and a specific type of “macho” masculinity that can be summed up in what Thrift and Leyshon (1992) called “sexy greedy.” This type of masculinity is also captured by the male characters in popular films, such as *The Boiler Room* and *Rogue Trader*. The culturally renowned Gordon Gekko, in the popular film *Wall Street*, embodies the “sexy greedy” character who will stop at nothing to make money.

While “macho masculinity” was valued during interactions on the trading floor, “traditional masculinity” was valued in corporate finance. McDowell and Court (1994) explained that, in corporate finance, workers were expected to go to the “right” school and wear the most expensive suits. Recruitment practices for corporate finance positions favored this image. For example, the majority of the individuals recruited for corporate finance jobs in London had been educated at Oxford, Cambridge, or one of five other elite universities. In addition, the majority of the men who were selected to work in
corporate finance were white, between the ages of 25 and 40 years, tall, and slim. These workers were expected to appear “staid and sober,” and the authors noted that the workers were guided by these normative ideas about how about they should perform.

McDowell and Court (1994) discussed the gendered performances required for women who work in merchant banks. They pointed out that many of the younger women they interviewed described becoming what Joan Acker (1990) describes as “honorary men.” For example, many of the women chose to deemphasize their femininity by wearing suits and avoiding adorning themselves with jewelry or makeup. However, women who worked in senior positions were less likely to emphasize a masculine performance. Senior women argued that they had tried hard to fit in with the men at their jobs when they were younger, but they no longer felt they needed to do so. Along with senior executives, American women working in the British banks also felt more liberty to challenge normative behaviors. One of the respondents said: “since I’m American, nobody has any particular idea of what I should be like” (McDowell and Court, 1994: 246).

While McDowell and Court (1994) convincingly argue that the meaning of gender can vary based on the type of position (corporate finance versus trading), Levin (2004) argues that even in a local context, the way gender is constituted can change significantly as the pace of the work shifts. He argued that temporal shifts at work impact gender repertoire. For example, the atmosphere at certain organizations, such as emergency rooms, police departments, and restaurants, changes dramatically throughout the day. In the case of trading floors, gender is constructed differently depending on whether the market is active or not. Drawing from ethnographic data collected at a large
commodities exchange, Levin (2004) found that during the fast paced parts of the trading day (e.g., at 9:30 a.m. when the market opens or when news crosses the wire), gender was constituted through definitions of “competence.” For example, he pointed out that while both male and female traders viewed competence as “gender neutral,” in reality, competence was constructed in a way that privileged attributes that are typically associated with masculinity. For example, competence was associated with being physical, having the ability to handle stress, and being aggressive. Although both male and female traders were able to fulfill these competency requirements, men were seen as “naturally” competent, while women’s success had to be explained. In addition, because the components of competence were interpreted as masculine, women were put in a position where they were forced to compromise between being “competent” and performing femininity.

During times when the market is less active (e.g., during the lunch hour when volumes are generally lower), gender becomes tied to sex and heterosexual imagery. Levin (2004) explained that women became more explicitly excluded from conversations or became the target of sexual jokes. Women were expected to develop “thick skin” and deal with the sexist jokes, or to become “honorary men” and avoid behaviors associated with femininity. Levin convincingly argues that gendered interactions operate differently depending on the pace of the trading day.

**Gendered Organizations**

It is not only important to examine gendered interactions at work, but also how the local organizational context impacts employees. For example, researchers have
explored the impact of workplace policies, hiring practices, and managerial activities on employees (Martin, 1996). In addition, researchers have studied organizational hierarchies and earnings inequality within organizations. Bivens and Mishel (2011) showed that the earnings gap between an average worker’s pay and CEO’s in U.S. firms, which was never low, has grown to unprecedented levels. They pointed out that, in 2010, CEO pay attained a ratio of 243-to-1 relative to the pay of a typical worker.

Research has also explored the impact of rules and regulations on workers. In *The Smile Factory*, John Van Maanen (1990) explored the rules and regulations structuring the lives of workers at Disney world. For example, workers attend the University of Disneyland where they are assigned uniforms and learn employee demeanor. Leidner (1991) also discussed the implications of routinization on service-oriented jobs. She conducted field work at two highly routinized interactive service jobs; McDonald’s and Combined Insurance Company of America. At McDonald’s her research focused on food servers who dealt with the public in positions such as window-crew. She attended Hamburger University and explored how fast-food restaurants standardize every aspect of serving and producing food. At Combined Insurance, she studied life insurance agents and uncovered the implications of regulating the looks, attitude, and demeanor of insurance workers. Similar to the Disney workers, insurance sellers are expected to always maintain a “Positive Mental Attitude.”

Interest in the how the workplace is organized has carried over to studies on gender and work. To say an organization is gendered means “that gender is present in the processes, practices, images, ideologies, and distributions of power in various sectors of social life” (Acker, 1992: 567). Gender is built into the structure of work organizations.
For example, the typical work day is organized in ways that assume a person is completely committed to their work, with little or no responsibility for non-paid work demands. Eight hour days away from home, with total attention to the job and longer work hours when needed, rely on an image of an independent, unencumbered person. Acker (1992) points out that this construction of a “typical work day,” while seemingly gender neutral, does not take into account that women are more likely to have responsibilities inside of the home.

Organizations are often gendered through segregation as well. Although women make up almost half of the paid labor force, women and men are often employed in different occupations (Wharton, 2004). Declines in occupational segregation that took place in the 1970’s leveled off in the 1990’s, and the trend towards occupational segregation persists (Wharton, 2004). Researchers have found that women continue to be concentrated in lower-paying jobs and also fill “flexible” jobs with less stability, while men, particularly white men, continue to occupy the upper echelons of most professions. Segregation also exists within specific occupations. For example, during my research I found that even when women and men work at the same company, they often hold different jobs with men occupying positions that pay more.

Women are more likely to face barriers to advancement in their jobs and women continue to face a “glass ceiling” in many occupations, particularly male-dominated occupations. One structural barrier to women’s advancement is organizational policies that privilege male workers. Martin (1996) studied managerial practices and evaluation processes in two different organizations: universities and a multinational corporation. She found that when promotions take place, male managers used hegemonic masculinity
to benefit men, thus excluding women. For example, managers are more likely to value characteristics that are typically associated with men, such as aggressiveness, independence, and competitiveness. Therefore, the men in these organizations are more likely to receive better evaluations and are seen as deserving of raises. Her study demonstrated that masculinity is valued by many organizational cultures and benefits men in material ways. Understanding how hegemonic masculinity is considered “normal” within organizations is one way to understand how organizations maintain sex segregation and pay inequality.

While women continue to face a glass ceiling in many male-dominated jobs, men who do “women’s” work often ride what Christine Williams (1992) refers to as a “glass escalator.” For example, men who work in the traditional dominated female jobs, such as teachers, are often promoted faster. In her study of lawyers and paralegals, Jennifer Pierce (1995) demonstrated that men who work as paralegals, a highly female-dominated position, ride the glass escalator. She pointed out that male paralegals often face preferential treatment by male lawyers because of their gender. While women paralegals often encountered stereotypical jokes and sexual harassment by male attorneys, the male paralegals were given more interesting and complicated work assignments preparing them to move up in the field.

Along with her analysis of the way gender is built into the structure of work organizations, Acker (1992) also argues that we must examine how ideological beliefs about gender impact how jobs are valued and who is seen as appropriate for jobs in certain organizations. Therefore, along with structural barriers to career advancement, ideological beliefs about gender continue to hurt women in the work world. For example,
cultural beliefs about gender continue to impact our understandings of who should do certain jobs. If men are seen as “naturally” better at math and finance, then it will likely impact hiring practices within fields that utilize these skills. In addition, once they enter the field, women may not be viewed as being equally capable as men at certain jobs. We also see “skill” constructed in a way that often privileges the work of men. Jobs that are deemed feminine often receive less pay. England (1992) found that jobs filled by women tend to be devalued and compensated less relative to jobs done by men with comparable skill. When evaluating a job’s skill, we continue to see jobs done by women given less merit than jobs predominately done by men. England (1992: 199) points out “attendants at dog pounds and parking lots (usually men) were rated more highly than nursery school teachers (usually women), and zookeepers more highly than day care workers.” In other words, a job’s worth continues to be gendered.

The “Gender Regime” in Finance Organizations

Several researchers have begun to explore the ways that the organizational context contributes to gender inequity in finance jobs. Skuratowicz and Hunter (2004) pointed out organizational processes that lead to sex segregation and gender inequality in the banking industry. They showed that management often incorporates gendered assumptions into the responsibilities linked to certain jobs. In other words, jobs were constructed in ways that gender was built into their definitions. They found that at restructured banks, when new positions were created, bank managers used gendered images to communicate who was appropriate for the job. Management used photographs and videos that displayed men as personal bankers and women as customer relations managers. Workers made choices on which jobs to apply for based on how management
framed the jobs. For example, workers applied for jobs based on the definitions of the jobs responsibilities. In addition, women were more likely to take jobs if they were framed as the type of career that might allow for part-time work.

Roth (2006) also researched organizational practices in finance and explored the implications for gender inequality. For her research, Roth wanted to study men and women who entered Wall Street at the same time and had similar credentials. She decided to use placement reports from business schools and she specifically chose individuals who graduated from five elite MBA programs between 1991 and 1993. She chose these years because they would have given the graduates enough time to pass their first promotion and she was interested in seeing if men and women were being compensated equally after several years in the field. In addition, she wanted to sample MBA graduates because she felt that she would be controlling for many important human capital characteristics, such as education credentials, previous work experience, GMAT scores, GPA, and undergraduate major. She also controlled for market conditions by sampling individuals who entered the job market at the same time. From this cohort of graduates, Roth compiled a list of the people who became associates in the ten major Wall Street securities firms. There were 621 people who graduated from one of the top five graduate schools of business and began working at one of these firms. In order to draw her sample, she first separated all of the eligible people into lists by gender. If someone had an ambiguous name, she contacted them to determine if she could put them in one of her sampling frames. She ended up with 498 men and 123 women. She then randomly selected her sample. Of those selected for an interview, she was unable to find 29 and 10 refused to participate. She ended up with 44 women and 32 men in her
sample.

Using in-depth interviews, Roth (2006) discovered several ways in which the institutional context of finance contributes to gender inequity. She found that the bonus system on Wall Street often benefits male workers. She points out that in securities firms, workers are divided into groups, which specialize in a particular type of financial service. Employees are compensated through bonuses that are determined through subjective evaluations. In other words, unlike many organizations in which salary follows a person as they move up the bureaucratic scale, at securities firms, most of your salary is determined through bonuses. In interviews, she found that women felt that managerial discretion in compensation led to gender biases. Roth (2006) also found that job segregation contributed to pay inequity because women are pushed into specific fields in finance that often get paid less. Women often felt pressure to take jobs in public finance instead of higher paying fields like corporate finance. Overall, due to these factors, she found a clear difference in compensation between men and women who work in finance. Specifically, she found that women in finance professions earned only 60.5% as much as men did. The gender difference in average wage compensation between men and women at securities firms was $223,368.

There are several other ways that the institutional context of finance contributes to gender inequity. For example, high levels of client-provider contact contribute to the gender gap in pay. Clients preferred to have Wall Street workers who are similar to them and since the majority of people obtaining financial services continue to be men, it was easier for men to gain a client base. In addition, client entertaining activities often advantage men. Roth (2006) found that women did not feel welcome at certain client
entertaining activities, such as elk-hunting and strip clubs, and this deterred their ability to form strong client relationships.

**A Structural Analysis of Work**

Along with examining workers interactions on the job and organizational policies, it is important to examine the impact of larger economic and structural changes, such as the recent collapse of the financial markets, globalization, technology, recession, and bureaucratization on workers. Sociologists are often interested in the effects of social structures. Karl Marx (1978) argued that labor process was rooted in capitalist control and Max Weber (1946) discussed the impact of increased bureaucratization. Harry Braverman’s classic study, Labor and Monopoly Capital (1974), provided a Neo-Marxist analysis in which he argued that capitalists sought to de-skill workers by creating a detailed division of labor in which costs, and worker’s power, became minimal. He argued that the same factors identified by Marx in the mid-19th century remained central to workers in the 1970’s. He felt that because of the structure of capitalism, more and more jobs were becoming alienating, degrading, and more similar to classic proletarian jobs.

This enduring theme has continued and researchers have demonstrated how structures of the economy and globalization impact workers’ experiences. Many have examined the reshaping of work relations and organizations under global capitalism (Tilly and Tilly, 1997; Greider, 1997; Hernandez Navarro, 2004). For example, Greider (1997) examined the impact of free global trade on workers and working conditions in Thailand. Specifically, he argued that global trade agreements, such as the ones produced by the World Trade Organization, have created a “global assembly line” that connects
workers (who are facing dangerous working conditions) and consumers around the world. In, *To Die a Little*, Luis Hernández Navarro (2004) demonstrated that by drinking one cup of coffee, our lives are inextricably connected to the livelihood of workers, including growers and producers, around the globe. Downsizing, restructuring, outsourcing are all topics that have been investigated. Globalization has cost United States workers their jobs, as more and more companies export their labor to cheaper markets. In addition, it has been argued that global capitalism has increased the divide between lower-class and upper-class workers. There are fewer full-time jobs and more demand for flexible workers who will work on a contingent basis (Henson, 1996). In addition, good paying jobs in manufacturing have declined, while the demand for low-paying service sector jobs has increased (Wharton, 2004).

Researchers have also begun to explore how broad structural changes and globalization impact money work. Specifically, it has been argued that globalization impacts peoples’ opportunity to invest, their investment decisions, and how investors see themselves. Harrington (2008) provides some structural reasons for increases in investment activity in the last several decades. She points out that globalization and technology have made it possible for individual investors to trade online and also get up-to-date information on the markets at any hour of the day. She also points to changes in retirement plans that have encouraged individuals to invest. Many organizations offer 401k plans and workers are often asked to pick from a range of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds for their retirement investments. Finally, she points out that changes in laws have encouraged more individual investing. Revised tax codes that keep capital gains taxes low have made investment income more desirable.
The Impact of Broad Structural Changes on Women’s Work Experiences

There is no doubt that the world of work is changing due to broad global changes in the organization of work. These changes also have specific implications for women. Researchers have examined how globalization affects women’s labor force participation. For example, the increased demand for cheap labor impacts women, who are more likely to occupy these positions. In addition, decreases in manufacturing jobs and increases in service jobs also have implications for women who have traditionally been seen as the ones who would be best suited for service jobs (Wharton, 2004).

Research has explored the impact of broad economic crisis and recession on women’s work. Van Staveran (2001) pointed on that in a recession, when household incomes go down, the amount of time spent doing paid and unpaid labor increases for women, while it stays constant for men. In addition, she demonstrated that women are often more vulnerable to losing their jobs in a recession than men (particularly in export jobs). However, in the most recent economic downturn, men initially experienced more job loss than women. According to a Pew Research Center analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data, from December 2007 to January 2009, men lost approximately 5.4 million jobs, while women lost approximately 2.1 million (Kochhar, 2011). The gender gap in job losses was a result of the high number of layoffs in sectors such as manufacturing and construction. Although men faced more job loss overall, researchers have found that woman bore the brunt of the layoffs that hit the financial sector. In financial services, women held approximately 59% of the jobs, but accounted for 76% (102,000 jobs) of the 134,000 job losses (International Labor Office, 2009).

While men initially lost more jobs than women during the Great Recession,
employment trends during the post-recession favored men, with men gaining 768,000 jobs and women losing 218,000 jobs between June 2009 and May 2011 (ibid). Some of this gender difference was due to the fact that women are more likely to work for state and local governments, which increased layoffs in the wake of budget deficits. However, women also experienced job losses across industries. Post-recession data revealed that men gained 152,000 retail jobs, while women lost 154,000 in this sector, which has traditionally favored women (Boushey, 2011). In the area of finance, which is particularly pertinent to my study, men gained 152,000 finance jobs, while women lost 154,000 jobs (ibid).

Research has also explored how care work has been impacted by the changing economic structures. Hothschild (2004) explored the global care chain and argued that capitalism and globalization have increased demand for immigrant domestic workers. In addition, she argued that rich countries are extracting “love” from less developed countries. Romero (1992) also provides an important discussion of the “emotional” labor provided by domestics. She argues that under capitalism, emotional labor has become a commodity. However, this emotional labor often remains invisible “shadow work.” Therefore, instead of being paid for being a personal counselor or psychologist, domestics receive nothing for this emotional labor.

**The Impact of Broad Structural Changes on Women Working in Finance**

Researchers have begun to explore the impact of global capitalism on women who work in finance. Blair-Loy and Jacobs (2003) explored the effects of globalization on the finance world. Specifically, they examined how these changes impact the amount of care
work in which financial brokers participate. First, they discussed some of the changes that are taking place in the industry. They point out that new technology has made it possible to trade stocks all over the world. In addition, globalization has led to extended hours trading sessions that have contributed to a 24-hour work day. They interviewed brokers and managers at four firms and they found that, due to longer trading sessions and extended hours trading, which enables workers to continue trading past the closing bell, parents had little time to care for families. Many have long work days and rarely take a vacation that lasts more than a three-day weekend. In addition, many workers keep track of the market all the time and therefore have little time to spend with family. The authors found finance workers spend sometimes as little as a half an hour a day with their children.

The demands of the job are gendered in that they are particularly burdensome for female brokers, who continue to do more care giving and have little time to spend on themselves. While male brokers said that they often strove to make time for themselves (“sanity time”) by playing golf or going to the gym, women brokers never discussed setting aside personal time for themselves. The authors found that commission-based firms are particularly problematic for women. Blair-Loy and Jacobs (2003) argue that these organizations reinforce the male breadwinner/female caregiver division of labor. Unlike commission-based firms, they argue that the discount brokerage model has become a good alternative for caregivers who want to work as brokers. Discount brokerages, such as E-trade and Ameritrade, are organized in a way that allows people to work and also have time to care for family members. Discount brokers are not paid on the basis of commission and workers generally make lower salaries on average (Roth,
2006). However, many women choose to work at discount brokerage firms because they generally have “typical” work days, do not have to trade after-hours, and many do not have to work all weekend. These firms are more family friendly, and have in turn ended up being more female dominated.

**Gaps in the Literature**

Finance jobs continue to be dominated by men and these jobs arguably represent all that is socially defined as masculine. Therefore, I think it is important to keep doing research that examines the gendered experiences of workers in this area. After examining literature that has looked at how broad structural changes have impacted finance workers and also how the organizational policies and work place interactions are gendered, I argue there are some gaps in the literature that my research attempts to fill.

My research examines the question: How is a “gender regime” built into the social organization of money work at large wire houses versus small and independent firms? I found no literature that explores how the different organizational contexts of financial services firms’ impacts gender inequality. My research elicits understandings about gendered organizational practices at these firms that have been unexplored, such as hiring practices, training programs, and compensation packages. Further, I add to the literature by demonstrating that the structural context at large wire houses is more detrimental to women than at small and independent firms.

My research also explores the question: What type of work culture is valued at large wire houses versus small and independent firms and how are gendered performances produced by the demands of the local workplace context? Levin (2004) examined how gender was performed at a commodities exchange, and McDowell and
Court (1994) explored gendered interactions at a merchant bank. However, little research has investigated how gender is constituted for those who work in financial services. Further, there have been no investigations exploring how the type of financial services company (independent broker dealer versus large wire house) impacts the production of gendered performances. This research adds to the literature on the ways that the local workplace context impacts how gender is constituted.

To date, I could find no research on the care work or emotional labor that women in financial services might be expected to contribute when they are on the job. Similar to Pierce (1995), who studied the emotional labor of women who work in the legal profession, I explore the emotional labor and care work performed by financial services workers. For example, in my research I demonstrate that many of the jobs that workers do in finance, such as selling stock or giving financial advice, involve emotional labor and care work that has not been taken into account in previous research and literature.

Finally, my research addresses the questions: In what ways is the current financial crisis impacting gender inequity in money work? How is the historical context impacting gendered interactions and the social organization of money work? The majority of those who have qualitatively investigated finance work did so at a time when the financial markets were flourishing. For example, when Roth (2006) investigated gender pay inequity in finance it was during an economic boom. However, the landscape has changed dramatically over the past few years making this an important time to explore how the economic, political, and historical context is contributing to different experiences for workers in finance. Large organizations, such as Lehman Brothers, have filed for bankruptcy. New government regulations are currently being imposed on
financial institutions. Large losses in the stock market, rising unemployment, and a multi-year recession has impacted the work and non-work lives of those in the finance industry. This research adds to literature by examining how the social organization of money work done at financial services companies has been impacted by the Great Recession.
Chapter 3:

Methods
This chapter details the research methods used in my study of finance workers. I
begin with a discussion of the methodological framework, which involves a commitment
to anti-racist feminist research. I then describe why I chose to study elites. I continue
with a description of my methodological strategies, including a description of my
informants, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. Finally, I discuss the
challenges I encountered while doing this research, including gaining access to
informants, maintaining confidentiality, and the power dynamics that I encountered
researching professional money workers.

Methodological Framework

Feminist Methodology

Feminist approaches to knowledge have developed out of a necessity to challenge
“truths,” which did not speak to “us” (women) and in many ways contributed to “our”
(women’s) oppression. Feminists are changing the norms of what constitutes an
argument (Heckman, 1997) and challenging norms of objectivity that assume that the
researcher and the researched can be separated. In addition, feminist-identified
researchers are making strides in creating knowledge about oppression and shedding light
on some of the problems associated with positivist knowledge claims.

Historically, men controlled the academic community and denied women and
non-white women the ability to produce what is considered to be “valid, acceptable”
knowledge. Hill Collins points out:
The experiences of African-American women scholars illustrate how individuals who wish to rearticulate a Black women's standpoint through Black feminist thought can be suppressed by a white-male-controlled knowledge validation process. Exclusion from basic literacy, quality educational experiences, and faculty and administrative positions has limited Black women's access to influential academic positions (Zinn et al. 1986). While Black women can produce knowledge claims that contest those advanced by the white male community, this community does not grant that Black women scholars have competing knowledge claims based in another knowledge validation process. As a consequence, any credentials controlled by white male academicians can be denied to Black women producing Black feminist thought on the grounds that it is not credible research (Hill Collins, 1990: 203).

Further, research projects that stray from positivist methodologies are often rejected from “prestigious” journals. In addition, those who choose to use qualitative or feminist methods are often denied tenure in academic institutions reinforcing the notion that they are not producing “valid, reliable” scientific data.

There are several commitments of feminist methodology that provided a guiding framework for my research. For example, I continually reflected on how my social location was impacting the way I am conducted my study and the way I interpreted results. Reflexivity is an important guiding principle of feminist research and can be defined as “the tendency of feminists to reflect on, examine critically, and explore analytically the nature of the research process” (Fonow and Cook, 2005: 2218). In addition, feminist researchers often acknowledge that the characteristics of the author/researcher influence the interpretation of findings (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). I continually tried to recognize how my social location might be impacting my study.

To this end, I am a white, middle-class, 35-year-old female who tries to use an anti-racist feminist approach in my research. My interest in the securities industry
developed in my early 20’s. I began learning how to day trade as a way to accumulate enough capital to buy a small business after being denied a small business loan from banks that had no intention of lending money to a broke, young, female graduate student. Since then, I have continued to trade and following the industry has become incredibly interesting for me. I have never held a job as a professional money worker. The anti-racist, feminist consciousness I developed in my undergraduate studies is the reason that I never thought of pursuing a career working as a professional in the industry. I know that because of my social location I would be incredibly uncomfortable in an environment that is often overtly sexist and heterosexist. In addition, even though trading stocks has given me financial security that I might not otherwise have, I continue to have many criticisms of the industry, with gender inequity being just one. I am also critical of the increasing connectedness of the big investment banks and government, the ever-increasing exorbitant salaries of Wall-Street executives, and the understanding that trading liquid capital means that for certain time periods (days, minutes, seconds) individuals, including myself, are taking an ownership stake in companies that are known to perpetuate inequality, oppress workers, and harm the environment.

