CHAPTER 4

MEN'S WORK, WOMEN'S WORK:
GENDER DIVISION AND UNITY IN SELF-MANAGING TEAMS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the interplay between gender divisions and gender unity in teams. Exploring the tension between division and unity is critical for the analysis of gender in self-managing teams because, ideally, teams are designed to unite workers (e.g., Katzenbach and Smith, 1993b). Gender divisions, however, are built into all levels of the modern workplace, including teams, and maintain various forms of gender segregation (Lorber, 1994). Such practices as occupational and task-based segregation produce and reproduce gendering (Acker, 1990). While teamwork is supposed to create group cohesion (Scholtes, 1988), little is known about the ways in which gender shapes that process and how gender divisions are created and maintained in teams that are supposed to foster unity.

Exclusive focus on gender divisions within teams may, however, obscure the various processes that also serve to unite employees as a group. While common interests may not automatically generate a group consciousness, the possibility of developing a greater awareness of power relations and, as a consequence, problematizing--if not politicizing--workplace relations still remains. By providing a forum in which individuals are assured a voice, teamwork may potentially help women and other subordinated groups articulate their common interests. Many activities in organizations challenge organizational power relations based on gender, class, or race (e.g., Halford, Savage, and Witz, 1997). In order to recognize those processes that directly or indirectly contest the organizational (or team) status quo and that question the relations of domination, one should consider both the processes that divide and those that unite team members. In fact, I found that unity among team members seldom meant the creation of active political alliances but, more often, involved a cautious articulation of mutual experience which allowed individuals to see their work positions in a similar light.

My purpose is to examine how gender divisions shape teamwork despite the explicit or implicit objective of bringing employees together. I will also discuss the ways in which team members seek unity in the face of existing gender divisions. The chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, I examine how gender shapes the division of tasks in teams and how this gender division influences teamwork. The second part focuses on gender divisions embedded in technology and technological skills and explores the ways in which workplace technology and technological skills reproduce gender divisions in teams. The third part considers the potential of self-managing teamwork to overcome these gender divisions and to foster unity among team members. This part deals especially with physical space and spatial arrangements in the team-based office. I illustrate how, by sharing their physical work space, teams may have reversed some traditional power relations and brought women and men together as equals. It raises the question of whether a common space devoid of traditional signs of power can facilitate more democratic team processes, including more egalitarian gender relations.

I address the gender division of tasks and technology thematically instead of discussing them case by case in order to understand the gendered processes within and across teams. I will, however, explicate the context of each division or dividing incident in as much detail as possible. After all, in spite of many similarities among the four teams, the gendering of each team was unique and should be understood contextually. For example, while each team had a different goal and combined a diverse set of jobs, some tasks were gendered across all teams. By the same token, some gendering processes appeared only in one team but nonetheless significant, because team members typically talked about them with great intensity and concern. Throughout this chapter, I will specifically emphasize the meanings that team members themselves gave to various gender divisions within their teams and discuss how these meanings shaped their work, their cooperation, and their presumed unity. The gendered processes discussed throughout this study will serve as windows through which I will examine also processes of race-ethnicity and class. As I will show in this chapter, race-ethnicity emerges as an integral part of the production and reproduction of team divisions in general and gender divisions in particular.

4.2. Team Theory and Practice: Tension between Unity and Division

Ideally, the goal of self-managing teams is to reduce, if not remove, departmentalization and disparity among members (Scholtes, 1988). A promise of egalitarian work conditions underlies many aspects of self-managing teamwork. For example, central principles associated with team-based organizations and teams--"workplace democracy," "flattened organizational structures," "information sharing" and "cooperation"--point toward the development of greater parity not only between managers and team members but also among team members. Equality also is strongly implied in most team guidelines for interaction and decision-making, for example, the principle of "balanced participation" promotes the notion that "everyone should participate in discussions and decisions" (Scholtes, 1988: 6—18).[26] Most importantly, teams are guided by the belief that they can reach their greatest effectiveness and efficiency when the members can concentrate on the task at hand and have "their respective titles, perks, and other stripes fade into the background" (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993b: 114). In other words, team theories imply that unity and cohesion among team members should take priority over hierarchical or departmental divisions because they enhance productivity and profitability. As team advocates Harrison and Conn (1994: 20) sum up, "[i]n egalitarian organizations, respect is accorded to people who have ability, skill, and knowledge, irrespective to where they stand on the hierarchical ladder."

Ability, skill, and knowledge may be critical components of teamwork; however, they are not value free. If some skills and knowledge are regarded as having greater value than others, those members who come to teams with the less-valued skills may find themselves treated as subordinates rather than equal team members. While optimizing a team's skill and knowledge composition enhances its overall productivity, it also can reinforce hierarchical distinctions among members who represent different skills, functions, and departments, and create tensions in a presumably egalitarian environment.

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26 For example, Acker (1998: 197) suggests that "less hierarchy and team functioning may well provide some women workers with opportunities to function more as equals with men and to be assessed on individual merit rather than stereotypical notions about women."

Team scholars and practitioners seldom take gender into account in their writings and thus, by overlooking the gendered constitution of contemporary organizations, they present organizational structures and processes as gender-neutral (Scholtes, 1988; Katzenbach and Smith, 1993a). While not everyone is silent on the issue of gender, those writers who do mention it (e.g., Yeatts and Hyten, 1998) often conclude that gender is inconsequential for teamwork. This conclusion is, however, embedded in the assumption that gender refers simply to a team's demographic composition, that is, the sex categories of 'men' and 'women'. Yeatts and Hyten's (1998: 241-242) treatment of gender is an example of this approach. In discussing team demographics, they maintain that gender has no effect on self-managing team performance. Citing a study of sex differences in job attitudes, they conclude that "almost all the differences disappear[ed] when sex-related differences in perceived job characteristics, age and tenure, level of education, income, and occupational level were controlled" (Lefkovitz, 1994, cited in Yeatts and Hyten, 1998: 241). Their approach entails two assumptions about gender: that gender is a variable (a sex category) and that, as such, it can be manipulated and measured (Alvesson and Billing, 1997). Using the example of job-attitudes, the definition of gender as a variable overlooks the notion that tenure, level of education, income, and occupational level are themselves gendered structures (Acker, 1990, 1992a) that shape work and job attitudes. The analysis of gender in teams solely as a biological sex category of individual team members hides the existence of gendered processes and reinforces the view of organizations and teams as gender-neutral. As a consequence, gendered processes that critically impact teamwork remain unexamined. Instead, I understand gender as a constitutive element which shapes structures, processes, and interaction in ways that are separate from the physical bodies of team members; for example, through skills, knowledge, and tasks.

4.3. Gendered Hierarchy of Skills and Knowledge

Teams are designed to bring together diverse skills and knowledge to improve their task performance and productivity. In service teams, the idea of combining skills goes along with the notion of improved customer service. The purpose of a team's cross-functionality is to enable the team to respond to all customer needs associated with the business transaction. Skills and knowledge required for meeting customer needs may be varied but they are always gendered, as are the jobs and occupations they represent. Teamwork therefore is not a gender-neutral activity but can be understood as a situation in which the different, gendered skills and knowledge brought to the team by the members are not only used for the team's purposes but also are given value. The construction of what is valuable is thus a gendered process and, as I will demonstrate, remains gendered even if the bearers of specific skills have equal organizational status.

The gender of skills may not be readily apparent. Merja Kinnunen (1997: 40), for example, notes that white-collar workers often see themselves as mental workers and regard their occupation as gender-neutral or suitable for both men and women because office work lacks physical strength demands. She claims that this reveals a gendering process; that is, white-collar tasks are defined by using the male body and masculine physical ability as a standard for job evaluation. Acker (1990) argues that a masculine bias is built into the concept of a "job" itself and that job descriptions and evaluations are embedded in the societal gender division of labor. The bureaucratic task of evaluating jobs involves imposing concrete terms onto an abstract job or what Acker (1989: 64) refers to as "constructing a structure of empty places." When jobs are evaluated on the basis of the job characteristics and not based on the education, skills, or pay of the job holder, what also becomes reproduced is the gendered hierarchy of jobs (Acker, 1989).

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Commonly used job evaluation practices expose a set of presumptions about its holder; for example, that the job will be occupied by a disembodied worker whose commitment to the job is full-time without any outside responsibilities. While the kind of work commitment embedded in job requirements may not be within the ability of any human to fully meet, Acker (1990: 149) argues that "the closest the disembodied worker doing the abstract job comes to a real worker is the male worker whose life centers on his full-time, life-long job, while his wife or another woman takes care of his personal needs and his children." This fundamental process of gendering "the job" (that is, paid work outside the household) reproduces masculinized job requirements and preserves gendered job divisions (Britton, 1997).

The notion of a 'masculinized job' has been used to examine work organizations in the U.S. and abroad. For example, a group of Finnish researchers found evidence of the masculinization of jobs at various institutional and organizational levels from collective bargaining to micro-level task classifications (Rantalaiho and Heiskanen, 1997). Britton (1997) found that a masculinized organizational logic shaped the training and task assignments of U.S. prison guards. In both a men's and a women's prison, organizational policies defined maleness as the ideal and the only legitimate quality of a prison guard. By emphasizing the guards' ability to respond to inmate violence with force and physical strength, the prison policies implicitly assumed the 'disembodied' prison guard to be a man. Women were discouraged from becoming guards by job training that focused disproportionately on prison violence (which, in reality, was not a common occurrence). Female guards were neither perceived by training policies nor treated by prison supervisors as 'real officers' and often were assigned to 'safer', more feminine tasks not involving the potentially, although quite improbable, violent situations, such as clerical work (Britton, 1997: 809). In this case, the seemingly gender-neutral organizational policies of training and assignments produced and reproduced women's secondary status as prison guards and thus barred their promotion to higher (and better paid) positions in the organizational hierarchy.

4.3.1. The Gender of Cross-Functional Skills and Tasks

Cross-functionality is an integral part of self-managing teamwork. Team advocates believe that as previously single-functional team members develop interchangeable skills, the team's flexibility will increase (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993a: 66). Furthermore, understanding what other functional areas do enhances the team members' knowledge of the broader organization and the available resources.

Following this model, all the case study teams had instituted guidelines for the members to learn from each other. The benefit of learning about other functions and one's whole organization through teamwork was articulated particularly by some members of the City County Account Management team at Omni Insurance. In the management level team, cross-functions represented an opportunity for the members to better understand their business.

> And here you are getting a cross-section of all different things--you are going to
> have marketing people, medical people, operational people and it's pretty nice.
> You're getting a pretty good pick up of different things. So I find it very
> educational (Roberto, Hispanic man, 32).

In addition, cross-training team members enhanced a team's ability to operate at full capacity even

when a member was absent. With cross-functional skills, the members would be able to perform each others' functions, if not thoroughly, at least superficially. For example, Lee, a team member and coordinator of the engineering subgroup in the Motorcol Customer Support Network (CSN), explained his idea of cross-functionality:

> The way we used to work, you were assigned to maybe a set skill and you became very efficient in that skill and you didn't wander out of that skill range. In a team, you want to back up your team members, so what you have to do is you have to go into a cross-training and you have to maybe step out of your skill range and learn somebody else's skill range, maybe you'll never be as efficient as they are but you would be efficient enough to always give a customer an answer or know where to find the answer. So you're not only learning your own skill range , but you're learning the skill range of everybody on the team. So when somebody's on vacation or somebody's sick, you can back them up and still function. ... I think probably for me, that's the most exciting, to watch other people, to pick up other skills and to be able to do other things. ... Everybody knows how to do a little bit of everybody's job and so, probably the most exciting is to watch other people get promoted to other skill levels (Lee, white man, 44).

Another team member, Paul, expressed his wishes for greater task sharing among the team's two different functions, the information and engineering functions.

> On the information side of the group, I would like to see more cross- functionalism into the technical side of it and more cross-functionalism in the engineering side into the information side. There is no reason that any of us can't take orders over the phone and process sales orders and do things like that. As far as the make up of the team, I think that's what I would like to see most. I would like to see all of us to some extent be able to do everybody else's job (Paul, white man 37).

Similarly, in the Eastern Alliance Special Projects team, training members in cross-functional skills meant that they could answer the phones for each other and respond to the customer with a basic knowledge of each other's tasks.

While cross-training team members was a clearly stated goal for the teams, members often talked about achieving a state of full cross-functionality as an ideal that was yet to be realized. As Gloria and Victoria, members of the Special Projects team described, an ideal cross-functional team would entail knowledge of each other's jobs:

> An ideal team would be that everybody knew everybody's job. And everybody, whenever the phone rang, you know if Gary had to—let's say he had to work at home, because of another project he's working on—I myself could answer Gary's phone and could do the things Gary does, but that's I think an unrealistic type of dream world, if you will. Because I have worked on another team where we did that and we had cross–trained and when the phone rang we were able to help. So, that is a good make–up of a good team that everybody knows how to work everybody's job (Gloria, white woman, 48).

One where everyone knows something about the functions that each of us do. Um...a team that could come together every now and then and discuss goals, have common measurements, uh....(silence) We do interact well, but to be able to help each other out in the job if we needed help (Victoria, black woman, 46).

Although the Special Projects had not yet reached an ideal cross-functional state, they were learning to perform each others' jobs. At the same time, cross-training did entail some problems. For example, it created frustration among team members as functional expertise was to be learned during a busy work day.

Cross-education is a big [goal]. We don't really talk about that much, but we have brought it up in the past. It's going much smoother now (Mel, white man 32).

One of the things that we are doing is to do some cross-training and we're working that into it when we can but it's difficult to do a lot of cross-training when you are in as demanding a job as we are most of the time (Gary, white man, 33).

Despite some problems, all teams believed that cross-education and cross-functional task sharing enabled a quicker response to a customer. Cross-training was seen by many as the key reason why a company would implement teams in the first place: cross-functional teams combine several functions into same unit and thus enhance response rate, time, and productivity.[27]

As desirable a goal as cross-functionality may be, it often entails a built-in gendering process. When departments, tasks, and skills are gendered (that is, involve feminine skills and/or employees from a female-dominated occupation or department), the principle of cross-functionality may exacerbate the gendered functional differences instead of upgrading skills and redistributing responsibilities. For example, when team members represent masculinized or feminized functional areas and tasks, their team responsibilities are likely to fall along the gendered divisions. This situation was evident in the Motorcol Customer Support Network (CSN) team that consisted of members, on the one hand, from engineering technical maintenance and, on the other hand, information systems. Because the individual skills associated with each sub-group were considered masculine or feminine, these functions were gendered. And, contrary to the expectations of many team theories, the Motorcol CSN team was not able to overcome task divisions through self-managed cross-functionality. Therefore, I argue that it was *because* of the perpetual gender division of tasks (and the mostly failed attempt at cross-functional task sharing) that the women were unable to become equally valued and fully empowered team members. In the next section I will show how cross-functional task sharing provided a process that uncovered the devalued nature of women's functions and provided evidence that cross-functionality was also a gendering process.

4.4. Customer Service: Gendering through Task Division

The deep-seated, gender-based task divisions can persist in teams even under the policy of cross-

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27 See, for example, Greenbaum (1995) for a critical discussion of the reengineering of the workplace.

functional task sharing and often work to maintain gender hierarchy in teams. The Motorcol's Customer Support Network's gender division of tasks is one example. In the CSN team women handled telephone orders, requests, and complaints (i.e., information systems), while male engineers either designed products (engineering) or provided technical support (technical maintenance). Using the terms of social-psychologists who have observed task-oriented groups in laboratories and work organizations, this division almost perfectly matched the traditional gender-based allocation of expressive and instrumental (aka. relational and task-oriented) work (Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill, 1977).

A great deal of the information work performed by the women consisted of mediating among the customer, the engineers, and the manufacturing department, such as conversing on the phone, taking orders, and conveying the client's wishes to the design engineers. Compared to the engineers' tasks, the women's work was relational and, typical of feminized customer service jobs, involved the use of their personality. On the other hand, the engineering work carried a strong masculine ethos that was not only evaluated differently by the men in these positions, but also protected fiercely when it was threatened. As a consequence, the gendering of tasks reproduced the gendering of the team.

That gender was a critical component of the team's task division was acknowledged by several team members. For instance, Ellen, who worked in the information group claimed:

> I think, in the information group there are four of us, which is, all four of us are women. I don't think that's a coincidence, just by nature of the business. But we have very strong working relations together (Ellen, white woman, 29).

While recognizing the gender division, Ellen also pointed out that sharing her sub-group work with three women strengthened their work relations and, in some instances, united the four women against their male colleagues in conflict situations. Consequently, the functional separation of men and women gave many controversies a gendered meaning. For example, another member of the information group, Jean, noted that:

> Sometimes it feels like guys against girls; that the guys are on one end and the girls are on the other side (Jean, white woman, 24).

The functional division among the team's subgroups was, therefore, not only a static gender split but a dynamic process that allowed and encouraged the members to define conflicts in gendered terms, which separated them into opposing camps on several workplace-related issues. The gendered allocation of clerical tasks was one issue that provoked conflict and disagreement among the CSN team members. Furthermore, clerical tasks, it turned out, were a point of continuous contention and a source of gender conflict in all four case study teams.

