Visions of Professional:
Traveling Ideas, Gendered Globalization and the Corporate Workplace in Hungary

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ABSTRACT

This thesis situates women's experiences with professional presentation in the corporate workplace into the on-going debate about heterogeneity, globalization, and in the ways in which imported ideas are localized. Building on Appadurai's notion of disjuncture in the global economy (1996), I argue using comparative ethnographic research at two corporations in post-state socialist Budapest, Hungary that corporate brands and values are localized at the level of the imagination. I use a feminist Foucaldian lens to illustrate how pleasure in the internalization of corporate culture and brands as manifested in attire serves to compensate for institutional inequalities by promoting engagement with fantasies of Western individualism, beauty, and equality. However, the imagination encourages corporeal self-disciplining. I argue that the imagination provides an important point-of-entry into understanding heterogeneity with respect to internalized negotiations of complex, oscillating class and gender power relationships. My research on the use of the imagination by Hungarian professional women in corporations brings a new, nuanced dimension to the debate on whether women are passive recipients or active resisters of top-down patriarchal policy within institutional settings.

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CHAPTER 1: DISJUNCTURE, FLOW AND GENDER

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A typical scholarly response to the on-going debate concerning globalization is that heterogeneity exists in the ways in which imported ideas are localized. In attempt to thicken an international application of this theory, in this thesis I argue that too much celebration of disjuncture within the global cultural economy runs the risk of glossing over ongoing, shifting power relations in institutionalized gender and class relations. Indeed, when ideas travel novel meanings are often grafted onto the same-old-same-old (Appadurai, 1996). Aspects of my thesis illustrate of this process insofar as my research suggests the ways in which Hungarian women in Budapest use "sexiness" as a localized interpretation of multinational asexual corporate dress codes. However, my data demonstrates that the mobilization of the imagination does more than just localizing imported ideas. A feminist Foucaldian lens to shows that pleasure emerges in the internalization of corporate culture and brands, and this compensates for institutional inequalities. Further, pleasure in self-disciplining and identification with the corporate brands makes way for the development of new social-class identities and allows a more fluid, internalized negotiation of complex, oscillating class and gender relationships. The on-going reconciliation of power within self-identification results in a twisting of trademarked corporate identity into something specific to this local context and moment in time.

To begin this discussion of power, identity and the body in the setting of globalization, I conceptualize these theoretical considerations drawing on a sociologically rich reading of two corporate settings. My study roots in research on women and attire in the professional workplace. The initial guiding question of my research is: how do Hungarian professional women working at multinational corporations in Budapest negotiate gendered codes of conduct with their attire? This question taps into the familiar subject facing working

women: dress too feminine and not be taken seriously, dress too masculine and risk being found unattractive. Implicitly written into their responses are the persuasive corporate social standards that affect how women discipline their bodies in order be accepted as professional in their specific workplace. As organizational communication researchers in the United States have argued, organizational discourses often perpetuate gender discrimination and gendered inequities in the workplace (Pierce, 1997; Staudt, 1994; Berryman-Fink, 1997 and Buzzanell, 1994, cited in Trethewey, 1999).

I investigate how local reinterpretation of attire standards at multinational corporations is not just a resistance to the global economy, but in fact inserts professional women into complex networks of historical, professional, and imagined landscapes overwrought in power dynamics. The responses of the women indicate that a Foucaldian notion of self-disciplining is taking place, and this research provides a useful complication to Appadurai's suggestive work on "scapes" and the use of imagination and fantasy in cultural flows of globalization. Thus at one level the details of this analysis provide a descriptive example of what he proposes about inevitable disjunctures involved in globalization. However, I also show that this heterogeneity is occurring within complicated power arrangements that involve complacent corporeal self-disciplining.

My research took place in Budapest, Hungary, a unique landscape to identify gendered aspects of globalization since the collapse of state socialism resulted in different consequences for men and women (Gal, 2000: 3). Additionally, the top-down authoritarian power that characterized state-socialism is now replaced with discourse of neo-liberal capitalism and democracy promoting the rise of the individual through consumption (McRobbie, 2004). Such discourse provides space for the rewriting of class and gender distinctions through individualism and consumption (True, 2003). Therefore my research on gendered heterogeneity in response to imported ideas gives a possibility of understanding the

impacts of gender and class using the imagination in other states that have recently undergone or are undergoing socio-political and economic policy shifts.

I construct my argument through a comparative study of professional women working at two multinational corporations in Budapest. Using their responses to questions about professionalism and attire in the workplace, I argue that the integration of global multinational companies in Hungary intersects with women's identity on two levels: within specific power structures which multinational corporations dictate, and within their imaginations. This second point makes up the bulk of my thesis, as I show how the imagination works on rewriting the traveling corporate identity onto the body through employer brand identification, attire choice, and self-disciplining and pleasure.

I illustrate my thesis using a post-structural feminist approach to understanding the disciplined body in institutional settings. I point to the eager identification my interviewees have with their employers' corporate brands. It is here that the redefinition of corporate standards takes place — the Hungarian corporate look is more feminine, brighter and there is a strong aversion to the standardized navy-blue suit that is often connected to capitalist expansion. My research provides an illustration of what effects and contributes to women's choices of clothing within institutional settings; it is an intense mix of fashion, "sexiness," and desire for "individualism" and "personality" vis-à-vis the corporate brand which consequently does complicate notions of heterogeneity in globalization.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

I conducted twenty-two interviews with 18 women and four men. Using a "snowball" technique to identify interviewees, I did five individual interviews at local café's in Budapest which lasted around 45 minutes; I conducted two phone interviews; and I moderated two focus groups at General Electric (GE) and L'Oreal which each lasted two hours and took place at the respective corporate campuses. All interviews were in English. Further, I tape-

recorded the interviews and transcribed them verbatim so to include the nuances of the interviewee's language in this thesis.

The majority of my analysis concentrates on comparing the similarities between the two focus groups which consisted of between five and eight female participants. Focus groups have benefits and drawbacks. Because I was interacting with the women for a short period of time and also at their place of work, I risked hearing them "reproduce 'familiar tasks'" since participants interviewed on-site often regurgitate familiar discourses (Silverman, 1993: 96). However, I took this as an opportunity to explore such discourses and their normalizing effects as well as make use of the benefit of observing interaction between focus group participants (Marshall and Rossman, 1999: 115) For my research purposes, the value of focus group interviews lies in this: the interaction between the interviewees, the spontaneity of responses, the shared glances that disclose taboos and reinforce workplace culture, and the unpredictable — all of which make for most revealing aspects of lived realities.