I understand that these particular values influenced how I approached the research, the types of questions I asked participants, and how I interpreted my findings. For example, while Roth’s (2006) main concern was to find out the differences between men’s and women’s salaries on Wall Street, the gender analysis stopped there. Pointing out gender inequity between men and women’s salaries is incredibly important to me, but I also wanted to ask questions that illuminate how the social organization of money work contributes to gender inequity between women. My experiences as an anti-racist,
feminist trader provided me with a different perspective and interpretation of the data than others might have found if they did this type of research. My personal experiences and social location could not be detached from my discussion and analysis of the data. I believe that a self-situating approach is integral to feminist research.

As a researcher, I have the power to construct and disseminate “truths” about the people I studied. The “dilemma of ethnographic authority” is something that all ethnographers have to consider, even those who study elites. James Clifford (1986) has written extensively on the power that researchers have to produce knowledge and texts about those they study. In addition, feminist scholars draw attention to the power that researchers hold in defining the “reality” of those researched. Sue Wise (1987: 76) writes that one “structural inequality in the research relationship is that the research products are produced by the researcher and it is her version of reality that is seen to have cognitive authority.” In my own work, I attempted to overcome this dilemma by embracing the work of Judith Stacey. Stacey (1988: 26) argues that, in ethnography, there is an inescapable problem of the authoritative voice of the author, but there can also “be ethnographies that are partially feminist (and/or) accounts of culture enhanced by the application of feminist perspective.” In other words, by recognizing and acknowledging our power as researchers, we can attempt to make the research as egalitarian as we know how.

Along with the dilemma of ethnographic authority, feminist methodologists have influenced my thinking about the insider/outside debate. Traditionally, in the methodological literature, an “insider” would be a researcher who shares the same race, class, and/or gender of those that she studies and an “outsider” is someone whose social
status differs from those she studies (Baca Zinn, 1979). Debates take place over whether “insiders” or “outsiders” can produce “evidence” that should count as sociological knowledge. For example, it could be argued that that an “insider” would be better suited to conduct a less exploitative study. Others might argue that “outsiders” would provide “more valid” results because they are more likely to detached and more objective in their research. Pierce (1995) argues that this constructed dichotomy is no longer relevant. For example, she states:

Simply because a researcher shares the gender and ethnicity of her subjects does not automatically qualify one as an insider. By virtue of her academic training, the fieldworker has been trained to look at the world in a way that is different from the perspective utilized by people with no such academic background (Pierce, 1995: 193).

Along with having different academic backgrounds a female researcher might have other salient aspects of her identity that do not coincide with her participants. For example, my sexual identity, age, political and religious affiliations, and/or class might differ from the researched. Therefore, instead of claiming I am either an insider or an outsider, I support Patricia Hill Collins notion of “outsider within” and recognize that there were certain moments where I was an insider during my research, while other times I was an outsider.

During my research, I also strove to be accountable to the participants I was researching. Code (1995) points out that accountability should also be an important concern for a feminist researcher (Burt and Code, 1995). She argues that accountability can manifest itself in a readiness to make sure that the women who have participated in the research process can remain active participants in the research. For example, she argues that researchers should make their results available and ensure that they are accessible to the people who are interviewed (Burt and Code, 1995). During my research
project, I have told every participant in the study that I am doing a research project. I have also been sharing my thoughts about the research with several participants, and I plan to give a copy of my dissertation to all of the workers who I interviewed.

Finally, I started my project with a commitment to promote social change. Feminist researchers, like me, are interested in producing knowledge about gendered social relations. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002: 147) state: “In our view, the point of doing feminist social research is not to score points for political correctness, or to attain methodological purity, but to give insights into gendered social existence that would otherwise not exist.” As a feminist, I am trying to “transform patriarchal social institutions through research and research results” (Fonow and Cook, 2005: 3). I believe that there continue to be barriers in society that are inhibiting women’s chances to learn about finance, enter into finance jobs, and gain the same opportunities as men in the career. Women continue to face harassment on the job. In general, women continue to be oppressed in the world of finance. I believe this study is important not only because I hope to uncover some important gender dynamics, but also because I hope to promote change in social relations that are oppressive.

**Why Elites?**

Social scientists’ “value studying what they like and liking what they study, in general, we prefer the underdog” (Nader, 1974: 303). Laura Nader points out that many social scientists have gravitated towards studying the underdog, leaving elites and those with extreme power in society under-explored. There seems to be a broad preference among sociologists to study the margins rather than the center. For example, historically, qualitative methods focused on groups that were less powerful in society. According to
Taylor and Bogdan (1998), qualitative research first became popular in the discipline of sociology during the early 1900’s. In 1923, Anderson wrote “the Hobo,” in 1928 Wirth wrote “The Ghetto,” and in 1927 Thrasher wrote “The Gang” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). This preference for studying the less powerful continues today as there seems to be more studies of drug dealers and gang members than of stock traders or corporate board rooms. Ethnography, for example, has been defined by what by Harding (1991: 376) calls “a radically parochial imaginary of the margins.”

Although many sociological studies have focused on the less powerful in society, there have been several classic studies that have contributed to our understanding of elites. C. Wright Mill’s classic study of the Power Elite (1956) sheds light on the unequal distribution of power under corporate-state capitalism. He argued that a very select group of “elite” individuals exercise the majority of political, economic, and social control. Domhoff (1967) echoed Mills and also argued that elites within government and business form an interlocking network of power. In particular, he discussed his concerns with the blurring of the boundaries between corporate and government control, where elites, including owners of large for-profit businesses and top managers in the corporate community, have increasing control over government policy decisions.

It could be argued that studying the ideas, practices, and culture of elites only focuses more attention on ways of understanding the world that are already have hegemonic status in our society. It follows from this argument that we should focus on shedding light on groups that have more clearly defined “subjugated knowledge” (Foucault, 1980). However, if we avoid studying elites, we contribute to the “cultural invisibility” and “post cultural” status of the powerful (Rosaldo, 1989). Rosaldo suggests
that by focusing inquiries only on certain groups and cultures, social scientists make those who are studied appear to be particularly problematic or more worthy of study. In other words, if we do not study the powerful, then we run the risk of normalizing their power and making them seem as if they are not worthy of inquiry. However, it could be argued that if there is any group that deserves to be denaturalized and opened up to a critical analysis, it is people who have money, status, and power.

We often see social scientists providing elites with knowledge about the masses. For example, large-scale research projects are often funded by elite institutions and elite philanthropic foundations. However, less often does social science knowledge flow the other way. I would argue it is equally important to study elites and elite organizations in order to challenge social inequality. By studying elites, we might be able to reveal important elements of what Dorothy Smith refers to as the “ruling relations” (Smith, 2005). For example, the powerful are more likely to be constructing the textual and discursive templates that are organizing individuals across multiple institutions. We cannot neglect to “study those very individuals or groups that are central to or, at a minimum, influence, the functioning of entire structures” (Odendahl and Shaw, 2002: 314).

Finally, I was interested in “studying up” because I think it is important to deconstruct oppressor/oppressed, margin/center dichotomies. There is a co-existence of privilege and subjugation in peoples’ lives that I think it is important to uncover. For example, a person may be privileged because of social class, but also face oppressive circumstances because of their sexuality or gender. By studying professional finance workers, I explore the intersection of power and vulnerability in peoples’ lives.
Methodological Strategies

The main reason that I used qualitative methods was because I was interested in understanding how the financial services industry works, and more specifically learning how gender is organized within money work. In order to investigate the social organization of gender in finance, I used semi-structured, in-depth interviews as my main research method. I wanted to understand how money work is organized by understanding how people participate in it.

Informants: Sample of Professional Money Workers

I interviewed 35 individuals working in the finance services industry. Thirty-one of the interviews took place in a medium-sized city with approximately 200,000 people. Four of the interviews took place in smaller suburban locations outside of the city at branches of large wire houses. The majority of my interviews (31) were done with female financial services workers between the ages of 29 and 62 years. I chose to spend the majority of my time talking with women because, on average, women continue to bear the brunt of gender inequality within the industry. However, I also interviewed four men in order to talk with individuals in various positions within the organizations and to gain a better understanding of organizational structures and company policies. Thirty-three of my respondents identified as white and 2 identified as African American. Several of my respondents did not reveal their marital status; however, 18 of the informants revealed having children. The total number of years respondents reported working in the industry ranged from less than one year to over forty years.

In order to participate, individuals had to work as paid employees in professional financial services. The type of work on which my research focuses is the work of a
financial advisor. Financial advisors are mainly responsible for working with clients and offering specific financial products and services. For example, they are responsible for helping clients arrange investment portfolios and plan for retirement. They also give advice on insurance, taxes, wills, and estates. Some of the informants I interviewed work solely as advisors, while some of the informants work as both financial advisors and money managers, which means that they trade stocks, bonds, commodities, and/or derivatives for their organization and are responsible for deciding which stocks are traded in and out of their individual clients’ and company’s funds and portfolios.

I interviewed workers who were employed at two types of organizations. The first group worked at large brokerage wire houses, including Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, Merrill Lynch, AXA equitable, Prudential, and Wells Fargo. At these large firms, I interviewed 20 individuals in various positions within the financial services organizational hierarchy, including Certified Financial Advisors, Presidents, Vice Presidents, Registered Representatives, Recruitment Specialists, and Regional Managers. This allowed me to gain perspectives from across the institutional setting. Due to the fact that there were only a few women working in upper level positions in the city that I did my research, I have chosen not to reveal how many of each type of worker I interviewed. In addition, throughout the document, I do not always indicate the exact position of each of my respondents. This is because if I did reveal this information I would risk breaching their confidentiality. The second group was employed at smaller firms or at independent firms. I interviewed 15 individuals working at small or independent firms. Of those who worked at small and independent firms, nine worked independently and six worked at small firms. Many of these informants previously worked at large wire houses and went
to work at smaller firms or started their own companies because of the gender discrimination they experienced at the large wire houses. I decided to split the research into these two categories after the first few interviews. It was after talking to my first few informants that I recognized that there are important differences in the organizational settings that impact gendered experiences.

I used both purposive and snowball sampling techniques to find participants. When I began my research, I had a key informant who helped me find my first informants. She was able to provide me with the contact information of several women working as financial advisors in the area. However, after interviewing the first few people, it became difficult to find women to participate in the study. This was because there were many offices in the city in which I did the research that had no female employees working in a position that entailed giving financial advice. Therefore, I used purposive sampling in order to find women to interview. Specifically, I searched company websites online. In addition, I found a local business networking organization that listed financial advisors and I was able to find several participants via this website. I contacted the majority of informants via email. In my message, I introduced the topic of my study to the potential informants and asked if I could interview them about their work experiences for approximately one hour. I contacted 82 individuals and ended up with 35 participants. The majority of those who did not participate, approximately 85%, were passive refusals who did not respond to my phone calls or e-mails. However, there were several active refusals. Time constraints were most often stated as a reason why a person chose not to participate. It is noteworthy that several women working at large wire houses stated that they were unable to participate because management did not want them
to be involved in my study. It was unclear if they could not participate because of the
topic of my study or if their offices has policies that restricted them from participating in
any type of interview.

**Data Collection**

I completed the interviews between May of 2010 and April of 2011. The primary
method of gathering data for this study was through semi-structured in-depth interviews.
Prior to the interview, I gave each participant a copy of an informed consent form (see
Appendix A), read through it completely, and answered any questions that they had. The
majority of participants had no questions about the research; however, a few asked me to
tell me a little about myself and asked why I was interested in the topic of gender and
finance. I also asked permission to take notes and audio record the interview. I informed
all participants that they would be given pseudonyms and that no identifying information
would be reported in my study. All interviews were face-to-face and were digitally
recorded with the permission of the participants.

Interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours, with the average
length being ninety minutes. The interviews were semi-structured and began with
demographic questions and then addressed more specific questions regarding
participants’ experiences in finance. The interview questions varied slightly, depending
on the responses given by the participants; however, an interview guide was used to
prompt the interviewee regarding broad areas that I wanted to cover. Interview questions
focused on participants’ experiences at work, organizational policies, and the impact of
the current economic context on their job (see Appendix B). I used a responsive
interview technique. In other words, I started with a specific set of questions on my
interview guide but would ask follow up questions and request participants to elaborate, explain, and provide examples and more details.

The interviews took place at varying locations determined by the preference of the participant. The majority of the interviews were done at their offices. This allowed me to do some observations of the overall atmosphere at the different offices and watch workers interact. Many of the participants gave me tours of their offices, so I could see where different types of work are done. Participants also introduced me to co-workers. One interview took place at my office. This was because the participant wanted more privacy.

Rapport built throughout the interviews as the respondents got more comfortable speaking with me. Many of the respondents seemed to start the interview somewhat cautiously and then, as the interview went along, they began to feel more comfortable opening up and answering freely. One woman even commented that as the interview went on she decided that she really wanted to “tell me how it is and let me know how things really work in this business.” While I was conducting the research, it seemed to me that many participants wanted their voices heard in hopes that institutional changes would occur.

The topic of my dissertation seemed to be very interesting to many of the people that I interviewed. Women, in particular, seemed excited to be able to share their experiences and seemed very happy to have someone to talk to about what it is that they do on a daily basis. Some would start the conversation thinking that they would not have anything interesting to share, and then, as the interview went along, they would find
themselves becoming really engaged in the topics and excited about discussing issues that they thought were important to share with me.

**Coding, Data Analysis, and Interpretation**

Every interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. The majority of the interviews were transcribed within two weeks after the interview. Several were transcribed after completing the interviews. After the initial transcription, I listened to the tapes while reading the transcription to locate any transcription errors. I also typed analytic research memos after each interview. In these memos, I included anything that I found particularly interesting about an interview. For example, I would make note of methodological challenges. I also described the atmosphere in the office where the research took place and any interesting interactions that took place. In addition, I began formulating general themes that developed as I talked to more informants.

After all of my interviews were transcribed, I closely read all of my transcripts and analytic memos. After this reading I began the open coding process (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). As themes developed, I color highlighted these sections of the interviews and wrote the themes in the margins of the transcripts. It was not uncommon for segments of the transcripts to touch on different themes so I would highlight these segments with two different colors. In addition, there were portions of some interviews that were not coded or assigned a theme. Because a close reading of some of the transcripts began early on in the research, there were some themes that I initially identified as relevant, that lost relevance as the study progressed.

After the open coding, I began a more focused coding process (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). At this point, I copied and pasted quotes from my themes into a word
processing document and broke my major themes into sub-themes. I did not use a search word processing program because it is possible that I would have missed information related to my themes and sub-themes. For example, Esterberg (2002) points out that when searching for specific words it is possible to miss certain word combinations that would relate to a theme or sub-theme. In order to connect each quote to a participant, I included the participant’s pseudonym and the page number of the transcript that the quote came from in parenthesis at the end of the quote. The coding process enabled me to organize my data and represent the social organization of my informants’ experiences.

Respondents, through their interviews, revealed the social organization behind many of their experiences, behaviors, and actions. My data interpretation was influenced by institutional ethnography. Institutional ethnography, a method developed by Dorothy Smith, is a mode of inquiry that strives to explicate how local work activities are tied to and coordinated by larger ruling relations. She points out that “every local setting of people’s activities is permeated, organized by and contributes to social relations coordinating activities in multiple settings. The work of the sociologist is to discover these relations and to map them so that people can begin to see how their own lives and work are hooked into the lives and work of others in relations of which most of us are not aware” (Smith, 2002: 18). Finance work is discursively organized and I was interested in how texts coordinate what gets “known” and also how company policies organize everyday activities throughout the finance industry. During the interviews, I paid particular attention to organization policies and texts that are connected to the work that money workers do. Respondents spoke in interviews about: the hiring process; training policies; organizational policies; new client information packets and client/advisor
checklists. Much of my analysis examines these institutionalized discourses and organizational policies/practices to show how they coordinate workers’ activities and perpetuate gender dichotomies and inequality.

Presenting results on elites can pose problems for researchers. For example, researchers describe fear of publishing reports that cast elites in a negative light. In addition, Cochrane (1998) brings up a really interesting point about reflecting on how you interpret and then report information that has been collected from powerful people. He cautions researchers to make sure that they are not simply taking back supposed “expert” knowledge of the powerful and transmitting it as the “truth” without recognizing that those in power are also tied into broader social relations. In other words, when studying any group, elite or otherwise, as a researcher I need to recognize that the elites are only providing a partial perspective and I am not interested in transferring their “truths” to the general public. Rather, I am interested in uncovering some of the social processes that are organizing their work experiences.

In order to provide results on the workings of an institution, it is important to study different people within an organization: “Interviews with elite subjects at institutions, although informative, may provide only the “top” part of a top-down perspective. It is critical, therefore that researchers substantiate elite interviews with additional non-elite interviews” (Odendahl and Shaw, 2002: 314). By gaining perspectives from individuals across the institutional setting, I was better able to make sure that participants working in higher-level positions were not presenting biased answers.

Finally, I think it is important to note that in my research I try not to make
generalizations about my informants, but instead focus on the discourses and workplace practices that organize their lives. The conceptual categories of positivist science are being challenged by feminist-identified knowledge producers. Smith (1990) has argued that the concepts used by many social scientists are objectifying and do not speak to the actual lived experiences of individuals. For example, concepts such as “mentally-ill” or “gay” are objectifying and can be used to manage and control bodies (Campbell, 2003). In addition, identity categories such as “women” “gay” “black” used by many positivist social scientists need to be challenged. For example, it is difficult to say anything about “women” when there is such a range of women from various social locations. For example, post-modern feminists have pointed out that “we” can no longer necessarily rely on categories, such as women, black, gay, and poor to tell us “truths” about people. I am not simply “giving voice” to informants, but instead I am attempting to uncover some of the structures and discursive frameworks (such as notions of “femininity” and “masculinity”) that organize their everyday experiences. In addition, I examine how organizational processes are contributing to the oppression of the particular group of individuals who work in the finance industry.

**Methodological Challenges**

There were several methodological challenges that I experienced while “studying up.” Some of the difficulties that I encountered while studying elites included gaining access, maintaining confidentiality, and negotiating power during the interviews.
Gaining Access

“I once enthusiastically told Erving Goffman I was studying business elites. “Have you slept with them?” he replied: “No, but I am getting in to talk with them,” I proudly answered”’ (Paul Hirsh quoted in Hertz and Imber; 1995: 72). In this quote, Hirsh speaks to one of the first methodological challenges that researchers who study elites have discussed: Access. Qualitative researchers have agreed that there are often many difficulties accessing individuals who are of an elite status. Elites often have busy time schedules and have little time to sit down and talk. In addition, elite individuals may be more guarded about their lives and they are more likely to have gatekeepers. In this project, I encountered this problem. It was often difficult for me to get workers in the finance industry to speak with me.

Susan Ostrander (1993) discusses the power negotiation that takes place when initially starting research with elites. She points out that elites are often very concerned with their privacy and many want to make sure nothing negative is written about them. She described her dilemma negotiating her research with the gatekeeper of one organization. She said:

In a meeting with the assistant director several weeks into the project, she dropped what felt to me initially like a small bomb: She asked that the agency be provided the opportunity to “sign off” on any written reports that would be circulated or that I might prepare for publication (Ostrander, 1993: 14).

In other words, the director wanted the ability to screen out certain information and data that she was collecting. She had to have several conversations with the director in order to negotiate. She decided to draft a contract that allowed the director to make comments on her reports and change any errors. However, she had to reiterate that she would only
change factual errors and not her interpretations or analysis. She wanted to make sure she could maintain the integrity of her research, but also gain the trust and support of the people she was researching.

Bosk (2008) had similar experiences with power negotiations while researching both surgeons and genetic counselors. After finishing his fieldwork, he shared his research results with the individuals he studied. Many of the research subjects suggested Bosk was “betraying” them because in his findings he did not always portray them in a positive way. Even though the research subjects agreed that Bosk was accurately describing situations, some argued that he should change the language he used to depict events. He even had one individual beg him not to publish his findings. Bosk tried to negotiate with his subjects as much as possible. He said: “I was happy to remove an offending phrase here or a too revealing detail there, but that was all. The sociological interpretation was my business, not his. It was the domain where I was the “expert” (Bosk, 2008: 151). In the end, he did make changes to his manuscript. For example, he changed male pseudonyms to female pseudonyms in order to try and increase confidentiality. However, he also argued that as a researcher he wanted to provide a full and accurate account based on the data he collected during his fieldwork. Therefore, he did not agree to change any of his interpretations of his findings.

Researchers have come up with some other suggestions for accessing elite individuals, which were helpful for me. Odendahl and Shaw (2002) suggest finding a key informant. They say: “The best entrée to elite individuals for interviews is provided by members of the elites’ own groups” (Odendahl and Shaw, 2002: 307). McDowell (1998), who studied individuals working in merchant banks, said networking and luck
played a key role in getting her access to certain people: “In the end we had to work in
the banks that would cooperate, and we got into those, in the main, through nepotism and
chance, which is not a strategy commonly discussed in handbooks of social research
methods” (McDowell, 1998: 2136). She used college connections and personal
acquaintances that were able to pull strings to get the banks to open their doors to her and
allow her to interview workers. In my own research, I developed a relationship with a
key informant who worked as a financial advisor for a large financial services company.
Prior to beginning my research, I had several conversations with her about the finance
industry and she helped spark my interest in gender inequality in the industry. She
referred me to two other women working in the same field and after speaking with them I
knew that I had found an interesting dissertation topic.

Another challenge to access was several of the participants who I interviewed at
large wire houses said prior to the interview that they would need to get permission from
compliance before meeting with me. Two people asked for the questions ahead of time
so they could show the compliance officer what would be asked. I did not have any
participants who said they could not participate due to compliance regulations. However,
I did receive different responses about how compliance would impact participants. For
example, I interviewed two people from the same office, one female and one male. The
male did not ask to see the questions ahead of time or suggest that he needed to get
permission in order to speak to me. While the woman in the same office told me she
needed to see the questions and said that after speaking with compliance that they would
need to see her responses and what she intended to say before she was allowed to do the
interview. So the woman wrote out all of her responses, got approval from compliance
that her answers were “ok,” and then informed me at the interview that she would have to read her answers like a script. It was unclear why the woman I interviewed was screened by compliance before speaking to me, while the man I interviewed was not.

In general, I found it incredibly interesting and also somewhat alarming that the company compliance officer had the power to screen every word that an employee was allowed to say to me as a researcher. It seemed clear to me that company compliance officers at large wire houses were expected to make sure that employees were not voicing any criticisms of the organizations to a researcher. At a time when financial companies have received a lot of negative media attention, the idea that companies are attempting to control the voices of their employees has implications for research. I think it was important that many of my respondents did not seek the approval of compliance officers before speaking with me because I think respondents were able to speak more freely. It is possible that many respondents at large wire houses were breaking company regulations by speaking with me. I am indebted to them for opening up to me and giving me information about their companies that could possibly cost them their jobs. This also speaks to the fact that I feel a great deal of pressure to make sure that I rigorously maintain the confidentiality of my informants.

**Confidentiality**

In order to protect the privacy of the participants, all of the data collected for my research was kept in a private location. Each of transcripts was given a code in order to separate the name of the participant. Electronic data was kept in a locked computer that was password protected. Hard copies of interviews were secured in a locked filing cabinet. In this report, all participants have been given pseudonyms. Identify
information, such a company names, are not attached to a particular respondent. Instead, I will only refer to a company as a large wire house or a small or independent firm. I have also chosen to limit the amount of information about the location where the research was done in order to maintain the confidentiality of the informants.

Confidentiality was extremely important to my participants. While all of the participants did allow me to audio record the interviews, many did reveal their reservations because they wanted to make sure everything they said would be confidential. One woman whom with I spoke knew that since I was recording the conversations it would likely impact how she responded. She knew that her name would not be in any way connected to the recording and that the interview was confidential. However, she said she was still nervous that even the sound of her voice could possibly associate her with the tape. After the interview, she explained why she needed to make sure that management did not find out about her participation. It was clear that some of the things that she revealed to me off of the record could possibly endanger her job.