4.4.1. Clerical Tasks as a Gendered Process

The persistent gendering of clerical work exemplifies the process of reproducing traditional gendered task divisions particularly in the Motorcol CSN team. As noted above, the work done by women in the CSN information subteam consisted of clerical and relational tasks, including making sure customers' wishes were integrated into the design and manufacturing of the product.

Clerical employees in traditional bureaucratic organizations have been confined to performing specific tasks while, according to its principles, a team-based organization allows employees (including clerical workers) more leverage to shape their jobs and learn new tasks through cross-functional task sharing. The Motorcol Customer Support Network's autonomy in molding itself to meet customer needs was rather pronounced when it came to the members' tasks. Being part of a self-directed team (and a team-based organization) provided the members a broader framework of customer service than a conventional departmental structure.

A cross-functional team physically represents the business transaction which is handled by one unit instead of being moved around through different departments (that now are represented in the team). In the CSN, the different steps involved in an engine purchase, from order entry to manufacturing, were brought together. Because the CSN was a relatively independent unit and held crucial responsibilities, such as engine design and monitoring the development of the product, the subgroups were able to redefine many of their tasks. The opportunity to reinterpret their tasks, however, proved simultaneously empowering and frustrating for the team. The built-in gender division of information and engineering work became difficult to overcome as the team attempted to cross-train the members in the fundamentals of each group's tasks. The gendered nature of the job of each subgroup and the processes that reinforced, instead of eroding, the gender division, increased conflict in the team and reproduced the gendered power relations among the members. From the point of view of task division, this self-managing team was not developing the kind of egalitarian relations that teams are supposed to foster.

From the point of view of the women of the CSN team's information subgroup, their work roles did not match Kanter's (1977) description of secretaries as "office wives." Facilitating the communication between the customer, the engine designers, and the manufacturing department did not follow the traditional division of labor between bosses and secretaries (nor did the resultant office relations). In a self-directed, customer service team, those performing traditional clerical tasks were not serving the other team members or their respective bosses but, first and foremost, the customer. Besides, the direct dependence that characterizes the more traditional boss-secretary relations (e.g., Eaton, 1996) was not perceived by the members as a part of teamwork. The careers of the information associates were not necessarily tied to the successes or failures of the other subgroups.

In spite of the team-based philosophy of the equality of tasks, in the daily work situations, women found themselves treated by their colleagues as if they were the team's secretaries. They also were often mistaken by customers for personal secretaries of the men in engineering and field service, which heightened their awareness and brought the gendered nature of clerical tasks to their attention almost daily. Ellen, an information associate, described this situation as the following:

> The way we work, we have three little subgroups: field service, information, and engineering. And for some reason, anytime intra-company, [that is] interdivisional people, call in and try to get in touch with the engineers, they have no problem, if they don't get the engineers, to call us up and say, 'Is Paul at his desk, could you look for me?' Now, I've never ever known of an occasion when they have done that the other way around, where they would call Lee and pull him off of his design project and ask him to look over his shoulder if I'm in the work area. . . . They feel like we, by nature of our position, have the time, apparently, to stop what we're

doing, to write out a message and take it over to their areas. ... And I find it really insulting, that they would do that. That's one of my pet peeves (Ellen, white woman, 29).

Another information group member, Jean, commented on the gendered nature of their work:

I guess they think "information" is secretarial, you know, answering the phones and distributing paperwork (Jean, white woman, 24).

Expectations about which tasks were appropriate for women and men were still very much a part of CSN's teamwork. For example, taking messages for the men was not part of the women's official job description, yet they were expected to do so.

A discrepancy was evident in how the women of the information group and some men in the engineering understood the idea of sharing tasks in teamwork. The women perceived that some basic clerical tasks should be shared equally by all team members regardless of the subgroup to which they belonged. These tasks included keeping an eye on the fax machine for incoming faxes, sending and receiving faxes, answering the phones, and generally being available (i.e., present in the office) for the customer. The engineers, however, had a more individual-based definition of what constituted their work and which tasks should be shared as a team. While devoted to teamwork, they did not regard the clerical tasks as part of their job description.

The lack of willingness by the engineers to contribute to the basic tasks for running a team was a point of contention for the information group. This conflict manifested itself in trivial tasks that had to be attended to daily, for example, keeping the team's fax machine working.

There are just little things like Ellen and I and Trina check the fax; we are the ones that distribute the faxes. We are the ones who put paper in the fax. If we didn't put paper in the fax, we'd never get them, because I have never seen at one time any of the gentlemen in the group put paper into the fax. . . . The point being that everybody plays their part in that group. Checking the fax machine; you know, that's a part of the group's function and everybody can do it (Jean, white woman, 24).

While Jean along with her information group colleagues viewed the fax machine as a common group task, they were constantly asked by the engineers to send faxes for them. The imposition of the secretarial role made it difficult for the women to be perceived as equally competent team members. In fact, it compelled them to seek reinforcement for their equal status from their own subgroup. Ellen described working with her own group as an opportunity to deviate from the power hierarchy in place, while interacting with the other sections required a more traditional approach:

It's a wonderful atmosphere to work in. And then we kind of branch out to deal with the other subgroups within the team, you kind of get back to some traditional roles. I mean I would approach Jean differently than I would approach Bryan or one of the other guys to ask them to do something (Ellen, white woman, 29).

In Ellen's opinion, the engineers did indeed have a different job, but the different nature of their work did not necessarily shield them from participating in what she thought of as common team tasks.

> With most of the engineering guys, we do tend to approach them a little bit differently. And I think part of that is, they're not quite working at the same level of "busyness" that we are. And part of it is, they just don't want to jump in and take on as much work. I feel that they see what's going on. We kind of tiptoe around that, but still try to get them to do some of the stuff that needs to be done (Ellen, white woman, 29).

Evidently, however, the engineers viewed their job as either excluding them from taking part in performing the clerical tasks or not providing them with the necessary skills to fax and file. Some of them were quite reluctant to extend the idea of cross-functional task sharing to secretarial tasks. Frank, a members of the field service engineers' sub-group, described his approach to sharing of clerical tasks:

> There may be grumblings about [technical maintenance], because it seems to not always [be busy]. If we're in the office and the phones are ringing, we're really busy; sometimes we're in the office and the phones don't ring, I feel like the Maytag repair man, we're just sitting twiddling our thumbs, while other people may have tons of work to do, order entry, checking orders, things that I can't help out with. I might be able to do a little filing now and then, but then I'm always worrying about if I misfile something and they're looking for it. "Oh, God what's going to happen? Will it be the end of the world?" So, it's hard to jump right in and help.
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> HAS THEIR BEEN ANY ATTEMPT TO TRAIN YOU TO DO THAT?
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> No. There's been, you know, statements like, "anybody can file." You know, just grab something.... Well, sure, I can file, I know my alphabet, I can go through and put numbers in order and that stuff, but just the knowledge of knowing where everything is in the office, I don't know where it is.
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> YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE THE FILING CABINET IS?
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> Well, I know where the filing cabinet is, but I don't know which particular orders they want in which filing cabinet. (laughs) I mean....it's like, I believe they've got them divided up into regions and stuff, but nobody has ever gone through and said, "OK, this is our system. This is what we do with these. This is what we do with those." And it would probably take no more than two, three days of me actually doing the work, and I would be able to jump in and help out. But then the thing comes in, what if I'm in the middle of this big stack of files, and all of a sudden the phone starts ringing, and I get fifteen calls right in a row and I've got this stack of files there that Tracy thought I was filing for her. And two days later because my job picked up, they're still not filed, and she thought I would take care of it. Those things run through my mind, and I just don't know where my job can interface. . . I

think sometimes certain people, myself included, have motivational problems, maybe that's the reason I don't file. It's a motivational thing. I really don't want to get involved (Frank, white man, 35).

In his self-reflexive comment, Frank came to admit he was reluctant to learn clerical tasks such as filing. His account points to a gendering process through which the gender division of tasks that already existed among the sub-groups became even more pronounced. While some men performed some clerical tasks, most of them were inclined to stay away from filing and phone service duties. Like Frank, they claimed inexperience in clerical work and thus were able to avoid it. The fact that neither the design engineers nor the field service engineers *wanted* to learn about the information group's work also revealed the low value they placed on the culturally feminine clerical skills. While Frank was clearly aware of the gendering of the team's tasks, he concluded that the division was based on the job descriptions of the sub-groups:

I know the women have in many ways a more difficult job, because there's a lot more of the paper work at the order entry stuff that they're doing, which shouldn't be that way, I guess as far as men and women. But that's the position they were hired into, and there aren't very many men in that position, at least there are none in the team. . . . If I had to pick who is overworked, I would say that the ladies are (Frank, white man, 35).

Frank's description also reveals another gendered dimension: the tasks held by the different sub-groups had very different time pressures. While the field service engineers' tasks did require them to be available for customers, the stress of it was more sporadic than the constant flow of orders and customers' needs that frequently overwhelmed the women in the information group. Frank's depiction of the field service's work schedule through a metaphor of the idle repair man contrasts with, for example, Jean's description of a busy work day:

A lot of times . . . we were so stressed to the maximum that we were working like 12 hours a day, even working six days and still not even barely catching up (Jean, white woman, 24).

The continuously heavier workload of the information group was based on the nature of the tasks that were done by the women. Paper work, answering the telephones, and attending to customers required their continuous attention and tied the women to their desks. Keeping in mind the call for cross-functionality, the women had asked for assistance from the other subgroups. After having been rejected in several occasions, Ellen described that she simply stopped asking for help:

It's kinda like your dog. If you're training your dog and you hit him on the head three or four times for doing something, he's eventually going to quit doing it. So, you know, it's the same with us. I know Jean and myself have both asked on different occasions to have help on something and just been told a flat "no." Well, we don't get back and ask again (Ellen, white woman, 29).

The example of clerical work illustrates the process through which the gender division of the feminized information and the masculinized engineering work became reproduced in daily work practices. It was a process that not only caused tension among team members but also further

divided the groups so that overcoming the gender division of tasks became exceedingly difficult. Furthermore, this gendering process limited the team's ability to put into practice the idea of cross-functional task sharing which, according to team advocates, is an important part of successful teamwork. For the information group's women, the engineers' reluctance to share tasks that were directly related to the team's objective of improving customer service was incomprehensible. While it is difficult to estimate to what extent the team's inability to share tasks affected its ability to perform customer service, it is likely that it created conflict and eroded the cohesiveness among the members.

In the case of the Motorcol team, cross-functionality was not a gender-neutral process but one that further marginalized the feminine clerical tasks. The cross-functional sharing of tasks was constructed in such a way that those with higher valued skills, such as engineering and mechanical competence, were able to determine which tasks were appropriate for them to perform and which were not suitable. On the other hand, the members with the less valued, feminine skills, such as clerical and phone service, rarely had that choice.

The evaluation of tasks was not an open acknowledgement among the CSN team members but manifested itself as the engineers' occupational-cultural understanding that some tasks were more suitable for them than others. While men often deliberately keep their distance from the gendered office technology, such as faxes and copiers (Webster, 1993), the CSN engineers appeared reluctant to admit that gender was the basis of their task evaluation. Instead, some of them reasoned they lacked the skills to send a fax and file papers or indicated that clerical work was part of the information group's job because "that's the position they were hired into" (Frank, white man, 35). The engineer's claim of not being skilled in clerical work is interesting also for another reason. It goes against what many sociologists have argued about the social definition of skilled work; that the concept of "skill" is embedded in the standards of masculinity (e.g., Kinnunen, 1997) and that gendering is an integral part of the reproduction of the image of men's work as skilled. In fact, Acker (1989: 94) argues that "the definition of male work as skilled is maintained by contrasting it with female work which is, often by definition, not skilled." Thus, it is quite possible that, rather than an admission of incompetence, the engineers' lack of skills was a way for them to dissociate themselves from clerical work. By referring to job descriptions, these men were able to make a separation between their required work and administrative functions and to overlook the fact that, in self-managing teams, some administrative or clerical tasks may always be a part of one's job (albeit, they may not be spelled out in the official job description).

The construction of clerical tasks as separate from other work was specifically evident in the case of phone service. The next section will illustrate in greater detail how one specific clerical task, phone service, revealed a set of gendering processes.

4.4.2. Doing Gender, Doing Phone Service

Phone service was another clerical task with a specifically strong gender-base across the case study teams. Although all the case study teams were oriented toward customer satisfaction, phone service emerged as a task that carried particularly distinct overtones of servitude, and thus projected cultural femininity. The gendered nature of phone work was not only a source of the gender division of labor in teams but also used as an explanation for it, thus reproducing the gendering of phone work. In this section, I will discuss the meaning of phone service in cross-functional teams.

The examples I will use come from the experiences of the team members in both Eastern Alliance teams (Special Projects and Employee Credit) as well as the Motorcol Customer Service Network. I will discuss ways in which the simple responsibility of answering the phone became perceived as women's responsibility. I also demonstrate how the division of phone service tasks became an inflammatory issue and divided the members of one team on the basis of gender. The third set of examples explores the gendering of phone service at the point of service and examines how customers' (implicit or explicit) notions of gender-appropriate occupations and behavior shape the experiences of team members. Hence, the following account of phone service explores gendering both within the teams and also at organizational boundaries. The examples I present throughout the discussion are designed to illuminate how teams allocate phone service and also how they negotiate the meaning and status of service work in general.

In general, phone service is "interactive service work" (Leidner, 1993) that requires an employee to accommodate the customer as much as possible. Most interactive service jobs assume a power relation between the customer and the employee in which the customer sets the parameters of the interaction and the employee, if only for the duration of the service situation, conforms to the customer's needs.[28] The ability to accommodate in customer interaction is gendered: the cultural image of women as empathetic and docile makes them attractive for service work.

Telephone service is yet another occupation that started as a male-dominated job and has since been feminized (others include secretarial occupations, food service, bank telling and teaching). Although the early telephone operators were men or errand boys, the work became feminized. Men were thought to be unsuitable for the job because of their rude demeanor, although other, more realistic explanations have been offered, including the docility of young women and their low wages (Reskin and Roos, 1990:13). Nevertheless, women are still assumed to be more capable than men to perform service work that requires compliance (Hochschild, 1983; Leidner, 1991). Women's culturally defined skills of nurturing and care-giving make them suitable for interactive service jobs that, as a consequence, are largely gender-typed. The sex-typing of service work also assumes that employees engage in gender-appropriate behavior. For example, Elaine Hall (1993a: 339) demonstrates that gender is integrated into waitering so that as the women and men table servers do their jobs, they "do gender," that is, they act in such way that met and reinforced cultural expectations of appropriate feminine and masculine behavior (e.g., women flirting or deferring while men remained more reserved and "professional").

Because most work tasks are gendered, a discrepancy between the gender of the worker and the gender of the job may cause conflict in the worker. Hall (1993a: 342) notes that "gender atypical workers experience more than being a different sex; they encounter a gendered work role that may conflict with their gender behaviors in other roles." A situation in which the gendered behavior required by the job clashes with the gender identity of the worker results in attempts to bring these two dimensions into alignment internally by "creating a correct gendered persona" (Acker, 1992:

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28 There is a great deal of variation in the ways in which the worker and the service recipient negotiate their relationship; not all interactions warrant the customer a dominant position in respect to the service worker. The concept of the "customer" does, however, acquire a newly significant meaning in the "team-based organization" because it is used by the management to reorganize how work is done and, in some cases, even the entire production or service process. I will return to this point later in this chapter and discuss the implications for gendering team-based service work.

253) and externally by reframing the job's gendered requirements. The male insurance sales agents in Robin Leidner's (1993: 202) study of interactive service work provides an example of this strategy. The insurance sales agents, whose jobs required culturally feminine skills, such as accommodating to the client, smiling and deferring, and even swallowing occasional insults without losing one's temper, redefined their job as strongly masculine. They argued that the sales work, in fact, demanded determination, self-motivation, and persistence and that it was unlikely a woman could endure in the job. Thus, the salesmen were able to restore the balance between what they did and how they saw themselves to fit the cultural masculine ideal.

The female-dominated Eastern Alliance Employee Credit team is a good example of the gendering processes associated with clerical work as all team members were involved in phone service. Phone-based customer service (both in the team and the organization) was performed by women who were considered as "naturally" appropriate for the task. The idea of women's natural suitability for phone service was held and protected--and thus reproduced--by both women and men in the Employee Credit team. Some women described themselves as more fitting to phone work because of their ability to empathize with the customer. The team's organization of tasks also revealed a broader acceptance of the gendered connotations of phone work. For example, the team had reorganized its task division to accommodate one man who felt uncomfortable working on the phones. And while another man had left the team because of frustration with clerical tasks, it was understood as normal for him to feel frustrated. Maryanne, an Employee Credit team member described the latter case:

> I think that he [the male member who had left the team] had a hard time doing support work because he knew a lot about computers and the systems and stuff. And I think it was, he thought he should go on to higher things. And in this support position, you are like down here [points down] and he knew a lot. He was too smart for that position (Maryanne, white woman, 37).