I am a traveler in Hungary, a visitor and a foreigner. This lens allows me to see patterns and activities from the perspective of an outsider. I conduct myself as a researcher in a similar fashion. I am a traveler, which can limit any "insiders" capacity to understand situations and histories as a native would, and therefore my foreignness also increases the possibility that I could unintentionally intrude rudely into people's lives. Furthermore, there is the language barrier, I only speak elementary Hungarian. I realized as I conducted my interviews that there was a wide margin left open for misunderstanding, confusion, and hesitation between my interviewees and me. Overall, I will try to embrace with honesty my imperfections as a researcher and thus this paper includes my occasional wide-eyed wonderings which emerged as I meandered, albeit briefly, through my interviewees' professional landscapes. Arlie Hochschild points out that there is no escape from subjectivity.

"[It] shapes what we expect and wish," (2003: 6). As such, there will be moments within this paper that I diverge from the traditional stance as a researcher and incorporate my own impressions, utilizing the subjective first-person as a point-of-entry into my analysis. It was not a long trip, but it was full of stories and impressions which I hope to share here with the utmost sensitivity as I am possibly able.

CHAPTER 2: IMAGINED IDENTITIES WRITTEN ON THE BODY

Identities are fabricated through social practices and discourses. This process is not just learning to chew with your mouth closed or cross your legs when wearing a skirt (though physical behavior is key to our experiences as gendered, classed, raced beings), the normalization processes involve cultural assumptions about appropriate attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and it involves our identification with and acceptance of those same attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. I address both aspects of human identity — the complexity of the imagination and the adornment of the physical body — to explain how within a framework of globalization, heterogeneity in the corporate professional dress emerges and what the theoretical implications of this are.

I draw on the work of Althusser ([1969] 1971) and Bourdieu (1984) through which I will build upon feminist Foucaldian (1975) notions of discipline, power, and body (Bordo, 1993a/b), and Appadurai's (1996) "scapes" that describe the function of imagination in the world global cultural economy. Together these theorists will be of assistance in the conceptualization what and how corporate branding intersects with the imagination, how it looks, how it is gendered, and how this adds a gendered dimension to globalization theory, social theory, and post-structuralist philosophy in an international context.

According to Althusser ([1969] 1971), ideology is a set of beliefs that we live by. Althusser dismisses the Marxist notion of "false consciousness," of reality and argues that an

independent reality exists but cannot be experienced because of the intervention of ideology ([1969] 1971, 142-5, 162-77). So subjects do not have a 'false consciousness' as much as an illusion of freedom that they learn within specific constructs. Ultimately, ideology "represents the imaginary relationship of the individuals to their real conditions of existence" (56), where these imaginary representations do control, because they produce the subject to control him/her self.

The imaginary representations are manifested in "material existence" (57) which are agencies of reproduction for which Althusser coins the term Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). ISAs are productive ritual-based social organizations which "produce in people the tendency to behave and think in socially acceptable ways" (Fiske, 1992: 284-326 cited in Garner, 1999: 3). ISAs include: education, religion, the family, law, politics, trading, unions, forms of communication, and cultural traditions. According to Althusser ideology bleeds into all forms of life and living, understanding and choice. ISA's are the handmaidens of ideology and through which subjects become subjects. We are all governed — in fact, we self-govern — and live out this governance through rituals of ISA: "you and I are *always already* subjects" ([1969] 1971: 59, italics his). Cultural rituals include daily processes such as dressing, shopping, cooking, working, and talking with friends and colleagues. These are the processes which thereby interpolate or "hail" individuals. It does so "in such a way that the subject responds: 'yes, it really is me!' if it obtains from them the recognition that they really do occupy the place it designates for them as theirs in the world, a fixed residence.... it obtains from them the recognition of a destination" (Althusser, [1969] 1971: 166).

In the first chapter of my analysis, "Ideoscapes," I compare and contrast how employees at GE and L'Oreal interpolated aspects of the corporate identity by considering how employees are "hailed" in their imaginations by the attractive characteristics of the corporate brands for whom they work with their attire. The women use their imaginations to

not just to make sense of their low wages or an unequal workplace, but they use imagination as a conduit for self-design of self within these structures of corporate branding, patriarchal relations and fashion; by rethinking their experiences in the workplace as something pleasurable, they tap into larger collective visions of success and meaning.

To describe this I'll build upon Appadurai's concept of the "imagination as a social practice" (1996: 31), which he argues in the globalized modern world, imagination is not just a fantasy, or escape or elitist pastime, but in fact an organized field of social practice which takes place throughout the complex flows in globalization (ibid). One illustration he provides for his theory that heterogeneity of material consumption is at the level of the imagination is the fact that Philippine renditions of American popular songs are more widespread than in America (ibid: 29), they have a nostalgia without any memory; the Filiopinos are engaging at the level of imagination with a memory of a world that they have never actually been a part of.[1] As a social practice, Appadurai argues that imagination is in fact laced through all undulating globalizing flows, which he gives the "-scapes" suffix to denote the supple and flexible nature of such streams: *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes* and *ideoscapes*, the last being the point I will extrapolate on to discuss how desire and imagination intersect with consumption of imported goods and values for women in professional work. Appadurai claims that since the imagination is a new social order, we all live in "imagined worlds" (ibid: 33), and therefore there is a high susceptibility to get tangled up in global marketing campaigns that cleverly convince consumers to believe they are actors in charge when in fact they are choosers at best (ibid: 42). My thesis points builds on his claim that materiality and consumption is affected by imagination, because I bring up how gender and power relations affect these imagined worlds.

[1] Appadurai cites Fredric Jameson's "nostalgia for the present" (1989, cited on, ibid: 30).

Fundamental to any discussion of the body and its adornments is social positioning. As my interviewees told me repeatedly, money is of great consideration when purchasing clothing, though I will show it is not the only consideration. That said, as anyone familiar with *Pride and Prejudice* knows, money cannot buy good taste. In this vein, Bourdieu's claim that in fact " 'taste' is bourgeois since it presupposes freedom of choice and only those with out lack have freedom to choose" (1984: 177) is useful. Reading him against my interviewees vocal desires to "be an individual" or "show personality" through consumption of attire and identification with ideas is particularly interesting given the historical context of Hungary. Just a decade ago, the market defined its fashion through deficiency. As such, Bourdieu's understanding of how the social practices in general, and material taste in particular, discipline the body are in fact indicators of social status on multiple levels. Thus I add new dimension to his claim by looking at how my interviewees redefine their social status by emphasizing "sexiness" and femininity through identification in the brands they work for.