Fear seemed to be on the minds of several of my participants. One woman whispered her entire interview with me because she was fearful her co-workers would hear her complaints about how her company is organized. Several others began whispering during the interviews when something came up in the interview that an informant thought should be confidential. On many occasions, I would have to move my recorder closer to the informant in order to make sure I would be able to transcribe their responses accurately. I also had to interview one informant twice because I was unable to hear her on the audio recording, which made transcription impossible.
Research Dynamics

Researchers who have studied elites have discussed some of the problems they have encountered during interviews. Specifically, Teresa Odendahl and Aileen Shaw (2002) discuss how power dynamics come into play during interviews with professional and elite individuals. They point out that individuals with elite status are often accustomed to having a lot of power and control in their lives. They are used to people listening to them. They may keep the interviewer waiting and many can be intimidating.

Describing one interview with a CEO of a large private foundation they said:

She hustled into her spacious office, glanced at her watch, and announced that she had less than an hour. “What is this all about?” she asked. Our interview subject was an impressive person, clearly accustomed to exercising authority…She took a personal call during the interview—a subtle reminder both of the demands on her time and that she had a life outside the institution” (Odendahl and Shaw, 2002: 305).

The woman made it clear that she was on a tight time schedule and that the interview was not an important part of her busy life. On several occasions during my research, I had informants who reminded me that they had limited time to speak with me. In addition, several participants took calls during the interview. This seemed more to me about pressures placed on them by their organizations to maintain a tight schedule than about purposively trying to control their environment.

Ostrander (1993) offered tips on interviewing upper-class women that were useful for me when I interviewed professional money workers. She suggested arriving early and attempting to get comfortable with the environment, which was something that I did. She also used the placement of her tape recorder as a way to make the decision on where to sit in an interview. Preparation proved to be incredibly important for helping to ensure a
“productive exchange” (Odendahl and Shaw 2002). Since professionals have only a short amount of time, I attempted to be as prepared as I possibly could be so that I was able to get as much information as possible in a short period of time. For example, I attempted to find out as much information about the person beforehand on their websites and in the company brochures so that less time was wasted collecting information that could be found elsewhere. Instead, I would verify that the information I had found out about them and move on to important interview questions.

Finally, it was also helpful to know the language of the people who I was studying. Hirsh (quoted in Hertz and Imber 1995: 2) says: “The fieldworker must be an expert in at least two languages, the language of social sciences and the language spoken by one’s respondents: The authority and success of the fieldworker are based on the ability to translate in both directions.” For example, a stock trader may not be able to answer a question that contains words such as hegemonic. Therefore, an academic needs to be careful with how s/he words questions. In addition, the fieldwork might need to translate common trading words when writing up an analysis for an academic audience. In my own research, I found that having an understanding of common trading words, such as VIX and put-to-call ratios, made it easier to begin conversations with the workers. In addition, it seemed that many of the informants became more comfortable speaking to me and possibly gave me more or different information once they knew that I had traded stocks and owned a small business.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I described the research methods I used in this dissertation. I discussed why I chose to study elites and provide a detailed description of my
methodological strategies and challenges. I also discussed my commitment to feminist methodologies. As a feminist knowledge producer, I strive to: change the norms of what constitutes “valid” knowledge production (Heckman, 1997), work for more satisfactory social relations (Harstock, 1997: 370) and challenge the oppression of women in work organizations.

In the next chapter, I present my first set of results. I describe the social organization of gender in the finance industry. I illustrate the gendered division of labor and explain how the organizational context contributes to a “gender regime” in the industry. In addition, I show how the organizational context contributes to and produces seemingly “naturalized” gender performances, which disadvantage women, particularly at large wire house organizations.
Chapter 4:

“I Need to Build my Own Door:” Financial Services Firms as Gendered Organizations
Following Connell’s (1987: 98-99) method, this chapter examines the current “state of play of sexual politics” within the financial services industry by providing a “structural inventory” of the sexual division of labor and power. Influenced by Joan Ackers (1990) theory of gendered organizations, I explore how the “gender regime” is built into the social organization of money work, particularly at large wire houses. Specifically, I examine the differences between the organizational practices and labor processes at large wire houses versus small and independent financial services firms. My findings demonstrate that the compensation structure, gender discretion in handing out orphan accounts, and the organization of partnerships, at large wire houses contribute to the gender wage gap and are detrimental to women working at those organizations. While I could find no industry-wide statistics to demonstrate that small and independent firms have more gender equality, based on my findings, it appears that they are less likely to have labor processes that explicitly disadvantage women.

**Segregation: A Structural Inventory of the Division of Labor**

Twenty of my respondents worked for large wire houses. For my research, these include the following companies: Morgan Stanley-Smith Barney, Merrill Lynch, JP Morgan, Wells Fargo, UBS, AXA, Edward Jones, Prudential, Mass Mutual, Raymond James, Lincoln Financial Group, and MetLife. Other companies such as Goldman Sachs, and Citigroup, would also be considered large wire houses; however, there were no branches for these companies located in the mid-sized city in which I conducted my
research. Fifteen of the respondents I interviewed worked for small and independent firms. For my research, these firms include independent registered representatives, independent Certified Financial Planners, family firms, and small local firms.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2010, women made up 32.8% of all personal financial advisors (Hegewisch and Liepmann, 2010). Industry reports (Durocher, 2011) suggest that the percentage is even lower, with women compromising only 13% of financial advisors. I was unable to find industry statistics determining whether or not the percentage of women working as advisors was greater at small and independent firms than at the large wire houses. In my research, there was a clear, although not complete, sexual division of labor within the industry, particularly in large wire houses, but also in small and independent firms to some extent. In all of the large wire houses that I visited, and in the vast majority of large financial services organizations across the industry, the authority of the office is a man, while the supportive roles are filled by woman.

I contacted at least fifteen organizations (both large and small) in the city where I conducted this research and found that there were no women working as financial advisors in those offices. In addition, even in offices where female financial advisors were employed, I repeatedly had informants tell me that there are few women working in senior positions at their firms. While the hierarchy is not completely standardized at the large wire houses, generally the highest ranked financial advisor is called a President, followed by Vice President, then Senior Financial Advisor, and finally Financial Advisor. Based on my research, these titles are determined by the number of clients an advisor has and their assets under management. So, as an advisor’s book of business grows, he or
she is bumped up to the next level in the hierarchy. However, there does seem to be some discretion in the decision by management to promote a person, possibly contributing to gender discrepancies. There was not one large wire house in the city in which I did the research that had a woman in the position of President. At small and independent firms, the majority of the individuals I interviewed worked independently as advisors; therefore, they were working as their own bosses. However, I also interviewed several participants at small firms and these organizations did have some women working in senior management positions.

Generally, at large wire houses, each advisor had the help of a client services associate, who are almost always female. At the small and independent firms, all of the advisors who I interviewed also had a support staff that was entirely female, except for one woman whose son was her assistant. At large wire houses, those who are Financial Advisors and Senior Financial Advisors will generally share an associate; however, those with larger books are able to have their own associate once they are bringing in enough revenue. It was unclear whether an advisor could pick an associate to work with them or if they were always assigned. I interviewed two associates and both said that they were assigned to advisors by management. If there is not a standard formula used to determine who gets their own associate and who has to share, then it is possible that there could be gender discrepancies in who is getting more “support services” provided to them by the company.

Client services associates said that their job ranged from taking phone calls from clients, to scheduling appointments, to putting trades through. Allison described her job as follows:
I assist five different brokers, with all different personalities, with all different business models, with all different clients. And (my job) is anything and everything. That could be ordering a credit card, trading, establishing a retirement plan, helping with portfolio reviews, marketing. I mean just anything and everything.

Client services associates are generally paid a base salary and then some are given bonuses from the advisors who they work for based on the amount of revenue the advisor contributes to the firm. When I asked advisors why the client services associate position continues to be a female-dominated job, many respondents voiced ideological notions that woman were naturally better at working in service jobs. However, when I asked the two women who actually worked in that position, one said it was because she liked having set hours and a set salary and the other said she saw the position as a stepping stone into an advisor position.

As a female-dominated position, a client services associate is often viewed as low-skilled and less-important than the advisor position even though the job entails the majority of the same skills required in the position of financial advisor. For example, I spoke with Pamela, who is a “registered” client services associate. A registered client associate has passed the necessary state exam to make trades. Pamela said that she does everything an advisor does except meet face to face with clients. Client services representatives, on average, make substantially less pay and Pamela suggests that they are sometimes undervalued by advisors. For example, she said: “I’ve heard men in this office refer to his rep as his “skirt,” she’s his slave basically. She does all the work and he makes all of the money.” Kate, a Vice President, was also quick to point out that she was higher up the organizational hierarchy than the women working as client services associates while she was giving me a tour of her office. She said: “All of the women in
the center (of the building) are client service associates; I’m the only woman advisor in the office. I feel connected to those women because we are women, but also separate from them because they are on a different level.” In other words, the women shared gender identities; however, their positions gave them different class statuses. Intersectional paradigms remind us that social categories, such as race, class, and gender, intersect to organize a person’s experience. It was clear in my research that client services associates, who were predominately female, had less status and power within the organizational hierarchy than female financial advisors.

Throughout my research, I only visited two offices that each had one male client services representative working there. Responses from the informants suggest that, even when there are both male and female client services associates in the office, their work is gendered. When discussing the responsibilities of the client services associates, Michele, a Senior Financial Advisor, noted that in her office: “Sheila does things like sending out the holiday cards,” while the male client services representative “opened accounts and puts through trades.” Her observation points to what other researchers have found are the differences between being a male in a traditionally female-dominated job, versus being a female in a male-dominated job. For example, Williams (1992) found that men in traditionally female-dominated jobs, such as teaching and librarianships, often ride a “glass escalator” and are given work that is more likely to help them move up to higher positions in their field. It is evident that a client services associate that consistently puts through trades and opens accounts will be more likely to move up to a top-tier position in finance rather than one that sends out holiday cards.

While men are riding a glass escalator, women continue to hit a glass ceiling, with
very few making it to the President and Vice President level. None of the offices I visited had a female Managing Director. A Managing Director is the person in the office who is responsible for such things as making sure the branch is meeting financial objectives, following regulatory rules, and being cost-effective in their daily operation. The notion that women are “naturally” better at working in service positions is one of the reasons why women are overlooked for promotions. Nancy gave a wonderful example of this occurring in her own life. She was working as a personal assistant for a man and was told that if she got her licenses then she would move into a partnership position with him.

She continued:

I got my securities license, my Series 6, my Series 7, my life insurance license, my health insurance license, and the idea was that I was going to kind of move in and help be a partner in his business. But that didn’t work out because he decided at the last minute that he wanted me to stay where I was in my administrative position and he was going to bring this other guy in as his partner. So that just made me crazy! I was so good at what I did, he needed me there, he needed me there. He didn’t want me to do the other. But for me it had all been about moving forward. So I just went ballistic!

Nancy was told that she was so good at her job in her administrative position that she was not given the opportunity to advance. She said her boss keep telling her: “We need you here!” But, she explained that he needed her there to do administrative work, not advisory work. Because she is a woman, she was seen by her boss as better able to work in a service position and was passed up for promotion. She was, not surprisingly, very angry about the outcome and decided to leave her position.
The Gender Regime

While it might appear that the sexual division of labor is a culmination of individual “choice” or preference, by using a structural analysis, it becomes easier to see how the institutional context differentially constrains and enables men and women’s experiences in the financial services industry. My research suggests that the traditional compensation model, gender discretion in handing out orphan accounts, and the social organization of partnerships at large wire houses are each contributing to the gender regime.

Compensation

The Wage Gap

Researchers have found that female financial advisors continue to be compensated much less on average than men. In 2010, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) collected data on employment and weekly earnings for 501 different occupations. The occupation with the largest gender wage gap was a “personal financial advisor,” with female personal financial advisors making only 58.4% of male financial advisors earnings. The BLS found that, on average, the weekly income for a male financial advisor was $1,647, while women earned $962: A gender wage gap of 41.6% (Hegewisch and Liepmann, 2010). Researchers have begun to analyze why there continues to be this large discrepancy. For example, Roth (2004) found gender biases in the distribution of performance bonuses, which are often subjective and secretive. The Equality and Human Rights Campaign (2009) also found gender discrimination in promotions and recruitment practices, which perpetuate the gender pay gap. My results
suggest that one of the ways the gender regime is perpetuated is found within the compensation structure for financial advisors at large wire houses.

**The Compensation Structure at Large Wire Houses**

Generally, when an advisor is hired by a large wire house he/she is given a salary for the first two years, which is the period when the advisor is going through the training process. The salary range varies depending on the company, the advisors’ job experience, and the advisors’ educational background. While one of my informants said that her salary during training was $60,000, another said hers was $15,000. Once an advisor is done with training, most are paid by commission; although, some advisors also maintain a salary after completing their training. Commissions also vary, but informants described two main types: flat rate percentage and commission for “service.” Some advisors charge their clients a flat rate percentage of the assets they are managing. In these cases, the client would have to have a minimum to invest. I found that at some of the large wire houses, the minimum is $250,000. Sometimes, advisors will work with the family members of high net worth (HNW) and ultra high net worth clients who have $100,000 to invest. Generally, I found that advisors take an annual flat rate fee of between 1-3% of each of their client’s assets. Out of that fixed fee, the organization pays the advisors a percentage of the fee and takes the remaining amount.

Some advisors at large wire houses also get paid a commission for each “service” performed. Instead of charging a flat fee, clients are charged based on the type of financial service rendered. For example, an advisor can charge approximately 5% of the amount entered into an annuity and 1-5% of the total amount entered into mutual funds. For each stock trade a client wants to do, an advisor charges anywhere from 1-2.5% of
the total amount traded by the client. The firm will take anywhere from 10-90% of what you “produce” and the advisor keeps the rest. I found that the majority of the advisors at large wire houses charge a flat fee depending on assets under management and also charge extra fees when financial transactions take place.

The majority of advisors at large wire houses also receive performance based compensation. In other words, most are paid bonuses for accumulating a certain amount under management. Sometimes, employees get cash bonuses for meeting certain asset requirements; at other times advisors receive “incentive bonuses” in the form of a trip or other prize. In my research, I found that gender is often built into the “incentive bonuses” that respondents spoke about. For example, often times the person who makes the most revenue in a quarter or who makes the target revenue the quickest is given a bonus. In addition, there are times when managers will opt to have a contest to see which advisor can hit a specific sales objective the quickest. Maria, who worked in a senior management position, described these as “sales campaigns.” She said:

A sales campaign would be something where, maybe for a period of time the office will have a little contest to try to drive a little bit of morale, team building, spirit, and they’re all working to specific goals, specific sales objectives. But, most of the reason we do it, is to just rally the troops, get a little bit of team spirit going. You know, they’re (managers) just trying to build a little bit of their own unique culture on the team, and so they’ll do contests. And the winners, they’ll do fun events. And they’ll do daytrips.

A group of advisors compete to make a specific “sales objective” and a reward is given to the first one who makes the objective. Informants describe males in senior management positions constructing incentive prizes that are geared towards male winners. For example, informants described prizes ranging from trips to a sporting event, free rounds of golf, and tennis lessons. Nancy described the contests in gendered terms as follows:
They have contests. They always have contests on bringing in assets, alright? So, I was number three and the first five people won the contest. So, I was pretty high up there ok. Guess what the prize was? A bus trip to the (men’s professional football) game with all the guys. I don’t care about football. There’s no way I am getting on the bus. So, my prize was to get on a bus with guys who were gonna have cases of beer, so they were going to be drunk before they got to the game and they were probably going to be throwing up on the way back. That was my PRIZE!

Nancy continued by saying that she felt it could even put women in a dangerous position to be the only woman on a bus with all men and alcohol. She said: “I’m not saying that anybody is going to do anything wrong to me, but you never know. It doesn’t seem completely safe.” The prizes are not only more likely to be something that a man might want to win, but in this case, she felt like it could potentially put a female employee in an uncomfortable or possible dangerous situation. Maria, a Regional Manager, mentioned that she saw this type of thing happening and, since she is in a management position, she has attempted to encourage others in her position to make sure that the incentive bonuses are not centered around men. She argued that this was something that should be made into policy, so that it was not just a subjective decision made by whoever is managing the particular office.

**The Traditional Model of Compensation**

I found that in large wire houses, all of the informants have to make “goals” or a certain amount under management. Michele referred to it as a Path of Achievement (POA), although she pointed out that other organizations have different names for it. Employees are expected to bring in a certain amount of assets each year and maintain a certain amount of revenue throughout their tenure. One informant, who just started the two year training program, was told he had approximately six month to accumulate
$800,000 under management and one year to accumulate $1.5 million. At another organization, you have six months after the two-year training program to make your first goal, which was $1.5 million in assets under management. At another organization, the goals were even higher, and I was told that an advisor needs at least $8-$10 million in assets within one year of completing the training to keep his/her position. It does appear that management has flexibility as to whether or not there is a firm line drawn about meeting these goals. Some advisors will automatically lose their job if they do not meet their six-month goal, while others are given extra time. It is possible that this discretion could be detrimental to female advisors.

Most advisors continue to have to follow this path even after training. Michele explained that, even after six years, she is expected to bring in a certain amount of revenue. If an advisor does not stay on the path and make a certain amount of profit for the company, the percentage of the revenue that an advisor re-coops from the organization drops. For example, if Michele makes her numbers, she receives 36% of the revenue she brings in. However, if she doesn’t make the number, she said it drops down to 22%. The amount of payout as a percentage of revenue differs at each organization. John explained that, in 2011, his company has the following payout rates: advisors who bring in $200,000 to $225,000 in annual revenue receive a payout of 25%; those who bring in $225,000-$250,000 receive a 28% payout; those who bring in $250,000-$300,000 receive a payout of 34%; for $300,000-$350,000 the payout is 39%; and for $350,000-$400,000 the payout is 42%. At this particular organization, the payouts for “low producing” reps were lowered in 2011. In 2010, the payouts were: 34% for revenue of $200,000-$250,000 and 37% for revenue of $250,000-$300,000.
It was particularly difficult for the informants in my study to bring in large annual revenues because the majority of the “goals” stay the same regardless of your geographic location. Therefore, the people in a mid-sized city have to make the same numbers as the people in a larger metropolitan area, such as New York City, which can be very difficult because there are not as many people with large amounts of money in smaller towns. I found a couple ways that advisors attempt to make up for the fact that there are fewer people with a large net worth. One is by taking on clients from different states and another is by entering into partnerships, which as I discuss later in the chapter, can be detrimental to women.

I found that this traditional model of compensation disadvantages women. For example, Chandra explains that the model of compensation focuses on sales rather than advising and values behaviors traditionally associated with masculinity:

Today’s client needs an advisor, they do not need a sales person. Women are more inclined to be advisors, but unfortunately the model is counter-set for advisors. An advisor is going to take a tremendous amount of time in understanding what the issues are, what the client’s needs, how you deal with those types of things, and many times it may not be a revenue driving activity. In the classic model: If there is nothing to be sold, that person is not eating. So the failure takes place, because it is counter-intuitive to what the model is. Men, on the other hand, are very much point A to point D. Women are A, B, C and D. So they say, alright fine, I have a job to do, and the job is only going to pay me when I get to D. I’m going to skip B and C and go right to D because that’s where the reward is. And for a lot of years, I fought even expressing that, because I thought (I was) being so broad brush and stereotypical and putting people in boxes, but I’ve seen it enough to know that that’s what the thinking pattern is. So men will succeed because they go right to the bottom line.

At first thought, Chandra generalizes the behaviors of men and women by suggesting that “women” are more likely to want to advise, while “men” are more likely to want to sell and make money. She went onto say that rather than generalizing the groups of people,
we should instead focus on how the model encourages particular types of behaviors for all people who attempt to enter in the career. She went on to say:

Actually, what we should really look at the fact that it’s not women who are disjointed, it’s the model that’s a problem. The compensation model is so short sighted, it turns people into sharks. I’m not saying that the model needs to change just for women. It really is a model that has to change across the board, particularly when it’s the consumer we should be focused on. Because when we go from point A to point D and skip points B and C, we are skipping the actual advice and just focusing on sales.

Large financial services companies are constructed in a way that employees are expected to bring in revenue so that the parent organization can meet their quarterly earnings expectations. The compensation model encourages organizations to hire individuals who are cut-throat and aggressive.

In my research, I found that the compensation model and the construction of the job as a “sales job” rather than an “advisory” job hurt women, particularly during the hiring process. For example, informants pointed out that part of the screening for many of the large firms is a personality test. These tests are used to determine whether or not a prospective employee should receive a second interview or not. The tests consist of some basic questions that determine whether a person has the “correct” personality to become a financial advisor. Jane described the test:

I had the six hour psychological test for my first test. In the six hour test, five different questions asked have you ever wanted or desired to be feminine. This was a few years ago, but I took another one when I came to work here in 08 and it was the same idea. It was basically making sure I fit the profile they look for.

When I asked what that profile looked like, she described someone who can “sell, sell, sell. It’s someone who can beat out the next guy. Someone who is a smooth talker. Someone who knows people with a large net worth.” As Jane points out, historically the
test was designed for all male applicants. While the test questions have been updated, Jane believes that the test continues to serve as a way for organizations to eliminate candidates (both men and women) who are seen engaging in behaviors that are associated with femininity.

Another woman I interviewed, Ann, said that she was not offered the first job she applied to at a large firm. She asked the person who called her from human resources why she was not selected for the position and that person told her that one of the main reasons she was not selected was because she failed the personality test. She took a similar test for her current position, but admits that she attempted to answer the questions differently the second time around so that she would pass. When I asked if she could give me an example of a question that she answered differently she said: “Well, let’s just say I tried to seem like a ball-buster. I said I was aggressive and was not affected by other peoples’ opinions of me.” Because the job is constructed as a sales position, women (and likely men who are not performing masculinity aggressively enough) are overlooked during the hiring process. In the next chapter, I will discuss more in-depth how the compensation structure at large wire houses produces a gendered employee and encourages performances that embody masculinity.

The Compensation Structure at Small and Independent Firms

During my research, I found that individuals working for small and independent firms were much more likely to get the majority of their wages from a fixed salary or from fee-based compensation. Fee-based compensation is when an advisor is paid a fixed or negotiated fee for a specific service. For example, an advisor could charge a
fixed fee to develop a retirement plan for an individual. Fixed fees for a comprehensive investment plan can range from a few hundred dollars per hour to well over $5,000 for the entirety of the service. While some advisors did charge clients a flat rate fee for the amount of money they managed for a client, I found that independent and small firms were much less likely to require clients to have a minimum amount to manage. In addition, when independent advisors charge a commission for a service, they did not have to follow a strict standard on how to apply those charges. For example, when charging a commission as an independent advisor, the advisor gets to keep the entire commission, rather than giving a large percentage of it back to the organization.

None of the advisors I interviewed at small or independent firms received performance-based prizes from the employer, which eliminated the possibility of gender-based incentives. It is possible that if these small firms did enact performance based compensation that gendered prizes could be used. However, the small and independent firms were more likely to have women serving in management positions; therefore, it is less likely that the prizes would be geared towards men. In addition, the firms also had a closer ratio of men to women working as advisors; therefore, it is possible that those making decisions about prizes would attempt to make the prize gender neutral.

None of the advisors working at small or independent firms had to take a personality test during the hiring process. The majority of the independent advisors I interviewed were self-employed, so they did not have a screening process to endure. In addition, none of the advisors at small and independent firms had to stay on a “Path of Achievement.” While many advisors set goals for themselves on how much money they wanted to have under management, they did not risk losing their jobs if they did not meet
certain asset requirements. The structure of compensation at small and independent firms changed the nature of the labor process. For example, unlike at large wire houses, where the focus of the job was primarily on sales, the job of an advisor at a small and independent firm is focused more exclusively on giving financial advice. This focus changed the type of performance required by the advisors, which is beneficial for women working in the field, who are seen good candidates for giving advice. I will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

**Gender Discretion**

Researchers have begun to explore how relationships between managers, senior advisors, co-workers, and subordinates shape opportunity for success in the industry (Roth, 2006). Roth (2006) found that male managers on Wall Street gave junior male advisors better performance reviews leading to larger bonuses for men. Roth (2006: 84) points out: “Bonuses had much less to do with merit than they did with manager preferences. These preferences could produce systematic gender differences in pay that were not related to performance because most managers, especially in the highest-paying areas, were men.” Subtle forms of discrimination by mostly male managers and mostly male senior advisors proved to be particularly problematic for the women whom I interviewed at large wire houses. For example, I noted earlier that male managers create incentive bonuses that are geared towards men. Further, mostly male managers also have discretion when it comes to deciding whether or not a person is promoted or fired if they don’t meet POA goals, which may be detrimental to women.