Maryanne's description not only reveals the gendering of clerical work from the point of view of a man being frustrated about with 'support work' but also that for Maryanne, it appears natural that he should have felt that way. The extent to which phone service can be informally associated with women is demonstrated quite vividly in the example from the other Eastern Alliance team.

4.4.2.1. Telephones as women's responsibility

My earlier discussion on the gender division of clerical tasks in the Motorcol Customer Support Network illustrated that a team may be unable to overcome a gender division of tasks in spite of the egalitarian ideas associated with self-management when the occupations that are brought together under one unit are themselves gendered, such as information work and engineering. It is, however, somewhat surprising that telephones service was associated with women even in the teams that did not directly entail a gender division of labor (e.g., clerical and technical tasks). The Eastern Alliance Special Projects team is an example of a team where women and men team members were both doing phone service and technical tasks. In fact, it was the lack of clearly defined division between administrative and technical tasks that provided the context for a situation in which answering the phone became a source of gender division.

At the time of the field study, the Eastern Alliance Special Projects team members were engaged

in a cross-training effort to learn about each others' tasks. Their goal was to be able to temporarily cover for an absent team member at least to the extent of being able to offer an intelligent response to phone inquiries outside one's own area of expertise. In this context, phone service did not directly resemble the stereotypical clerical task of an operator or a secretary for another person. In fact, the team's objective was to help solve technical problems of their "internal customers," that is, other members of the organization who would call in their requests for help. Therefore, answering the phones was part of everybody's job; however, as *a duty*, the job was gendered. Victoria, a member of the team, explained that while the phone tasks were distributed equally, her male team mates often assumed that the women would take responsibility for the phone calls:

> I think, right now the way the team is structured, you have the guys who do this specialized little thing, and then you have the ladies who perform the same type of functions. Occasionally. . . we have this little joke. . . we'll get, the ladies, you know..."OK, the frat brothers are around the round table." We'll call them frat brothers (laughs) because some mornings they'll get together and pull up a chair around that little table and they might talk about fishing and they talk about hunting. And there are times I'll get up and go over where Gloria and Barbara are, as we'll look at each other and we'll go "frat brothers!" (laughs)

> But they go to lunch together. They cannot go to lunch separately. And with a team, like in our group, we have specific lunch times. It was all set up that way because someone needed to be there to answer my calls. So I'm supposed to go at 11:30 a.m. Gloria goes when I come back. Well, it got to a point where the guys, they all would go, all four of them. There are only seven in the group which means that we would have to handle all of their calls. And Barbara, Gloria, and I, we have independent schedules. We do our own thing. If Sheila has, if she has something to do in the interim, we expect John to handle her calls. But if he's out with the frat boys, we take on that load. And sometimes, it's just the two of us, Gloria and myself; Barbara's out to lunch. So we made a comment in one of our team meetings. We said, "OK, we need to look at the lunch times. Do you have to go at the same time?" And it was like, oh, Lord, we had just stabbed someone in the heart. And Mel says, "I think that people, when it's time to go to lunch, you ought to be able to go to lunch." And wait a minute, we're not saying you can't go eat. It's just that you're supposed to be here to answer Mel's phone or Gary's phone or vice versa. But if you're all gone. . . So then they sent Gloria a little note to thank her for answering their calls, but they still go at the same time. It's like, "Are you guys ready to go?" And I mean, they're gone! So, we just deal with it, we do our own thing. But you know, the guys still segregate themselves (Victoria, black woman, 46).

While the team had clear guidelines on covering the phones, the men's casual approach to the phone duties caused friction in the team. Victoria interpreted the men's informal activity, such as lunch time get-togethers, to signify a gendered division of labor because it pushed the responsibility for receiving phone calls to the women. Thus, while all team members' job descriptions included phone service, the task became gendered through the informal social practices. The informal meetings among men were also quite stable and protected, as is shown by their insistence on being able to maintain the lunch routine.

The dispute over phone duties reveals a concrete situation in which the members' equal status came into question. Although the men may not have been aware of the gendered meaning their female colleagues were giving to their lunch gatherings, the situation nonetheless points to a gendering process that emerges through the task division. In addition, a view of gender balance as fluid and situational emerges through the conflict. At least from the point of view of the women, there were some teamwork situations that encouraged a perception of all members as equal, while other situations instigated a gender imbalance of power. The controversy over the responsibility for answering the phones also provides a snapshot into a gender division of informal social interaction. The informal lunch gathering among the Special Project team's men could potentially limit the women's access to information shared by the team leader and his male colleagues. While there is no direct indication that the informal networking has benefitted the men or left out the women in the Special Projects team (as the all members engaged in mixed-sex social activities together), the situation is a classic example of the kinds of gendered advantage structures that exist in the workplace and are maintained through informal social activities. For example, Iiris Aaltio-Marjosola's (1994) study of the organizational production of cultural gender stereotypes illustrates that, despite high credentials, women may be bypassed for promotion because they are "cultural outsiders," that is, they do not share informal social networks with men (see also, Haslett, Geis and Carter, 1992). The label of an "outsider" can be permanent as it is reproduced through everyday interaction that excludes women (as in Aaltio-Marjosola's [1994] case). Nevertheless, the production of exclusionary labels and images also can take place among women if they share a position of power. I will return to this argument in Chapter 5, when I examine the production of gendered symbols and discuss how some often-used team symbols, such as the "family," were not only gendered but also entailed (exclusionary) assumptions regarding race-ethnicity.

4.4.2.2. Phone work as a source of gender conflict

Although some women in the Eastern Alliance Special Projects team felt frustrated about the allocation of phone service, their grievances continued to be openly discussed and negotiated among the team members. The situation was quite different in the Motorcol CSN team, where a phone conflict polarized the female information team against the male engineering subgroups and eventually reached a stalemate.

In addition to the gendered clerical tasks, such as filing and order entry, the task of answering a ringing telephone divided the team along the lines of gender. Shortly before my visit to Motorcol, the company had provided phone mail service for all team members and had changed the previous phone policy that had required everyone to answer phones for each other. The strife had begun from the engineers' assumption that their job did not entail taking other team members' phone calls. Lee, the coordinator of the engineering team explained the situation as follows:

> In the very beginning when we first started it...everybody was trying to answer all the phones. We said, "we'll try it this way for whole year and see how it works." So, we tried that and what it ended up being was we found out that we lost a lot of time stopping what we were doing just to see if our light was blinking, and if you were doing calculation, it was hard to get back to where you were. And a lot of times when we would answer the phone for someone like in information group, the best that we could do for the customer would be, "I'll have someone get back at

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you, I don't have that information right at hand." We found out that that was worse than them going to voice mail and getting back at the end of the day with the right information. So we tried that for awhile and it worked until we started increasing our business; then the next thing we were doing, answering a lot of our telephones, getting a lot of things done, looking at the lights.

So now what we've done, if it's information, the information phones ring; if it's engineering, the engineering phones ring; if it's after market [i.e., the field service sub group], the after market phones ring. And normally there's always one person in information group and one person in engineering and one person in after market, so they're present to catch the phone or if nobody's there, it goes into voice mail and they get back to the person before the end of the day. And we started that about a month ago and it seemed-- the whole time we're meeting about this to find out everybody's feelings on it-- and it seems like right now we've just had some meetings about it that the information group likes it because their phone is ringing a third of the time now, everybody's phones are ringing third of the time now. And the engineering group likes it because they're not being constantly interrupted and looking to see if it's their phone that's ringing. So, it seems to be working right now (Lee, white man, 44).

Lee's account of the a new policy of allocating the phone service tasks portrays a consensual process which, in the end, benefits everyone.

However, for some other team members--mainly those in the information group--the phone conflict had a different meaning that had to do with the basic principles of cross-functional teamwork. To Karen, the information group's coordinator and the CSN team leader, the fact that the engineers were reluctant to respond to all phone calls (instead of only answering those that were directed to them) revealed their desire to remain separate from the team:

I think, as a general rule, we are a fairly cohesive team. As far as being able to work together, get along together in a group, I think we do that pretty well. I think we haven't grown like I would have liked to seen us grow over the past year. I think there are conflicts in the group that don't get addressed, that need to be addressed ...

SUCH AS?

We have a couple of members of the team who we have allowed by choice to sit outside of the team, I think, and not fully participate. I don't think we have done a real good job of trying to pull them in. And if their choice is not to participate, then I think, the team needs to address that issue as well. We haven't done yet, I don't think.

At least my vision of what the team should be, is that we should be able to respond to the customer in a timely fashion and we should be able to do that because we have a certain pool of resources, that cross-functionally could do the same kind of things. What I struggle with are things that...; I see people handing off, that they

should be able to go off and do that without the hands off. Because, I think, when you hand off, you build up queue time and you sell your response to your customer. . . . For example, Keith and Vernon are drafters, very siloed; that's what they wanna do. That's all they wanna do. There are times when we need them to interact directly with the customers. They are very reluctant to do that. Vernon, in particular, is very reluctant to get on the phone. And he would much rather walk over to Paul and have Paul make the phone call rather than him pick up the phone and make the phone call. ...If there was that direct communication between Vernon and whoever the customer is, then it wouldn't have that middle person in there who could inadvertently ask the wrong question, get the wrong answer, fill more queue time and not fully understanding what the whole question is, not being able to communicate with the person. So I have a vision that would say, anybody in that team should be able to make that call, you know. And we haven't been able to make that happen (Karen, white woman, 40).

In Karen's view, phone service should have been a part of every team member's job. For her, those members who did not pull their weight were also communicating their wish to not be involved in teamwork, at least in its ideal form of everyone working together. While in Lee's view, the phone system was working well, Karen had a different understanding of the situation:

I think one of the problems that we had recently was over phone coverage. And that really created some stresses in the group. And I am not sure, in my mind, we have really come to a resolution. We get some feedback from the regional sales offices that phones weren't being covered. And that got interpreted to be, well, [that] the four of us weren't answering the phone. So it kind of got fed back that way. That created some real strife between the information group and the engineering group. Because the information group pretty much made sure that the phones are covered. As a matter of fact, when the guys in the field can't get hold of the engineering group, they call the [information group's] women and they don't like that. They say flat out they don't like being treated as go-betweens. You know, they have a role, they have a job to do and it's not to chase after the engineering side, to make sure they are answering the phone (Karen, white woman, 40).

Some of the CSN engineers wanted to avoid phone work, but not all men had similar experiences with clerical work or, for that matter, attitudes toward clerical tasks. Karen's example of Paul, the member of the engineering group who was asked to make phone calls for his engineer colleagues, is indeed interesting. Paul's work in the subgroup involved quoting and pricing product modifications, which required him to maintain a constant phone interaction with customers. In that capacity, he had a specific role that bridged clerical and engineering tasks. Paul's original job involved customer service and phone interaction, which had encouraged the draft engineers to give him additional clerical tasks. Although Paul had expressed his support of the information group's suggestions concerning clerical task sharing, he felt distressed about having to also take on others' administrative tasks. Much like Karen, Paul described this situation as a result of a lack of cross-functional task sharing among *all* team members:

There are times when a volume of information has been thrown at me: calls, e-mails, faxes. There are things that others in the engineering group can do just as

well or better than me. And because we are kind of "cubbyholed", a lot of what I do is very urgent and I may have five different things that I have to get done today and I can do three of them, which three do I do? Now there is no reason I shouldn't be able to take those other two and hand them off - say "here, you know, you need to quote this and this" and it might put an hour of hold in each office day, but at least we get off five of them answered that day.

That's just probably my biggest frustration. But on the other hand, I also, I try to put myself in their [the drafting engineers'] place, and we did make a deal with them. You know, we made a deal that they would be insulated from the phone calls and things. And that was based on the theory that everything could be channelled through me. But it just didn't ... in practical application, it just hasn't worked that way (Paul, white man, 37).

Paul's work situation resembled that of the information group and, as such, it gave him a unique position to examine the pressures it entailed and the value it was given by the team members. Like clerical workers in general, he was required to perform several different tasks while under time pressures. Clerical work such as phone service is characterized by a disjointed work flow. Also, the fact that the customer service employees have to be available when the phone rings reduces their ability to control their own work pace. The lack of control and the devalued nature of customer service work had become evident to Paul and, as he talked about involving the drafting engineers in customer service work, he pointed specifically to the lack of authority customer service tasks implied:

I would like Keith and Vernon to function more, I guess, intuitively and fill more of a customer service role. *And it is a very intimidating role to be in*. Because you are having demands made on you from all different angles, and you are not always sure what you should be doing, what you have got the authority to do. You know, you are kind of jumping in over your head and, a lot of times, what I would like, I would like the rest of the engineering team to function more like that. You know, "Do what I've gotta do, to get it done" -attitude (Paul, white man, 38; emphasis mine).

It is evident that service work was considered even by Paul as less prestigious because it involved an element of submission to the customers' wants and needs, the multiple pressures of various departments, and the lack of authority. Although the two engineers in question did not directly talk about their lack of enthusiasm about service work, Keith, for example, argued that his specific drafting tasks required him to focus on the design at hand without the interruption of phone calls.

The drafters' grievances about noise (and the extra task of answering the phone) may have been well-founded; however, the fact that the engineers' privilege to have a silent work environment was protected by their supervisor while, at the same time, the information group's work load was increasing, was disconcerting. The engineers' special protection caused others to feel mistreated. Karen, for example, claimed that the situation was frustrating the other team members:

I think that creates some frustration within the whole team. Because that adds more work to other members of the team. Plus, it creates this protective cloud all around

this person; this individual that's part of the team. ... And I don't think that is good for the group. You know, I think if you are a team you are willing to jump in here and do whatever it takes to deliver, you know. For us, it is optimal customer satisfaction too.

HAS ANYBODY BROUGHT THAT TO THE TEAM'S ATTENTION?

That's another one where we bring in that, we talk about it, we try to figure out ways to do it, but we just don't quite get it there. So I am not sure; I mean part of it is the leadership issue within the group, you know. We have to pull them forward and make that happen. Part of it's the willingness on the individual team members to wanna make that happen. So both of those elements have to be there and I don't think that those elements were there (Karen, white woman, 40).

From Karen, I also learned that the current resolution to the phone conflict had not been negotiated in the most democratic way possible. According to Karen:

The phones got changed without the consensus of the whole team. . . They changed the phone system and never talked to the four of us [i.e., the information team] how they were gonna change the phone system.

OH?

And our take on it was, "well, you know, if you wanna do that kind of thing, you really probably should have talked to the whole team first." Because it's become such a sore point in the group, so we just kind of let it go right now. For one thing, we feel like we can do so much within the group, but at some point you've got to say, this is what we're gonna do. If you don't buy into it, then, maybe, you aren't a right fit for the team. We haven't been willing to do that yet.

ARE YOU PLANNING TO?

Yeah. I think we will deal with that issue. There are some things going on, some potential changes in the way the group is structured, that probably are going to force us into that change. But we have kind of had that in a holding pattern, waiting on some input from sales and marketing. And the really funny part of it is, you know, they did all this change and we haven't heard any negative comments coming back from the regional sales offices. So, you know, as long as they are not getting any fire from it, they think they've made the right decision. And maybe they have. Maybe we were the ones that were way off base.

WHAT WAS YOUR POSITION?

My belief is, that when that phone rings, it should be answered by someone, period. You are in a front-end customer service group. You don't really have a clue who is calling in on that phone. For that phone to ring and go into a voice mail situation is unacceptable. Someone should be picking up that phone. Now, maybe,

cross- functionally, it doesn't make whole lot of sense for me to answer an engineer's phone; someone is calling on the engineer, they probably have a technical question. But if you've got five people sitting there who are all from particularly engineering group and their phone is ringing, somebody should pick that phone and try to answer their question (Karen, white woman, 40).

From Karen's description, one gets a sense that the process of negotiating the phone conflict further deepened the gendered task division. The protection of the drafters' uninterrupted work flow entailed an implicit evaluation that their jobs were more important than the rest of the team's jobs. The evaluation assigned those who designed engines more status than those who served customers. Because the engineers' drafting job lacked the feminine, relational element of customer service (see e.g., Fletcher, 1998)--that is, interacting with the customer on the phone--the engineers were able to physically withdraw from the team and concentrate on the design at hand. Furthermore, the ability to fully concentrate on one's task was regarded by the engineers not only as a critical condition of their job but also as an entitlement, which they protected. For others the engineers' "full concentration" appeared as a privilege which they did not share and , therefore, the ability to outwardly exhibit full concentration became, to a degree, a symbol of a protected status.

The way in which gender shaped the phone conflict and its resolution was sometimes clear but, other times, less obvious. The more clear and evident gendering took place in the construction of cross-functionality in such a way that clerical work--phone service in particular--became depreciated while engineering acquired a protected status. Although the team may have been only acting within the parameters of cultural norms which assign clerical skills and tasks a lower status than technical skills and tasks (see, e.g., Aaltio-Marjosola, 1994), it was clear that the context of a self-managing team was not a sufficient catalyst for a serious re-evaluation of clerical work in relation to the other members' jobs. As a result, the hierarchy of the members' job statuses remained untouched.