In my second chapter, entitled "Sexiness," I again use a comparative framework to further discuss how the women's disciplined adornment of bodies exemplifies heterogeneity within globalizing, imported ideas, and however the form of disciplining that the women employ upon their bodies is also from a Foucaldian perspective, pleasurable. Basing my analysis on the claim that culture directly "grips" us, I extrapolate how lived bodily experiences are mediated through self-surveillance bodily discipline which in facts traps minds into a cycle of disciplining (Bordo, 1993a: 16). Stretching the concept of Althusser's ISA's further, Foucaldian terms explains how routine behaviors, particularly for women, such as putting on makeup, diet, exercise, and dress in effect render the body 'docile.' Bordo bases her theory on Foucault's conception of modern (as opposed to sovereign) power. Where power is productive though importantly, repressive as well, and not something that people

have per se, nor is it administered by some grand wizard or ontological essence, but in fact is the on-going result of "multiple processes of different and scattered origin" (2003b: 191). As a result, power is inherent in selfhood and manifested in how individuals conceptualize themselves and subsequently behave. Specifically, individuals react within streams of power by self-correcting to them. This is not a claim that power is ever evenly distributed, which is something that I will illustrate further in this thesis, in fact it is quite the opposite: power it is a non-linear flow that circumscribes a world uneven in attitude, histories and positioning. No one is outside of power processes, and since the administration of power is within individual's selfhood and behavior is productive, it is hidden because it is pleasurable.

Bordo's theory rests upon research on anorexic and bulimic women in the United States (US) who self-monitor their lives in order to fit into hegemonic standards of bodily beauty.[2] However, ways that power is manifested on the body are not universal. For example, Azhgiklina and Goscilo argue that women in Soviet Russia wanted to look stylish, do up their hair and wear make-up because it was arguably the only means to self-expression, and therefore a form of resistance to, not only expressions of, Soviet standards of body (1996: 107). Bodies reflect the socio-political landscapes they are produced in, so wearing make-up in one place can mean something quite different than wearing make-up in another (ibid). Desire for beauty products manifested as overdone, "provincial" imitation of Western fashion against the disillusion of gender equality and unattractiveness of uniformity under communism (Drakulic, 1993: 26). In this thesis, I show how recent political history crosses with the likelihood self-disciplining in order to achieve the look of an "individual" which is done through looking "sexy" and identifying with the corporate brand.

[2] Bordo makes very clear that only *some* women develop eating disorders. This is because while everyone is subjected to the same "homogenizing and normalizing images and ideologies concerning 'femininity' and the 'female body'" we are not all exposed to the same environments; therefore how we respond to these images differs based on our varied environments (2003b: 62).

Finally, I wish to employ a metaphor that Elizabeth Grosz uses in her book *Volatile Bodies* to describe her turn away from the hackneyed Cartesian dualism of mind and body: she describes Möbius strip – the inverted three dimensional figure eight (and a model she borrowed from Lacan) – to describe the inversions and multiple dimensions of the body and mind. As she puts it, "the Möbius strip has the advantage of showing the inflection of mind into body and body into mind, the ways in which, through a kind of twisting or inversion, one side becomes another" (1994: xii). My thesis brings together the complexity of the imagination, the discipline of the body, all within the globalized workplace which is equally disciplined and governed by implicit rules, and where historical trends influence local codes of conduct. The consequence of looking at women's professional clothing using these windows makes it incredibly difficult to see the imagination and body as two separate entities – they are intertwined and reverberate against each other as the frames to view clothing and embodiment shift.

2.1 DISCIPLINED BODIES IN THE CORPORATE WORLD

Scholars have long pointed out that women who are engaging in paid-work face the simultaneous demand to be "professional" as well as "feminine" (Pierce, 1996; Dellinger and Williams, 1997; Acker, 1991; Marini, 1989). Researchers in the United States have shown that women receive conflicting feedback concerning their beauty, femininity and sexuality in the work place. [3] For instance, women who are considered more physically attractive are often perceived as having greater occupational value than those who are less physically attractive (Jackson, 1992: 97 cited in Dellinger and Williams, 1997: 152). Yet at the same time, attractiveness has the potential to be a liability. Marini explains that physically

[3] I define the difference between feminine and sexy as this: feminine is colorful – pinks, reds, blues, whites, etc. and accessorized with lace, buttons, patterns, weaving, fabric layers, flowers. Sexy reveals skin – shorter skirts, opened toed shoes, low cut shirts that show the breasts, or cropped tops that reveal the belly, and any other version of tightly fitted-attire such as tops, trousers, skirts. Granted, this distinction is subjective and the line could be different in other places influenced by other religious, social, and environmental norms.

attractive women can be perceived as more feminine and therefore less likely to possess the masculine traits presumed necessary for success in traditionally male professions such as management and the sciences (1989: 360). Naomi Wolf (1993) describes the paradox: women are either too pretty or not pretty enough. The former means not being taken seriously, the latter means being ignored. All in all, the unclear standards for professional women's attire choices show how important it is to take gender into consideration. Women experience the workplace differently than men.

Research on how women negotiate professional standards in the workplace reveals that most women actively make decisions about appearance within structural constraints imposed by the institutions they are working within, and generally conform to the expectations at hand in order to be taken seriously. Dellinger and William (1997) point out that nearly all women wear makeup in the workplace order to be taken seriously as professionals, to be considered healthy, and also for personal empowerment and pleasure; in doing so they reproduce patriarchal structures within the institution.

Similarly, Trethewey (1999) argues that professional women typify the "disciplined body" because of the restraint required on women in order to be professional. The salient features measuring "professional" are a woman's trim body, and clean, androgynous attire. Trethewey records a near revulsion for displays of a sexual or maternal body in clothing. Not only is it unprofessional, it is considered unattractive in the United States corporate context. The professional female body should be hidden; it is not part of the professional equation.

Ann, [4] 34, an American I interviewed in Budapest, typifies these sociological findings with her perspectives on corporate attire. According to Ann, the suit is *the* basic for the professional world. Ann has worked for the US government for 12 years. She is just one of 300 million Americans, but she clearly lays out the classic no-no's in the professional

[4] In this paper, interviewee names have been changed.

workplace, interspersed with a few of her opinions on Hungarian fashion, which make not just for an entertaining read, but reinforce the United States vision of professional which is the idea that the body is to be hidden and the professional workplace is not the place for a feminine body.