In my research, one example of gender discretion that women repeatedly reported as problematic was the distribution of “orphan leads.” Women described male advisors
in senior positions who consistently provided other men with accounts, enabling men to accumulate a larger book of business and stay on the POA. An orphan lead is a potential client that has been identified as someone who is looking for an advisor to help with a particular transaction. For example, a senior advisor could be having a conversation with a potential or new client and find out that the person needs to have an annuity renewed. The senior advisor could decide that he/she wants to give that prospective client to another advisor. Barbara said: “I found out (my company) gave all of the orphan leads to the men trainees. I never got one, not a blessed one. They were never given to me, and I never knew of a woman, during my twelve years there, that got one. And every woman who was there eventually left.”

Kate, a Vice President, also described an instance when male managers gave new male trainees and younger advisors accounts. She explained that certain managers, for any number of reasons, may not necessarily want or need to take new clients. For example, several of my respondents who are close to retirement have started to slowly give away or share accounts with younger advisors. Informants have found that this is often beneficial to young male advisors. Kate said:

I’ll tell you where in my opinion I’ve seen the guys, perpetuating more of a gender disparity. It’s when managers have the ability to hand out accounts. I see a lot of that happening. Where you know the good golfer wanted the manager to golf with him, so they become buddies and then he will help his buddy.

She pointed out that this is a very important way that women are hurt in the industry, because currently the way the compensation model is set up a person needs to acquire large accounts to accumulate the minimum amount of assets under management needed to keep your job. So, having someone help you meet those requirements greatly increases your likelihood of staying in the field.
Ann, an advisor at a large wire house, was another respondent who saw trainees being “hooked up” by senior male advisors with large net worth clients and felt doors were opened for men and not for her. She said:

There were trainees, when I came on, there were trainees ahead of me, like eight months ahead of me or nine months ahead of me, and there were three of them and they are all males. One ended up leaving here and going to work at another firm. Another one works in a team with senior men and got offered a nice salary and then the other one hooked up with one of the seniors, another senior guy and inherited a book that produces like 40 million or something crazy. So they’ve all seemed to have made arrangements and that’s why I always seem to be in the “hallway” of a big house, I’m in the hallway and there’s all these doors opened for them and it’s like I get left out and I have to make my own door.

A couple months after speaking with Ann, she contacted me to give me an update on what she was doing. She told me that she was given notice on a Friday that she did not meet the minimum amount of revenue for the quarter and that she had to pack up her office and leave. She spoke with her supervisor and he suggested that she contact senior advisors to see if any of them would consider teaming up with her. She found a senior advisor who allowed her to “team” up with him, and in her new role she was responsible for “servicing” accounts and bringing in new clients. In the next section, I discuss how these partnerships at large wire houses are contributing to gender inequality.

Female respondents at large wire houses also reported difficulty building critical relationships with co-workers and senior advisors when decisions about networking events were made by male colleagues. Similar to Roth (2006), I also found that women at large wire houses often felt or were excluded from informal work events planned by male senior advisors. Kate said: “You know, those golfing trips still happen. Those times when the men go out together and make each other feel good. I know that they exclude me. I know they help each other out.” Informants revealed that social gatherings
are often geared towards men and make it easier for men to bond with each other. For example, Jack, who trains new advisors, said that the company often held their social gatherings for new trainees at a local sports bar. There was only one female advisor in his current group of trainees and he admitted that sometimes the conversations that took place might exclude her. He argued that this was not something that they (men) did on purpose, but he recognized that the female trainee might be left out during those interactions. He said:

We are doing a mixer on Friday, if she comes she will be the only female there. So I can very much see how, what all of a sudden tends to happen, some of the people talk about sports and you might not talk about it with her necessarily. When she comes over the conversation kind of shuts down. I do see that.

We agreed that ideological assumptions about gender differences might impact who is pulled into bonding conversations. When I asked Jack if he ever thought about having the gatherings at a gender neutral place, he said he did not know what type of place that would be. Together, we wondered if the conversations would be less gendered (about men in sports) if the location was less gendered.

There are a number of reasons why women’s exclusion from social networks can be a disadvantage for them in the industry. Networking events and social gatherings are often places where advisors receive helpful resources from co-workers and strategies for success. Further, networking functions allow co-workers to bond and improve relationships, which improves job satisfaction. Women might leave jobs where they are excluded by senior male workers and move into fields in finance that are more female dominated, such as equity research, where earnings are often lower. Further, many women might not enter into a career in finance when they think they will be
uncomfortable at social gatherings or excluded from networking events that help workers succeed.

While gender discretion by male managers and male senior advisors disadvantaged women at large wire houses, I did not see similar results at small and independent firms. Due to the fact that the majority of the respondents I interviewed at small and independent firms worked for themselves, there was not an opportunity for them to miss out on orphan accounts. For those individuals who worked at small firms, but did not work independently, none of the respondents ever mentioned advisors getting orphan accounts from other advisors. However, there were two women who I interviewed who worked at small firms who had inherited some accounts from other female advisors who had retired. Future research should examine more in-depth the process by which accounts change hands when an advisor retires to see if there are similarities/differences between how this takes place at large wire houses versus small and independent firms.

**Partnerships**

Researchers have not discussed the ways that “teaming up”/partnerships are perpetuating the gender regime in the finance industry; however, I found that these business relationships are particularly detrimental to women working at large wire houses. Partnering can take many different forms and it is very hard to generalize what a partnership look. However, my data suggest that the partnerships, in many cases, disadvantage female employees. In the city in which I did my research, I could not find any women in the position of the senior partner at large wire houses. Therefore, in all of the partnerships, women were being brought into the partnership by a male senior advisor.
to “work together.” According to female informants, partnerships feel like unequal relationships where they are being compensated unfairly and assigned either menial roles and/or highly gendered labor.

**Gendered Labor in Partnerships**

Several female informants said that they were given very little responsibility in their partnerships, which they felt was detrimental for the progression of their careers. For example, Jane said that she was brought into a partnership solely to help bring in clients. She said that once she brought them into the firm, she was responsible for what she felt like were the menial tasks:

I was in a partnership when I was at (Large Wire House) with two men. And my role in that partnership was, they were the big producers and I was, quote “new” because I’d only been in the business a few years, so I made calls and booked the appointments and “the boys,” that’s what I call them now, “the boys” were sitting up in the room and schmoozing and hitting golf balls with potential clients.

After bringing in the clients, she had limited interactions with clients, which she felt made many clients mistake her for an assistant rather than a partner. Ann said that she became the “donut dolly” in meetings with her senior partner. She discussed how she felt that she was supposed to entice new clients to work with her group, but then was given a limited role in the actual meeting once she set them up. She said:

I felt under-valued at times in those experiences (meetings) by that senior person that was male that was sort of like ok you’re cute and your bubbly and you can get the client in but let me handle the nuts and bolts. When I was the one (that). arranged that meeting. to talk to the client about the complexities of what he needed to do. At that meeting, the senior guy was like, I mean he didn’t even allow me to have a voice or a role at that meeting.
She went on say that because she was given a minimal role in the meetings she worried that if she ever was able to go out on her own, many of the clients would not view her as a competent advisor. She said: “So I’ll reach out to him now and then with an invite to something, but I almost think that his perception, because I wasn’t, I didn’t have a role in those meetings other than like the “donut dolly,” that his perception of me might be that I’m not capable enough.” Ann worried that because she had a limited role in her meetings it was possible she would be seen as a less capable advisor than her senior partner.

My research suggests that in many cases the female advisors in partnerships are not always given an opportunity to interact with clients in meaningful ways. Women are being told by senior male advisors to perform in ways that perpetuate the notion that femininity is tied to enticing in new clients with their appearance and personality, while masculinity is needed for the “nuts and bolts” of a meeting. The organization of gender in the companies appeared to limit the chances for females to have interactions after the initial contact, or perpetuated gender stereotypes of women’s intellect by having them do menial tasks in meetings.

When women in partnerships are given more responsibilities, their jobs continue to be highly gendered. For example, several respondents suggested that in their partnerships the women’s job responsibilities were “servicing” and advising, while the men’s responsibility was to trade and research. For example, several informants said that woman were responsible for: scheduling meetings, taking calls from clients who have questions, sending out statements, and updating information about investments. Women are also giving “advice” by updating clients investment strategies when a major life event
occurs, meeting with clients during tax season to discuss tax savings, and showing clients
different strategies for wealth protection and/or accumulation, generally, with the
research that has been done by the senior partner. Men are responsible for placing trades,
picking stocks, researching, and developing client investment strategies. In many of
these partnerships, men often have less client interaction after the initial meeting.

Michele explained: “Men and women are seen as having different strengths, so
men and women will partner up and the woman will do a lot of the interacting with
clients and advising, while the man stays in the office and trades stocks.” She said:
“The stuffy men I work with think that it is below them to be talking with clients. They
think they should be doing the important thing, the trading.” It is interesting that that
putting through trades is seen as more important that interacting with clients. Lauren
explained that this is because pay is often commission-based, so advisors are paid when
they make a trade or when they sign up a new client, not when they are taking time to
“service” the client. She said: “My partner tells me not to waste so much time talking
with clients. He says if it isn’t making us money than don’t spend time doing it. He says
that the Client Services Associate can spend time talking to them about whatever they
want.” These are not exclusively the way partnerships have to be set up. For example, I
did speak to one woman at a large wire house who specifically said that she was
originally given these types of roles and asked to switch positions because she wanted to
be involved in research and have less interaction with clients. However, the majority of
individuals who I interviewed at large wire houses described the gendered nature of their
job responsibilities.
Unequal Power in Partnerships

My research suggests that many women are being brought into partnerships to do menial tasks or to “service clients.” In addition, because of the way many of the partnerships are set up, women are receiving unequal compensation and have very little power over the book of business. For example, partnerships are set up so that senior partners “piggyback” on the revenue that junior advisors bring into the firm. I found that generally that means that when a junior partner brings in a new client, the senior advisor will receive 50% of the revenue that each new client generates. However, the relationships are not reciprocal, so if a senior advisor brings in a new client, the junior partner in most cases is not entitled to any of the revenue that is associated with servicing that client. Ann explained that she didn’t understand that this was how the partnership would work until after she was already set up in one by her office manager. She said:

I was told that they were my partners and I was told it would be 50/50 on all new business. And then, I said: “that means that whatever business you bring in I get 50% too.” And they were like: “oh yeah, yeah and don’t worry, whatever.” As the weeks crept on by, I revisit that and I said: “I don’t seem to be getting 50% of the business you’re bringing in.” And they said: “Well we never said that, what we said was the 50% of the business you’d bring in would be OUR business, but NOT the other way around.”

Another informant referred to this practice as “overriding.” Partnerships are set up so that the senior partner can piggyback onto the revenues brought in by a junior partner and, as Ann points out, the structure of these relationships is not always clear to the junior partner.

Along with piggybacking fees, junior partners are very vulnerable an unequal distribution of assets if the partnership dissolves. For example, Lauren felt that her
company brought her in by “dangling diamonds in front of her.” She explained that she was recruited from a firm she had been working at for 20 years. She was told she would be partnered with a senior advisor and she would receive a larger income by servicing his clients and bringing in new clients together. Over the course of three years, one of her responsibilities was servicing 1,400 clients from a large company. She provided each individual with his/her own financial plan. After she was done, she had been given the impression she would be responsible for continued services to these clients. In addition, she assumed after all of that work she would make a commission off of these individuals as she continued to “service” their accounts in the future. However, after finishing all of the plans, the company decided to do their planning in house. Thereby taking the information she put together and leaving her with 1,400 less clients than she was told she would have. Her income dropped by 40%.

Throughout those three years, Lauren and her senior partner also brought in “shared clients.” She explained: “I was responsible for the advising part of the job, while he sat in his office and made trades.” Lauren made financial plans for each client, interacted with them over the course of three years, and then was told that the partnership was not working out. She was told to bring him a list of the clients she wanted. She brought in a list of 40 clients who she had “serviced” exclusively. She even provided him with a record of all of her client interactions, which she had detailed into a computer program. He said: “No” and told her to make the list smaller. She came back with a list of twelve clients that she wanted to keep. He said: “No.” So, they took the list to the manager, who said that the company policy states that whoever has the first contact with the clients gets to keep them in the event that a partnership breaks up. So even though
she did all of the financial advising with these clients, she had no right to keep the clients.

A similar experience happened to Jane. She said her partnership dissolved when one of the senior partners found a “whale” client and decided he only wanted to share that client with his other male partner and not with her:

They got the book and they got all the commissions, which was not what we had originally arranged, but management just said, this is how it’s going down. I brought in 10 million in net assets. I’m bringing, I’m bringing, I’m bringing. It was a year and a half time frame. And then the day that he was bringing it in, he dissolved the partnership. And I learned to, um, have things be in my name. Not be a handshake. So, that I would have been protected. So, what they did was, we split our existing ten million in assets, three million, three million and three million. And the ten million that came in new, that was split between the two boys…it was frustrating to me, that I was naive to think that they considered me an equal.

In both cases, managers were the deciding factor on how the clients would be split up. In situations where partnerships break up, senior advisors, who are almost all men, are often given priority by managers, who are almost all men. This is yet another example of how gender discretion is hurting women.

In other cases, when I asked informants how their partnerships were set up and how their assets would be split if they decided to dissolve the partnerships, informants suggest that they had been told different things. Some are told that whoever found the client gets to keep them. Some are told that whoever’s name is on the clients paperwork gets to keep the client. I’ve found that this is almost always exclusively the senior partner. In fact, when interviewing Ann, I asked for an example of a “touch,” which is any type of paper work that is sent out to a client, such as a statement or updated account information. When I pointed out to her that her name was not on the form, her face showed her surprise and she said: “Oh wow you’re right, I wonder why that is. I can’t
believe I didn’t notice that.” While one would think when partnerships are formed there would be contractual agreements and legal documentation to protect junior advisors, all of my informants suggest that they are often loose agreements, placing junior advisors, who are often women, in vulnerable situations where they are subject to the possibility of losing clients who they think are theirs.

I did not interview any advisors at smaller and independent firms who were in partnership relationships like the ones I found at large wire houses. Since the majority of independent advisors worked on their own, they did not encounter a need to separate their work into servicing accounts and managing money. In addition, since independent and small firms did not have strict rules on the amount of assets a person needed to have under management, there was not a need to find a partner to help make their asset requirements. I did find several cases where a person at a small firm was working as a mentor to another advisor or had a mentor helping them start their career. However, these were informal relationships, where the person working as the mentor was helping the new hire learn how the job worked. The mentor did not determine the work responsibilities of the mentee, nor did they piggyback a percentage off of the mentee.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my results demonstrate a clear division of labor at large wire houses. Women continue to be clustered in the lower-paying positions in financial services, such as the client services associate position, with men filling the majority of upper-level financial advisor jobs, such as Presidents and Vice Presidents. The gender
wage gap in finance continues to be much larger than the overall gender wage gap in the economy; 58% versus 28%, respectively (Hegewisch and Liepmann, 2010). This research adds to the literature by showing that there are specific organizational factors contributing to the gender regime at large wire houses. An organizational level analysis reveals how the traditional structure of compensation, gender discretion by male managers and senior male advisors, and the formation of partnerships at these firms is contributing to the gender regime in financial services.

While there are no industry-wide statistics to demonstrate that small and independent firms have more gender equality, based on my findings, it appears that the small and independent firms are less likely to have labor processes that explicitly disadvantage women. At independent firms, women were often their own bosses; therefore, they were not screened out by personality tests, which favor masculine, sales-focused performances. At small and independent firms, I found that women continue to be clustered in the client services position; however, small firms were also more likely to have women in management positions, which deterred management from enacting gendered incentive bonuses. Further, workers at small and independent firms were not organized into partnerships with gendered work responsibilities and unequal distribution of assets that disadvantage women.

The next chapter will examine how the different organizational contexts at large wire houses versus small and independent firm’s impact the overall workplace culture and the production of gendered performances. Rather than viewing gendered performances as naturally occurring behaviors, chapter five demonstrates: How and under what conditions gendered performances get constituted. Specifically, it
demonstrates that the type of gendered performance that is valued varies significantly at large wire houses versus small and independent firms.
Chapter 5:

(Girly) Bulls and (Grizzly) Bears: The Production of Gendered Performances in Financial Services
In this chapter, I examine how gender operates at the interactional level within the finance industry. Specifically, I examine how individuals say they and other similarly-situated workers “do gender” in their interactions on the job, and the type of work culture and gendered performances that are valued. I demonstrate that the meaning of gender varies based on the type of interaction (client versus co-worker) and the type of organization (large wire house versus independent broker dealer). The way gender is constituted varies significantly at large wire houses versus independent broker dealers.

Academic feminists have pointed out that gender is not some “thing” that one “has” but instead is situationally constructed via performances of active agents (Messner, 2000). These accounts highlight our individual “freedom” to shape gender boundaries and demonstrate the situational fluidity of gendered performances. Further, there work has demonstrated how gendered performances are constrained or enabled by “specific historical, social, and political configurations” (Walters, 1999: 250). For example, how we “choose” to perform gender is constrained by social structures, such as the workplace context. Researchers have begun to examine the different ways that gender is constituted at various types of finance jobs. For example, McDowell and Court (1994) point out that traders and dealers are encouraged to embody a “macho” masculinity, and are expected to demonstrate “killer instincts and guts.” However, those who work in corporate finance are encouraged to embody “traditional masculinity” and are expected to “go to the right school, be staid, sober, and wear an expensive suit” (McDowell and Court, 1994: 241). Although I have found no research that has explicitly examined the gendered performances expected for the position of the financial advisor, my findings demonstrate
that the type of performance that is produced varies greatly at large wire-houses versus the small and independent firms.

**Large Wire Houses**

Twenty of my respondents worked for large wire houses. The formality of the large wire houses was apparent and often intimidating for me. At three of the largest companies, I was greeted by a security guard, who would run my license and offer me a name tag that I was told to wear while in the building and return before leaving. Lobbies were furnished with large mahogany desks, plush couches, and ornate chandeliers. Coffee tables were lined with business and financial magazines and flat screen televisions projecting CNBC. Many of the waiting areas were eerily quiet, with just a few formally dressed workers who appeared to be passing through heading to their offices. It felt nothing like visiting a trading floor, where you might see large groups congregating; instead, it felt more like visiting an attorney’s office.

According to participants, the overall workplace culture at large wire houses remains a “boys club.” Workers at large firms gave interview responses that demonstrate a culture that continues to value behaviors traditionally associated with masculinity and devalue interactions and behaviors associated with femininity. Female respondents described their offices in the following way: “it’s a real boys club;” “it’s a frat party;” “I don’t think they (men) want us here;” “It’s me and the good old boys.” Several female respondents reported being mistreated by managers and experiencing unfair treatment by colleagues. One woman I interviewed has since stopped working in the industry after experiencing what she described as a hostile training environment. Another woman was sexually assaulted by a male colleague at her office. She was fired after filing a
complaint and subsequently won a wrongful termination lawsuit. After telling me her story, she said: “I want to tell you that there is a reality in this business, in the financial business, it’s still male dominated!”

Even in offices where respondents felt that the overall culture of the office was not sexist, those same respondents would answer follow-up questions with examples of how women were degraded by co-workers. For example, one respondent felt that the overall culture in the office was gender neutral, but then proceeded to say that as a woman on numerous occasions she was asked by co-workers to do menial tasks, such as make coffee and take notes, rather than interact with a client. While there seems to be the rhetoric of improved gender equality, in reality, gender does continue to organize interactions.

“Be a Bear, Be a Grizzly Bear!” Constructing Competence at Large Wire Houses

At the large wire houses, the job of a financial advisor is constructed in masculine terms. Similar to Levin (2004) who studied commodities traders, I found that competence is viewed by workers as gender neutral. For example, respondents suggested that gender was not the cause of success or failure as a financial advisor. Respondents repeatedly argued that men and women had an equal chance at succeeding. However, the qualities that are constructed as competent are those associated traditionally with masculinity. For example, to be a competent financial advisor at a large wire house means “being aggressive” and “being strong,” and the type of aggression and strength described by participants contains a covert gendered logic.

When describing their job, respondents who work at large wire houses note that being aggressive is a necessity. The job involves, particularly during the first three years,
making sales objectives, getting as many clients as possible, and building assets under management. Several women said that during the hiring process they began learning that the appropriate gender performance for the job involves being aggressive. Jane described her experience during the hiring process in detail:

When I was at (a large wire house), the interviewer asked me, describe yourself. I said I’m a bubbly, I’m so excited, and I want this so much. That was almost the end of my interview. Then, I interviewed with (a man) who’s now an acquaintance. He put his arm around me and he said, you seem like a really sweet young lady and you are very knowledgeable, I think your best fit would be with a bank. So, then I interviewed with a man in NY, I can’t remember his name, and his first question, describe yourself in one word. So, by then, I figured “bubbly” wasn’t the way to go, so I said aggressive, dynamic, persevering, you take your pick. And he said: “Very good.” They hired me on the spot.

Jane learned how to perform gender from one interview to the next, recognizing that qualities associated with femininity, such as being “bubbly,” were not valued. She de-emphasized attributes that she learned would not get her the position as a financial advisor and attempted to perform more aggressively.

It is also interesting to note that Jane was told that she would be better off working at a bank. Two individuals I interviewed had previously worked at banks and both of them described banking jobs as much more service oriented than their current job at a large wire house. For example, Ann said: “I come from a banking environment, which banking is all about service.” It is likely that women are seen as more compatible with banking because the job requires workers to be more service-oriented. In addition, working at bank was also described by several respondents as a “low-end job in financial services” because in banking an advisor is much more likely to work with a retail client who has a lower income than the typical client at a large wire house. Large wire houses
are often exclusive and require a minimum net worth in order to work with an advisor at the company. For example, Kate required a $250,000 net worth to be a client and expressed her concern and disappointment that her company had recently merged with a retail bank, which she referred to as the “Wal-Mart of banking.” She said:

I drive down the boulevard and roll my eyes when I see the bank. I don’t think my clients like it and neither do a lot of the employees. The employees liked the prestige of working for (the company) and the clients like to have an exclusive place to invest. You see these advisors at (the bank) and they will open accounts with people who only have a thousand dollars to invest.

In other words, she did not like that her company was associated with a bank because advisors at banks work with lower-income individuals. Women are seen as better suited to work in banking because it is service oriented and the clientele often has a lower income.

Along with learning how to “do gender” during the hiring process, respondents also discussed learning how to “do gender” in aggressive ways at training sessions, which are required for all new hires at large wire houses. Trainees are taught that in order to be a successful financial advisor, they need to aggressively pursue clients. Elaine described her first day at training:

On one of the first days of training, one of the leaders taught us a chant: “If you’re gonna be a bear, BE A GRIZZLY BEAR.” “If you’re gonna be a bear, BE A GRIZZLY BEAR.” At first I didn’t know what he was talking about, I thought he was referencing a bearish market. But, it became clear that he was telling us to be aggressive, aggressive as we could to hook in clients. He had us chanting and fist pumping like we were on the cast of Jersey Shore. I was really uncomfortable, looking around, thinking I didn’t sign up for this.

Clearly being told to act like a grizzly bear was supposed to encourage trainees to perform in aggressive ways. She went on to say that in her role play activities she was
told by her trainer that she needed to have a louder voice on the phone and a “stronger sales pitch” if she was going to be a successful advisor. Training programs organize gendered behaviors by teaching the appropriate way to interact with prospective clients. In addition, at the trainings, advisors are taught to view themselves in competition with each other. For example, at all of the large wire houses, trainees are told that if they do not have a certain amount of assets under management within a certain time frame, then they will be kicked out of the program. At one wire house, advisors are required to bring in $10 million under assets during each of their first three years, totaling $30 million by year three.