On the other hand, the phone conflict had some less obvious gender effects that may be interpreted not only as a reproduction of gender bias but also as potentially empowering for the women. The fact that the team practiced cross-functionality unidirectionally meant that, while the men did not learn about customer service, the women had acquired an understanding of the technological make-up of the product they were selling. As the following comments illustrate, the context of a self-managing team had indeed encouraged the women to perform cross-functionally even though the men hesitated to do the same:

> And I am not technical at all, I'm kinda here to facilitate the process of getting the orders placed and getting the stuff direct to the factory. And, you know, not only can the technical guys help me come up with questions to ask the customers to make sure we are getting them exactly what they want, but sometimes I feel like I can give them [the engineers] just an outside view or the most simplistic view whatsoever, but they've overlooked it from being so embroiled down in the nitty gritty details of it. So that's just, I've learnt something every day that way. That's probably my favorite part of the whole teamwork, is the variety (Ellen, white woman, 29).

> I know that I feel a lot more comfortable asking the information group for help,

though, than I do the engineering group ... I think some of it is because of the sensitivity of the issue of sharing workloads in the engineering group. The information group, as long as they are able to do it; I mean, you know, we trade back and forth pretty easily. If Ellen is unsure about something or Jean or Trina lay it on my chair, most of the time, I could take care of it pretty quickly. But there is never any discussion over, "Oh, this is not my job!" Or, "well, I shouldn't be doing this." But with the engineering group there is more attention there about: "Well, this isn't really what I'm doing or what I'm supposed to be doing," or I can't hand something to one of the engineering people and say, "call this customer, get this straightened out." But, in a lot of cases, I can take that very same thing, which might be a technical issue and hand it to someone in the information group and they can, they will take it and run (Paul, white man, 37).

In the light of these testimonies, it is difficult to argue that working in a self-managing team simply and uniformly reproduced women's secondary status, although the gender division of tasks points in that direction. As most processes in the work place, the phone conflict also entailed a dialectical situation: although the clerical tasks continued to be devalued in the team, the cross-functional task sharing had helped the information group to learn some of the engineers' technical knowledge, which the women were able to display to the customer while doing phone service. Thus, interacting with the customer on the phone gave the information group an opportunity to portray themselves as technically knowledgeable. In other words, as they picked up technical skills, the women felt they had improved customer service and "upskilled" their job.[29] Unfortunately, though, their sense of enhanced skills (and the opportunity to exhibit the) was curbed by the attitudes of some customers whose expectations of gender appropriate behavior and sex-typed jobs revealed yet another gendering process associated with phone service.

4.4.2.3. Gendering at organizational boundaries: Customer service and gender expectations

Thus far, I have discussed the gendering of phone work as instigated by internal gender relations and taking place within teams. However, the customers and their preconceived notions about the sex-typing of service work were an integral part of the gender divisions experienced by several of the team members I interviewed.   Phone service also exposed the different treatment that men and women received from customers which, in some cases, reinforced the secondary status of phone workers. The female members could negotiate the team's internal gender hierarchy with their male teammates; however, when they were in the role of a customer service agent, they had to accommodate the customer, even when the customer's attitudes about gender-appropriate behavior devalued their expertise.

Women who performed phone-based customer service in both the Motorcol CSN team and the Eastern Alliance Employee Credit team experienced gendering at the organizational boundaries. I

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29 Joan Greenbaum (1995) discusses the upskilling of office jobs as part of the reorganization of labor process that has characterized management practices since the 1980s. She points out that while the integration of tasks and the enhancement and upskilling of jobs is associated with "the new humanistic management style," the underlying objective of these practices is to reduce labor costs. The result, she says, is "more challenge and responsibility for some clerical workers, but fewer workers overall, meeting the objective of cutting total labor costs" (Greenbaum, 1995: 88).

discussed earlier how the women in the CSN information subgroup were constantly mistaken by customers to be secretaries and were expected to locate members of the engineering group who were not at their desk. For example, Paul, whose work straddled both the engineering and the information group, noted that outsiders often assumed that the information associates constituted a secretarial pool for the engineering groups:

> I know for a fact just from my own observations of the last year working with the group, that the females in our group are perceived and treated differently externally of the group, than the males are... I think that people outside the group expect the men to function in more of a technical and leadership capacity, and they expect the women in the group to function more in a clerical, secretarial role. People would come into the group and, while they wouldn't dream of handing me something and saying, "Get this faxed off for me", they would go to any of the women in the group and do that. And their justification for it is, well, yeah, but this is the information part of the group.

> ... I never get anybody calling me saying,"Hey, can you find Ellen or Jean for me?" And most of the time what they [the Information group] are doing is more urgent-- as far as timeliness--than what I am doing. So you would think that it would be the opposite, somebody [from outside] would call and try to find them, "I got to get something shipped today." I think they'd be on fire to get a hold of them but I never get anybody call me, saying find Ellen or Jean for me. So there is this perception that, that they "service" us. There is a perception that what we do is more important or more urgent than what they do. And there is also this perception that they are at our disposal and you can see it. I mean you can just see it.

> IS THERE ANYTHING BEING DONE TO CORRECT THAT?

> No. No. Other than, if somebody calls looking for me and they call Jean and say, find Paul, I have encouraged them [the women] to do what they think they ought to do about that. You know, if they don't like it, tell them [the customer], "Look, I don't know where he is, let me put you back in his voice mail." But the conflict there is that we are a customer service group (Paul, white man, 37).

Paul added that when customers were requested to call the operator instead of the information group if they needed to speak with him, most of them had "joked it off" and thus reasserted their image of the information associates as clerical support.

Apart from some disapproving customers, the external expectations of appropriate sex-typed job functions may not have had the kinds of internal effects were the CSN team not a service team. However, in this case, the team's very objective of customer service set the parameters for the phone policy and, as a result, confined the information associates to the phone tasks (to restate Paul's words, "the conflict there is that we are a customer service group"). The team's customer service orientation, therefore, was referred to as the underlying rationale for maintaining the gendered task division, which not only negated the team's attempt at cross-functionality (by relieving the technical side of the team from performing service work) but also made it difficult for the women to gain equal status among their male colleagues. Interestingly enough, while the label

of "service team" had a confining impact on the information group, it seemed to have no effect on the customers' perceptions of the male members' functions. For example, Paul addressed the issue of external expectations and gender advantage:

> There is no doubt in my mind that externally to the organization or externally to our immediate managers, I am definitely perceived as far exceeding what I am in the group. . . [When] people come in, they immediately come to one of the men to introduce themselves. If we are in a group, they defer to one of the men; I mean they assume that one of us is in charge. Most of the people I talk to on the phone ... In a lot of cases I am in a situation where they may be asking me technical questions that would be on my expertise. I am not an engineer and I will tell them, you know, let me get you an engineer, I am not an engineer. But I know that they make certain assumptions about the extent of my credentials and I think they do that, because I am knowledgeable by product and since I am a man and I am discussing these issues, I must be an engineer.

> On the other hand, when they get one of the females in the group, I think they tend to believe that they function at a lower level than they really do; they are order-entry clerks. When in reality they are functioning on a much higher technical level ... So many times, someone will call and say, well I have got this problem, let me speak to Paul. And Ellen or Jean will say, "Well, I can fix that." "Oh, well, just have Paul call me back." [laughs] That's like the assumption is that it is presupposed that there is no way they could even tackle this one, you know, that sort of thing. And a lot of times, it is some thing they can take care of (Paul, white man, 37).

Paul's comments illustrate how customers and other organizational outsiders had a continuous impact on the association of "customer service" with women and feminine skills while excluding technical skills from the definition of service. The juxtaposition of "technology" and "service" within a customer service team resulted in reinforcing the service role of women even though all the team members were supposed to be involved in customer service.

The customers' and outsiders' assumptions that men were team leaders and women were their followers characterized the phone-based customer interaction in the Eastern Alliance Employee Credit team. In many ways, this female-dominated team matched the stereotypical image of the feminized occupation of phone-based customer service. The fact that the lending agents also had to make decisions about large sums of money, however, contradicted this stereotype. It was this particular feature of their work that presented problems with some customers, whose assumptions of gender appropriate work caused some women to have to bring a male voice on the line. Shelley, who had worked as a lender for several years and had accumulated a rather high lending limit (see Ch. 3 for discussion on lending limits) said that customers often requested a male lending agent to handle their loan decisions:

> We still have, in this day and time, and including employees, depending on who they are, we still have people that have a problem talking to a female. Mostly men. Something as simple as if you make a decision and they don't agree with your decision, they'll say, "May I speak with your supervisor? Is he in?"--assuming the supervisor or the next level is a male counterpart. And that is inside and outside

[customers], although it's not as much as it was two years ago, or five years ago, or whatever. It's seems like it is evolving, but you still have that certain amount, and sometimes, it's gonna be someone who has less experience. And we don't have a problem within the group, within a certain level, of playing supervisor. A lot of times customers don't really want to talk to supervisors. They want to talk to someone who is different; a different person on the phone, period. We do have certain people within the group that are designated override personnel who have a little bit more lending authority . . . If it's someone who just wants to talk to an override officer, I would just find one of the other females. Since I'm an override officer, that would also have override authority. If it's somebody that's just being male chauvinistic, I would just let them speak to Chuck.

EVEN THOUGH YOU HAVE MORE EXPERIENCE?

Even though I have more experience . . . Sometimes they just need to hear it from a man.

HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?

How does it make me... I've been in this business for so long, I quit worrying about it. Although, I think it's funny now, whereas at one point, it used to make me angry. I just feel like that's something you have to deal with. It doesn't happen as often as it used to, so obviously things are improving. It's just, there's going to be that certain amount of it there all the time, just like bigotry or anything else. I don't think you will ever get rid of that or hunger totally. I mean it's gonna always be a certain small percentage, hopefully a small percentage, of that out there (Shelley, white woman, 44).

The gendered expectations of customers, in Shelley's case, discounted her work experience in favor of a less experienced man. Her experience is fairly typical in commercial banking even at higher levels of managers where the number of women has increased--albeit at the same time as the industry has become more service-oriented and decentralized, reducing both the status and the authority of bank managers (Bird, 1990). Despite the apparent feminization of banking, it continues to bear a masculine air of financial matters. As Chloe Bird (1990: 164) notes in her case study of bank managers, "women in commercial banking still sometimes encounter customers who insist on seeing a man."

The effects of Shelley's experience may not have been as divisive to the Employee Credit team as the gendered customer expectations were for the Motorcol CSN team due to the nature of customer service. In the former, the employee-customer relationship remained much more anonymous than in the latter, as all transactions were handled over the phone through a routinized process. Anonymous customers, therefore, did not impose an internal status or a role for the women lenders in the Employee Credit team. However, as Shelley explained, this treatment did have potential individual effects, although she herself had rationalized that the attitudes were simply a part of the job and reflected a broader social inequality between men and women.

Other team members acknowledged the situation and even took advantage of the team's sex

composition when they were confronted with a difficult customer. The following comments of Chuck and Richard describe how perceptions of gender could be used instrumentally in customer interactions:

> If you get an irate employee or an irate customer who may be very forceful and may try to step... I think sometimes, that they may back down to a man rather than a woman. . . . Sometimes I think that they may feel like they can step on a certain person, where Dianne is not like that but I feel like sometimes Richard may be able to offset the situation a little better than Dianne can. And that may be one out of a hundred. But I think, there's sometimes that a man, it's just like there sometimes that when you get an irate customer in, instead of getting a man, you need a woman to talk to offset the situation.
>
> CAN YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE? HAS THAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
>
> Yeah. I mean, maybe some time when I may get upset or I may be at the end of my rope, that they may need someone, just a different voice on the line; that's not, not a man that may be trying to dominate the conversation; someone that can maybe sympathize with them but then just help straightening up: "Here is what we need or here is what we don't" and go with it that way. Because I feel like sometimes--and I am just thinking of me, Pete, and Richard--sometimes we may lose our patience a little quicker than somebody like Michelle or Sandra who's great, too. They can go ahead and comfort the customer, but then tell the customer what needs to be done rather than being dictated, maybe, by me and Pete and Richard do sometimes (Chuck, white man, 25).
>
> I know people have said that a person won't take a "no" from a woman, and they wanna hear from a manager or would like to talk to a man, and that's happened before, not so much here but it almost seems like that if a man tells somebody that the situation is this, they would sometimes take it more than if a woman told them. That's chauvinistic whatever it would be, but that's the only thing I could tell you that being a man would have an impact around here, I mean, obviously we're a minority around here (Richard, white man, 52).

Bringing a man or a woman onto the telephone to either assert force or calm the customer undoubtedly reproduces gender stereotypes both externally for the customer and internally for the team. However, this stereotyping may have not affected the internal divisions of tasks among the team members, as all of them performed phone service work. Instead the impact might have been more internalized by the women who had to endure such treatment and tailor their service persona accordingly. I will discuss the demand of presenting a service-friendly persona in more detail as I explore emotional labor within teams.

The gendered nature of phone work did indeed shape the gendered task division of the Employee Credit team in one specific incident that warrants detailed examination. In Ch. 3, I mentioned that Richard, who was a team coach and an assistant to Dianne, the team leader, had acquired the coach position after a brief period as a phone service agent. Working on the phone had been difficult for

Richard, a former branch manager who had been laid off after his branch closed as a result of a merger. In addition to the obvious difficulties associated with demotion from a manager to phone service, working on the phones also made Richard, a white man in his 50s, a gender atypical worker (Hall, 1993a). Compared to the rest of the team that was made up of women and two young men in their 20s, Richard's sex, age, and managerial experience did not fit into the sex or age typing of phone service. I contend that because there was an obvious discrepancy between the gendered nature of phone service and Richard's past experience (including his inexperience in phone service), he was promoted to be a team coach. The coach's job, interestingly, was to train the phone workers and to listen in on their interactions with customers.

The fact that Richard was promoted to a coach after having worked on the phones for only ten months reveals the deskilled nature of phone work. In fact, he noted that the training he received for the job was minimal and that it was assumed that he would easily pick up the basics of phone work.

> I think I had about 15 minutes training to go from sales finance to coming onto the phones, since I'd never worked on the phones before, where you're going to be on the phone all day long, take applications, this and that. Each individual step is nothing new but together it's a little different than what I've been accustomed to and the training was a little slim but you just had to pick it and you did. Of course, you had the other team members assist you along the way, it really is not the same thing, I guess... throwing out to sink or swim, it wasn't that bad. There was really no formal training to start from what I was doing to starting the new position as a loan person on the phones (Richard, white man, 52).

However, Richard assumed that women were naturally good at doing phone service, which also explained their numbers in the job.

> As you can tell from walking around here, women are taking over this type of work, ... or I guess they always have done the telemarketing stuff, not telemarketing but telephone work, and so I think it's, ...There are a lot of women out here so obviously they find it enjoyable and something that they can do well. I think women, most women have a good phone demeanor, are very compassionate when they're talking to people. . . Of course I sort of got in here by the back door just because the way things had happened but some of the other fellows have got here just by joining the group and actually applied for that and they're enjoying [it].
>
> ... I was in branches for 20 years... Back then I had tellers. And I didn't really know, I couldn't do their job, I couldn't go back and work the teller window, I didn't have to, and... But here, I think I do a better job as a coach. I think you're expected to know everything they do now. In order to coach someone, I guess, [you] need to now what you're telling them to do so, there are differences. Here I need to know every part of their job, in a branch, as an example, I did not, I could just oversee and assume that my people were doing what they were supposed to and I had the blind faith that they were (Richard, white man, 52).

Although Richard's case is a single incident, I argue that it reveals an underlying gendered logic of

task division. Despite the fact that many of the woman lenders had years of experience on the job compared to Richard's ten months, none of them was considered for the supervisory, "coach" job.[30] This incident suggests that the promotion structure within the team was gendered. Richard was seen (and saw himself) as atypical for the phone service job (see his comment about doing a better job as a coach than as a phone lender) that was predominantly held by women and younger men (who would later seek better opportunities). It was thus gender-appropriate for him to be promoted to the coach position once an opportunity presented itself. That the team failed to consider a woman lender for the coach position demonstrates that phone service jobs are unskilled. In other words, phone service requires stereotypically feminine qualities of 'pleasant demeanor' and that those feminine qualities exclude a possibility for a lender to be in a supervisory position, requiring her to monitor and control the other team members. Although Richard was a well-liked coach and a respected colleague, the gender implications of the situation did not go unnoticed. Brenda, a lender and a team member, talked about the incident as the following:

> One of the males, you know, had a really difficult time keeping up at one point and it was just recognized that that was, what he was doing, which was the same thing that everyone else was doing, the consultance; he just wasn't strong in this area because he just had to work in a really fast pace. And so, he was just placed in a different position that he was more suited to work, I don't think I've seen that happen with any of the women. You know, you're down in [loans], you've got to get up (Brenda, black woman, 42).