In Ann's world, here's what NOT to wear:

Anything sexy:

> [Don't wear] anything that makes people say 'why' – like why is she wearing a low cut shirt, who is she trying to impress?' And you do not want people focusing on your underwear line if you are trying to get business done. The point is you don't want your clothes to distract from you …

Patterns:

> [Don't wear] patterns, no patterns. Well I think that patterns are ok, they are fine; the problem is that they are not as easy to work with. Get basics and then put all of your style into your blouses and scarves … Here I see patterns mixed often. I see things like stripes and dots. (Laughs.) And it makes me go, how can you do that? But it is quite common here.

Too many colors:

> Or, don't have someone ask, 'why is she wearing purple and green together?' Or have a bag that doesn't match shoes or something like that? And yes, I mean, we have all gone out with the wrong handbag. But you know, *this* is different. For me, I have a red [handbag] that goes with all of my browns, I have a black one and I have a tan one for my blues. Here you will see green and red and orange together. It is sort of like, what? In the States we have one or two color pieces. You don't do four. So that is a little different. But it works here.

Again, anything that shows too much skin:

> And obviously in the summer when you walk around here there are some people who (voice lowers) I think, are not dressed for an office. It's a little too much, too much. But, (sigh) that's just their culture.

Her perspectives illustrate how clothing is integral to the materiality of corporate identity. As fashion theorists have pointed out, on a superficial level appearance is an important symbolic communicator of identity (Finkelstein, 1991: 108; Wilson, 2001: 55). Finkelstein argues that, in the United States, "even when this masculine uniform [the suit] is appropriated by women, still it retains its general meaning, that of indicating the importance of business" (1991: 108). Here, female business attire should represent the Acker criticized model (1991) of the "abstract worker," and fold together the masculine workplace and femininity with androgynous, un-sexy attire.

The business suit often connotes the very definition of capitalism – standardization, efficiency, uniformity, and top-down policy. The suited man has the potential to represent an "interchangeable cog in a global mechanism prepared to move territorially or up or down the social scale into whatever slot best comports with the well-being of the global system" (Zelinsky, 2004: 36). And with the spreading of economic and technological efforts of the modernist project, the suit has come to epitomize the capitalist system it emerged from.

2.2 THE SUIT TRAVELS

Considering Appadurai's theory that the imagination is a widespread social phenomena that intersects with material for heterogeneous results, it is not a surprising find that suiting practices been hijacked, destabilized, and changed as they have traveled. Kondo (1999) argues that, through an ad campaign, the "Japanese Suit" – a slightly asymmetrical, looser version of the Western suit designed by *Comme des Garçone* – became a place where nationalism, masculinity, and style are rewritten to include each other and thus served to overcome the Western construction of Asian masculine identity as inferior. The suit was imported along with Western business, was tweaked to accommodate the Japanese figure, and, most importantly, the meaning of the suit were remade. By wearing this suit, Japanese

men had a route to take to fulfill the yearning to overcoming historically related national inferiority. This suit channeled the best of the old Japanese empire (and conveniently left out the worse) and twined this together with the Orientalist reading of superior "Japanese aesthetics." As it travels, the business suit, and attire in general, becomes a site to renegotiate power relations and rewrite histories.

Female clothing practices have undergone massive convulsions and are varied around the globe (see Carol Smith, 1996; Chatterjee, 1989). In the business, women's attire has been a site to contest globalizing processes. One important study closely related to my research is Carla Freeman's anthropological investigation of Caribbean women working as data-entry workers at export-processing zones. She argues that their on-going emphasis on the "professional" attire they wear to work, despite low wages, gives them the opportunity to rewrite their social and gender positions and therefore rewrite the aspects of globalizing processes. As such, Freeman argues that that female attire within institutional settings can simultaneously be the locus of corporate power and discipline but also a form of subversion of global norms from which the women derive pleasure and pride (2000: 65). As I find the intersections of imagination with disjuncture in globalizing processes, and gender and class with collective fantasy for corporate brands, I will build upon Freeman's work that in part argues "styles of dress … work against the anonymity of the open office [which] further entrench both the discipline and the pleasures of professionalism" (ibid: 259).

CHAPTER 3: "IDEOSCAPES"

Capitalism offers continually new lifestyle choices available through consumption. People are told through marketing, advertising and the discourse of neo-liberal capitalism that they can build their own identities by purchasing goods which are branded with specific lifestyles and ideas (McRobbie, 2004; Klein, 2000). Globalization has spread consumption to

the far reaches of the globe, and many theorists have attempted to understand how these trans-local processes of buying and selling have affected people, states, economics, and individual lives (see Friedman, 1999; Abu-Lughod, 2000; Wallerstein, 1974). In a region with recently renovated social, political, and economic truisms and policies, post-state socialism is characterized by the fact that consumerism offers a new way to express ones gender identity, as opposed to the more dogmatic state agenda which arguably offered a more limited scope within which to imagine ones self, which thereby constructed Western consumerism as a "a paradise" which remained a "dormant desire" (Drakulic, 1993: 28). Today consumption of goods and services to "new class, gender and generational identities" which True argues " … can be seen as a new form of emancipation" (2003: 106). Cultural industry characterized by "[the use of] symbols, stories, images, and information to generate profits" (Budde, 1998: 77 cited in True, 2003: 105) are new psychological powerhouses of capitalism, and through which new meanings are produced in culture and for people (ibid, Klein, 2000).

In this chapter I engage with Appadurai's notion of ideoscapes, which I detailed earlier in this paper, where ideas are carried around the world along side the flows of capital, goods, and people in order to look at how ideas have been imported into the post-state socialist Hungary and what this means for women's identities in the corporate workplace. I will build on Deluze and Guattari's (1987) notion of a rhizome-like modern world in order to conceptualize the connections between people and groups. They claim that there is no beginning and no end to these processes (cited in Appadurai, 2000: 29). The rhizome is an apt metaphor for the Foucaldian notion of power's relationship to identity – within an ebb and flow, not a top down process, which as I mentioned earlier, is not to say that the landscape is by any means even. To do this, I trace the historical roots of ideas and see how the

imagination can be seen as a social practice which alters the real relations between people and their conceptions of gender and class identities.