The language used to describe the training revealed the gendered nature of the discursive frameworks organizing interactions. The training programs were described by participants as “survival of the fittest,” “boot camp,” and “elephant hunting.” Elephant hunting refers to prospecting for clients with large amounts of money to manage and invest. References to war and violent metaphors were commonly used to illustrate their experiences learning how to perform as advisors. For example, Heather, who works at a large wire house, described the training in the following way:

You know, it’s like basic training for war mostly, but with a focus on sales. Not really a lot of product knowledge when I was there, so much. They equated it to water boarding and drinking water through a fire hose. I mean, literally just flooded you with information…And they make you sit down and do some cold calling while they’re listening in.

Ann, who also works for a large wire house, also referenced the boot camp style chanting that was used to encourage trainees to disassociate themselves with prospective clients and focus on “getting the sale done by whatever means necessary.” The mantra they were told to repeat was: “Some Will, Some Won’t, So What, Who’s next? Some Will,
Some Won’t, So What, Who’s Next? So Let’s Get it Done, Let’s Get it In.” The the chant is embedded with sexualized imagery. For example, the phrase “Let’s get it in” is currently used by men, particularly in pop culture, when referring to their attempts to have penile intercourse with a woman. While masculinity was never explicitly referenced as a requirement during training, the language used to describe the process demonstrated that aggression was built into understandings of what it means to be an advisor at a large wire house.

In order to be seen as competent, advisors must demonstrate not only that they are aggressive, but also that they are strong enough to handle the stress of the job. Strength is also constructed in masculine terms. For example, there is a certain way to handle stress that is deemed appropriate, and the way to handle the intensity of the position means to interact in ways that have been constructed as “tough,” “manly.” The appropriate way to show strength is to display anger or keep your emotions to yourself.

Participants argued that one of the most stressful aspects of the job, during the first few years in the industry, was the rejection that they received while trying to “build your book.” Male advisors were seen by co-workers and management as better equipped and naturally able to handle rejection, while the female advisors that I interviewed discussed the pressure they felt to demonstrate that they could handle rejection. Donna spoke extensively about her experiences having to prove her strength to her male colleagues. She said:

I think that they (men) think that women can’t handle rejection as well. It is one of the things that they’ll cite in these sale careers, or around finances, that women can’t handle the rejection that they get from customers as well (as men). That (is something) I’ve definitely heard cited. Or, that they’ll (women) burst into tears…the perception that women will cry and they can’t handle rejection. I think
it’s been interesting for them (male colleagues) because I’m somebody who, I think, is changing some of their perceptions about women’s tolerance for stress, like in the workplace, in terms of being able to stand up to rejection. They know that I can handle what they can dish out, so to speak. I think I’ve kind of earned their respect.

Handling stress means being able to handle rejection a certain way. To earn the respect of her colleagues, Donna felt she needed to prove her strength to her co-workers. In order to earn the respect of her colleagues, she needed to tolerate not only rejection from possible clients, but also tolerate sexist comments from her colleagues. She went on to say:

There’s definitely camaraderie here, there’s some kidding…it’s been really interesting for me because of the way that they (co-workers) will sometimes talk about women in front of me. I’m almost like a defective male. For me, in terms of them (co-workers) saying: “Well, I don’t know why she cried, it was a meltdown, it was a train wreck” and they’ll say that now with a pretty good degree of comfort with me there.

Donna, along with the majority of the women I interviewed at large-wire houses, said that their job required them to develop “thick skin” and in some instances become what Joan Acker (1990) describes as “honorary males.” For example, Donna described feeling like a “defective male” when her male co-workers were critiquing a female colleague.

Women respondents discuss what they view as the added emotional labor involved in justifying their presence at the male-dominated large wire houses. For example, several respondents discussed the work involved in making sure they did not disrupt the “male norm.” Donna described avoiding activities typically associated with femininity, including bringing food, because she didn’t want her co-workers to view her as an “office mom.” She said:
I’m careful not to do some of the things that women do at the workplace that kind of discredit them a little bit like the feeding of other and things like that in terms of baking or things like that. I don’t do that. Because just from what I’ve kind of learned over the years, there’s things that you shouldn’t do because you will be viewed a certain way, you know.

Donna mentioned on three occasions during her interview that she was often worried that her male co-workers would think of her “like a girl.” She de-emphasized activities associated with femininity because she felt that she would lose the respect of her co-workers. It’s interesting that the “feeding of others” would give her less credibility in the workplace, as if being able to bake means that someone is less likely to be able to do money work.

Maria, who was currently working in a management position, also felt that bringing up “woman’s issues” was not something that should be discussed in the sphere of money work at a large wire house. For example, she spoke about not wanting co-workers to know that she struggles with work/non-work balance. Specifically, she says:

I don’t try to make my being female an issue. I don’t ever make big deals about workplace balance issues that I wrestle with that I know they (men) don’t wrestle with... So you know, the issues that I deal with I know they wouldn’t relate to, nor do I need to preach to them about, nor do they care about, so I don’t make a big deal about that. I watched early on a few women who just had some major issues about everything – kind of like, woe is me and oh my plate, and you know, at the end of the day, it’s business.

She went on to say that she had a lot of credibility with her group and very good working relationships because she did not bring up “female issues.” She also mentioned in her interview that one of the reasons she did not discuss her possible gender disadvantages was because she had seen another woman in her office experience a tremendous amount of backlash from her colleagues when she did mention her possible gender disadvantages.
Maria noted that the majority of the men that she worked with had someone at home to take care of domestic responsibilities therefore work/non work balance issues are constructed as a “female” issue in large wire houses. She also said that because domestic responsibilities are still seen as “woman’s sphere,” it is not something to be discussed in what is constructed as the male sphere: a.k.a. “business.”

**Temporal Differences**

Similar to Levin (2004), the way gender is constituted at large wire houses changes depending on the time of day and labor process. For example, many hours of a typical day for a financial advisor are spent in an office, where he/she will read research reports, schedule meetings, make online trades, and construct financial plans. During these time periods, there is often little contact with other advisors, therefore, gendered interactions with co-workers become less salient. However, my respondents pointed out that during office meetings and work events gender becomes significant. For example, sexualized language and joking is much more likely to occur. Interactions at meetings and company dinners are more likely to involve the sexual objectification of women and more closely resemble versions of “macho masculinity” described in Lewis’ (1989) accounts of bond traders. For example, Barbara, who currently works as independent advisor, described a work event that she had attended while working at a large wire house at which she felt uncomfortable. She said:

I was sitting with three guys I had known for a number of years…to say it was broadly, to say it was inappropriate for mixed company doesn’t touch it. And I have a sense of humor. It was inappropriate for mixed company. It was inappropriate for corporate, there was a corporate officer there. I spoke my piece, nobody cared. They were telling dirty jokes, they were being rude, it wasn’t a stripper, but it was gross. It was offensive to females.
Even when Barbara spoke up and said that the sexual jokes were inappropriate, the banter continued. Researchers have shown that while jokes can serve to relieve stress on the job (Haas, 1972; Wilson 1979), they are also one of the primary ways through which groups form and maintain solidarity (Hughes, 1958; Norman 1994). At company parties, men use hetero-sexualized joking to reinforce highly gendered group solidarity. It allows men to communicate their differences from females and bond with each other.

Mandatory quarterly firm meetings were described as a place for men to bond with each other and exclude women. Nancy said: “You know the atmosphere is just like, it’s a frat party. It’s all the guys going around spanking each other in the butt. It’s all about them making each other (men) feel good.” Nancy spoke of feeling alienated and isolated because of her gender during office meetings. It is during these times women are excluded from becoming honorary “Big Swinging Dicks” (Lewis, 1989).

Along with sexualizing or isolating women, respondents reported that homophobic comments are sometimes used during office meetings to perpetuate heterosexism and challenge behaviors associated with femininity. For example, respondents reported that men repeatedly called other men “gay” if they were not performing masculinity in ways that have been constructed as “appropriate.” Nancy described her weekly office meetings at a large wire house as follows:

The assistant branch manager would always make jokes about gay men. You know, in our weekly meetings, there was this one guy that he would always say things like, “oh your shoes look really gay.” He almost gave the guy (who he would harass) a psychotic breakdown because he had issues to begin with, so for (the assistant manager) to push buttons like that and I was thinking, how do you know there’s not somebody in here that’s gay, how do you know that?
Homophobic comments serve not only to perpetuate heterosexism, but also organize masculine performances and narrow the types of interactions that are deemed “appropriate” for both men and women. For example, when calling the man’s shoes “gay,” he was policing not only his sexuality, but also his gender performance. Homophobic comments facilitate the idea that a large wire house is not only a “man’s world,” but a specific type of man’s world; namely, a heterosexual space, where any behaviors that might be associated with femininity should be avoided.

**Small and Independent Firms**

Fifteen of the respondents I interviewed worked for small and independent firms. For my research, these firms include independent registered representatives, independent Certified Financial Planners, family firms, and small local firms. The locations of these offices were diverse, including large Victorian homes, strip malls, and small suites in larger office buildings. I would describe the environment at these locations as more comfortable and less formal than the large wire houses. The office spaces felt more relaxed and personalized. For example, some were painted with bright color on the walls and others were adorned with pottery, travel mementos, and family photos. I never had to get security clearance to enter any of these offices.

The overall work culture was described much differently at small and independent firms than at the large wire houses. None of the respondents referred to their offices as a “boy’s club.” Respondents described their offices as: “My second family;” “It’s terrifically collegial, it’s a team;” “It’s a very, very benevolent kingdom.” Janet said that it was only when she left her office that she realized that money work was male
dominated. She had recently attended a national conference and was meeting with “wholesalers,” who encourage registered representatives to sell their “family” of mutual funds or financial products, such as Oppenheimer or John Hancock. Representatives are often given incentives to work with a particular wholesaler. She said: “They come with footballs and baseballs; they come with jackets then are men’s sizes. They come with all these things for guys, but women are also advisors. Bring a Coach Bag. Bring something that will recognize the fact that I am also an advisor.” So, even though none of the respondents reported experiencing blatant sexism in their offices, many had experienced gender biases when leaving their offices.

“Financial Advisors are Like Social Workers:” Constructing Competence at Small and Independent Firms

The work of a financial advisor is constructed differently at smaller independent firms. Rather than constructing the job in masculine terms, competence is more likely to be associated with activities traditionally associated with femininity. For example, a good financial advisor at an independent firm is someone who can “connect with clients,” “give good advice,” and “help people meet their financial goals.”

Respondents at independent firms felt that building relationships with their clients was one of the most important parts of their job responsibilities. For example, to be considered competent, respondents felt that clients had to trust them. Others discussed wanting to have long-term relationships with their clients. Respondents spoke about building friendships and some described their relationships with their clients as a “marriage” or as “partnerships.” The majority of the people that I interviewed at small independent firms had spent at least some time working at large wire houses. One of
their main complaints about the wire house model was that it was constructed as a sales job, rather than an advisory job. Jennifer described her current position at a small independent broker dealer in the following way: “I’m not trying to sell to these people. I’m trying to connect with them.” She had worked for ten years at a large wire house and did not like having to sell certain products to her clients. She enjoyed the opportunity to provide more flexible information and advice to her clients, rather than the “standard pre-packaged packets of information” she was expected to provide to clients at her previous job. Kim another independent advisor also felt that having more flexibility in the type of information that she was able to provide to her clients made it easier to build a strong relationship. She noted that she felt her clients trusted her more because she was giving them individualized attention and not pushing certain “families of mutual funds.” While not all large wire houses require advisors to sell specific financial products to their clients, in general, advisors with whom I spoke at independent broker dealers felt less pressure to aggressively sell to their clients.

In addition, small independent firms do not have formal training programs that perpetuate standardized performances. While some of the participants working at independent firms had gone through training programs at previous jobs at large wire houses, the majority of them had not gone through standardized training programs. For example, most studied for their Series 7 or Series 63\(^2\) exam online rather than sitting in

\(^2\)Any individual who wants to enter the securities industry must take the Series 7 exam, also known as the General Securities Representative Examination. The test is administered by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority. This registration qualifies a candidate for the solicitation, purchase, and/or sale of all securities products, including corporate securities, municipal securities, municipal fund securities, options, direct participation programs, investment company products, and variable contracts. The majority of states (including the one where this research took place) also require that
on a class with other trainees, which is often the case at a large wire house. In addition, the majority of workers at independent firms did not have to have a specific amount of money under management by certain time periods in order to keep their jobs. Therefore, there was less emphasis on competition between workers. Their experiences learning about how to do money work were much more diverse, leading to more flexibility in gender performances. For example, Janet spoke of her experience learning about what it means to be a financial advisor from her mentor:

My mentor taught me that advisors are like social workers, only they deal with financial issues, rather than emotional issues. Although, those two things, money and emotions, often go hand in hand. So that’s how she taught me to think of my job. She told me I needed to build a relationship with my clients so that I can help them through good times and bad.

Unlike Elaine, who was told she needed a “good sales pitch” and that she needed to aggressively pursue clients at her large wire house training, Janet was taught to think of herself a financial “social worker” who needed to connect with clients in order to help them.

Along with building relationships with clients, respondents also described the job in terms of “giving good advice” to their clients so they can accomplish their financial goals. For example, respondents discussed advising clients on retirement, savings, and portfolio choices. Respondents spoke of the importance of empowering and educating individuals. Sarah, who worked at a small independent broker dealer said:

individuals pass The Uniform Securities Agent State Law Examination (Series 63). The examination covers the principles of state securities regulation reflected in the Uniform Securities Act. The examination is intended to provide a basis for state securities administrators to determine an applicant’s knowledge and understanding of state law and regulations (FINRA, 2012).
I like educating people on the objectives of doing planning... How much can I spend? What if I waited a couple of years to retire? You know, what are my choices, what are my options? I think people can make much better decisions by knowing that. And you know, a lot of people say, well, the internet, you know, I don’t need information I’ve got the internet. Well the internet provides information, but not advice. And I find that when things get confusing, people tend to do nothing. You know it’s like a deer in headlights. So I try to get people to open up to me, explain to me what they are trying to accomplish. And then I’m there to help them do it.

Like Sarah, respondents at the independent firms were much more likely to mention teaching as a part of their job. They felt that it was their job to educate individuals about their financial choices and increase financial literacy. Rather than focusing on aggression as a necessity for the job, competence is constructed as being able to connect with others or teach others, which are characteristics traditionally associated with femininity.

At independent firms, financial advising was described as a type of care work. For example, respondents felt that there job was to protect their clients and be there for them if they have questions. Janet described the responsibility involved in helping clients:

When people come to me as a planner, so many things come out of our conversation that they wondered what they did before finding someone to work with. Because people constantly have questions and they don’t know where to turn. And who’s going to take their interests at heart and make sure that someone is watching out for them... I feel that financial planning is a tremendous responsibility. You know, people are counting on me to take care of them. And sometimes I’m the main person that they’ll bounce things off of and then once they get my thought then they’ll decide what to do.

Janet believed that it is the job of an advisor to help clients make decisions and look out for their financial well-being. Due to the fact that there is a much greater emphasis placed on giving advice rather than “aggressively building a book,” women did not need to justify their presence at the small firms, because these are qualities that are more likely
to be associated with femininity.

At small and independent firms, competence is not constructed in masculine
terms; therefore, gendered performances for workers seem to be much more flexible. For
example, participants at small and independent firms never described having to de-
emphasize femininity and none suggested that they needed to become “honorary men.”
In addition, female respondents did not feel they had to justify their presence at their
organization. In fact, several respondents felt that the job was “made for women”
because giving advice, connecting with clients, and teaching people are all activities
traditionally associated with femininity. One woman with whom I spoke at an
independent firm, Beth, had never even thought of finance as a male-dominated industry
until I asked her if she could suggest any other women that I could interview. She
proceeded to look at her file with the list of advisors that made trades with the same
broker dealer\textsuperscript{3} as her and could only find three other women on the list of over 50
advisors in the area. She was surprised because she had assumed she was not in a male-
dominated industry because of the type of work that she does and the activities that she
does on a daily basis.

**Embodying a “Money Worker”**

One of the basic features of gender’s manifestation in the contemporary western
world is that for the most part masculinity is taken for granted, and hence not
spoken, whereas femininity is the always-articulated modification of that assumed

\textsuperscript{3}A broker dealer is a person, company, or organization that trades securities for its own
account or on behalf of other independent advisors. The majority of independent
financial advisors center their relationship with clients on advise and use an independent
broker dealer to clear trades and provide other services, such as product due diligence.
Independent broker dealers are distinct from large brokerage firms in that they are
generally not market makers or securities underwriters. They also do not create research
reports or engage in investment banking (Financial Services Institute, 2006).
norm. That is, in both symbol and practice, masculinity is confounded with
general, the human, that which need not be specified, whereas femininity is
marked, frequently on the body (Salzinger 2004:14).

While the overall work culture appears to be more gender neutral and
performances more flexible at independent firms, at both large wire houses and
independent firms, money work continues to privilege masculinity. According to Lucal
(1999), in our society, the default reading of a non-feminine person is male. In other
words, individuals are assumed to be male unless proven otherwise and it is significant
because it forces women to perform femininity and to be marked as female. For
example, women need to “do work” in order to fulfill societal expectations of female
embodiment, while males are generally read as male without extensive body work (Black
and Sharma: 2001). Salzinger argues that the salience of femininity and the invisibility
of masculinity is even more pronounced in the work world. She argues: “The
unelaborated ‘worker’ is always (already) male. What this means concretely is that,
socially, femininity is often specified, by name or by highly explicit conventions around
embodiment, whereas masculinity literally ‘goes without saying’ (2004: 15). This is the
case in money work, where women’s presence often needs to be explained. For example,
for those women who are viewed as competent, their gender is marked. A woman who
becomes a financial advisor is a “strong woman” and a woman who becomes a Vice
President is viewed as a “female Vice President.”

Female respondents discussed the work involved in attempting to embody a
“professional” money worker. One woman, Julie, who worked at an independent firm,
dyed her hair darker in an attempt to be taken more seriously when interacting with
clients. Barbara commented that the dress code at an agency event she attended, while
working at a large wire house, perpetuated the notion that only men worked as financial advisors. She said:

I went to an agency retreat and they gave us a sheet of instructions and it said the dress code for the Saturday night dinner was jacket and tie. They never bothered to say this is you know “formal business attire” as opposed to jacket and tie. So, I decided to be pissy the second year and showed up in a jacket and tie that I borrowed from my husband.

Barbara was frustrated that her organization assumed that the only people attending the event would be men.

Results suggest that while women required effort to embody a money work, men had less work to do to be perceived as finance professionals. For example, Jack, a male respondent, who worked as a hiring manager and an advisor at a large wire house, noted that he did not have to think about the type of clothing that he wore because wearing a suit and tie he believed was the quintessential outfit of a ‘finance worker.” He said:

I feel pretty comfortable just throwing on a suit and tie...It’s just how you dress, so yeah, it’s something that I just sort of wore for 10 years straight..I can wear this anywhere and feel comfortable.

While Jack knew that wearing a suit was “just how you dress,” Kathy, who worked at a large wire house, said that when she started in the industry, she was not sure what she was supposed to wear. When she went to her interview, she described having to speak with a hiring committee of four men in white shirts and black suits. She said to one of the hiring committee members:

So, I guess you have to wear a white shirt? And he said laughing: “Well no.” And I said: “Well what do women wear?” Obviously, I’m looking around and every single person is in a suit and white shirt. And he was like: “you can wear anything you want.” And I’m thinking, “oh really?”
Kathy continued on by telling me that she wanted to look “professional;” however, she pointed out that trying to appear “professional” as a woman is not easy. The industry continues to have a male norm and women need to negotiate how to embody a money worker.

My respondents demonstrated that along with not knowing what attire to wear to embody a money worker, overall appearance is more likely to impact interactions for women. For example, Jack noted that when meeting with clients, he knew that he would not be judged by his appearance. However, he had met with clients that would not want to interact with female advisors if they were not seen as wearing the “right” clothes during a meeting:

I walked into a house with a young lady and she’s dressed a certain way, attractive young lady, the wife can immediately shut down. The husband can be speaking to the girls directly, and I’ve seen it where the wife will shut right down. Where, if I go in there, nobody’s shutting down.

He continued by saying that women were put in a precarious situation. He felt that if women dressed conservatively, then they would be seen as “defective men;” however, if they were “too attractive,” then they might not be taken seriously.

Along with being judged by clients, female respondents also felt that their appearance was more likely to be judged by co-workers than their male counterparts. Nancy left her position at one large wire house because she felt women were being critiqued more harshly for their appearance than men in the office:

I’ll tell you the trigger event that had me leave (my position at a wire house) was when the branch manager asked me to go tell one of the sales assistants that I didn’t like her outfit and that she couldn’t wear it anymore. And I said I’m not doing that. I said, I will not do that. There’s nothing wrong with the way that she’s dressed. I said, if you want to tell me that she’s gotta do her math better of
something like that I’m fine. But you cannot ask me to go and criticize somebody’s clothes, which it was just a different style, Megan, it was just a little bit different style, there was nothing wrong with it.

Nancy was asked and refused to regulate the appearance of her female co-worker. She felt her co-worker should be judged on her job performance and not on her attire.

Women also discussed the work involved being taken seriously in interactions with clients and co-workers. Heather, who worked at a large wire house, pointed out that many interactions with clients have to do with stock prices, which she believes, is often viewed as something that men will naturally do better than women. Therefore, it takes more effort for female money workers to prove that they have the “expert” knowledge necessary to manage a client’s money:

There are cases where a lot of men don’t take you serious. I come across that a lot. Typically, with a lot of the older men, more so, because I think it’s just maybe a gender gap. I’ve swayed some of the older guys that you know really don’t take you seriously until somebody asks you a question. Most of the time it’s all fluff, but the technical stuff makes me sound smart. Just because, they don’t know what you’re talking about (laugh), all the sudden they’re like, OH (emphasized) she does know something.

Because Heather did not feel that she was taken seriously, she used “technical language” to justify her expert knowledge.

For women, decisions on what to wear, how to adorn themselves, what type of voice and language to use when interacting with clients and co-workers was complicated. Some women weren’t always sure how to perform, so they changed their performance depending on with whom they were interacting. Women describe acting differently with clients than with co-workers, and also performing differently depending on the social location of the person with whom they are interacting. These interactions speak to the situatedness of gendered interactions. Heather discussed performing very differently
with co-workers than with clients. She said that she would de-emphasize her femininity at the office because she thought she had to do so in order to be taken seriously; however, while meeting with some clients, she would use her femininity because she felt it benefited her. She said:

I had a client that I cold called from training, that is still a client to this day, and partly because he was an older guy, construction business, you know, I called him, he said he used to get a thousand phone calls a day, but he decided to meet with me because my voice sounded nice and sweet. And then when he met me he was like, oh you’re beautiful. Now he’s moving all his money over. Literally it was like a half million account and he moved everything over to me after I met him.

She went on to say that while fulfilling societal expectations of feminine beauty worked to her advantage in this particular interaction, that this was not always the case. She had numerous clients ask to speak to a male colleague because they thought she was a secretary. She also felt uncomfortable interacting with clients who continually commented on her appearance and made her feel objectified. Several other women gave explicit examples of negative interactions that they experienced because were viewed as attractive by clients. One woman had a client try to kiss her during a client meeting. Another said: “I had a male client dump me (as an advisor) because I wouldn’t go on a date with him.” She went on to say that she did not think she should have to appear less attractive in order to avoid being hit on by clients.

While the men I interviewed did not speak directly to the ways in which they had to work at embodying a “money worker,” Connell and Wood (2005) suggest that it is likely that men are participating in body work to fulfill narrow expectations about what a business worker should look and act like. For example, they suggest that all business workers have to manage their bodies to demonstrate loyalty to their companies. Male
workers are disciplining their bodies by participating in exercise regimes and dying their hair. They also point out that men are learning about sports and drinking beer at company events even if it is not something they are interested in doing. In addition, black men or young men likely have to participate in different types of body work to be viewed as a competent, because the work involved in embodying a money worker is also impacted by other aspects of a person’s social location, such as age, race, and class.