As Brenda noted, there was slim opportunity for a woman to become a coach, particularly if she did not master her phone service job, while inexperience and substandard performance were not barriers for the managers to offer such a position to a man. For women, experience in a phone job did not lead to upward mobility while a man with different type of job experience was seen as gender-atypical for the job. As a consequence, phone service remained defined as a feminine (and feminized) task, which communicated to the women that despite their equal status, the gendered nature of their job counted against them for higher level jobs. Furthermore, the fact that Brenda chose to describe the situation as involving an anonymous male rather than naming Richard, reflects an underlying recognition of the power relations in the team. For Brenda, Richard was no longer a coworker but a coach who had the power to unobtrusively monitor the team members (for example, by silently listening in on the their phone calls), which further exacerbated the gendered relations of dominance and subordination in the team.

4.4.3. Organizational Status and Gendering of Tasks

The common characteristic of the three teams I have examined so far is that they all operated at the lower levels of the organization and their tasks included routine customer service at the point of service. However, the fourth team, the City County team at Omni Insurance, differed from the other three in significant ways. As a team of middle managers, the City County team members' jobs neither involved direct interaction with the customers nor clerical work, as most members had their own designated secretaries (many members shared secretaries). Also, compared to the other

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30 The job of a team coach is basically a team leader position. The concept of "coach" tends to be more suitable for the rhetoric of equality inherent in the team practice. In reality, a coach is a supervisor and often, as in the Employee Credit team, adds another supervisory level into the team's internal hierarchy.

three teams, the City County team had a more influential position within the organization because it handled a large client that generated high revenue for Omni. In other words, the organizational position of the City County team and the jobs that constituted it were different from the Eastern Alliance and Motorcol teams.

Although the City County team may have avoided the kinds of gender divisions (and conflict) that shaped the work of the other three teams, the team did not avoid gendering processes. The key to understanding the different gendering of the City County team is its management level position. The higher hierarchical status of the City County team, combined with the skilled, knowledge-based jobs, ensured that all members were considered experts in their respective areas and, therefore, equally important for achieving the team's objective of successfully managing the City County's account.

The team's status was reflected especially in the meanings the team members gave to task divisions and how they explained the link between gender and specific tasks. For example, because of the assumed skilled nature of the individual jobs, the designation of some tasks as "women's work" was not as evident as in the other teams. And although taking notes during the team meetings was carried out by a woman, the task itself was not defined by the members as a secretarial job, thereby disclaiming its gendered nature. Many members mentioned that the feminine secretarial task of taking notes was indeed performed by a woman, Margaret, but they (including Margaret herself) interpreted this task as Margaret's wish. Thus, note-taking was defined as enjoyment rather than a gendered task:

> I know Margaret takes the minutes and that may be perceived as a, you know "woman's responsibility" but she volunteered to do that, you know. I think she enjoys doing that to me. Like she volunteered to type the minutes when I make them, legible to the outside community. So she chose that responsibility. I really don't, I don't see things they say, this is a woman's job or this is a man's job to do (Anthony, black man, 39).

> You see Margaret, ...Did she do the minute taking and all that during the meeting and everything, is that a gender thing? There was a woman who did it before. I wouldn't do it if they paid me a million dollars. Not because I am a woman but because I wouldn't do it (laugh) (Martha, white woman, 36).

> I do them because I have my portable system, my laptop, and I have a printer and all the rest of the stuff that goes along with it. We had a guy taking them for a while. And I just started taking them after awhile since his computer just wouldn't operate correctly so I'd just bring my laptop. . . I like the computer, I mean it gives me something to do while I'm sitting there, and do that instead. . . That was not gender related at all. It was just something that happened. And Bob will [say]: "Well now that you've taken the notes, I will take them back to my secretary..." [Margaret:] "Get away from me!" "I am not your secretary, number one. And number two, I can give them to my secretary" (Margaret, white woman, 54).

Although the team members resisted the idea of gender division of task, the value placed on secretarial duties came across clearly. While Martha expressed her dislike of taking notes,

Margaret associated her voluntary note-taking with "something to do" and referred to her managerial position ("I can give them to my secretary") when another team member challenged her. I suggest that the organizational position of the members and the skilled nature of their work allowed the interpretation of note-taking as a voluntary task instead of a gender-typed job. And although the gendering was revealed in the low value of the note-taking job, it is possible that devaluing the task did not have the kind of effect on Margaret as it might have in a lower-level team.

An example from the Motorcol CSN team illustrates this point. Jean, a team member, described a situation in which she was asked to take notes:

> I know one time when I started up here, I was in a meeting and it was like the product review meeting. And because I was about the only female in there, they turned around and said, "Can you take the minutes?" I was like, you know, there were a whole lot of other people that were more educated, who were on a product line and had more experience; not that I didn't mind, but just the general assumption that because I was the only female in there that I was going to take the minutes, and type them up and distribute them. (laugh)
>
> AND, DID YOU?
>
> I did because Marty [unit manager] signs my check (laugh). And that's why I did it (Jean, white woman, 24).

In short, Margaret's emphasis on the voluntary nature of her task was made possible by her organizational position as a manager. While Jean suggested that she would not have agreed to take notes had it not been her boss who asked her, her organizational position limited her ability to resist the gendering of the task, which Margaret was able to do. While Jean was frustrated when her male coworkers associated the note-taking job with her sex, her position did not allow her to openly challenge them, which Margaret did.

4.4.3.1. The gender of relational tasks

Even though many team members perceived the City County team as devoid of gender bias, gendered task divisions also characterized this team. Tasks that entailed maintaining the team's external and internal relations were performed by women, and they were openly devalued by the team. The men's tasks, such as financial management, were seen by some members to warrant leadership in the team.

In general, team members viewed relational tasks as less valuable than work that could be measured in generated income for the company. Margaret's position as the manager of community and government relations is an example of the different values placed on the two types of tasks in the team. Because Margaret's task of maintaining the team's relations with the local and state government legislators was not quantifiable, she was rendered a secondary status within the team. Although Margaret herself preferred to remain on the sidelines during meetings (and take notes), it was also quite apparent that because her expertise did not carry a direct monetary value for the team, her contribution was often overlooked by the others. This situation was

evident, for example, to Martha, a product manager and team member.

> [Margaret's] role is with legislative and community relations and sometimes she goes off and I get a feeling that the team doesn't sense the value of her contribution. And sometimes it'll make me a little, you know, weary, but the team has to be considerate and I think that's a struggle 'cause sometimes she may feel less than what she needs to feel to be a satisfied team member (Martha, white woman, 36).

The lower value of a relationship-building task came through in team meetings, where often the different functional areas of the team were in conflict with each other. Martha noted that because of her "community relations" job, Margaret was often intimidated by team members that represented other, presumably more important functions in the team.

> Margaret, when she's talking, she gets run over a lot... For some reason Margaret is allowed to be run over and then she gets real aggravated, and she'll say she's aggravated. . . Margaret is not responsible for any functional thing, her position, her role in the company is nebulous, and I'm not saying anything bad about it, it's non-quantifiable, she's a relationship builder. I've known Margaret for years. . . She must be good at what she does 'cause she's been doing it for a long time but don't aggravate her, don't let her feel like what she's saying is not important 'cause she's gonna have a problem with it and it will slow down the progress of the team. But her perspective is very important in my opinion because it does make us look at the overhang, or that political umbrella that we have to [take into account]. Where I feel like she's very necessary as part of the team, and a lot of time, when you look at the political situation, you look at the operational situation Cynthia is responsible for, you look at Brad, and then you have this product perspective, you aren't gonna reach the same decision using your own set of criteria, and that's where we fight. And generally, you are generally not going to highly weight the political criteria, it's going to be weighted and considered but it may not blossom as a result, and that may be something that's frustrating to her. That's kind of an "aha" to me, I hadn't really thought about that (Martha, white woman, 36).

Margaret's efforts to be recognized as a valuable team member had not been fruitful by the time of my field research. In her view, ignoring the political parameters of serving a municipal client was risky even if community relations had no direct remunerative worth. The fact that this was not recognized by the team caused Margaret a great deal of frustration:

> Part of the problem, I think, is the kind of work that I do. Omni is a very internally driven affair. [The team members] look at the company, they look at things; they just had a major breakthrough at the meeting last week. Because they recognized the need and saw the value of dealing with the decision makers. . . What [the team] is doing for the longest time, [is looking] strictly at the numbers, you know. . . You can't give a numerical value to what I do. . . They don't understand they're only dealing with 90% of the group [City County]. And guess what, the 10% that they're not dealing with is the 10% that can tell them to take a hike. . . There is no redeeming quality in my being here. I personally won't sit in any more meetings where I am being made to feel that whatever my contribution is, it is insignificant

(Margaret, white woman, 54).[31]

The "insignificance" of Margaret's contribution points to a dichotomy of relational versus remunerative work. The fact that non-quantifiable tasks were considered as less important than quantifiable tasks that generated direct monetary returns (or were perceived to do that) concretely exemplify the values of capitalist enterprises and, thus, also reveal the bottom-line of team efforts. When teams are scrutinized within the context of corporate profit-making, the rhetoric of their egalitarian potential appears overly optimistic. As the City County team's case demonstrated, teams may reproduce internal task hierarchies on the basis of their perceived economic importance, which consequently correspond to the power hierarchies of the overall organization.

As for gender implications, a task division along the lines of productive and reproductive work disadvantages women in teams. As women dominate low-skilled, low-paid service occupations that simulate their household reproductive tasks, their tasks within teams are already positioned as second tier to those that produce quantifiable results (often regardless of the sex of the worker). Because Margaret's relational tasks did not have an immediate dollar value for the team, they were perceived by the members as less significant. Without arguing that Margaret was sidelined directly because she is a woman (which may be the case), I suggest that her treatment illustrates a gendering process of devaluing relational tasks that are performed by women, despite the level of their position. Thus, the underlying criterion of productivity for evaluating team tasks sets the parameters for unequal power and influence in teams. As long as women's jobs are perceived as relational, interactive, and having to do with 'reproductive' activities (including administrative assistance and clerical tasks), they occupy a secondary status even in such presumably egalitarian structures as self-managing teams.

While a woman in a manager position may be able to resist gendering (as Margaret's interaction with her coworker illustrated), the relational nature of her task can relegate her to a less powerful position compared to tasks that generate profit. While Margaret's position illustrates this process, other tasks in the team also reflect this division. As I discussed in Ch. 3, the team's task structure was heavily dominated by the marketing department (that was represented at four different levels) whose members claimed responsibility for acquiring the sizable City County account and thus were entitled to the key positions in the team. The team's leadership, for example, was seen as a direct extension of the account manager position and thus was not within the reach of other functions. Brad, the former team leader who had stepped down but still had an informal leadership position, outlined the connection between the account manager job and the team's leadership:

> I have always been essentially the leader of the team from the beginning in this organization. I guess in the health insurance industry that we are in, the account manager or the sales person is always looked upon as the leader of the group, the

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31 Margaret's frustration about her role in the team had prompted her to discuss the need for a community relations function in the team. The team had spent several meetings in the past determining whether she was a full member or an 'ad hoc' member. The team discussed this question also in the meeting I observed. Later, in the interview, Margaret interpreted the team's views as favorable to her full membership. On the other hand, as an outsider, I interpreted the discussion as highly ambiguous and unclear about the degree of her membership.

initiator. You are the facilitator, you develop the agenda, you are the one that drives it, you are the one that goes out and gets the support. . . My role has always been, I guess as leader of the team, the group appointing me leader of the team, and as a result, I have been a leader ever since. However, until the recent change last year, my position, when I was promoted to sales manager, we hired Anthony, who is now the account manager and I am trying to move him in into a leadership position in the team (Brad, white man, 36).

It was clear to the team members that the relatively informal but nonetheless very influential leadership position was tightly connected to the job of the account manager. This pre-structured team hierarchy precluded the leadership aspirations of, for example, Cynthia, whose sole job was managing the operations of the City County account (for example, enrollment, claims, and reimbursements), including about 40 female employees in the day-to-day operation of the account. As a matter of fact, Cynthia did express interest in the leadership position, although some of her teammates doubted her ability to do the job, as the following comments reveal.

We elected Brad as a leader and that's not an anointed position. We now have to go back because I don't feel that Anthony was the perfect [person] to be a leader. I don't think he knows the corporation, I don't think he knows the account... I told everybody if Brad is gonna step down, I will have somebody nominate me as the leader. Because I just feel like, I think we're setting somebody up for failure (Cynthia, white woman, 48).

Brad is the leader, he's designated Anthony as a leader. He probably shouldn't have done that, I don't agree he should have done it that way particularly because he got direction from some of the team members that the team needed to make that decision, and Cynthia wants to be positioned in that slot. Personally, I don't think Cynthia would be right for that slot.

WHO DO YOU THINK WOULD BE RIGHT ?

Probably Anthony, who Brad has set. But Cynthia doesn't like it 'cause he's a new person coming in and he is very structured and he sends out assignments... (Martha, white woman, 36).

These comments reveal not only that the team leadership was tightly connected to the account manager position, but also that by appointing Anthony as the leader, Brad overlooked some members' wish to elect the leader democratically. The evidence suggests a less than equal process of appointing a team leader. Instead of democratically electing a leader, which would have allowed all members to be nominated for the post, Brad had unilaterally appointed the new team leader. As a consequence, this process not only undermined relational tasks and those (women) who held them (e.g., Margaret and Cynthia), but also thwarted the team's ability to function as a democratic unit.

The example of the City County Account Management team underscores the idea that gendering processes in organizations should be understood contextually. Gendered processes do not occur in isolation but always are shaped by other dimensions of existing power relations, such as

organizational status, and also by the underlying imperative of corporate profit-making that dictates the evaluative framework against which individual jobs are appraised. Using a socialist-feminist position, in the context of profit-making, women's relational tasks always become secondary to those tasks that are profit-generating. The capitalist logic of profit-making fundamental to all business organizations provides a context in which tasks that serve the monetary "bottom line" are valued and promoted and those that do not are devalued. Thus, any egalitarian aspirations of self-managing teams must be viewed against this backdrop.

As women become employed at higher positions and gain more organizational status, they are able to label their tasks and responsibilities and to control the meanings associated with them. Thus, many gender-typed tasks can, in higher level teams, enable team members to maintain the image of gender-neutrality, as in the case of the City County team. While being careful not to impose a gendering process where one may not exist, I note that gendering is a multifaceted process that also may be hidden behind an apparent "gender-neutrality" (Acker, 1990). Indeed, gendering processes can be opaque even to the actors involved. For example, the members of the City County team could have been 'blind' to some gendered processes that to me, the investigator, were more obvious.

Most importantly, however, the question that calls for critical attention is: to what extent does the team members' image of their team influence their work processes? For example, does the image of gender-neutrality enhance gender equality so that when women (and men) perceive their team as democratic, they will be empowered to push for more equal task divisions? I pose these questions, but refrain from attempting to answer them based on my study. A more longitudinal study could potentially tap into the role of perceptions of equality in the reproduction of and resistance to gendered task divisions. Nevertheless, as I have illustrated, the potentially gender-blind processes (or "non-gendered," if one can even image such processes) and women's empowerment through teams always take place within the confines of the capitalist logic of profit-making and a patriarchal take on what constitutes profit-making.

4.4.4. Gender and Cross-Functional Service Work

Even when teams pronounced cross-functional learning and task-sharing as a goal, I found gendered processes that, instead of eroding the gendered task divisions, reinforced the sex-typing of jobs. Gendered task divisions occurred specifically when all team members were expected to perform their own clerical and administrative work, in which case women bore the burden of clerical service. This took place, for example, through references to specific job descriptions, as with the "information" group of the Motorcol CSN team. In the Eastern Alliance Special Project team, gendering occurred when the men shifted the responsibility for answering phones to the women. Telephone-based service work was particularly gendered, as men often either tried to avoid answering the phone (as the engineers in the CSN team), dismissed answering the phone (as the men in the Special Projects team did by lunching together), or simply were seen by managers as more suitable to work as a phone monitor of others than for customer service (as in the Eastern Alliance Employee Credit team). Although the management-level City County team avoided conflict based on clerical assignments, gendered processes emerged through the open devaluation of relational tasks for their lack of value-added worth.

These processes point toward the gendered nature of service work in general. The cultural

association of service work with women along with the growing number of women in low-level service positions provide a challenging scenario for self-managing teams. The team members' experiences I discussed above cast doubt upon the ability of organizations to overcome the divisions maintained by gendered occupational structures and sex-typed jobs through self-managing teamwork. Even as the case-study teams were aspiring to cross-functional task sharing, the members', as well as the customers', attitudes and expectations perpetuated gendered task divisions. Cross-functionality in general was viewed by all the teams I studied as an excellent way to enrich individual jobs and strengthen team performance. In reality, though, the sharing of tasks was rather uneven: women, in some cases, were able to enrich their jobs through learning technical skills; at the same time, the men's lack of interest in learning and performing clerical tasks conveyed to the women the idea that their jobs were unskilled and less significant. The underlying idea that self-managing teams will encourage team members to share jobs and learn new skills was not realized; instead, the persistent gender divisions that devalue women's work continued through the team's different functional areas. In other words, although self-managing teams brought together employees from different organizational functions, the team structure itself was not enough to dismantle the gender division of tasks. As a result, at least some aspects of the traditional organizational gender hierarchy became reproduced on the smaller scale of a team.