In the next two sections of this chapter I analyze Hungarian women's responses to the specifics of time, pay, and the professional corporate workplace. I argue that the strength of ideas concerning femininity and cosmopolitanism on one hand, and equality and merit on another, are symbolized by global company brands, which have penetrated into women's psyche at the level of the material. They self-govern their wardrobe and make sense of their lives through the brands they are working for. I build this upon the premise that the body is both a text upon which culture is written including class, race, gender included and "a direct locus of social control" (Bordo, 1993: 165). Using a comparative framework of my fieldwork at General Electric (GE) and L'Oreal, I show that there is a gendered heterogeneity to the globalizing process in post state-socialist Hungary, and this is the bleeding together of personal identity with corporate culture that is written on the body.

3.1 BEAUTY AND THE BRAND

Corporations stake great importance in promoting employee belief in the mission of the company. Rituals and trainings are techniques that companies use to promote similarities between employees and encourage teamwork. These activities are designed in a way that allows people to feel as if they are a "good fit" into the company (Anniina, personal interview). This does not have to necessarily result in a long-term loyalty, because often companies are more concerned with the bottom line than bottomless allegiance. However, as Todd, another corporate recruiter told me in an interview, considering the fluidity of the job market today, people are too loyal to their companies: "I've found most people over time will start to have a loyalty to their companies. They expect to get something in return, and usually they won't get it." For better or worse, the on-going interaction the corporation has with its employees through obvious disciplinary techniques such as training sessions and corporate

culture codes is designed to make employees feel as if they are supposed to be there. However the meanings which emerged from my focus group at L'Oreal, Budapest deviates from the corporate intentions of L'Oreal; the women are finding their own interpretations which are not patterned exactly after corporate handbooks.

On an early Wednesday evening on the Buda side of the Danube, the L'Oreal office was abuzz. My host, Gabi, a 26-year-old event planner in the *Matrix-Professional Hairdressing* department, took me down the thickly carpeted navy blue and bright beige hallway on the sixth floor of the new blue and brick high-rise in Buda, gesturing to various spaces housing different L'Oreal brands. She was an elegant young woman, with long straight brown hair and wearing a black and white flowered dress showing off her small waist with a wide bright green sash. Gabi had sent me an e-mail before I arrived explaining that she found my topic of attire at work particularly interesting. "If you look at the girls working in this company, you can guess who works in which division!" she wrote. When I met her in the lobby, she said the same thing, clearly excited about the prospect of a researcher coming to see how well they fit together at L'Oreal.

As we walked, I peaked into the offices, eyeing similarly skirt-clad and heels clad women at desks, on phones, and filing papers. The majority of the people working in the office were women, Gabi told me, only a handful of managers and salespeople are men. I was hoping to see some instance of difference from each department but in the quickness of our walk, the offices blended together into a stream of brightly lit cream-colored rooms divided with desks decorated with colored post-its and silver filing cabinets. The offices were the site of the production and consumption of loveliness, and as I walked around, they were decorated with posters celebrating beautification: "Nothing Moves Me More Than Beauty" read a Lancôme poster on the wall in the conference room where our focus group was held. A breathless brunette rested her manicured hand against a peaches-and-cream cheek.

My focus group at L'Oreal consisted of five who had worked at L'Oreal from anywhere between six months and seven years (see Appendix A). They epitomize Western hegemonic attractiveness — slim bodies, white skin, styled hair. The resemblance between the L'Oreal brand of beauty and the looks of the women was not unnoticed by them. They were proud of it. The overarching theme that emerged from the focus group was way they talked about their company, with a sense of pride and ownership, a hyper identification. They felt included at L'Oreal, the brand — being popular as it is — made them feel popular as well, a form of communicative and cultural "interpolation."

Judit, 29, said when she goes out and says she works for L'Oreal, "people go wow." Judit has long, jet-black hair, deep-set brown eyes, and the kind of lips that people associate with augmentation. Judit has worked for L'Oreal for four years and is a Brand Representative for *Luxury* brands. This is a prestigious position to be in, for as Gabi put it, "if you look at *Luxury* they are always elegant and pretty, they are really pretty. Really tall and thin. I think maybe the HR selects girls like that." Judit shrugged when Gabi said this, and smiled. She is comfortable with her frame and position. For her, it is no farce that Luxury brands have influenced her style. In fact, she likes it like that: "we try and express who where we are with our clothes," she said. That day she was wearing a short fitted black dress overtop black footless leggings with sparkly gold flats and strings of long beaded necklaces looped around her neck. "If I was working in a bank I would not care so much. But it is cool that we are working at L'Oreal. I'm proud of that."

Her sentiments would be music to the ears of many business owners. Managing to foster a solid association with the brand with employees' lives – to the point that the employee lives the brand both at work and at home – is a basic message in business school. Get your employees to match the company culture and they'll work harder for less, states an instruction booklet for managers (Schein, 2004: xi). A web site designed to give advice to

business people on improving productivity instructs employers to ask this: “Are [your employees] living your brand?” Implying that if they are, the company will be more successful (Lake, 2007: para. 2). The wide—smile pride on the L’Oreal women’s faces when they talked about their taste made evident just how much the brand had influenced them. It was not just a result of corporate indoctrination, they like it.

Simmel, in his work on fashion argued that the two salient features of fashion is simultaneous union and exclusion (1904: 546), claiming that at a fundamental level people seek individuality and also conformity with fashion. The case of L’Oreal illustrates this thesis at work: the women find aspects of the brand attractive and have jumped on board, separating themselves out by department – where more *avant-garde* hairstyles are ‘in fashion’ in an experimental division of hairdressing products, whereas expensive elegance is remade in *Luxury*. This takes place along the divisions within the workplace. In line with Gabi’s initial observation, the women concluded that those working together on specific brands, after time, develop a unique style and image. Gabi explains further:

> I think if you are working on a brand you start to think about it and that affects you and you start to think about your fashion like it. You think ok this is fashion. You know if there is something colorful then we are colorful then if there is white or pastel than we wear that. We follow the fashion of our brand.

Kinga, 25, immediately disagreed. She works on a team of twenty women, all in the same office space, doing marketing for L’Oreal *Paris* which features daily-use products such as shampoos and facial soaps — items designed to be sold to the masses in drug stores. She looked at Gabi and said:

> I don't dress by the brand. I am more influenced by people working around me, you know, you are looking at the same people all day so I am more dressing how they dress and not how my brand – which changes all the time – is.

The other agreed. Though ironically, Kinga was exclaiming the product mission of the brand that she worked for — the ones designed for mass consumption and therefore the most flexible and least dogmatic in its image. So in fact, perhaps she had sentiments more similar to the brand she was working for than she even realized.