**Conclusion**

It is clear that gender is enacted by money workers in everyday interactions and the types of gendered performances that are valued varies significantly at large wire houses and independent firms. My research adds to the literature on gendered organizations by explicating the ways that the local workplace context at financial services firms can constrain and/or enable seemingly “naturalized” gendered performances. My findings show that the organizational structure of large wire houses continues to promote a boy’s club culture. Further, the job of a financial advisor, at these firms, is constructed in masculine terms, encouraging performances traditionally associated with masculinity. While a “competent” financial advisor at a large wire house is one who is an “aggressive, strong, elephant hunter,” the job of a financial advisor is not constructed in masculine terms at small and independent firms. A “competent” financial advisor at a small or independent firm is someone who can connect with others, teach, and give good advice. Since these activities are associated with traditional notions of femininity, workers are much less likely to feel pressure to embody a macho masculine posture.

Along with examining the local work place context it is also important to examine
how the larger economic environment is impacting both gendered performances and the social organization of gender in the industry. As Walters (1999) points out:

The performance of gender is never simply a voluntary act… Theories of gender as play and performance need to be intimately and systematically connected with the power of gender to constrain, control, violate, and configure. Too often, mere lip service is given to the specific historical, social, and political configurations that make certain conditions possible and others constrained (Walters 1999: 250).

The next chapter will locate this study within the current historical context to examine specifically how the economic crisis, beginning in 2008, is impacting money workers in financial services and contributing to gender inequality. It examines more closely how the conditions created by the “Great Recession” produce and perpetuate particular gendered performances and impact how gender is organized within the industry. Further, it examines how the economic recession is contributing to inequality between workers in finance.
Chapter 6:

The Inequality Regime: Examining the Impact of the “Great Recession” on Money Work
In this chapter, I examine the impact of the current economic crisis on workers in financial services. Specifically, I describe the “Great Recession” and reveal its impact on gendered performances and the social organization of gender in finance. My research shows that at large wire houses the recession has contributed to performances that closely resemble what Connell refers to as “transnational business masculinities.” However, at small independent firms, the economic downturn is perpetuating performances that encourage emphasized femininity, as workers attempt to calm the nerves of weary investors. In this chapter, I also describe the ways that the economic crisis and competitive global capitalism has contributed what Joan Acker has termed “inequality regimes” in the industry. Finally, I conclude with resistance strategies that money workers are using to attempt to challenge the gender regime.

“The Great Recession”

Based on government statistics, the United States economy officially went into a recession in December of 2007 (Goodman and Mance, 2011). Economists have deemed it to be the longest and deepest recession since the end of World War II (Ibid). The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that during the recession, 7.5 million workers lost their jobs. The unemployment rate reached 10.1% in October of 2009. While the economy returned to economic growth, albeit slow growth, in June of 2009, layoffs continued with non-farm payrolls dropping an additional 1.2 million by February 2010. At the present time, economists are debating the possibility of a double dip recession.

Researchers have argued that a combination of factors led to what has been termed “The Great Recession” (Ruzich and Grant, 2009; Lewis, 2010; Pagano and
Volpin, 2009). For example, over-leveraged home owners and problematic lending practices contributed to the collapse (Ruzich and Grant, 2009). Starting in the early 2000’s, homeowners with inadequate incomes were able to finance homes with a small down payment, decreasing the chance they would be able to pay back the obligations. In addition, there was an uptick in the number of sub-prime loans. In 1994, there was $35 billion in sub-prime lending, or 5% of total mortgages originated (Ruzich and Grant, 2009). By 2005, there was $625 billion (20% of mortgages) in sub-prime lending (ibid). Of that amount, $507 billion was converted to mortgage-backed bonds, which were underwritten by Wall Street banks, such as Bear Sterns, Merrill Lynch, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley (Lewis, 2010). In addition to the increase in amount of sub-prime lending, during that same period, the structured terms of the loans shifted, making default more likely. For example, in 1996, 65% of sub-primes had fixed rates. By 2005, 75% of sub-primes were floating rates\(^4\) (ibid). Along with the increase of sub-prime lending and the change in loan structures, there was a large increase in the number of fraudulent loans. For example, lenders were mis-informing homeowners on the terms and interest rates, increasing the chance of default.

Mortgage originators had the incentive to lend to under-qualified home buyers because they did not keep the risk of the loans. For example, originators would make a loan and then sell the debt to a fixed-income department at a Wall Street firm, which they

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\(^4\) Most sub-prime mortgages were structured so that home owners would pay a fixed-term rate (say 8%) and then at the start of the third year, the rate would jump to a higher interest rate (say 12%).
would re-package into Collateralized Debt Obligations (CDOs)\(^5\) and sell to investors (Lewis, 2010). In addition, originators benefited from selling sub-prime mortgages because these types of loans encouraged refinancing. For example, when homeowners were unable to keep paying the high interest rates that often began several years after the term of the loan began, many were forced to refinance the terms of the loan, increasing the fees that the originators collect.

Ratings agencies also played a part in the collapse. For example, ratings agencies began being publically traded in early 2000’s and started making large profits rating CDOs (Pagano and Volpin, 2009). Moody’s and other rating agencies attached AAA\(^6\) ratings to CDOs, when they didn’t necessarily know what was packaged in those obligations (Pagano and Volpin, 2009). Standards & Poor’s had pool-level data on the CDOs, such as the average credit score and average loan to value data, but had no individual information on the loans. Wall Street didn’t want individual loan data released (it could have impacted the ratings) and rating agencies feared pressing the firms for that information (the firm could get their ratings from another rating agency, decreasing the agency’s profit margins) (Lewis, 2010). By placing the AAA ratings on many of these CDOs, it encouraged investment in what were seen as “safe” assets.

Finally, over-leveraged Wall Street banks set the stage for one of the largest financial collapses that the United States has ever experienced. In the early 1980’s, Wall Street firms began to be publically traded. By becoming publically traded, firms were

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\(^5\) Collateralized Debt Obligations are individual loans, which are re-packaged into a product (generally with multiple asset-backed tranches, with each tranche having a different risk/return associated with it) and sold on the secondary market.

\(^6\) Triple A ratings were historically viewed by the rating agencies as having less than 1-in-100,000 chance in default; double A had less than 1-in-1000 chance of default; triple B had less than 1 in 500 chance of default.
able to shift the risk taken by their employees to share holders, which in turn perpetuated the risk tolerance of Wall Street workers. And, risk taking did in fact increase tremendously. In the early 2000’s, companies began leveraging themselves at unprecedented levels. Investors knew little about the risks that the Wall Street banks were taking (some risks were even kept off the books making it impossible for an investor and regulators to know what was held on company balance sheets), and Wall Street workers took larger and larger risks in hopes of larger returns (Lewis, 2010).

When home owners began to default on their loans and housing prices began to decrease, the Wall Street banks that took on the risk of owning these debt obligations began to crumble. In March of 2008, Bear Stern’s stock price collapsed and the company was sold to JP Morgan for $2 per share (Baily, 2008). In September of 2008, Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy. That same month, the Federal Reserve lent the insurance company AIG $85 billion to cover losses on the sub-prime credit default swaps that AIG had sold to the Wall Street Banks (Lewis, 2010). In addition, Merrill Lynch, having lost over $55 billion on sub-prime (CDOs) was acquired by Bank of America.

In late September of 2008, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson convinced the U.S. Congress to provide the banks with $700 billion to buy sub-prime mortgage assets from the banks. The program was named the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) (Swonk, 2009). In November of 2008, the Treasury provided another $20 billion to Citigroup

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7 A credit default swap is an insurance policy, generally on a corporate bond, with a premium and a fixed term. For example, when buying a swap, you might pay $100,000 a year for 10 years to buy a 10 year credit default swap on $100 million in Apple bonds. If Apple defaults on its debt anytime in the following 10 years, you would make $100 million. If Apple doesn’t default, you would lose $1 million ($100,000 over ten years).
along with a guarantee on $306 billion of the company’s assets (Swonk, 2009). The $700 billion proved to be insufficient, so the Federal Reserve started purchasing the sub-prime mortgage bonds from the banks. It is estimated that by 2009 Wall Street firms had transferred over $1 trillion of risk and losses of bad “investments” to the U.S. taxpayer (Lewis, 2010).

**Transnational Business Masculinities at Large Wire Houses**

The financial industry was hard hit during the Great Recession, with the Bureau of Labor statistics reporting that 785,000 jobs were lost in the “financial activities” sector between December 2007 and January 2009. The impact of the collapse on the daily lives of finance workers was significant. The money workers I interviewed described the recession as an incredibly stressful time to be working in the finance industry. The atmosphere in the offices changed from tense to extreme panic virtually within hours as markets dropped hundreds of points in minutes. Extreme market volatility increased the daily pressure placed on money workers. Advisors describe being told by clients to beat the market; however, with the S & P averages down from 1576 to 666 (or 58%) from October 2008-March of 2009, “beating the market” meant in many cases that clients lost between 25% and 50% (and sometimes more) of their money. Some advisors were working around the clock in an attempt to ease the minds of concerned clients. Allison, a client services associate at a large wire house, pointed out that it was a “scary time to come to work.” At the same time that she was worried about her clients losing their retirement savings, she was extremely stressed that her job would be eliminated.

Overall, my data suggest that the economic crisis perpetuated particular types of gendered performance at large wire houses. While there are variations in performances,
as explained in chapter four, it does appear that the recession encouraged a performance that resembles what Connell refers to as “transnational business masculinity.” Connell argues that, under global capitalism, the type of gender performance that is valued is one that is tied to increased egocentrism, increased loyalty to the corporation, and a declining sense of responsibility for others (Connell, 1998). Connell argues (1998) that “world politics is now more and more organized around the needs of transnational capital,” inserting “strategic power in the hands of particular groups of men; managers and entrepreneurs” who are increasingly competitive, detached from loyalties to nation, family, and marital partners, and embody traditional masculinity, without any requirement of direct physical strength (Connell, 2005: xxiii). While I did not interview individuals at sites across the globe, my respondents are participating in transnational business practices with transnational capital. For example, advisors are working for publically traded firms and trading capital that connects them to companies that employ individuals throughout the world. In addition, since most of the large wire houses are multinational corporations, it is likely that organizational practices, such as training programs, compensation practices, and hiring practices are used in many of their offices across the globe. Researchers have argued over whether this type of performance is hegemonic, I did find that the recession encouraged workers at large wire houses to embody what Connell describes.

Labor processes and the organizational structure of finance, at large wire houses in particular, perpetuate these characteristics. For example, through the recession, many of my respondents reported that they were expected to work more hours and take less vacation time to demonstrate their loyalty to the company. In addition, the recession
made it more difficult for advisors to meet their company’s asset requirements, described in more detail in chapter four, encouraging a “do whatever it takes” attitude. For example, “Gordon Gecko”-type behaviors and macho masculinity are rewarded in the industry because one of their job requirements is to help their companies make more money. This was particularly evident at large wire houses. When workers are expected to make a certain amount of profits for shareholders, it encourages management to look the other way, even if workers are exploiting clients in the process. In addition, the structure of the market distances traders and advisors from the companies that they trade. For example, technical traders often move money in and out of the markets based on moving averages, stochastics, and the Relative Strength Index (RSI), often with little knowledge of a company’s everyday activities. This distancing allows for a declining sense of responsibility to those who are impacted by those trades. Elaine, who works as an advisor at a large wire house, pointed out that she knew very little about the company practices of some of her largest investments. She said:

My job is to make my clients money. I am sure some of the companies I invest in engage in behaviors that I don’t agree with. I mean I know they do. And it would be great if I could always base my investment choices on my moral beliefs about “good business.” But it’s...well it’s difficult sometimes. Like, one of my biggest holdings in the mutual fund most of my clients are in is MO. Do I like investing in tobacco?..not really. But in these economic times I feel a lot of pressure to get that dividend for my client.

She went on to say that she knows she would lose her job if she didn’t “perform” and make sure that her clients were receiving returns. So, she says she makes tough decisions every day, knowing that that her work is organized in a way that her focus has to be on increasing and maintaining the wealth of her clients. She knows that this focus sometimes comes at the expense of others, such as those who are harmed by products made by Altria
(MO) or the alienated workers who are employed by the companies that she trades.

As large wire houses, the recession encouraged performances that are traditionally associated with masculinity such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, lack of emotion, and a lack of caring for others. Participants pointed out that having to demonstrate increased loyalty to the company often meant “screwing over clients and co-workers and even family members” and discouraged behaviors associated with femininity such as empathy and compassion. These “masculine” performances were more amped up by the recession, which increased competitive pressure between co-workers. While Connell (1998) focuses on performances of men, such as male managers, I think it is important to recognize that these were also gendered performances that women were supposed to engage in at large wire houses. However, while men and women both engage in the performances, men’s behaviors are naturalized and this extra aggression isn’t seen as surprising or questioned by others. Men are viewed as naturally able to adjust to the increasing demands of competitive, global capitalism are seen as the ‘natural’ drivers of a strong economy. Women’s ability to engage in these socially produced gendered performances was questioned by co-workers and managers. For example, female respondents discussed having to reassure male managers that they would be able to “handle the pressure.”

Increased job insecurity, caused by the recession, encourages workers to perform in “masculine” ways that are more self-centered and this perpetuates an inability to care for others. This was particularly problematic for women, who wanted to take a maternity leave or were considering working fewer hours in order to care for a child or a family member. For example, Donna, a single mother, who works at a large wire house
and recently adopted a baby, decided not to ask for a reduction of hours at her job because she knew that it could put her new job at risk. She explained that she was one of 80 people that interviewed for her job and she believes that there are hundreds of other workers that would be willing to work more hours for less money. So, she felt a great deal of pressure to comply with any requirement that her manager imposed on her. She discussed the need to find childcare when she travels and the guilt she feels when sending her infant to daycare with a fever because she fears taking a day off from work:

> Every time I have to travel for business, and I do that frequently, it’s a night I have to find childcare. But that’s what I have to do to meet the needs of my career and make sure my child is cared for. I definitely feel conflicted. I even joke about it. “Oh yeah, I did what every good mother does, I pumped my child full of Tylenol this morning and I put her in daycare.” You know I know that this is what I need to do to feed us. I mean, yeah, you know this was the job, during these economic times, this was the job that was available.

Respondents like Donna demonstrate that “meeting the needs of the job” becomes more difficult in challenging economic times. In addition, demonstrating company loyalty can be more difficult and emotionally charged when workers are expected to make their job their only priority. Since the recession started, Heather mentioned that she is reluctant to acknowledge that she has a life that exists outside of her job. She said:

> The week I started working here my daughter had pneumonia. She was two at the time. I had to be here. It was so hard. I was very reluctant to kind of let anybody know what I was going through. I was just here. You know I was paying a babysitter so I could come to work. So I didn’t have to let on I was having problems at home that I needed to cover.

She said she was unable to care for her child with pneumonia because she knew that taking a day off with the market down hundreds of points would not be acceptable at her company. Further, new technology, such as smart phones and around the clock trading,
make it possible and necessary for money workers to always be available to clients. And during the recession, both clients and managers expect advisors at large wire houses to make work their first (and sometimes only) priority.

Female respondents at large wire houses also described delaying family formation because of the demands of a larger workload. Elaine, who is currently working at a large wire house, said she is waiting to start a family. She said she just starting the training program six months ago and, even though she is in her early thirties, she knows it would be impossible to take a maternity leave during her first two years: “This job is impossible to do if you are a new mom. Or at least this part of the training. Unless you have a full-time stay-at-home partner or a full-time nanny to raise your kid, this job is not for you.” Nicole also said that there is no way she could have had children during the training portion of the job. She said that she missed her opportunity to have children because she felt pressure to work long hours at her job. She spent the last twenty minutes of our interview urging me to consider getting pregnant if I want to have children and told me no less than ten times to make sure I do not wait until it’s too late like she did.

While women described a struggle to balance work and time outside of the office, men at large wire houses continue to have an easier time meeting the added demands placed on workers during the recession. For example, men are more likely to be able to embody “transnational business masculinity” by working additional hours and showing their loyalty because they often have fewer domestic responsibilities than women. In addition, men, on average, make much larger salaries at the big firms, making it easier to allow a partner to stay home if they have children. Donna pointed out that all of the men in her office have a person at home to take care of children and domestic labor. She said:
These men are all married to women who don’t work (outside the home). So there’s somebody on the home-front, O.K., doing everything for them. You know they’re (the men) all parents, one’s got a baby on the way, one has 6 children, one has two children, another one has three children, so they have someone on the home-front. So, even though they are fairly active participants within their families, they’re not the ones generally I think you know, getting the prescriptions or they’re not shuttling the kids to the game.

She went on to say that she has to constantly remind the men that they have that privilege over her and the other women in the office, who are also responsible for more domestic work at home.

Along with struggling to balance formal work time and time outside the office, some have argued that during economic downturns, women at large wire houses are less likely to report sexual harassment or discrimination in finance jobs because of fear of retaliation (Steinberg, 2011). The recession has made women less likely to report what they view as harassment or mention what they view as wage discrimination because it might lead to termination. Those fears are not unwarranted. In fact, one woman I interviewed was fired from her position at a large wire house when she reported a sexual assault by a male coworker. She has since won a retaliation case; however, in most cases sex discrimination cases are incredibly difficult to prove. In addition to the fear of being fired, the notion of a “boy’s club” has become common sense language for women at large wire houses, making it seem as it if it inevitable. The idea that sexism is “just the way it is,” compounded by the increased job insecurity caused by the recession, makes women less likely to come forward when experiencing sexist interactions. For example, Lauren, who works at a large wire house and whispered her whole interview to me, said that she kept quiet about the discrimination she felt at the office because she “knew what I was getting into when I entered this business.” She went on to say that the increased
competition and pressure to meet their companies income requirements made the culture even more unbearable for her, so she planned to take an early retirement in a few months.

**Emphasized Femininity at Small and Independent Firms**

While the recent retraction in economic growth perpetuate some qualities that closely resemble transnational business masculinity at large wire houses, it is also clear that this is not the only performance perpetuated by the recession. As Connell and Wood (2005) point out, economic globalization produces a complex business environment and constructs a range of gender patterns, none of which are hegemonic. I found that during the “Great Recession” qualities traditionally associated with femininity were emphasized by money workers at small and independent firms, to calm the nerves of weary investors.

Respondents at small and independent broker dealers describe performing in ways to emphasize femininity. Participants described having to “take on a motherly role for their clients.” They describe wanting to take care of their clients: “I want them to know I feel their pain,” “I lose sleep at night,” “I’ve cried with clients.” Advisors at small and independent firms describe being less aggressive and emphasized that they did not want to embody the macho masculinity that is encouraged at large wire houses. Emily, who works as an independent advisor, said:

I’m less aggressive towards clients and with clients’ money. Some of it is because I’m a little more nervous, a little more cautious. I don’t want to lose more of my client’s money. Also because people lack trust in the system I tread lightly with people. I speak softer. I use a gentler tone with people. I think you have to.

Emily described her performance as gentle and soft and made sure to emphasize qualities that made her seem feminine.
During the recession, the organizational context and labor processes at small and independent firms enabled a different type of performance than was described at large wire houses. Specifically, respondents pointed out that the compensation practices at their firms enabled them to show more empathy for their clients. Unlike at large wire houses were the majority of advisors have to stay on a Path of Achievement (POA), which I describe in chapter four, workers at smaller firms can lose money for one or two years and still not fear losing their job. Several respondents at independent or small organizations pointed out that their revenues were down during the recession; however, they were able to weather the storm because they didn’t have to maintain a specific book of business. Many had structured their business in a way that it was much easier to maintain an income during the downturn because they had clients that paid fees for services rendered rather than receiving commissions for returns on investment. The majority of workers at small and independent broker dealers said that they had more business than ever and actually saw the recession as the reason why clients were choosing smaller firms to get their financial services. Emily said: “There is a trend to use smaller banks and smaller firms. People lack trust in the big guys. They know they are a big part of the reason we are in this mess. And I think people still need help but don’t want to be involved with those people.”

Due to the organizational context, respondents at small and independent firms are able to construct their job as a “helping” profession, which encourages behaviors traditionally associated with femininity. Rather than a decreased sense of responsibility for others, I found that workers at smaller, independent firms had an increased sense of responsibility to their clients. Sarah, who works as an independent advisor, described her
performance during the recession as such: “I care more than ever about my clients. I try and show them that I’m here for them, however I can be.” Rather than feeling additional pressures to demonstrate company loyalty, the advisors attempt to show more loyalty to their client by emphasizing that their job is to help them. A man I interviewed at an independent firm also described the way the organizational context allowed for emphasized femininity, rather than the masculine performance encouraged at large wire houses. Dave, who works as an independent advisor said: “I try and make sure that they know that I am not selling them anything. I am here to give advice and teach them about how to stay safe during these turbulent times.” Respondents at small and independent firms described the job as about keeping their clients safe by helping rather than selling to them, which is encouraged at the larger firms.

Advisors as small and independent firms also pointed out that their organizations make it easier for them to remain flexible during the economic downturn, allowing them to have an easier time negotiating their time management. Many of the advisors at small firms agreed with those at large wire houses that there is more work to be done and the job required additional hours during the recession. Therefore, some women in particular struggled to balance formal work and time outside the office. For example, Emily pointed out that her clients were just like family to her; therefore, she was willing to give them as much time as they needed, just as if they were blood relatives. However, some of the advisors described having an easier time negotiating work and non-work time than I would have initially imagined. Ashley said that working for the smaller firm made it easier for her to arrange her work schedule. She also said that she decided that a good way to spend more time with family was to have her seventeen year old son help out at
the office as her assistant, which is not something she could have done at a large wire house. She said: “It’s nice to have family around when you’re dealing with some of the stresses of the recession.” So, even though she was working more hours, she did enjoy the opportunity to spend some of that time with her son.

**Impact of the “Great Recession” on the Gendered Organization of Finance**

Along with impacting gendered performances, the current historical and economic context is impacting the social organization of gender within the industry as a whole. Throughout the last ten years, the number of women working in finance has declined, while the number of men has grown. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) shows that during the past decade 141,000 women or 2.6% of female workers disappeared from the finance industry, while the number of men grew by 389,000 or 9.6%. The recent economic downturn has proven to be particularly hard on women in the industry. For example, researchers have found that woman bore the brunt of the layoffs that hit the finance sector (Izzo, 2012). In the U.S., women held about 59% of the jobs in financial services, but they accounted for 76% (102,000) of the 134,000 job losses between December 2007 and December 2008, which was when job losses only began to pick up in that industry (Izzo, 2012).

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) found that women were more likely to lose their jobs when financial companies restructure during a recession. In particular, women who are pregnant, on maternity leave, or work part-time to care for children are targeted for redundancy layoffs. Support staff is another place where finance firms have found “redundancy” and, as such, women, whom represent the majority of people working in this position, disproportionately felt the burden of these cuts. In
addition, the client services associates that did keep their jobs saw a sizable increase in
their workload. For example, Allison, a client services associate, explained that the
recession led her company to cut people in her position and increase the amount of
advisors she had to support. Prior to the recession, she was working for three advisors;
however, since 2008, she has been assigned to two more advisors:

They cut two of us (client services representatives). Which in an office where
there’s 12 or 15 that’s a huge deal. So they got rid of two, which means that I
picked up a couple, two more brokers. I jumped from three to five. That’s what
happened. And then it just got bad. So I was assigned two more brokers, so
probably got, another, 1000 clients or something.

When I asked if she was given a raise because she was taking on more work she said:

“No, I was just lucky to keep my job.” Some advisors who I interviewed are hiring more
support staff on their own, instead of placing more work on the remaining support staff.

For example, Chandra, who works as an independent advisor, acknowledged the decrease
in support staff, but decided to hire more out of her income. She said:

One thing that has changed is that corporations are downsizing their
infrastructure. The support staff has become leaner. And although I pay a fair
amount for support (out of her income), I couple that with the support that is
already part of the infrastructure for the office. Since the recession, I have to
spend more money hiring my own support to make up for what they got rid of.

Chandra acknowledged that she did not want her support staff to have to take on more
work due to the fact that the company was downsizing. She said she was particularly
concerned for her “secretary, who does so much for so little.”