The findings also suggest that the gendered nature of service work may present a problematic setting for self-managing teams to institute genuine cross-functionality. Although theories and research on self-managing teams do not explicitly address the gendered nature of work, they do assume that cross-functionality will enhance team performance. If that is the case, achieving a state of "high-performance" (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993a) could be seriously hindered if team leaders and members overlook the gendered task divisions within teams.

Self-managing teams are especially vulnerable to the kinds of gendered task divisions I have discussed. Because teams often are formed as companies downsize, tasks that previously have been separate, such as clerical tasks, now become the responsibility of all team members and a part of each individual job in a team.[32] There is a danger, however, that when a team includes both men and women, and when team tasks also involve administrative work, that the gender division of labor will not change. Instead, women will continue to be seen as the "natural" clerical workers regardless of their actual team assignment and, as a result, bear the responsibility for tasks that, in fact, should be shared by all members. The conventions and stereotypes of women's and men's work, persistent occupational sex-segregation, and the devalued status of clerical work provides a context in which gendering of teams, including self-managing teams, is likely to continue.

4.4.5. Gender and Task Division in Manufacturing and Services

In order to understand the depth of the gendered task division in teams, we also should consider the different demographic make-up of service and manufacturing industries as well as the restructuring that is taking place in both of them. The fact that the Motorcol Customer Support Network team combined engineering and information work reveals an industry-wide division of masculine technical and feminine clerical-secretarial tasks, which became transferred into the team.

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32 Joan Greenbaum (1995: 86) calls this "the clericalization of professional work" which occurs "as more professionals and managers are expected to do their own word-processing and handle their phones and e-mail."

On the other hand, both of the Eastern Alliance teams exhibit the make-up of many service industries that employ disproportionate numbers of women, especially at the lower organizational levels. The case of the Eastern Alliance teams thus reflects the fact that, for more than half of this century, women in white-collar service industries (such as banking and insurance) have been employed in clerical work and performed various kinds of interactive tasks (Bird, 1990; Leidner, 1993; Thomas, 1990). Contrary to the feminization of white-collar service work, a great deal of the blue collar, manufacturing jobs still carry a masculine label, especially if they involve technical skills (and often, regardless of the sex of the worker who fills the position). Therefore, we should take into account the different gender characteristics of the manufacturing and service industries when explaining the specific ways in which self-managing teams are gendered. Consequently, the more rigid gender division of the informational-relational and technical tasks in the Motorcol CSN team could result from such an industry-wide gendering.

The difficulties of mixed-sex teams in the blue-collar setting have been documented in the examination of gender in flexible specialization and restructuring of the labor process. Examining flexible specialization and manufacturing work, Jane Jenson (1989) claims that participatory schemes in manufacturing industries have gender-differentiated effects, especially when women and men are grouped together to perform technical jobs. She is pessimistic about the possibility of mixed-sex groups in technical jobs and argues that "mixed groups are unlikely to form ... because notions of masculinity and femininity exclude the possibility of female competence" (Jenson, 1989: 154). However, Jenson's prediction that teams will develop predominantly into single-sex groups does not take into account that even manufacturing industries are now attempting to establish a new, customer oriented, high-performance corporate culture by implementing cross-functional customer service teams. In their attempt to improve customer service, many manufacturing plants are bringing together technical and non-technical jobs (for example, to provide the service of designing and manufacturing customized engines as in the Motorcol CSN team). As a consequence, women and men will increasingly find themselves working in the same team, in which gender cleavages develop and prevail.

4.4.6. Conclusion: Gender Division of Tasks

I have shown that gender shaped teamwork through the persistent gender division of labor that remained unchanged despite the presumably egalitarian status of a self-managing team. Even in those teams that aspired to cross-functional task sharing, women continued to be associated with clerical and relational (emotional) tasks. The necessity of all team members to perform some kind of phone-based customer service emerged as an especially gendered and conflictual process. Moreover, in many teams, the traditional gender division of tasks was further perpetuated by customers, whose gendered assumptions shaped the women members' service interactions. For example, customers attempted to intimidate women service agents by requesting to speak to a male representative. Also, customers treated women team members as secretaries to the men members. These practices illustrate that, in addition to internal, intra-team gendering, the position of women team members was devalued also by gendered expectations imposed externally on them, regardless of their team membership and implied equal status.

4.5. Gender Divisions in Technology and Technical Skills

In the first part, I examined the production and reproduction of gender divisions through team tasks. This part continues the focus on gender divisions by examining how gender was embedded in and shaped the technologies that the team members used in their daily work. I also consider how teams evaluated technical skills and how the assumptions about masculinity and femininity embedded in technology and technical skills shaped teamwork.

Feminist researchers argue that masculine principles and values dominate technological education, design, production, use, and workplace cultures where technology is utilized (Cockburn, 1985; Hacker, 1979; Keller, 1985; Wajcman, 1991). The question of gender is particularly interesting if we examine the impact of new information technology on the organization of white-collar work, as the proliferation of computers has fundamentally changed office work and women's jobs (Appelbaum, 1993; Greenbaum, 1990, 1995; Henwood, 1993; Kling, 1996; Wajcman, 1991). Since the 1980s, optimism about the potential benefits of computerized work (Zuboff, 1988) has given way to more critical assessments of the "automated office." However, some analysts still argue for the democratizing effects of information technology in the workplace (Kling, 1996). The claim that new information technologies, such as electronic mail, will "enable workers to bypass rigid bureaucratic procedures" and allow communication across hierarchical levels (Kling, 1996: 285) is especially noteworthy when examined along with team rhetoric of empowerment. In this section, I will briefly examine how technology and technological divisions shaped the way in which men and women worked interdependently in self-managing teams, and how perceptions of technological knowledge and skills affected power and influence in teams. I argue that gender divisions among team members were further exacerbated by technology and that, when male team members labeled technological skills as masculine, women were barred from gaining an equal status in the team.

Technology is traditionally a masculine domain which excludes women (e.g., Wajcman, 1991). In the four case study teams, masculinity, technology, and technological skills were intricately linked and emerged as gendering processes that warrant examination separately from the gendered task divisions. I begin with a brief discussion about the "new office technology" (mainly computers, but also fax machines, copiers, etc.) and the ways in which it organized teamwork. I then examine the masculine culture of technical work, and finally, how team members' gendered perceptions of technological skills reproduced traditional gender relations.

4.5.1. Teams, Office Automation, and Technological Displacement

Automated office technologies have fundamentally transformed the organization of white-collar work as different organizational functions have been separated spatially but brought together again electronically (Baran and Teegarden, 1987: 202). Since the adoption of the word processor and the subsequent use of computers, clerical work has also become, in some respect, more decentralized, while in other ways, more centralized. Although computers have provided employees greater access to information and allowed many to work at home, office automation also has increased worker surveillance and enabled employers, in the name of flexibility, to create secretarial pools that serve a number of bosses (Greenbaum, 1995; Murphree, 1984, 1987). According to Joan Greenbaum (1995: 94-96), on the other hand, new office technologies have opened up an opportunity for clerical workers, "to use and develop more skills" but, on the other hand, their

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wages rarely reflect the newly-acquired skills. Although clerical jobs have become more 'professionalized' as clerks and secretaries use computers, their new skills have not changed traditional gender relations or the gendered division of labor. In fact, "gender stereotyping of jobs has remained remarkably stable even when the nature of work and the skills required to perform it have been radically transformed" (Wajcman, 1991: 33).

The Eastern Alliance Employee Credit team and the Motorcol Customer Support Network are good examples of the technological changes. The lenders of the Eastern Alliance team had direct access to the Bank's data base and to protected information about the financial standing of its employee-customers. The team members' ability to use computers in their jobs and to access confidential information contributed to their upskilling.[33] Thus, the predominantly female team consisted of clerical workers who clearly were considered to be more professional than traditional secretaries.[34] Furthermore, Eastern Alliance's automated organization appeared more accessible for the Employee Credit team members who used computer mediated communication not only to send e-mail to each other but also to maintain contact with the Bank's out-of-state head office.

Information technology, however, enabled the supervisor--that is, the team coach--to closely monitor and control the lenders and their interaction with customers. The PC monitor on the coach's desk displayed on-going phone calls concerning, for example, who was on the phone and who was taking a break, and how long each phone call lasted (the average call length was 2.5 minutes). Part of the coach's job was to listen in on each lender's phone conversations, evaluate their customer service performance, and give feedback. For example, the team coach, Richard, explained how he would monitor a specific team member who was known to be "firm" with customers.

> She is, I think, maybe a little firm. We like to give employees maybe the benefit of a doubt in some things and maybe most of us talk to an employee like a friend 'cause we're in a same situation. She has come from the other side, I'm thinking maybe she's still talking to the employee as if there is no connection there and they're still outsiders, and she's very firm in what she does and doesn't give a whole lot yet as far as bending the rules or anything, we're trying to work with her on that. That'll be my job as a coach to listen in on her phone calls to see how severe she really is... I haven't really had a chance to listen in on her and that'll be first thing I do probably, to be asked to see how she's doing, see if she's turning a little bit. But since we're talking, one of the other folks who came over about the

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33 One could also argue that office automation has resulted in the professionalization of previously unskilled white-collar work and, at the same time, in the deskilling of individual jobs. The use of computers has, to some degree, brought together conception and execution of many clerical tasks. Because computers require thinking and conceptual understanding of one's job, the job is viewed as 'professional' (Zuboff, 1988). However, deskilling is evident, for example, in the case of the Easter Alliance Employee Credit team made up of loan consultants or 'lenders'. A lender's job once involved face-to-face interaction with the customer and loan approval that was based on the lender's expertise, and it was often done by men bank managers. Today, credit approvals are determined by computers and given over the phone, mostly by low-skilled women service representatives (see also Greenbaum, 1995: 94-98).

34 Unfortunately, I do not have information about their wages.

same time as she did, just said, when we were working together today, just said about this person that "she'd make a good warden in a prison," in a woman's prison, and then she changed it, "well, maybe a man's prison." So it's kinda, I guess, a feel that even she has for her, and of course she is in the same little cube with her so she'd hear her talking. So, that's what we gotta do on that one, that'll be my first job, trying to calm that one out, or make it more friend-sounding (Richard, white man, 52).

The technology that provided the lenders access to bank-wide financial data on employees also placed them under greater surveillance. Aware of the possibility of being monitored, they had to convert their interaction into the style and manner designated by the coach (who himself had worked the phones for only a short while).

The case of the Employee Credit team illustrates how the use of technology can produce mixed outcomes: computers changed the nature of team members' jobs, but also enabled closer surveillance of the team. The use of office technology, *combined* with the gendered task division between the coach and the lenders discussed earlier intensified gender divisions within the team and thus worked against egalitarian relations in the team.

In addition to increased surveillance, office automation has another, equally suspect outcome, worker displacement, which particularly affects women and minority workers. Service industries such as banks and telephone companies have led the way toward deskilling jobs and subsequently substituting them with technology (Hacker, 1989). For example, Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) displaced 179,000 tellers during a ten year period between 1983 and 1993 (Greenbaum, 1995: 126). The automation of an organization's functional units eventually lead to job elimination and to laying off workers. The proliferation of teams can be seen as an integral part of office automation and reorganization of work (e.g., Baran and Teegarden, 1987).[35] However, teams may also disguise an inevitable displacement of some functions that are to become automated. I use the example of the Motorcol CSN team to discuss this gendered organizational logic.

The CSN team combined various technical and information-oriented functions with a goal of improving customer service. However, during the interviews it became evident that there existed some plans to displace at least some of the information group's functions with direct access to product ordering through the Internet. This development was explained by Lee, the coordinator of the engineering sub-group, in a discussion on the future development of the CSN team:

> Probably the next step that we're going to be looking at is ordering over the Internet. Something like that, such that if it's something that's already engineered, it never even comes to the information system, it goes directly to the floor. Right now everything comes through the information system. So engineering-wise, when there's something different that needs to be done, upper management has acknowledged that we're probably the best at where we are. It's going to be to

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35 In Chapter 3, I discussed how both Eastern Alliance teams were manifestations of reintegrated work processes which were brought together into a team after bank mergers and downsizing. Multifunctional teams, such as the Motorcol Customer Support Network (CSN), also illustrate these processes.

improve on it because we've gotten our engineering modification down to about two days, sometimes one day and just the documentation almost takes one day to do. So the next big step will probably be an Internet type situation.

IF YOU IMPLEMENT INTERNET ORDERING SYSTEM WOULD THAT RENDER THE INFORMATION PART OF THE GROUP OBSOLETE?

It wouldn't render it obsolete because there's always modifications to what they need to handle. It would render the standards obsolete because they could just order it straight off the internet. But someone would want their motor to be red, someone may want it to be green and that's how the CSN exists right now. And probably about 50% of the work that comes through the CSN is the same [as now], so we would always need that information group to handle that type of information for us (Lee, white man, 44).

Neil, the coordinator of the field service sub-group, echoed Lee's ideas as he discussed what an ideal CSN team would be like.

It would look very much like it does now, except I'd have a computer automated input, which means I'd have this automated fax type computer that would allow people to come in, and cut our phone calls in half. Because most of the information they're looking for would be in the computer to fax information back to them automatically. Also I'd get on the Internet immediately and the information would be there, and I would make [it] available on a web page site so that they could pull it out of the Internet, they wouldn't have to call us all the time, and we could do the things that are a lot more manual work intensive. That would free up a lot of our resources which would allow us to interact with customers that really need our help more... We could also move into actually putting the order entry at the customers' fingertips. We could have a web page or a computer system set up here that you could dial into. Anyway you'd want to do it, we could get you right into the order process. All you need is your own customer number. You could enter it, you could look up the charges, you could look up what you wanted to order, see what the cost was and enter the order yourself.

THIS IS WORK THAT IS NORMALLY DONE BY THE INFORMATION PART OF THE TEAM?

Yes.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THAT PART?

It would allow them more time, and they wouldn't be so stressed out. They'd be trouble-shooting information that would allow the service side more time for the customer out there who needs a service done but couldn't get through on the phone. Unfortunately, in service it wouldn't help us as much as the other groups. Because people want to talk to live bodies when it comes to a service problem. They want to be reassured, and they want to understand what they're doing before they go

throw a switch that might blow the unit up. They don't want to just read about it, they want to actually talk to a live body (Neil, white man, 47).

Noticeably, both men believed that moving the product ordering function from the information group to the Internet, where customers could independently access product information and make selections, would not displace the women who did the job now. Despite their optimism, it is realistic to assume that some tasks, such as the information associates' phone service, could undoubtedly be at risk if Internet technology is integrated into the team's functions.

Office automation together with the reorganization of work into self-managing teams serves the purpose of cutting costs. On the one hand, companies can eliminate heavy layers of middle managers and pass administrative functions onto their employees through self-managing teams. On the other hand, automation enables breaking into parts whole jobs and creating jobs that require less skill and are more easily filled by nonskilled workers. As a result, some lower-level jobs will be enriched as several tasks are reintegrated under a single job title. However, because these jobs, and particular tasks, often are routine-like and partly automated (for example, the information jobs in the CSN team), they may be but a few steps away from an eventual displacement as new technology becomes more cost-effective than an embodied worker.[36] In a study of AT&T, Sally Hacker (1979) found that women--and particularly racial-ethnic minority women--were systematically hired to fill the highly fragmented and routinized, low-skilled jobs that eventually became displaced by automation while white men were promoted into skilled jobs. If the bottom line of the team movement (and the underlying motivation to adopt self-managing teams) is to increase productivity and competitiveness, the idea of displacing routine jobs with technology is not far-fetched. I propose that it is unlikely that multi- or cross-functional self-managing teams will shield any individual job against automation. And while team members can and do learn cross-functional skills, their individual contribution may not be as valuable to the team if others can do their jobs just as well (as with the CSN team's plan to use the Internet and have customers themselves do some of the "information" group's tasks). Future studies should examine the impact of technology on worker displacement in the "self-managing team era" and the extent to which women's team jobs are especially at risk.

4.5.2. Customer Service and "Live Bodies"

In the service sector, displacement of phone service functions with automated answering services could be challenged by the new standards of customer orientation that characterize the "high-performance," "team-based" organization (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993a). The new organizational policy of customer-orientation is viewed by management experts as the only way

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36 In fact, one can imagine a development similar to the CSN plan of automating order entry to take place in the Eastern Alliance Employee Credit team in the future, if loan information and approvals become fully automated. This scenario might not be too futuristic as voice recognition software that allows the customer to converse with a computer and inquire, for example, about loan information is already being developed (Gross, 1997).

for a company to maintain a competitive edge against its rivals.[37] In the cases of the Information group of the Motorcol CSN team and the Eastern Alliance Employee Credit team, this could mean that, in order to better serve the customer, the teams should keep "live bodies" answering the phones. This idea became evident in several interviews with the CSN team. For example, to revisit Neil's previous comments concerning the necessity of automating some team functions, he also emphasized the goal of keeping customers satisfied by having them interact with a 'live body':

> ...[T]hat would allow service side more time for the customer out there who needs a service done but couldn't get through on the phone. Unfortunately, in [field] service it [i.e., automation] wouldn't help us as much as the other groups. Because people want to talk to live bodies when it comes to a service problem. They want to be reassured, and they want to understand what they're doing before they go throw a switch that might blow the unit up. They don't want to just read about it, they want to actually talk to a live body (Neil, white man, 47).[38]

The need for 'live' or 'warm bodies' on the phone also was stressed by the other two coordinators, Lee and Karen:

> In the very beginning when we first started it, we never wanted the customer call and not get a warm body. So we let all the phones ring so everybody was trying to answer all the phones (Lee, white man, 44).