The rest of the women at the focus group agreed with her that daily interaction with others influenced their clothing style and image at least as much as their brands did. The daily interactions that they have within specific space and time constraints are a form of organized communication that result in patterns of behavior which are specific to this communication.

Zsuzsi, a top-seller for *Luxury* who was four months pregnant, spoke up. She claimed that she does not fit the stereotypical *Luxury* profile:

> When you say that the girls in *Luxury* are really nice and elegant, and then I look at me and I look at them and I cannot wear what they wear, because I am small. I am not very thin. No it would never really fit me, no really, I cannot wear that.

Everyone started giggling. Gabi touched Zsuszi's black silk blouse, "but when you started to work for *Luxury* your style changed," she said. "Yes," Kinga agreed: "we all noticed you did begin to pay more attention to your presentation." Zsuzsa threw up her arms in protest:

> Ok maybe you see something that I don't. But I have to say I think that what is really important is personality so I wear things that I think will show my personality, even if maybe I changed a bit when I started working for *Luxury*, I am still me.

Her insistence on being "me" is a point I will return to later in greater depth, but here it brings me to my initial point about the mind, the interpolation of subjects through attire. The key point this exchange is the fact that the women take great pride in their company. Many of them said that either their style did not change significantly or that L'Oreal helped them find a style upon starting to work there, and as a result, they are enjoying it even more. They were looking for an identity to step into, and L'Oreal fit. Something about the identity of "beauty," and "style," just clicked.

Irma, voiced such a sentiment: "When I first got this job my dad said I can see you in all *Zara* clothes. Last time I went shopping I had in mind if I could wear it to work and if it would look L'Oreal. And he is right – I buy mostly *Zara* now," she said, after working at L'Oreal for two months. Typifying the Althusserian "hail" is the interlock of work and play attire. Instead of purchasing one wardrobe for work, and one for home, as for example, Ann at the US Embassy, as well as Roy, 30, a South African manager at GE both do. The L'Oreal women said that aside from the occasional pair of jeans they look to buy attire that will work for both the office and the afternoon patio. Further, because they like "L'Oreal style," there is no resentment towards wearing work clothes in their free time. I argue this intertwining of wardrobes provides the women with a way to engage with the allure of a corporate brand, of hegemonic and glamorous "style" in their imaginations without having to purchase Prada. By working at the brand, they can become it. This is attractive: "I like it, it's L'Oreal. It is selling things for fashionable women. And I am proud to be that," said Judit. For Gabi the style at L'Oreal helped her style "improve, I look better now I think," she said. Further, she is a bit critical about women who do not know how to dress in her opinion:

> I know about the Irish people and they are very different than Hungarians. The girls are a disaster. They are really fat and they have no style and they wear really mini skirts. They were finding they just put on

> and went out. They were even coming to the shops in pajamas and this was really awful. They have no style.

In linking themselves and their style, in a very personal and specific way, to the corporate brands they work for, these women are making L'Oreal to their specification — connecting with it in their imaginations of what beauty is — which is linked to hegemonic standards of female attractiveness laden with symbolism of a specific kind of wealth, whiteness, and femininity, which I will address further in the next section of the paper — and redesigning the brand to fit their desires for individualism. They are proud of this, and even exhibit some pretension about their position as L'Oreal employees

While they could be making more money working somewhere else, the glamour of their position and the attractiveness of the L'Oreal imagination is worth the low pay. Gabi at L'Oreal makes approx. 114,000 HUF per month, less than the average Hungarian salary at 125,000 HUF per month (Hungarian Statistical Yearbook, 2006). The evident pride and pleasure the women gained from using their imaginations to live the L'Oreal brand is something that perhaps compensates for the fact that they make very little money and have little time for themselves. Employees have made sense of their decisions concerning attire, they have been "interpolated" in recognizing themselves within the global image of acceptable "beauty." They are able to find pleasure in living this at the level of imagination by identifying with the L'Oreal brand.

Their experience — low pay, pleasure in ideas — parallels Freeman's (2000) argument that "pink-collar" women doing data-entry in Barbados are reinterpreting the global economy through the pleasure from their interpretation of what their job as data-entry workers means, which is symbolized in their localized clothing styles which embody a social status change. The women she interviewed were often making the same or less money than women working at nearby assembly factories. However the pleasure of imagining themselves

as office workers — a desire which came together with the material in their fashioning of office clothing — which was more powerful a draw than the actual pay. Similarly, L'Oreal women, through collective visions of the brands they work on, together are taking great pleasure from being "L'Oreal" perhaps more than they are from the pay.

The actual dress code at L'Oreal is short; in the office employees should "be professional," which means no jeans and nylons are required. Past this, the women had specific ideas about what influenced them (their colleagues and also what they think about the brands they work for), and do not always follow the corporate rules. Gabi: "We had a special training day and it was all about wearing makeup. No really, I never wear make-up and we were all asked to wear makeup [sic]," she smiled. "I still don't wear make-up very often. I am very lucky, I have very nice skin."

Consequently, it is impossible to make the Marxist claim that these women are "duped" into positive identification with L'Oreal brands and lines. These women do not just do whatever they are told. "I want to wear spaghetti straps and I cannot," said Judit, nevertheless she was wearing spaghetti straps that day, seen through her black sheath dress with capped shoulders. This identification on the one hand is a form of "interpolation" of the L'Oreal brand within their imaginations, and on the other it is a pleasure they get from being the brand at work, at home, to their friends – despite low pay. The result is a specific vision of professionalism: the Hungarian L'Oreal.

Bourdieu (1984) argues that symbolic and ideological class and gender distinctions accompany material consumption. Here, these class and gender distinctions are being rewritten through brand consumption. The women are purchasing clothing which looks "L'Oreal" and finding a new pleasure and even haughty attitude in working at this company. I argue that my research complicates the notion that consumption of material goods alter

social relations. Here, women are finding themselves vaulted into a different social class because of their employer's prestige. This is articulated through talk of clothing.