**Care Work and Emotional Labor**

My results demonstrate that the recession has increased the amount of care work
and emotional labor required by money workers and has also impacted the gendering of
work responsibilities. Although money work has not traditionally been seen as part of the “care industry,” the respondents I interviewed described care work and emotional labor as important aspects of the job and one that is often overlooked as a major component of the labor process. I use the term care work to refer to work that involves providing “service that develops the human capabilities of the recipient,” such that it improves, “the recipient’s mental health, physical skills, cognitive skills, and emotional skills” (England, Budig, Folbre, 2002). For example, financial advisors describe teaching and counseling as two important features of their job. James (1989: 15) defines emotional labor as “the work involved in dealing with other peoples’ feelings, a core component of which is the regulation of emotions,” whose “value lies in its contribution to the social reproduction of labour power and the social relations of production” (ibid: 19). In my research, almost all of the advisors I interviewed described the added care work, emotional labor, and administrative work that was required starting in 2008. Respondents reported more client “touches,” including phone calls, meetings, and e-mails. Heather, who works at a large wire house, noted: “The one thing that definitely changed during that time period was a lot of phone calls, and more handholding.” She described spending countless hours writing e-mails and speaking with clients on the phone, attempting to comfort clients who had lost a lot of money. The labor process during the recession was described by participants as “all about handling clients’ emotions.”

I found that women, at small and large firms, were primarily given the responsibility of providing this additional labor. For example, the majority of my female respondents discussed the care work they were pressured, and in some cases expected, to do. One of the reasons women bore the brunt of this labor was because of ideological
assumptions that they would be better at helping clients through the difficult times. For example, Michele, who works at a large wire house, said that she knows that more clients call her instead of the men in her office when they are stressed out because the market is falling. She said: “Because I am a woman, I get a lot more calls about personal problems than the men in the office. I have had to refer a couple people to professional counselors because I just don’t have the skill set to deal with some of the issues they confide in me about.” She noted that she was the only woman financial advisor in her office and she has been told by her co-workers that she is good at “consoling people.” She says she has no choice but to take the phone calls because “someone has to do it and sometimes I do think the clients would prefer to talk to me.” But, she is also suspicious that her male colleagues have her do it so that they can keep focusing on money-making activities while she is “stuck on the phone” for hours.

Along with ideological assumptions, the social organization of gender also places women in positions within the finance companies where they are most likely going to have to take on the majority of that labor. For example, client services associates, at large and small firms alike, are often the first contact person for an angry or scared client. So, most often, they are the ones that have added labor when the market is volatile. Allison, who worked at a large wire house, said it was an incredibly stressful time to be a client services representative because the volume of calls and e-mails was so high. She said:

I thought I had work before the recession...I was so wrong. People would call and they would be so scared. All of their retirement money was disappearing. Conservative investors, especially, wanted to know why they were losing so much. Accounts were dropping hundreds of thousands overnight. We just didn’t know when the market would stop falling. People wanted answers. Clients
would call and would give attitude right away. You people, you people (lost my money)… and I was the person that had to tell them it was going to be okay even though I really didn’t know.

Dealing with angry and scared clients became one of the most important aspects of client service associates and advisor assistants.

Although care work and emotional labor increased at both large wire houses and small firms, the additional work was spoken about in very different ways and with very different consequences. At large wire houses, the increased work placed women at a disadvantage. At small and independent organizations many respondents spoke about the work as stressful, but also as an advantage for women in the industry.

According to my respondents at large wire houses, since the largely female support staff is being fired, women in the office are asked to do more care work, emotional labor, and administrative work, and this can perpetuate gender inequality. For example, Heather, who works at a large wire house, said that since the recession started: “I do more administrative stuff that really is not in my job description.” In addition, Elaine explained that she is now being asked by her male co-workers to do additional tasks such as picking out holiday cards for clients, organizing company parties, and: “It is like they just assumed that I would do it, that I would be good at throwing the parties. I don’t even like planning parties, but I really don’t feel like I can complain. Especially during these hard economic times…I’m walking on eggshells.” She felt that the pressure to do this work really places her in an extremely difficult position. She felt that if she did not do the extra work, she could lose her job. However, because of this added labor she was going to have a hard time making her asset requirements, which have actually increased at her company since the recession started. She points out that the percentage
of payouts for advisors are decreasing. Therefore, the amount of assets advisors have to have under management has to be higher in order for them to keep their jobs, because lower-producing representatives are the first to get fired. So, Elaine has to increase her book and at the same time she has added administrative labor. She did not think it was fair that some of the men in the office were not asked to pick up any extra administrative work and therefore were going to have an easier time staying on the “Path of Achievement.” Her experiences clearly demonstrate the ways the Great Recessions has perpetuated a structural context in the industry that disadvantages women.

The structure of partnerships at large wire houses has also placed women at a disadvantage during the recession. As chapter four points out, at large wire houses, many partnerships are set up with a senior advisor and a junior advisor relationship, where the majority of the senior partners are male. I found that the recession increased the number of partnership relationships as more workers want to form these relationships in order to consolidate the costs of running the business. In partnerships, the labor is organized in ways where women advisors are placed in the position of interacting with clients, while men are taking on the primary role as trader and/or money manager. When market volatility increases, clients are more likely to want to have contact with an advisor. So, during the recession, women were placed in a position of having to perform additional labor (for no extra compensation), while the majority of men were not.

While respondents at large wire houses described how the increased amount of care work and emotional labor was detrimental to their work, respondents from small and independent firms felt that the “caring” component of the job was enjoyable and the
increased care work was a positive for their businesses. Emily, who works as an independent advisor, explains that, especially during market turmoil, clients just want to talk to an advisor who can help them feel better, not necessarily to make any changes in their portfolios:

I have clients who come to me, and I am positive that during this recession they come to me, because they need a cheerleader and that’s where I spend time now. They’ll come in and I know it’s not financial. I can’t tell you how many people. I’m the team cheerleader. I’m a chins-up girl. That’s what I tell people, chins up. So I think if I had to redefine my job I’d call myself a financial psychologist.

She went on to say that she did not mind this aspect of the job and has always felt that dealing with people’s emotions what part of her job. She just recognized that the recession has made this a larger component of her work.

Emily felt that since the start of the recession many individuals feel the need to have an “expert’s” opinion because of their own fear of handling their finances on their own. She thinks that many clients are more suspicious of money workers post-collapse and therefore they really want to trust their advisor. She thinks this has been particularly helpful for women who work as independent financial advisors:

People are scared. And I really think that many of them are happy to speaking to a woman. I’m a small, petite, woman..I’m not an intimidating man in a suit. I think that has really been an advantage for me. I have more people calling wanting to be my clients because they want to have a more intimate relationship with their advisor.

She went on to say that she believed that many people felt less awkward showing their emotions with women advisors and she thinks it’s important that people feel comfortable opening up to her.

Jennifer, works at an independent firm and points out that because much of the
negative publicity centered around Wall Street executives, who were mostly men, clients have becoming distrusting of male advisors, particularly at large wire houses, and have decided to switch to smaller independent firms to work with women. She explains that there is an assumption that “because I’m a woman, I’m going to be less egotistical and actually care about what happens to them. I know it’s stereotypical, but I don’t blame them for wanting to get away from the big bank model.” She continued by saying that while she does think there are some men working at those firms who are not compassionate enough, she recognizes the reason they act that way in many cases is because their organizations train them to perform that way.

**The “Great Recession” and the Inequality Regime**

My data suggest that the current “Great Recession” is contributing to and perpetuating complex inequalities between money workers. Acker (2006) introduced the term “inequality regime” to denote the work practices and social processes that produce multifaceted inequalities. Influenced by intersectional theory, she demonstrates the importance of examining how multiple axes of embodiment (race, class, and gender) intersect to organize inequality within workplace organizations. Inequalities of power within work organizations have increased in the last thirty years with “the present dominance of global corporations and their free market ideology, the decline in the size and influence of labor unions, and the increase in job insecurity as downsizing and reorganization continue” (Acker, 2006: 458). National economies are undergoing tremendous changes. Changes in technology, organizational restructuring, and downsizing contribute to rising competitive pressures in private sector industries and contribute to inequalities. Further, we see an increasing numbers of jobs and workers
flowing across national borders; “good jobs” are often scarce; workers are expected to take on more risks; states are cutting back on social services and these changes are altering peoples’ lives throughout the world, often heightening inequality and uncertainty (DeVault, 2008: 3).

It was important to me that I examine the intersection of privilege and oppression in the lives of the workers who I interviewed. While “money work” is an elite job, there does appear to be a growing disparity between the “extremely” elite financial services workers and many of the workers I interviewed. While some of the older workers I interviewed had reached a level of income that is considered upper-class and upper-middle class, the newer workers in the industry seem disempowered, docile, and unsure of themselves and their likelihood of “making it” in the industry. Industry statistics show that approximately 15% survive the first four years in the business (GAMA International, 2007) and, for women, that number is even smaller. Jack, who is a hiring manager at a large wire house and trains new advisors, said that approximately 5% of women at his company make it through the first two years of training.

While my research has demonstrated the ways that women advisors are disadvantaged relative to men in finance, it is important to point out that the social organization of money work during the recent recession also perpetuates inequality between money workers. For example, financial advisors are only able to “build a book” with the help of low-wage, often invisible labor. Financial advisors who I interviewed demonstrated that the pressure to live up to company expectations during the recession perpetuated the inequality regime and, in particular, highlights inequality between women. For example, as job insecurity and the demands of the work have increased,
women in advisory and management positions are outsourcing their labor, particularly their domestic and emotional labor, to other women in order to live up to company expectations.

Within the larger economic context it is important to examine the ways in which emotions are extracted from one place to another. For example, Hothschild (2002: 17) examined the global care chain in which she describes the movement of female care workers from the South to the North and “women who normally care for the young, the old, and the sick in their own poor countries move to care for the young, the old, and the sick in rich countries, whether as maids and nannies or as day-care and nursing-home aides.” Indeed in my research, many female advisors were extracting “love” from other women (either from other countries or in some cases from family members). For example, women reported hiring domestic workers to clean their home. In addition, the majority of the mothers I spoke with who work as Financial Advisors hire babysitters or nannies. Maria, who works in management at a large wire house, acknowledged that there is no way she could keep her current work schedule without the help of her nanny who cared for her two children.

When female money workers, both advisors and client services representatives, arrive at their jobs, many take their place in the “care chain” and provide “love” and “emotion” to clients. Attempting to manage clients’ emotions was a vital asset to companies that relied on (mostly female) advisors to keep investors and clients from withdrawing capital from their accounts during the recession. Some advisors described the emotion as “real” (truly caring about the clients), while other’s described the labor as “made up” (just another part of the job). Either way female advisors reported that the
importance of the labor is often taken for granted by managers as the “care work” component of the job continues to be under-valued. In addition, women describe the guilt felt because they are spending time caring for “clients,” while other women are caring for their loved ones.

Along with outsourcing domestic work, advisors also maintained their economic status by relying on support staff during the recession. Such staff is predominately comprised of women. Emily, who works as an independent advisor, admits she would not be able to achieve her income without the help of the support staff:

My client services associate allowed us to do the amount of work that we had to do during this downturn, even though she does get a little disgusted. It allows us to just do a wonderful job. She does all the paperwork, all of the putting out the flyers, handles all the phone calls, sets up appointments. She checks with the clients and creates that feeling of: “Oh wow, hi, how are you? How’s your dog?” So she’s just great. She’s just a great worker. I would not be anywhere near as successful as I am if it wasn’t for her.

The economic recession has increased the amount of labor that client services representatives have to do and the emotional labor provided by these women helps female advisors succeed. Incomes reported to me by female advisors continue to lag behind men in their offices and were nowhere near the multi-million dollar salaries earned by advisors in larger metropolitan areas. However, the female advisors I interviewed were able to maintain elite social class standing relative to the client services representatives, who were enabling them to do their jobs effectively throughout the recession.
Resistance Strategies: Challenging Inequality Regimes

Although my research results suggest that the current economic recession is perpetuating inequalities regimes, I found that some respondents were also attempting to challenge the gender regime. For example, respondents discussed their attempts to change the gendered performances that are valued, particularly at large wire houses, in the finance industry. In addition, respondents described larger structural changes that they were trying to make within their companies. Finally, they discussed the importance of challenging larger cultural discourses that perpetuate inequality in the industry.

Kathy and Nicole work in a partnership at a large wire house. I interviewed them together and throughout the interview they stressed their effort to challenge the traditionally masculine performance of an advisor at large wire houses. Kathy said: “I looked around and we were told and saw how all the men did it, and we wanted to do something completely different. Because it didn’t make sense to me or feel comfortable to me, so we decided to do it our own way.” The two women started a program at their firm in order to help empower women to understand finances. They hold seminars for women in the community at no charge to provide a comfortable atmosphere for women to speak freely about finances and answer questions they might have. Instead of holding seminars for clients in boardrooms, they hold spa or salon parties and invite women in the community to partake in events that encourage communication about finances:

One of the ideas we had was going into spas and inviting people in a comfortable setting, and they could get manicures, pedicures or do yoga or get facials, depending on the spa, where they could come in and we could be a resource of information. We could just answer questions and just see what’s on their minds. Not, kind of like the old model, of tell them what they need. Turn it around, the
opposite. Ask them what they want to know. And how they want to live and what they feel.

Kathy and Nicole think of their job as “teaching and helping” rather than “experts that manage clients’ money.”

Nicole also noted that she felt it was very important that she found another woman to work with at her company. She feels they are taken more seriously at company meetings when the two of them can speak together in a room that is entirely male. While originally they ran into obstacles with male co-workers and managers who did not want them to change “a business model that has existed for decades,” eventually, they felt that because they were able to “have each other’s backs” at company meetings, they were able to be heard by managers. While the organizational structure does continue to provide limitations as to how they perform (for example, they still have to maintain a certain book of business), they feel that working together has given them some flexibility as to how they perform their gender and has also allowed them to make some changes to how money work gets done.

Several other workers also discussed the importance of changing from a sales-based model to an advisory model, where the focus of an advisor’s job becomes about “helping” rather than “selling.” For example, Chandra, an independent financial advisor, explained that the industry should focus more on the financial literacy component of the job rather than simply viewing advising as a profit making activity. If the industry does become more focused on “helping” rather than “selling,” then it is possible that the gendered performances that are now required at large wire houses would shift and, on an ideological level, “women” would be viewed as better suited for the profession.

However, if the profession becomes female-dominated it is possible that wages would
decrease. Or, “feminizing” the job could lower the status of the profession. For example, it is possible that giving financial advice will start to be viewed as a service job similar to social work, which is often undervalued and low paying. Therefore, until the idea of “helping”/“caring” and other qualities associated with femininity gain more status in society, it is unlikely that focusing on associating the job as a type of “care work” will challenge the gender regime. Instead, larger cultural changes are necessary to challenge the gender binary, which places femininity in opposition to masculinity and perpetuates the notion that “caring” is solely a feminine characteristic.

Along with challenging gendered performances, many of the workers I interviewed were displeased with the traditional model of doing money work and are attempting to make structural changes to the ways finance work is done. In my research, I found the recession has actually given women some leverage to push for structural changes within their organizations. For example, one woman noted that traditional forms of recruiting clients are not working in the ways that they once did. In other words, clients do not want to be cold called or speak to a “hot-shot advisor.” Therefore, several women who I interviewed have approached management with ways to restructure their positions. One woman was able to change from the “Path of Achievement” model to a salary position. A salary position gave her a steady income rather than relying on commissions that were difficult to come by during a major market pull back. Another female advisor was in the process of speaking with her boss about becoming an advisor who is fee-based rather than solely commission-based. She noted that this would allow her to be viewed by her clients as a professional that is paid for a service rather than as a sales person attempting to accumulate a larger book of business.
Another woman I interviewed had recently approached her manager because she thought that the company should lower the amount of income necessary to become a client. When the amount is $250,000 (which it was at her large wire house), it limits who can seek financial advice and perpetuates class inequality. When she was told this was not a possibility, she decided to go work at a small independent firm. I spoke to her again after her move, and she said she now has a much more diverse set of clients. She now thinks of herself as empowering women (who are the majority of her clients) to have economic independence rather than simply as a way for “rich people to accumulate more money.”

Along with interactional and structural changes, many respondents discussed the importance of making larger cultural changes in order to help eliminate the inequality regimes in finance. For example, respondents discussed the importance of changing dominant discourses that suggest that men are the only people who can be advisors. Pop culture images help to create common sense understandings about the appropriate ways to “do gender” in money work. For example, Jack, who works at a large wire house, pointed out that we continue to see very few women on CNBC, which perpetuates the notion that women are not advisors. He added that even when you do see women on the channel it is often only women who work in certain positions. For example, you might see a woman who works as a research analyst interviewed on the channel, but you will rarely if ever see a female trader on the floor of the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) or New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), which reinforces the notion that women can do research, but that they cannot make trades.

Jane, who works at a large wire house, also pointed out that company
commercials, websites, and marketing brochures can perpetuate the notion that men are advisors, while women are support staff. During her interview, she said that her company recently made a new marketing brochure and she was displeased with the images that were placed in the brochure. She described how the brochures were made to make it seem that only men are advisors:

I did not like the way they took the pictures. They had men photographed for the brochure and the men were photographed with clients in their office, facing them, talking to them, making it look like they were giving financial advice. And for me, they wanted me to pose facing the computer, with no interaction with anyone, making it look like I was doing clerical work or not working with clients.

After viewing the brochure, she spoke with her manager and had them take another picture. She went on to say she did not think that the people who were making the brochure even realized what they were doing; however, she believed that it was important that women were presented in ways that made them look like competent advisors. While differently situated individuals are positioned to construct various meaning from discursive frameworks, such as pop culture and workplace texts, the continued overwhelming bias of men in certain types of financial positions narrows and normalizes ideas about who should and can perform these jobs.

**Conclusion**

My results suggest that the current economic crisis is impacting the social organization of gender in finance. In particular, the “Great Recession” is contributing to complex gender performances, including pressure to conform to transnational business masculinities at large wire houses, as well as emphasized femininity at small and independent firms. In addition, the economic crisis is contributing to inequality regimes
in finance. While the recession is perpetuating inequality between money workers, some respondents have developed resistance strategies in an attempt to challenge cultural ideologies, organizational discourses, and company policies that contribute to inequity.
Chapter 7

Conclusion
Overview

In this study, I investigate the social organization of gender in the financial services industry. This research adds to understandings of how the localized labor processes in financial services and the broader economic recession perpetuates gender inequality and produces gendered performances. Throughout the dissertation, I compared the labor processes and organizational policies at large wire houses versus small and independent financial services firms and found that the structure of large wire houses are more detrimental to women working in the field.

At large wire houses, sex segregation persists, with men filling the majority of higher paying positions, such as Vice Presidents, Presidents, and Managers, while women are clustered in undervalued, lower paying positions, such as client services representatives. According to a recent gender discrimination lawsuit, documents submitted to the United States district court in New York revealed that at Goldman Sachs just 29% of Vice Presidents, 17% of Managing Directors, and 14% of Presidents are women (Lattman, 2010). The gender wage gap also persists in the industry. Personal financial advisors had the largest gender wage gap of any career tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), with men making, on average, the weekly income of $1,647, while women earned $962: A gender wage gap of 41.6% (Hegewisch and Liepmann, 2010).

My analysis demonstrates how the social organization of gender at large wire houses perpetuates gender inequality. Influenced by Joan Ackers theory of gendered organizations, I demonstrate how gender is built into labor practices in ways that
disadvantage women. Specifically, I found that the wage gap and gender inequality is perpetuated by the traditional model of compensation, gender discretion in handing out orphan accounts, and the social organization of partnerships. The traditional model of compensation at large wires houses, sometimes referred to as the Path of Achievement (POA), requires employees to accumulate a minimum amount of money under management, which transforms the position into, primarily, a sales position. The construction of the job as a “sales” job rather than an “advisory” job encourages particular types of gendered behaviors. Gender is also built into performance-based compensation. For example, gendered “incentive bonuses,” such as a trip to a sporting event, are given to employees who hit sales objectives the fastest. Advisors are expected to be cut-throat “whale hunters” and those who do not embody these masculine qualities are discouraged from entering into the career. Gender is even built into the hiring process at large wire houses, with recruits expected to take personality tests and companies eliminating candidates who are evaluated as a person who might engage in behaviors that are considered to be feminine.

Partnerships also perpetuate the gender regime at large wire houses. Women complain of being given menial tasks within these partnerships or becoming responsible for the majority of the emotional labor that the job requires. Women’s job responsibilities were “servicing” clients and doing such things as scheduling appointments, sending out statements, and taking calls from concerned clients, while it was men’s responsibility to trade stocks and determine asset allocation. The structuring of partnerships often puts women at a disadvantage because the majority of senior partners are male and they often set up the arrangements so that they can “piggyback” off
of any income brought in by the junior partners. However, this relationship is not reciprocal, and the women working in the junior positions do not generally receive a portion of the assets brought in by senior male partners. In addition, the loose structuring of these relationships make junior partners vulnerable to an unequal distribution of assets if the partnerships dissolve. For example, in situations where partnerships break up, senior advisors are often given priority by mostly male managers and male advisors leave the partnerships with the majority of clients.

While there are no industry-wide statistics to demonstrate that small and independent firms have more gender equality, based on my findings, it appears that the small and independent firms are less likely to have labor processes that explicitly disadvantage women. At independent firms, women were often their own bosses; therefore, they were not screened out by personality tests that favor masculine, “sales-focused,” performances. At small and independent firms, I found that women continue to be clustered in the client services positions; however, small firms were also more likely to have women in management positions. This deterred management from enacting gendered incentive bonuses. Further, workers at small and independent firms were not organized into partnerships with gendered work responsibilities and an unequal distribution of assets that disadvantage women.

My research also explores the gendered performances of financial services workers. I show how the type of organization (large wire house versus small and independent firms) impacts the overall work culture and determines the type of performance that is valued and produced. At large wire houses, we continue to see workers refer to the atmosphere as a “boy’s club” that views men as naturally better
equipped to be financial advisors. These organizations construct a competent advisor as one who performs in ways that are aligned with traditional constructions of masculinity. Advisors are expected to embody a “macho masculinity” and are hired, trained, and evaluated based on characteristics and behaviors that privilege masculine performances.

Small and independent firms demonstrate that there are alternative ways to do money work. Workers describe a culture that is more equalitarian and none referred to the environment as a boy’s club, but instead viewed their offices as “collegial” and “benevolent.” To be a competent advisor at a smaller firm, advisors are expected to “build relationships with clients” and “give good advice.” Advisors at small firms, regardless of the gender of the respondent, were much more likely to describe financial advising as a type of care work. Competence is not constructed in masculine terms. Therefore, gendered performances for workers seem to be much more flexible. In addition, the lack of formal training programs at small firms also contributes to more flexible gender performances. Female respondents did not have to deemphasize femininity or become “honorary men.”

While my research demonstrates that gender constructions differ between small firms and large wire houses, I also found that within the local workplace context gendered interactions differ depending on the time of day and the type of activity the workers are engaging in. For example, I found specific occasions impacted how gender was constituted. At large wire houses, gender became much more salient at holiday parties and office meetings. When more interaction takes place between co-workers, women were more likely to be excluded and/or sexualized. Men or women who exhibit qualities defined socially as feminine often experience negative consequences. For
example, men are called “gay” for not embodying a particularly type of manhood and
women often feel alienated or excluded.

While gendered performances are more flexible at the smaller firms, overall,
money work continues to be constituted in relation to a “male norm.” When listening to
participants in both large wire houses and smaller independent firms talk about
colleagues in the profession, male co-workers were referred to as “good financial
advisors,” while women were referred to as “good female financial advisors.” Also,
respondents used a specifying verb when describing competent female advisors. You
have to be a “strong” woman to be an advisor, while men are assumed to naturally have
this strength. The specifying descriptors demonstrate the dominant social organization of
gender in the current historical context. The erasure of the gender identity of males
elevates them into the universal category, “financial advisor,” and reveals the sexist
nature of Western social organization and cultural processes. Bannerji points out:

Silence or absence does not always, or here, mean powerlessness. Here
the silence or erasure amounts to a reference to the fact of an all-pervasive
presence. About this we say--- “it goes without saying…” When a
subject becomes so central as to be an icon or a typology for what goes on
every day, situation devices… become unnecessary” (Bannerji, 1995: 127).