> There should always be a voice at that phone, in my opinion. . . When I call somewhere and I don't get a warm body on the end of that phone, and that's a customer service experience, I'm not real happy with that (Karen, white woman, 40).

For Lee and Karen, good service entailed having customers call a team representative and not getting a recording or a voice mail. The fact that they brought up this issue as they explained the phone conflict over who was responsible for the team's phone service (discussed earlier in this chapter), casts light not only on the gendered division of labor but also on the gendering of technological displacement. The jobs of the information group's women were safe for the time being as the team strove for greater customer consideration. Nevertheless, the fact that the phone service jobs can be described simply as ones that require a 'warm body' reveals their deskilled task content. These routinized, deskilled, and low-waged service jobs are most often held by women, who also are the most likely candidates for technological displacement.

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37 Management experts often take this idea to the extreme. For example, one consultant argues that companies should "exceed customer expectations, not merely meet them" (Scholtes, 1988: 5—48). Others describe how one company was able to surpass its competitors by refocusing its "customer service" into "customer obsession" (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993a: 67). Customer-orientation was definitely an important part of teamwork in all the case-study teams.

38 Notice also that Neil referred to the need to maintain 'live bodies' in his own group, the field service group, while he thought that the information service functions could be easily automated.

This had in fact taken place in the Eastern Alliance Special Projects team where voice mail now substituted "live" administrative assistants, as explained by Barbara, a systems analyst in the team:

> We don't have any administrative support, and it's kind of like if we want to have a meeting, who's gonna answer the phones. Little things like that, those are the little things that are...
>
> WHO DOES ANSWER YOUR PHONES WHEN YOU HAVE A MEETING?
>
> We have recently made an arrangement with the administrative personnel here to transfer calls to our voice mail. ... We used to not have voice mail because of a corporate decision, they didn't really want anyone to have voice mail ...
>
> WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS ?
>
> The CEO of the company felt like a real person should answer the phone at all times, which is a nice thing but it's not always feasible. It's better to get someone's voice mail than to let it ring twenty-five times and nobody get to it (Barbara, white woman, 43).

The decision of the Eastern Alliance bank that real bodies no longer were needed on the other end of the telephone line shows that telephone answering services are indeed displacing clerical tasks and jobs. This may, however, be happening more in the back offices where customers are internal than at the organizational boundaries where phone agents are serving external customers.

Thus far, I have argued that because of the deskilled nature of some clerical tasks, they are at greater risk of displacement by office automation whether or not they are integrated into a self-managing team. On a more pessimistic note, I also introduced the idea that perhaps, once a job is integrated into a cross-functional team, the members will learn to perform each others' jobs, thereby making each worker's contribution less unique and more replaceable. While I did not find support for this thesis in my data, an interview with a young woman in the Motorcol CSN team brought my attention to the issue of deskilling of individual tasks from the point of view of the worker. Tasks that the management views as deskilled and displaceable may be seen by the worker as a whole process in which every part is important. The following story highlights the way in which one team member regarded each individual task in her job as important for the whole job and challenged a supervisor's informal (and benevolent) attempt to 'rationalize' her work process.

Jean, an information associate in the CSN team, told a story about how her (and the team's) supervisor, in an effort to reduce her workload, attempted to prioritize some of her tasks as more or less important. She responded to him by protecting her job expertise:

> Ray [Motorcol's director of logistics] was trying to, when we were really stressed, he was trying to find one-minute ways to eliminate the stress in the workload. And I just sat down one day and I showed him what I did. And I said if I don't key in

this part number right, production is going to build the wrong motor and the customer is going to get what he doesn't want, an unsatisfied customer. I said, if we do not distribute the paperwork, then when production needs to find the file to see if something was approved, you know, we are not going to be able to find it. That's time lost in production that they could be building something. I said, if I don't check the region's work, if I don't go back to regions when they've entered their orders: did they priced them all? Will they not have to issue a credit because the customer is overcharged or they entered the wrong cable to go with [or did] they just mismatch the application? You know, every single part of our job is not something that you can just say, 'well, this isn't important; do away with it'.

He was just trying to find one-minute ways to be able to eliminate my work when every single part of my job right now is important. And I don't know how much is going to change when [the new computer system] comes up. I know the way Karen talks, a whole lot, but right now it's survival, until [the new system] comes up. And, 'you don't know what I do every day intimately, so don't give me one-minute suggestions that you have no idea what you are saying'... And I said, if you don't know every one of these processes, you don't know what you are talking about. And I said, I can't eliminate them. So, and I think that helped him realize that it's better not to say anything (laugh) than to come over and think that, to tell us [how to do our jobs]... (Jean, white woman, 24).

In addition to illustrating Jean's perception of her job as a whole process, I also wish to point out that while some nonskilled clerical jobs may be at risk for technological displacement--exemplified here by the director's views of unimportant tasks and the possible changes to result from a new computer system--workers can and do resist the manager's views. Jean's detailed account of the components of her job made it clear that she thought of herself as skilled in her job and decidedly more than a 'warm body' that could be displaced by a computer. Verbal challenges seldom override the organizational logic of profit maximization; however, this example shows the kind of informal resistance that often is not noticeable. To what extent being part of a team empowered Jean to resist her boss remains unclear. More research is needed to make conclusive statements about the empowering influence of teams.

Finally, following Acker's (1990, 1992) metaphor of the "disembodied universal worker" who actually is a man, I propose that the current "warm body" discourse reveals in turn a particularly embodied worker who is a woman. The proverbial "warm body" symbolizes the tension between, on the one hand, the imperative of service-sector companies to compete with better customer service, for example, by having women perform relational tasks and emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983). On the other hand, the companies are under pressure to cut employment costs with office automation. Therefore, the "warm body" featured at the intersection of these conflicting pressures is unmistakably a woman whose job has been rid of whole tasks and expert skills in a (more or less conscious) preparation for technological displacement.

4.5.3. Gender and the Construction of Technological Skills

[G]ender bias is clearly likely to result not only from the effects of segmentation of the labour force but also from the social construction of skill. In other words,

'new' social relations will continue to reproduce the situation in which women's skills are not recognized as any more than natural talents as well as the numerous social processes which divert women from mastery over technology (Jenson, 1989: 154-155).

Jane Jenson's remarks capture the tensions between the new flexible forms of work, such as work groups and teams, and the gendered construction of skills. In this section, I discuss how the process of gendered skill construction and maintenance played out in one specific team, the Motorcol Customer Support Network. The gendering of technological skills permeated the work environment in the CSN team. In addition to the engineers' reluctance to use feminized office technology such as fax machines or telephones, the team's work relations also were shaped by the gendered assumptions about technical skills. In a team of two all-male engineering groups, the female information associates felt pressured to show basic understanding of engines. While the women had learned some basic elements of engine design and were able to adequately communicate with the customers, they constantly encountered resistance and disbelief concerning their acquired knowledge. While the women did not assume they were technological experts, they were engaged in an uphill struggle to be considered capable of learning technical skills. In this process, technical knowledge and skills were actively protected and preserved as exclusively men's domain and the information jobs were consciously defined as entailing "people skills" (i.e., relational, emotional labor) or "language abilities." For example, Lee, the coordinator of the drafting engineers, pointed out the difficulty of working with "non-technical" women:

> The most difficult part that I have found is that being an engineer, most engineering departments are typically male-oriented and so there was a gender situation we had to overcome 'cause now we're working every day with a lot of females in an open setting, so it was a little more difficult to ... approach work with [women] team members because they function differently and they react differently and they don't always hear what you say and you don't always say the right things to pass along the information. So I think probably the most difficult thing was to get used to not only working with females but to be able, the terminology, the technical terminology, to get it to where they could understand it for the customers because the females that we work with are not technically oriented, they are information oriented (Lee, white man, 44).

These gendered beliefs about technical skill shaped the work of the information associates as well as their role in the team. Despite the fact that the women had learned to use technical terms to describe the engine designs, the engineers often dismissed their technological understanding of the product. While Ellen, an information associate, was enthusiastic about learning technical skills to enrich her job, she recognized the tension between using technical terms in her job and the engineers' gendered perceptions of technical skills.

> I can express myself and be taken seriously for what I am doing. I do however feel like, any time it comes into a technical discussion, ... when I am making a point that I know to be correct about a particular motor or like a customer wants a particular type of connector on it, they [the engineers] really have to see it in writing before they believe that that's what they [the customers] want. They are making it just go on my O.K. because I have said it, even though it's a customer I have been working

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with since I got here and I knew their product line inside out. And I know exactly what they have on the machines and why they need this certain type of connector. But I do find a little bit of that, that may just be, I can't really tell whether it is because I am a woman or if it is just because I am known to be technically weak, I am very honest about that (Ellen, white woman, 29).

Working in a male-dominated, technical area, the women were very careful not to inflate their ability to understand technological designs. They were very careful not to tread on the engineers' territory, which often strengthened the association of technical skills with masculinity. In fact, Jenson (1989) argues that gender segregation in technology is maintained also by women themselves. She claims that "women and men's identities tend to contain deep assumptions about what work is proper and possible for each gender," and that women's identities may often exclude "the notion that technical skill or familiarity with the machinery is feminine" (Jenson, 1989: 150). This could be one explanation for why the CSN women felt confident about their ability to handle basic technical questions while also assuring that "were not technical" or that they were "technically weak." Working in a team with eight male engineers, the women's budding understanding of the engines they were selling was seldom promoted. Furthermore, the level of cross-functional training that the team coordinators hoped to achieve--including the women's basic technical know-how and, to a lesser degree, the men's sharing in the information tasks--kept eluding the team.

Some women in the CSN turned their technical weakness into a chance to claim their other strengths. Although Karen, the team coordinator, was confident about the technical ability she had acquired throughout her years in the company, she also was quick to confess her limitations. In the end, however, she redefined her self-claimed technological weakness:

> You can't stay in this business long and not have some level of understanding about the product, and you have to go off and search for that. You know, you have to go off and hunt it. Because if you are not technical here, there is some training that's tailored to you, you know. But you have to be willing to go off and hunt that information and try to understand it and interpret it in the best way that you know how. Now I am limited, obviously very limited in what I can do technically, but it doesn't mean that I can't take what I understand technically and interpret that and bring it back into what the business needs are, what the business processes are. . . Maybe I don't understand the electronics, but I do understand the big picture; how that affects the business, how that affects the customer, how, you know, the technical changes in their product can affect the customer (Karen, white woman, 40).

Interestingly, Karen was able to redefine her skills not only as technically weak but as strong in the business side of the team endeavor. By redefining her technological weakness, she was able to challenge the definition of the information group as a purely administrative, non-technological (and thus less-valuable) unit.

To counter the masculinity of engineering, both Ellen and Karen suggested that a change in the team's sex composition might alter some deep-seated assumptions about femininity and technology. Ellen, for example, believed that a greater sex balance in all subgroups would change

the men's attitudes toward women.

> I think I would really ideally like to have a little more gender spread among the areas. Like I'd like to have two female engineers, and then, or female engineer and a male engineer, I mean a female draftsperson and a male draftsperson. . . And then I would love to have a male on our side of the wall. . . But it's so hard to find someone. I mean, most of the jobs I have held have been like this, on the phone every day running around gophering-type thing. And I have never worked with a man that wanted to work in that capacity. . .

> WHAT DO YOU THINK A FEMALE ENGINEER WOULD DO TO THE TEAM?

> Oh! I think it would be like a catalyst. Just to see a female in that capacity would wake some people up, you know, like the people who would call in and try to get her to track down Paul because he wasn't at his desk. We actually have some field engineers who are females and they've been with the company about a year or so. And I think, I have seen more account activity out of them than I have some of these guys who have been out in the field for 10 years. So you can really see the difference. . . They [the women engineers] just, they are really effective when people see them coming. They tend to want to sit and listen to whatever they [the women engineers] say. You can see the dynamic. I am not usually part of the meetings when they are coming and quoting a large project but, you know, all eyes are on them for their answers. That's a really interesting thing to watch (Ellen, white woman, 29).

> As far as limiting my ability and being recognized for what it is I know and I'm capable of doing here, I don't think gender has a role in that at all. I think it is more of the technical side of it; that's where we have our limitations. We don't have a lot of women in the technical side. We have a lot of women in the service side of the business, but not in the technical side. It is difficult to recruit and there are very few women that are actually going to engineering schools still today (Karen, white woman, 40).

The comments of Ellen and Karen reflect the masculine culture of technology. These women evidently believed that the masculinized organizational culture of Motorcol as well as the CSN team could be addressed by adding a female engineer to the team.

In this section, I have briefly described some ways in which the gendered division between technical skills and "language skills" (i.e., relational skills) perpetuated a gendered task division in the CSN team. It also raised barriers for the kind of cross-functional task sharing that would recognize the information group's ability to handle basic technological knowledge and engage the engineers in administrative duties (phone calls, faxes, etc.). This level of cross-functional task sharing would have been desirable for the information group, but not very attractive to the engineers, many of whom made it clear they did not care to learn or perform administrative

tasks.[39] This deepened the team's gendered task division and maintained the devaluation of the information tasks.

The construction of technology as masculine emerged as a gendered process particularly in the Motorcol CSN team. In the other three teams, technical skills were not as salient as in this manufacturing team, with the exception of the Eastern Alliance Special Projects team. In the Special Projects team, all team members, women and men, performed technological functions. The technical skills required in their work, such as software development and assistance with personal computers, ensured, at least on the surface, that the women were seen as equally capable to handle technical tasks.[40] Of course, as I discussed above, the fact that some men in the Special Projects team still regarded answering the phones as a feminine secretarial task illustrates that even in the context of more masculinized (or non-feminized) occupations, women's defining characteristic continued to be their gender.

4.5.4. Conclusion: Gendered Technology

The second part focused on the ways in which assumptions about gender embedded in office automation and the construction of technical skills devalued women's contributions, especially in teams where men held technical jobs. I also found that the attempt of some teams to automate and displace devalued (feminine) tasks potentially a gendered process. However, more research is needed to draw conclusions about whether teams will protect men's more than women's jobs from automation and displacement.

Thus far, I have identified those processes that produced and reproduced gender divisions in the case study teams. Next, I explore a practice which, instead of dividing the team members, helped create a sense of unity among them.

4.6. Team Space: A Promise of Gender Unity?

The goal of unity that underlies the self-managing team movement has significant spatial implications for work organizations. The fact that teams need a place to meet and interact has prompted managers to reorganize the office floor to accommodate teamwork. In this section, I explore the physical office transformation from the point of view of 'gendered spaces' (Spain, 1992). I will show how team-oriented spatial arrangements created a sense of unity among team members and how a shared workspace helped, to an extent, 'demasculinize' the office.

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39 It would seem logical that the information group's women would find cross-functional task sharing to serve their interests; for example, to gain a more valued position in the team. Paul, for example, had noticed the women's preference for cross-functional task sharing:

> The women in the group tend to believe in more cross-functionalism. [They believe in], I guess, more of a democratic sort of dynamic for the team and the men tend to believe in a specific functions for team members, kind of a "cubby hole" type thing (Paul, white man, 37).

40 Even so, the women's tasks dealt more with software (mainframe computers) while the men dealt with both hardware and software (PCs).

A team-oriented office design affects gendered power relations as it aims at allocating team members equal-size workspaces and stripping (often male) managers of their closed-door privacy. In fact, developing the team-based office layout emerged, in this study, as a challenge to many traditional and gendered status symbols. First, I will examine the notion of gendered space and illustrate how spatial design can reproduce gendered power relations in work organization. After discussing the team members' experiences with working in a "team space," I briefly reflect upon the possibility for physical design to address gendered processes in teams.

4.6.1. Gender, Hierarchy, and Office Design

The physical separation of women and men that results from occupational sex segregation produces and reproduces 'gendered spaces' (Hanson and Pratt, 1995; Spain, 1992). In an occupationally sex-segregated labor market, the majority of women and men work in separate industries and organizations. Furthermore, spatial sex-segregation occurs also within the same company when women and men who hold the same job title work in different locations (Baron and Bielby, 1985: 240). The impact of spatial sex-segregation on gender relations at the workplace constitutes a complex process which also shapes women's opportunities at work. Working in a gender-segregated space limits women's access to valued knowledge, resources, and power, thereby reproducing organizational gender stratification (Spain, 1992).