What the women of L'Oreal are doing is not entirely new, but in fact another instance of how gender affects social and class identification through consumption. The fact that they are rewriting their positions vis-à-vis willing identification with the brand as manifested in their reflects back to other historical instances when specifically women were about to reinterpreted their social positioning with attire. For instance, during the turn-of-the-century in the United States young women working in factories found themselves with meager wages but a sense of newfound independence. Consequently, they often spent more money on clothing and would forgo certain living necessities (linen, poorly decorated shared flats) in order to publicly showcase their elevated class and autonomy (Wilson, 1992: 164; Ewen, 1988: 73 cited in Freeman, 2000: 236). Another example is of working-class women in the United States who during the 1940s and 1950's rewrote their class positions through consumption of the Dior's "New Look" — which was a kick-back to conservative female attire with a nipped waist, gathered skirt and rounded, puffed shoulders and intended to relay sophistication and was for a high class. These women were arguably reinterpreting the fashion industry intention for "the look," and used the clothing to change their social status (Partington, 1992: 364 cited in Craik, 1994: 80).

The women at L'Oreal are all young – the oldest woman was under 40 – and exuded a pleasurable vigor for tapping into a "stylish" cosmopolitan lifestyle through identification with their companies' brand. This is an evident divergence from the state-socialist past which was characterized by the state-sanctioned aversion to beauty as well as the material lack of consumer beauty or fashion products (True, 2003; Azhgikhina and Goscilo, 1996; Drakulic, 1993). By defining themselves in this multinational French companies image, the young

women are able to find pleasure in a new identity that is globally acceptable, articulating at the same time a new class identity for themselves that is unrelated to their low incomes.

3.2 MYTH OF MERITOCRACY

If reinventing beauty is the name of the game at L'Oreal, the women at GE — Tungsram are not playing. The connection between women's identification with the brand – which was evident in the focus group — and had little to do with engineering lighting, nor with manufacturing beauty. Instead, the women were vocal about the importance of following corporate policy, the equality within their workplace, standardization, and desexualization of the job. Gender identities were being written and rewritten in the long hallways of the old Tungsram factory, but through the contradictions between what the women said about equality, and what they wore.

Useful in conceptualizing the working lives of these women is an understanding of two types of power which flow through daily activities. On one hand, there is the Foucaldian and Althusserian model of "authoritarian" power, which is the more classic understanding of power as it belongs to those in charge and is administered to the seemingly power-less people at the powerful's discretion.

GE Tungsram is a 100-year-old lighting and optics research factory in Budapest employing near 4,000 Hungarians (GE Annual Report, 2006). Today, it is the primary powerhouse of optics research and production and produces between 10 and 15 % of the total European consumption of light bulbs (GE annual report, 2006). The factory is a testament to long history of Hungarian technical innovation and steadfast company commitment, but Tungsram carries in the corridors and unchanged gray architecture visions state-socialism, despite the changes GE implemented when it bought out the factory in 1989.

During state-socialism, Tungsram was not just a lighting factory it was a community. Families often worked at the factory for generations. Children of Tungsram employees went

to company sponsored schools; employees vacationed together at Tungsram holiday facilities; on weekends they rooted for Tungsram sporting events hosted at company provided leisure facilities (Marer and Mabert, 1997: 20). When GE bought the facility it introduced a series of new management changes which usurped decades of familiarity — including lay-offs, reorganization of the workplace, and the closure of the Tungsram sporting centers. This resulted in a flurry of antagonism towards the new owners, exemplified by a Budapest newspaper editorial entitled "GE Brings Good Things to an End," (ibid).

Today, however, residue of the old, paternal Tungsram remains. The site remains unchanged, looking near identical to photos of the factory three decades ago. Further, GE attempts to keep a strong hold on the employees through mandatory training sessions, and building exercises. Upon hire a GE publication entitled "Integrity: Code of Conduct at the Workplace," is disrupted, it is fifty pages long and in order to solidify their hiring contract all employees must pass a test on the contents. Further, all contracts stipulate that no employees can talk to the press or any other sources about their positions. The booklet prescribes appropriate and inappropriate behaviors such as how to deal fairly with co-workers regardless of nationality, sex, or creed.[5] To encourage on-going teamwork, in 1996, GE installed an anonymous phone system to begin to encourage all employees to call and essentially "rat" on their colleagues if they were not complying with GE code or were causing problems. GE, claiming a desire to foster an ethical workplace, instead tapped into a culture of informing that was violently enforced during communism (Marer and Mabert, 1997: 21). It is no big surprise that the phones are rarely used.

However, these overt manifestations of authoritarian power are carefully hidden behind company discourse on "diversity," "merit," and "equality" in the workplace. In recent years GE has hopped on the "politically correct" (PC) bandwagon and made the appropriate

[5] My source on this information is the former GE recruiter, Anniina, who spoke at length with me about GE recruiting patterns, training sessions and how the corporate culture works, in her opinion. She was unable to get me a copy of this booklet due to these confidentiality reasons.

policy changes to show it has addressed the growing concern over sexism, racism, and other inequalities researchers have shown to be rapid in the corporate workplace structures. To combat this, GE institutionalized a worldwide "diversity" program to encourage women and minorities to strive for "excellence" (interview with communications director, Eszter).

There are also subtle forms of corporate and corporeal top-down disciplining. For instance corporate recruiter Todd explains how corporations will use acting books to assist employees with taking on the personas necessary to be successful in sales and marketing.

> 'You are just role playing,' I tell them, 'you are not *you*, you are a character.' That way it is easier to not be completely truthful when you are not being you. You are being this persona that you do. And it is much easier that way.

His description of teaching new employees to deceive illustrates the urban legend claiming capitalists are deceptive bloodsuckers. But people are not so easily duped into transforming themselves into cogs of the corporate machine. Anniina said, corporations want people who will get along well with the others, and in addition to tests on human resource policy, the companies will use on-going examination techniques to enforce their specific definition of "get along:"

> They really make sure to see if a person GE Compatibility, there is a process that people go through. It starts in the application and selection process – they look for people new out of college, they aim to build good teams, so they aim to select similar kinds of people they have to for teams. Once you are hired you are constantly evaluated. Team leaders evaluate performance of individual team members on a quarterly basis and have to evaluate suitability and attitude towards about working in the team and working for the company. [They] look for warning signs to see if someone is unhappy with the company [sic].

Disheartened with the corporate varnish glossing this deception with terms like "team building" and "equality of the workplace," she said and that if someone is unhappy they will often perform poorly, which brings down their self-esteem and will often quit before they are fired. "They weed themselves out," she said. Anniina noted other company disciplining procedures in addition to such mandatory tests, quarterly performance reviews, and on-going training sessions. Making employees feel as if they are a part of something bigger, and important, serves to justify paying little for much work, she said. This attitude appeared to be evident with the women working at L'Oreal and GE, in some respects. However what my research shows is that while the overt disciplining and surveillance is in place, the ideas that women are attaching to at the level of their imagination – and thus the most insidious form of power and manipulation — are subverted meanings about the company brand that the company perhaps did not even intend to make available.