It is because men are the dominant sex, that male financial advisors do not need to be
named as such, and this erasure of their sex often leaves their privilege unexamined.
However, most women’s success in the finance industry must be explained.

Due to the male norm in finance, I also found that, in order to be viewed as a
capable advisor, men require less attention to body work. Male respondents point out
that they can just “throw on a shirt and tie” and their ability to do money work is rarely if
ever questioned by co-workers or clients. However, women describe struggling with how to dress and adorn their bodies in order to be taken seriously. Future research should examine race-based and class-based differences. It is likely that men and women with different social locations would require more work to be viewed as a competent advisor.

The final data chapter examines the impact of the Great Recession on the social organization of gender in finance. I found that the recession impacted gendered performances differently at large wire houses versus smaller independent firms. At large wire houses the recession encouraged what Connell refers to as “transnational business masculinity.” I found that the economic downturn perpetuated gendered performances that are traditionally associated with masculinity such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, and a lack of emotion. For example, workers were expected to show total loyalty to the corporation by working more hours and taking less vacation time. Workers were socialized to be increasingly insensitive and have little sense of responsibility for others (Connell, 1998). The structure of the job distances traders and advisors from the companies from which they profit, allowing for a declining sense of responsibility for others. Increasing pressure to make profitable returns during a recession also perpetuated aggressiveness and a “do whatever it takes mentality.” Job insecurity and pressure to demonstrate company loyalty was problematic particularly for women who wanted to take a maternity leave or were considering working fewer hours in order to care for a child or a family member. Women described delaying and or avoiding family formation in order to maintain their work schedule. However, men, who often have less domestic responsibilities, had an easier time taking on additional work hours and assignments.

As Connell and Wood (2005) point out, economic globalization produces a
complex business environment and constructs a range of gender patterns, none of which are hegemonic. Therefore, while there were indications that workers were pressured to embody “transnational business masculinity” at large wire houses, the organizational context at small and independent firms produced a different type of performance. Specifically, I found that during the Great Recession qualities traditionally associated with femininity were emphasized by the workers to calm investors’ nerves. Respondents pointed out that the compensation practices at their firms, which are not focused exclusively on meeting asset requirements, enabled them to show more empathy for their clients. In addition, workers at small and independent firms construct their job as a “helping” profession, which encourages behaviors traditionally associated with femininity.

Along with impacting gendered performances, the current historical and economic context is impacting the social organization of gender within the industry as a whole. The Great Recession hit women in financial services harder than men, with women bearing the brunt of layoffs in the finance sector. In addition, my results demonstrate that the recession has increased the amount of “care work” required by money workers and has impacted the gendering of work responsibilities. During the economic downturn client “touches” increased as investors sought advice, support, and consolation from advisors. I found that women were primarily given the responsibility of providing this labor at both small and large firms; however, the additional work was spoken about in very different ways and with very different consequences. I found that large wire houses, the increased care work placed women at a disadvantage. For example, partnership relationships increased during the recession and in these arrangements women were
primarily responsible for the client services responsibilities. In many cases, women were placed in a position of having to perform additional labor, for no extra compensation, while men were not. At small and independent organizations many respondents spoke about the additional care work as an advantage for women in the industry. For example, respondents pointed out emphasizing the “caring” component of their job was a positive for their businesses during the recession. Clients’ skepticism towards “hot shot,” male advisors on Wall Street has encouraged them to seek advice from independent firms where they could have more of a personal relationship with their advisor.

The final data chapter also demonstrates how the Great Recession is contributing to what Acker (2006) termed, the “inequality regime.” While my research demonstrates the ways that women advisors are disadvantaged to men, particularly at large wire houses, my results also indicate that the recession perpetuated inequality between female money workers. As job insecurity and the demands of the work have increased, women in advisory and management positions are outsourcing their labor, particularly their domestic and administrative work, to other women in order to succeed. The female advisors who I interviewed were able to maintain their social class standing, relative to their client services associates and domestic workers, who were enabling them to do their jobs effectively during the recession.

While the recession is perpetuating inequality between money workers, some workers have developed resistance strategies in an attempt to challenge cultural ideologies, organizational discourses, and company policies that contribute to inequity. Such challenges were relatively rare among my respondents.
Limitations and Future Research

I chose to do qualitative research because of my beliefs about knowledge production and the type of knowledge I wanted to produce as a researcher. In chapter three, I discuss some of the key commitments of feminist methodology, which speaks to some of the reasons I chose a qualitative study. In addition to those reasons, qualitative methods allowed me to get up close to the empirical world rather than producing knowledge through statistical analysis of abstract categories. Taylor and Bogdan (1998; 9) state: “By observing people in their everyday lives, listening to them talk about what is on their minds, and looking at the documents they produce, the qualitative researcher obtains firsthand knowledge of social life unfiltered through operational definitions or rating scales.” Rather than generalizing about groups I examined how gender is organized and produced by the labor process.

As with all social research, this study has strengths and limitations. While I was able to collect rich, complex information, much of my data interpretation relies on interview data. It is possible that respondents were not completely honest in their accounts. In addition, memories are imprecise. When discussing past events, such as past training or past interactions with clients and co-workers, it is possible that participants made some inaccurate statements. However, Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002: 147) state: “In our view, the point of doing feminist social research is not to score points for political correctness, or to attain methodological purity, but to give insights into gendered social existence that would otherwise not exist.” Social science data is always situated and partial, whether it is collected through surveys or interviews. Regardless of its limitations, the knowledge produced by this study allows for a greater understanding of the gender dynamics that are produced and experienced within financial
organizations.

The majority of my interviews with money workers took place in a small metropolitan city, with several of my interviews taking place in smaller suburban settings. The social organization of gender in finance likely differs in larger metropolitan cities. Particularly at the interactional level, the gendered culture in money work is undoubtedly influenced by geographic location. If I were to expand this study to a larger city, I would expect to find that normative gender ideologies and gendered interactions are impacted by local workplace culture and local political climate.

This study focuses on experiences of financial advisors primarily within large wire houses and small independent financial services firms. Future studies should look at how gender is organized in other areas of finance, such as large hedge fund firms and private equity firms. These organizations continue to be male-dominated and researchers have yet to investigate how gender is constituted within these areas of finance. In addition, researchers should investigate how changes in technology in finance are transforming the way gender is being organized in money work. For example, little research has explored the impact of high-frequency trading on the social organization of finance. Future research should investigate how gendered, classed, and racialized persons’ are organized through this new technology and how these changes may be perpetuating inequality regimes.

Although I explore interactions and inequities between men and women, and different groups of women, this too is an incomplete picture of the social organization of money work. Research should focus more on variations among men, with certain men maintaining power within finance organizations. The lack of Black men and women
within the industry is noteworthy. During my research, I was able to interview two self-identified Black women; however, I was unable to find even one self-identified Black male who worked as a financial advisor in the city where I completed my research. I also did not find one Black male or Black female working in the position of a client services representative to interview. Future research should expand my dissertation to explore more explicitly focus on issues of race and sexuality. How are race and sexuality organized by the institutional context? Specifically, how are these social identities mediated by the type of organization (large wire house versus independent broker dealers) and the type of interaction (client versus co-workers)?

**Contributions and Implications**

Given the large proportion of women who work for near-poverty or poverty-level wages, with little job security and no benefits, some may argue that the oppression of women working in high-paying finance jobs is less significant. However, if privileged women with more resources to contest discrimination still suffer from wage inequality and harassment then this type of research demonstrates the strength and persistence of workplace barriers and disadvantages women face across the income spectrum. I started this project with a commitment to promote social change and I think one of the most important guiding principles of feminist research is to “transform patriarchal social institutions through research and research results” (Fonow and Cook, 2005: 3). Several important implications arise from my research.

This research makes several important contributions to the literature on gender and work. First, this research gives insight into the everyday social construction of gender. My research demonstrates how gender is activated as a salient organizing feature
in money work. I show how the social conditions, including both the local organizational structure and the broad economic context, impact the social organization of gender and the saliency and the type of gendered performance that is valued. The majority of qualitative research on the financial services industry has taken place during times of economic boom. However, my research was the first to examine the impact of the “Great Recession” on gender inequality in the field of money work. In addition, I was able to explicate the ways that economic recession produces specific types of gendered performances.

To date there have been no studies comparing the organizational structures of large wire houses versus small and independent firms. I was able to show the ways gendered performances in money work can be constituted in a multitude of ways depending on the organizational context. One of the biggest surprises for me, when doing this research, was discovering that small firms construct money work much differently than large wire houses, thereby impacting the social organization of gender. At many small and independent firms, the work of financial advising is constructed as a helping profession rather than a sales job. Gendered performances are more flexible when the job is organized as a fee-for-service job, where clients pay advisors to develop retirement strategies, provide strategies to lower debt burdens, or simply increase financial literacy.

Much of the privileging of masculine performances at large wire houses stems from the organization of the profession into a “sales career,” where the biggest book of business reaps the highest pay and job title. Personality tests during the hiring process attempt to eliminate socially constructed feminine behaviors, such as empathy and
compassion. When training programs at large wire houses create “whale hunters” who can only service clients with $250,000 in wealth, a Gordon Gecko-type performance becomes the path of least resistance. These processes serve to alienate women (and certain men), who are seen as unfit to be “Masters of the Universe.”

Women working in these organizations should not have to become “honorary men,” or develop a “thick skin,” just as those men that are not at the center of the hegemonic notion of manhood should not have to “man up” or become “Big Swinging Dicks.”

Cultural discourses continue to provide stereotypical symbolic resources with which individuals create (and sometimes disrupt) clear-cut differences between males/females and masculinity/femininity. The social organization of these categorical gender/sex differences continue to be tied to a gender hierarchy, with masculinity and male bodies maintaining power. On a larger cultural scale, we need ideological shifts in mainstream discourses that continue to suggest women are better suited to care work and men are more suited to working with capital. Sexist cultural representations continue to perpetuate the notion that the appropriate social space for woman is located within the private space (home) belonging to the world of reproduction. While the appropriate space for men is in the public (workplace) belonging in the world of economic and intellectual production. Success of capitalist expansion depends on the construction of the reproduction/production split. Sexist ideologies perpetuate the devaluation of reproduction and care work, justifying the low-pay and non-pay of child care/care work,

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8 The term Masters of the Universe was popularized by Tom Wolfe in his 1987 novel, Bonfire of the Vanities. He borrowed the name from a line of action figures and a comic book series and used it to describe greedy Wall Street workers who live excessive lifestyles. The term continues to be used in pop culture to describe extremely wealthy, powerful finance professionals.
which is required to maintain global production. The actual presence of women in the public sphere continues to be challenged by this ideological construction of two spheres.

There are also ideological constructions and normalized expectations about the appropriate social space for the presence of Black bodies. Workspaces, which remain gender segregated, are also organized by race, with Black women expected to hold inferior, segregated positions. From advertisements, to music videos, to pornography, Black women are represented in sexualized, animalist terms, given the sole purpose of always being readily available to service males. “Beast of Burden” images have continued since slavery to deny Black women’s intellect and portray them as merely a body for physical labor for white society (Bannerji, 1995). These stereotypes originate from a long history of racist and sexist practices, which imply white, male superiority. The images and stereotypes of women and Black women as less valuable are economically profitable for business that can continue to pay them less for their work.

This research also adds to the literature by shedding new light on why men remain at the top of the hierarchy in the field of money work. While many believe that sexism has waned in the finance industry since Lewis (1989) documented blatant sexual harassment and discrimination in Liars Poker, my research demonstrates that gender inequality remains, particularly in large wire house organizations. Men (White, heterosexual) remain in the majority of high ranking positions in these companies. In addition, organizational practices, and cultural ideologies organize gendered performances and perpetuate a disparity between the incomes of men and women.

My research demonstrates that even the hiring process at large wire houses is laden with gender biases that advantages men and masculine performances. I have seen
no other research that has done a gendered analysis of these personality tests. Structural changes within organizations will need to occur in order for progress to be made. Gendered questions in hiring need to be eliminated. Just because a person “does femininity” does not mean that he/she will not be good at giving financial advice. This research also demonstrates the ways that incentive bonuses are being gendered and shows why those constructing these prizes should be more aware of how they decide to incentivize their employees to bring in more clients. While any person might want to win a trip to a sporting event as a result of their efforts, these types of prizes carry gendered meaning. Further, in a highly male dominated arena, it may not feel like a prize for a woman to win a trip to an all male sporting event.

This analysis also adds to the literature by exploring the ways in which partnerships at large firms are often detrimental to women. In addition, this research is the first to examine the ways in which financial workers engage in both emotional labor and care work. Organizations need to rethink gendered work assignments. Particularly in partnerships, we continue to see women assigned to care work activities, which continues to be devalued compared to money management. Culturally, we need to stop assuming that women are inherently better at interacting with people and men are inherently better at calculations or stock trades. In addition, we need to start valuing care work on the same level as monetary labor. That way any person can engage in either activity, or both, and receive the same level of respect and compensation.

I do think teaching financial literacy and the ability to help individuals navigate their monetary decisions is an important job. And, I think the people who choose to engage in these activities should be treated with respect and equality. It is my hope that
managers, leaders, and workers in these organizations can begin to recognize the ways that organizational practices are perpetuating inequality and take steps to assure that all workers (and the lives of those that are affected by that work) are valued. It is also my hope that this research will reach and inspire them to make such changes.

**Research Reflections**

Throughout the last several years, during this long difficult economic recession, the finance industry has made headlines as money workers are often a main target in the discussion of who is to blame for the current economic crisis. However, in news reports and even academic articles, the activity of trading and traders is often unmarked. As Leslie Salzinger (2003: 2) points out: “financial markets are produced by situated subjects, operating through available structures of meaning that elicit as well as constrain their assessments and decisions.” In other words, workers’ actions are organized by available discourses, organizational rules, and the labor process. As Donna, who works at a large wire house, pointed out during her interview: “I’m not sure how long I will last here. This position makes me into a monster. When corporate profits become the driving force of all of my actions, my choices are limited.” Peoples’ work performances are constrained by economic, political, and social context.

Recently, I had a few beers with a current Goldman Sachs employee at a New York City pub and we were discussing our work. He is an options trader who is earning a large income and he talked about how incredibly depressed, stressed out, constantly worried he is that he will be fired or replaced by a younger “hot shot.” He is counting down the days until his student loans are paid off so he can leave the job and go to work as a teacher back in his home town. He said he was hoping he could make it one or two
more years, but the stress might make that impossible. He said the amount of alcohol he was taking in that night was an indication of just how incredibly stressed out he was. I admit it was difficult for me to feel sorry for a man making over a hundred thousand dollars a year. His privilege was obvious and he commented on how ridiculously high his compensation package was, particularly because, as he put it: “I’m not really doing anything useful for the world.” He could not wait to be a teacher, because he believed as a teacher he could make a difference in someone’s life. And, we both agreed that it is frustrating that we place so much value on individuals who construct complicated algorithms to skim pennies off of trades, while individuals dedicating their lives to educate our youth sometimes earn very modest wages.

Global capitalism and the current recession have created a scarcity of work in the finance industry, where even many high-paid workers are disposable “worker bees.” Similar to other industries, and the overall economic structure, there are fewer and fewer individuals at the very upper echelon of the earnings scale, with many other workers feeling pressure to make profits to keep their jobs, regardless of the cost. He said traders are: “Expected to roll over our co-workers and scam our clients if that is what it takes to make a profit. And we are rewarded for profits regardless of the costs to others.” The performances encouraged by the context perpetuate behaviors associated with lack of empathy, aggression, and violence.

It is of my opinion that these issues, as well as those discussed in greater detail throughout this dissertation, will contribute to a global economic meltdown. This event is likely to occur over the next several years as a confluence of factors come to a head. Specifically, global wealth inequality, lack of resources, and debt burdens from over
consumption are contributing to increasing global unrest and unstable national economies. Further, I believe that the lack of empathy and the aggressive and violent attitudes that have become entrenched in capitalist pursuits of wealth accumulation will ultimately provide the impetus for the crisis. As the Italian proverb eloquently states, "Wealth conquered Rome after Rome conquered the world" (Stone, 2006).

Changing gendered meanings and work performances is incredibly difficult in an industry based on capitalist patriarchal values. “Free market” capitalism is often associated with accumulation rather than distribution, competition rather than collaboration, and aggression rather than cooperation. These values are aligned with current dominant constructions of masculinity, and, as Joan Acker (2004: 13) explains:

In today’s organizing for globalization, we can see the emergence of a hegemonic hyper-masculinity that is aggressive, ruthless, competitive, and adversarial. Think of Rupert Murdoch (Reed 1996), Phil Knight (Strasser and Beklund 1993), or Bill Gates. Gates, who represents a younger generation than Murdoch and Knight, may seem to be more gently aggressive and more socially responsible than the other two examples, with his contributions to good causes around the globe. However, his actions made public in the anti-trust lawsuits against Microsoft seem to still exhibit the ruthlessness, competitiveness and adversarialness of hyper-masculinity. This masculinity is supported and reinforced by the ethos of the free market, competition, and a ‘win or die’ environment.

Masculinity is embedded in the organizational practices that drive and shape what is called “globalization” and the “new economy.” However, researchers rarely examine how masculine performances impact the globalizing process of capitalism. For example, violence, aggression, and ruthlessness are often built into institutional corporate practices in ways that are portrayed as “rational” business decisions. Downsizing or outsourcing production from one low-wage locale to another is conceptualized as a “strategic plan”
rather than a violent act that leaves former employees without resources for survival (Acker, 2004).

When casually speaking about my research with friends throughout the course of the study, every woman I interviewed who worked in a professional career said that I should write a study about their profession. A lawyer said she was so tired of having condescending judges tell her how to look. She mentioned: “I had a judge today tell me to dye my hair brown so I would be taken more seriously at work.” Another attorney said: “I walked in to the courtroom today and the judge asked if I was the stenographer.” A local physician said I should expand my research to examine the medical profession because she gets frustrated when her male co-workers are paid more and treated with more respect. Over and over again, women I spoke with about this project related to the experiences of female participants. The “male norm” in the workplace continues to ‘other’ those that identify as female and/or perform what is considered to be feminine in any way. The continued association of “professional worker” with maleness, and in many cases a specific type of maleness (white, heterosexual, tall, married, athletic), disadvantages anyone that does not fit into that construction.

There is a blurring of boundaries of many sex and gender norms. We are starting to see changes in peoples’ ideas about what constitutes masculine performances versus feminine performances, and notions of sex and gender are continually being challenged and redefined. However, as evident by many of the organizational policies at large wire houses the status quo is sometimes strongly reinforced by those who hope to maintain their power. And, in those cases, we see a continued effort to suggest there are natural, essentialized differences between men/women, perpetuating patriarchal notions that
masculinity/femininity and man/woman are stagnant and “real” rather than constructed. The binary construction of gender and sex continues to place maleness and femaleness at opposite ends of a spectrum, and the dichotomy is set up so that these constructed differences place one behavior, action, performance (generally masculinity) at the top of the hierarchy. There needs to be a continued effort to demonstrate that these ideas about both sex and gender are social constructed.

While many people are challenging and reconstructing the norms surrounding the meaning of gender, I only need to mention the fact that I am having a baby in a few weeks to become fully aware of just how engrained gender norms are in the mindset of the majority of individuals. The first question almost without exception: is it a boy or a girl? Demonstrating the fact that sex is made to be incredibly significant in our society, with most still assuming that sex alone determines a great deal about an individual’s preferences and behaviors. When I say I won’t be finding out the sex, people ask, how will I know what clothes to buy or how will I decorate the room? Some ask what the gender of the baby is and when I explain that the baby is not “doing gender” in the womb I often receive a blank stare. The majority of people continue to think of “gender” as a noun rather than a verb, with very few people aware of the social construction of gendered performances. When I chose to do this research, one of my main goals was to help to demonstrate the production of gender in one particular venue. As long as the meanings associated with gender continue to perpetuate inequality in society, I think research such as this will continue to be useful. It is my hope that research such as that described here helps to elicit the ways that gendered performances are produced by the social context.
Appendix A

Consent to Participate in Research
Gender Regimes in Finance: The Social Organization of Money Work
Syracuse University, Department of Sociology

My name is Megan Bahns and I am a graduate student at Syracuse University. I am inviting you to participate in a research study. Involvement in this study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. This sheet will explain the study to you and please feel free to ask any questions about the research if you have any. I will be happy to explain anything in detail if you wish.

I am interested in learning more about your experiences working in finance. You will be participating in an interview that will last approximately one hour. All of the information will be kept confidential. I will assign a number to your responses and only my faculty advisor and I will have the key to indicate which number belongs to which participant. In any articles that I write or any presentations that I give I will use a made up name for you and I will not reveal any details about you that might link you to this research project.

With your permission the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. The tapes will be kept in a secure, locked cabinet and will be destroyed once the study is complete.

The benefit of this research is that you will be contributing to our understandings of gender inequality in the finance industry. The risks to you of participating in this study are minimal. There is a small risk that asking you about your feelings, attitudes, and experiences at work may cause you to feel stressed or upset. You do not have to answer any questions that you don’t want to and you can stop the interview at any time. If you do not want to take part, you have the right to refuse to take part, without penalty. If you decide to take part and later no longer wish to continue, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

If you have any questions, concerns, complaints about the research, contact me at:

Megan Bahns
302 Maxwell Hall
Syracuse, New York 13244
mebahns@maxwell.syr.edu

Or you can contact my faculty advisory, Professor Andrew London at:

Center for Policy Research
426 Eggers Hall
Syracuse University
Syracuse, NY 13244-1020
Appendix A

(315) 443-3252 (phone)
(315) 443-1081 (fax)
anlondon@maxwell.syr.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than the investigator, or if you cannot reach the investigator, contact the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board at 315-443-3013.

All of my questions have been answered, I am over the age of 18 and I wish to participate in this research study. I have received a copy of this consent form.

___ I agree to be audio taped
___ I do not agree to be audio taped

_________________________________________ _________________________
Signature of participant                                             Date

_________________________________________
Printed name of participant

_________________________________________ _________________________
Signature of researcher                                             Date

_________________________________________
Printed name of researcher
Appendix B

Megan Bahns
Syracuse University, Department of Sociology
Interview Guide

Tell me a little about yourself- (education, family status, job description, age, work history)

Could you talk a little about the path you took to get to this job? And why did you decide to work in finance?

What type of training program did you go through?

Could you talk about your day yesterday? (what kinds of things do you do on a daily basis)

Describe the work environment

- How would you describe the work culture?
- Interactions- who do you interact with? Types of interactions?
- What are your relationships like with male colleagues? Female colleagues? Support Staff? Clients?
- Could you give a specific example of a negative interaction(s) you’ve had working in finance? Also a positive interaction(s)

Is there any work that you do on a regular basis that is not directly mentioned in your job description? Or are there any parts of your job that might be surprising to people that don’t work in the industry?

How do you negotiate/balance your work, non-work life?

Many people get their ideas about finance work from pop culture. People picture Gordon Gekko. How would you describe finance work? Is this image accurate?

Has your work changed at all since the 2008 collapse? Different responsibilities?

I would like to talk to you a little bit more about how your company is organized.

- Describe the hierarchy in your workplace?
- Is there job segregation?
Appendix B

- Are there any workplace policies or government policies that guide your work on a daily basis? (specifically any new policies that have been enacted since 2008)
- Likes/dislikes about how your company is organized (or your job in general)

Have there been any changes in your organization post-collapse?

-any changes in how you negotiate your work, non-work life?

What are your prospects for the future? Have your plans changed at all since the 2008 collapse?
References:


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DATE OF BIRTH: October 8, 1977

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:
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   Outstanding Dissertation Award, 2013
   SAGE Teaching Innovations and Professional Development Award, 2012
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   Maxwell Teaching Fellow, 2008-2009

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Instructor, 2005-2012, Department of Sociology, Syracuse University

Visiting Assistant Professor, 2011, Department of Sociology, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Executive Director, 2008-2009. Alpha Kappa Delta, the International Sociology Honor Society