Spatial expressions of organizational gender hierarchy are typical for many contemporary offices. In the average white-collar office, secretaries and clerical employees (most of whom are women) work in easily accessible, open areas while managers and supervisors sit behind closed doors. The ability to control one's workspace and, particularly, to limit others' access are valued highly in an open-plan office. As Daphne Spain (1992: 218) points out, "higher status within an organization is accompanied by greater control of space." A poignant example of the link between status and work space comes from Jennifer Pierce's (1995) description of the spatial hierarchy of a law firm:

> [S]enior partners are located in large corner offices with unencumbered views of the San Francisco Bay. ... Associates are signed to smaller and simpler offices, ranging from modest offices with windows to those without. ... By contrast, in the female-dominated strata of paralegals and legal secretaries, office space and decor are determined primarily by functional requirements, and privacy is minimal (Pierce, 1995: 32-33).

Moreover, others have found that "architectural privacy," that is, the visual and acoustic isolation of a workspace, is strongly associated with job satisfaction across occupational categories and levels (Sundstrom, Burt, and Kamp, 1980; Hatch, 1990).

An open office layout is also a visual control mechanism that enables supervisors to monitor their subordinates. Resembling an inverted prison panopticon (Foucault, 1977), in which guards in the middle survey prisoners in cells against the wall, women in clerical jobs are subjected to both visual and auditory surveillance as they are seated in the middle and surrounded by managers (see also Pierce, 1995: 34). Even in cases where secretaries have a 'private' office with a door, that door is often made of glass, enabling visual surveillance. Because of their lower rank, secretaries in private offices remain subjected to uncontrolled visits by higher ranking managers (Spain, 1992:

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214, 220).

Not surprisingly, the physical layout of the three organizations I studied resembled this "typical office." Entering the Eastern Alliance Operation Center (or Omni Insurance and Motorcol, for that matter, since all three were quite alike), I encountered large open areas that were divided into smaller segments. Those segments were further divided into distinct units with removable walls of various heights. On one floor, for example, the majority of the work areas and desks were fully visible throughout the floor space. Aside from the employees' personal paraphernalia, the individual workspaces were distinguished only by the height of their walls, which also symbolized a place in the organizational hierarchy: the lower the level of the employee, the lower were her or his cubicle walls.

Interestingly, areas designated for teams often co-existed on the same open floor with other clerical employees. For instance, at Eastern Alliance, instead of being fully visible (like the clerical workers on the same floor), a team had a designated work area enclosed by higher walls. The Special Project team was located on a large open floor, which was organized according to job categories. The team, along with other managers, worked behind a high cubicle that surrounded a clerical area with low walls. The members of the Special Projects were clearly separated from the rest of the floor and shared a small common area with a round table.

The spatial organization of the other teams roughly followed this principle. The Motorcol CSN team also worked in cubicles that were organized around a common area with a large middle table that was used for team meetings, lunches, and other informal gatherings. While at Omni Insurance, only a few City County team members worked in the same Omni branch, the team's off-site meetings provided a confined physical space for uninterrupted teamwork. Among the four case-study teams, only the Employee Credit team lacked a common team area. Instead, the team members sat in two parallel groups divided by a wall and without individually separated work spaces. The team leader and the coach were seated on the side of the room, in high-wall cubicles (visibility was not necessary as monitoring was done through phone calls).

The team-oriented layout in the site organizations (although mixed with the conventional open-floor pattern) demonstrates how the transformation toward high-performance systems also is changing the physical design of the white-collar workplace.[41] Private offices that once reflected high position in the organizational hierarchy are being transformed into cubicles in which status and rank are not visible. In the insurance industry, for example, the team-based office environment reflects both a reintegration of the work process and a reduction of signs of rank: "the walls of private offices have been torn down and managers, professionals, and clericals work side by side in shoulder-high cubicles" (Baran and Teegarden, 1987: 209).

In team lingo, reducing various signs of rank implies more egalitarian team relations. Becker and

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[41] An interesting, corporate-induced reconfiguration of "public" and "private" space was brought up by Jean, a member of the Motorcol CSN team. Jean mentioned that amidst the phone controversy (described earlier in this chapter), Motorcol management had considered placing telephones into the bathrooms in order to improve customers' access to the team members. While that had not occurred, the fact that the management deliberated such an idea illustrates how spatial arrangements are consciously manipulated in order to better serve the goals of corporate capitalism.

Steele (1995: 16), for example, argue that the "high-performance" (or "total workplace") office design speaks the language of "teams and teamwork, of minimal status and hierarchy, of a concern for the dignity and comfort of an entire staff, of a belief that an enriching environment ultimately benefits the company." They also advocate reorganizing previously single function-oriented spaces to accommodate multi- and cross-functional teamwork. Since facilitating information flow is critical for the "high-performance" organization, teams should be designated a common work area where everyone can see and hear each other and talk freely in the course of the workday. An open layout, team advocates believe, fosters creativity, equality, and, most of all, efficiency (Becker and Steele, 1995; see also Hamada, 1996).

4.6.2. Physical Space and Gender Relations in Self-Managing Teams

Evidence from the four self-managing teams suggests that a team-based office design could indirectly enhance gender equality in teamwork, at least to the degree that it involves removing the many symbols of status mentioned above. In all four teams, members commented on the benefits of physical proximity for increasing interaction. However, while many women saw the community-building potential as a positive development, men focused on the lack of privacy in their open access cubicles. It was particularly clear that men who in their previous positions had worked in private offices regarded the open-access cubicle as a symbol of limited power and control. Therefore, the transformation from private offices into team-based areas implies that organizations are changing from masculinized and individualized spatial arrangements toward less masculine--and perhaps "degendered"--workspaces.

For many of the men I interviewed, a doorless office meant working in high noise levels and being exposed to others. For example, the Special Projects team leader, John, complained about "too much white noise" in his doorless cubicle. Similarly, Richard, the Employee Credit team coach, had to get used to the new office environment where "there was no privacy." Other men across the Eastern Alliance and Motorcol teams also remarked that they experienced difficulties with working in a space that was exposed to everyone:

> As far as like privacy in our area, you could tell, I mean we're like all bunched up in a small area, there is none. Pretty much you can hear anything by anybody says on the phone, but again you're on the phone yourself, so, you know there is not much privacy. If you do any negotiations, somebody can hear you and say, "Hey, you know, why did you offer them that?" And that'll happen (Chuck, white man, 25, Eastern Alliance Employee Credit team).

> This is very different for me, having people around. And you've seen where I sit. I'm in the middle of a floor with, you know, literally hundreds of people in view if I sit up and look around. That was real different, because I was used to a private office, floor to ceiling, walls, wall of windows. I could look outside and see what's going on. And all of a sudden I'm in this big room with hundreds of other people. You can't even blow your nose in private (Mike, white man, 46, Eastern Alliance Special Projects team).

> I like the high cubes, because it cuts down on some of the noise from out on the floor, but sometimes if I want to talk to somebody, I'd like to just say, 'Hello,' or

ask them a question without having to yell (Mel, white man, 32, Eastern Alliance Special projects team).

I guess, probably, the type of thing that took most getting used to was the physical environment, the open...you know, before I'd been working in a closed cubicle many many years. It's quite a change, particularly for my area because it's open to the big hallway, everybody coming down the hallway (Vernon, white man, 50, Motorcol CSN team).

[D]istracting, like in an office environment, it's pretty distracting a lot of times, people are always just wandering through and striking up a conversation with someone and I can't help overhearing everything (Keith, white man, 30, Motorcol CSN team).

Among other things, the men's comments reveal their discomfort with losing control over their immediate workspace. Some of them, such as Mike, also felt uneasy about being visible to everyone on the floor. Their experiences illustrate the changes in the previously masculine office space: private offices have been a privilege of higher level workers who were predominantly men. This privilege, however, no longer existed in a team space.

Mike's seating arrangement in the Special Projects team also warrants closer examination for another reason. While the other members worked in high-walled cubicles in a common team area, Mike, who had joined the team only recently, sat outside the team space, at the edge of an open clerical area that seated mostly women. The feminization of his workspace was therefore evident and signified a loss of status from his earlier position in another company.

I'm not in the little pod where, where the other six [team members] are. I guess it wasn't worth rearranging all the furniture. John [the team leader] was concerned up front that maybe I felt left out of a lot of things. And, yeah, you do have some isolation; that you can't just turn around in your chair and see somebody you work with and talk to them. It would be nice to be in the group but it doesn't really affect my performance, I don't think. I understand it's a physical limitation of where the offices are and everything changes and in six months, we're all going to be some place else probably. So ... I don't have my 13-foot wall and floor-to-ceiling windows any more. I don't have my private office (Mike, white man, 46).

Mike's isolation from the team was exacerbated by the fact that the seating arrangement in the Special Projects team supported close interaction among the other men who sat together. The only woman who shared the men's space was Victoria, the other two women were separated from the men by a cubicle wall. In fact, Victoria was aware of her anomalous presence in the masculine space:

What happened was...I wanted one of the windows. John and Barbara beat me to the windows. So, I didn't want [a place] on the very front. So they placed me in the last spot. And I think Gary had a choice... But I really, deep down I really believe that if John could work it out, and not have flack coming from me or anybody else, he would move Mike back there. And all the guys would be

together. Deep down I feel that. I really do (Victoria, black woman, 46).

These experiences show some ways in which organizational spatial arrangements are gendered. Working in a common area without the ability to secure a private space signified a loss of status especially for those men who had had to move from a private to a 'public' office. Women, on the other hand, either were used to the lack of privacy (primarily at the lower tiers) or regarded the proximity to men as an opportunity for team-building. In fact, women who commented on the spatial arrangements[42] viewed the mixed-gender work environment as conducive to informal interaction. For example, some women in the Employee Credit team talked about getting better acquainted with their team colleagues.

> I am getting to know the other four [team members]... You hear them on the phone, so you know what they are like. So it's, it's getting to know all of them now (Maryanne, white woman, 37).

> I was sitting in our mini team, we could hear a lot of their conversation, and we communicated across the wall. There was poor Chuck, the only guy. Sometimes when we had a tendency to be talking about what we're going to be cooking for dinner and things about the kids, and Chuck would go, "Alright, alright! I've heard enough about the menu. You're making me hungry" (Shelley, white woman, 44).

Shelley also praised the cubicle system for providing an open access to the team leader.

> The people that we are working with now, Richard and Dianne, the fact that they're in a cube and have no door is a perfect analogy because their door is always open. And I don't care whether it's before working, during the day, or after hours, I've talked to both of them about situations that I needed another opinion on (Shelley, lender, white woman, 44).

A common team area also provided a setting for informal discussions. They were often used for chatting and taking lunch or coffee breaks, during which the members came together to discuss both work and private matters.

> [A]t lunch, we always eat at the table... There is about the same ones of us that always sit there and sometimes we'll talk about work, and sometimes Paul is there and we'll talk about stuff that's so far off the wall, we don't even know how the conversation got started. But that's are really big stress reliever. . . And I think that helps us. We don't have daily meetings together as a team as a whole. But I think that's our meeting time; you know, it's real informal, it's just, you know we get our

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42 The team members' comments I use to illustrate the gendering (and degendering) of space emerged without solicitation from the interviews. If a respondent made a comment concerning the team space, I often probed about their experiences. However, my interview protocol did not include direct questions about workspace. In fact, I only began paying attention to spatial dimensions of gender and teams after two men during the first site visit at Eastern Alliance brought up their sentiments about their loss of the closed-door privacy. It could be that women in clerical and service work were accustomed to the open office plan and therefore did not bring it up as readily as the men who had experienced a change in their environment.

lunches out and just talk about whatever we wanna talk about...that's the most
enjoyable time, 'cause we do talk about work sometimes at lunch but sometimes
we won't (Jean, white woman, 24, Motorcol CSN team).

There have been times when almost everybody ended up in the middle round
coffee pot for few minutes in the morning, chatting about nothing specific (Barbara,
white woman, 43, Eastern Alliance Special Projects team).

In fact, the close spatial arrangements had more or less influenced the Special Projects team's
decision to forgo team-wide meetings. Because they sat together, as Barbara and Victoria
commented, team members were able to keep abreast of each others' projects:

Now we don't meet quite as often but it's not unusual that we're hollering back and
forth across the cube, which we hardly ever used to do, or that two or three people
are sitting at the round table in the middle and talking through something or trying
to figure out the schedule of who's gonna take care of something... (Barbara, white
woman, 43, Eastern Alliance Special Projects team).

Through interaction daily, we pick up on what each other needs to know. In that
little closed environment, you know, because we're so close together – in a close
environment, we can pick up on things (Victoria, black woman, 46, Eastern
Alliance Special Projects team).

The opportunity for informal team-building was particularly critical for the Omni City County
team since most of the members met face-to-face only once a month (see description in Ch. 3).
Their monthly meetings were held on the grounds of a famous golf resort (which undoubtedly
reflected the relatively high profile of the team). These off-site meetings were, however, a constant
point of controversy in the Omni organization, to the extent that some members felt pressured to
move them back to the Omni office. Despite the fact that team-outsiders at Omni did not approve
of team meetings at a golf resort, the members swore by the opportunity to immerse themselves in
their work without disruptions.

When we were [meeting] in an office setting, those individuals that worked in that
office always had to get up and go take a phone call, had to attend this little piece of
the meeting, and that's going to disrupt our performance, our focused performance
(Martha, white woman, 36).

[We received] a lot of insensitivity and I'd say animosity from other areas of the
organization because our meetings were being held off-site. And the only reason
we started holding meetings off-site was, the issues were so many, the work
involved in team building, what we were trying to do was to create and form a
team. And at the same time, this team had to resolve problems that were coming.
That the only way we found we can do it was to seclude ourselves for three days
(Angelo, Hispanic man, 38).

We try to choose an area with a pleasant surrounding, so that members can relax.
They understand going into it that they are in for two-day marathon. They used to

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be three days. And we normally start at 8:30 [am], usually go to 5:00 [pm] and later. Some times we work till 9:00 at night--depends on the work we have to do. So we want a comfortable environment because people are going to be in a room all day (Brad, white man, 36).

But part of the bonding of the team was because we had no place to go. We had to, I mean everybody could go to their room and sit there and watch TV, or we could get together and actually get to know each other. And I think that was probably, that's something that the people who were at the meeting, who were saying "you shouldn't go off-site," don't get. ... Other than outside the room, we don't have any place to go. ... It's not uncommon for us to decide not to stop and order some pizzas and work until 9 o'clock at night (Margaret, white woman, 54).

The off-site meetings provided a clear spatial separation between teamwork and other daily duties of the members and thus enhanced their ability to fully concentrate on work. It was an opportunity that most members regarded as essential for team success. In addition, the remote location allowed team members to meet informally, albeit work-related debates often continued during dinners. During a post-meeting dinner I attended, the members told stories about all-night celebrations and maintained that informal gatherings enhanced their team spirit and work effectiveness. Margaret, who organized the meeting accommodations, also noted that meeting in an informal setting reduced the anxiety of speaking up and expressing one's view during the meeting.

You can see everybody gets more comfortable. And when you have that comfort, you can be more productive because it's not this constant brain drain. ... I have always found that if you meet in a comfortable area, you are going to get a lot more done than if you sit in a straight back chair around this table. Even if you are very formal, you speak very formally, you're not to say what you really mean. And that's why it's openness, it's everybody sitting in their living room. Here in the living room you are the kings or the queens as the case may be (Margaret, white woman, 54).

My observations during a two-day meeting support the members' testimonies. The 'living- room' meeting environment allowed for an unusual level of intimacy among the members, which encouraged direct talk, a free expression of views, as well as humor. The meetings also included intense debates during which individuals stood up, walked out of the room, or moved onto the side couch. In this process women were able to both speak up and assert their expertise. However, as I discuss in Ch. 5, their outspokenness was often interpreted within a gendered framework. Therefore, while the confined team space created an *opportunity* for greater gender equality, the City County team members may not have realized it to its fullest.

4.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I hoped not only to identify gendered processes in teamwork, but also to document practices that may offer opportunities for reversing persistent gender divisions. It appears that the gender division of tasks I documented in the first part reflects the various occupational- and institutional-level gendering processes that are simply reflected and reproduced by gender divisions

in teams. To challenge these structural gender divisions, organizations would have to address this problem directly and actively. It is unlikely that self-managing teams will have an equalizing effect on gender relations without structural changes, such as assigning female-dominated occupations higher value and greater wages.

The potential unifying effects that spatial arrangements can bring to teams show that teams can overcome some divisions by physically working in the same space. However, the practice of sharing a team space suggests, at the most, an indirect effect on gender relations: "degendering" resulted from men 'losing' their private offices, rather than from a deliberate attempt of the team or the organization to foster gender equality in teams. It is possible that by increasing face-to-face interaction among men and women, teams could facilitate cross-gender alliances. It also is possible that spatial arrangements have no effect on gender relations as interaction among men and women can remain gendered in spite of increased contact. In the next chapter, I take on the issue of gendered interaction and discuss how gender shaped the daily exchanges in the four self-managing teams.