The first thing my host at GE, Orsi, 31, told me upon issuing me a visitors badge and shuffling through the waves of security was that GE is a "safe" place … non discrimination place." Because of this "safe" environment, she said, the women who attending my focus group did not want to answer the questionnaire I had send by e-mail the week prior (see Appendix B). "GE is not like that." I nodded, confused. I followed her through a maze of linoleum hallways checkered with closed blue doors and decorated with framed posters of the famous (male) figurehead engineers. Next to the pictures were the accomplishments: designing wire to optimize longevity in the original tungsten filament lamps, a feat which became the namesake of the factory. Tungsram is a blend of "tungsten" the material used for the long-life light bulbs, and its German translation "wolfram" (GE, "Tungsram a Very Short History, 1996).

I found out shortly into our focus group that the aversion to my questionnaire and the reliance on GE's code of conduct had to do specifically with questions concerning sexual

orientation and showing "sexuality" and "sexiness" at work. More than that, for the first hour, women did not want to answer any of my questions: nothing about what it is like working at a foreign company, less on to what extent they can be sexy at work, or what kind of clothing is appropriate or inappropriate. The retreat to the protection of GE from the assault of the American researcher flared into resentment when one participant, Viktoria, 27, got up to leave early:

> I didn't provide you with the questionnaire. Is it a problem? I have it in e-mail but especially in this part …(she slowed) … in GE what you never ask this from a colleague or from a interview [sic]. So I prefer not to answer part of the information. For me I don't think it is appropriate to ask. We are GE so for me I do not answer this questionnaire.

Viktoria was very defensive; she spoke quickly and with a prickly tone. For me as a researcher, her response is telling about how much my questions bothered her. I was touching on an apparently untouchable subject — sexiness at work. With Viktoria up, another woman, Henrietta voiced similar concern:

> I do not like to answer these questions because we can be in the feminine style at GE in our clothing; it is not GE that makes it difficult to wear the clothes that we like, so it is not a good idea to ask these questions.

Why does asking about the experience of gender and strategies of professionalism seem like discrimination in this context and generate such widespread discomfort? After all, my interview questions reflect a desire to better understand women's experiences at work given the wide historical evidence that women's experiences in professional contexts are different from men's and sometimes stressful. It is no secret that women in the sciences face the

dubious task of proving themselves. Often tokens, lone women face extraordinary performance pressures (Staudt, 1994: 130). Research has been done on the causes of female exclusion in business: commonly identified explanations are patriarchy and the coding of the work place as gender-neutral when it actually is not (ibid). Acker claims "when it is acknowledged that women and men are affected differently by organizations, it is argued that gendered attitudes and behaviors are brought into (and contaminate) essentially gender – neutral structures" (1992: 163). In other words, when women enter into male-dominated disciplines they often and up feeling isolated, alone, and as if it is there fault.

My questions rest on these established and long-researched facts. But that said, my questions also marked the women at GE as "different" and not as "equal" to their male counterparts, whom they were being told through aforementioned, politically correct diversity programs at GE that they are equal to. If GE claims that it has solved any problems of discrimination, and the women are told that discrimination does not take place, I was then violating a taboo. I was bringing up the fact that GE — for all its claims of equality and merit — might not be equal. And that women might experience professional as something different. And in this violation, I was met with collective anger. The women were irritably throwing the words of GE corporate policy out at me — saying "we are GE" and citing the fact that there is "appropriate" questions to ask given the said "equality" — so that, potentially, I might not see how far their experiences were from the actual meaning of words. Whereas for women at L'Oreal, talking about attire and beauty is part of their jobs — L'Oreal is all about keeping up appearances. But at GE I appeared to be questioning the validity of the women's positions as female at a company which claims to be gender neutral.

It was not until the two women left and I began discussing some of the photos I brought, which I will elaborate on in my next chapter, with the remaining women that they began to talk more about their vision of professional, as well as the contradictions they face

as women working in a male-dominated profession and environment. The participants said they are a minority; that the work environment can be tense. As one woman put it: "women here are constantly being subjected to scrutiny about performance."

As with the L'Oreal women, the GE women's use of the corporate identity takes place within their imaginations. However, it was not "beauty" and feeling a part of something globally accepted as glamorous that encouraged such "interpolation," but the desire to be equal. For instance, money is not as problematic for women at GE as it is for the women working at L'Oreal. Compared to the average net Hungarian salary for engineers at about 158,343 HUF a month (Hungarian Statistical Yearbook, 2006), some women at GE make much more — at least 290,000/ HUF per month, depending on experience. So the pleasure that they are getting from having a strong identification with the brand is not compensation for low pay, but compensation for being a minority in a male-dominated profession within their imaginations.

Further, by "interpolating" themselves in their revised editions of the brands they work for, the women at both L'Oreal and GE are not just exchanging their time and work for a paycheck but giving up parts of themselves emotionally, and finding pleasure in this. The use of emotional identification with the corporate brand has been noted in the corporate workplace in previous research. For instance, Mills wrote in *White Collar* that "when white collar people get jobs, they sell not only their time and energy but their personalities as well. They sell by the week of month their smiles and their kindly gestures, and they must practice the prompt repression of resentment and aggression… here are the new little Machiavellians, practicing their personable crafts for hire and for the profit of others, according to the rules laid down by those above them" (1969: xvii, quoted in Freeman, 2000: 64). Pierce points out in her study of gendered litigation practice that "strategic friendliness" is deployed to manipulate other lawyers (1997, 52), which entails giving up and changing aspects of ones

personality in order to be successful. She points to Hochschild's research on emotional work in how flight attendants use deference and reassurance in order to relieve anxiety in passengers (1983, cited in Pierce, 1997: 52). Emotional work here is not an unwritten aspect of the job description as it is for Hochschild, but the way that emotions are fueled by engagement with the corporate brand within the imagination to compensate for structural gendered inequality.

Overall, this chapter has showcase the extent to which the corporate brand influences attire within the imagination of the individual employee. There are a range of ways that women can respond to a tight pocketbook and or asymmetrical workplace (see Acker, 1991). I showed that justification of specific kind of attire consumption within identification of corporate brands has lead to rewriting class and gender distinctions within and outside of the workplace at the level of the imagination.

The women of L'Oreal are elevating their class status with an imported ideoscape of "beauty" through brand identification manifested in their attire. They can engage in this not because they are making enough money to purchase their identities through consumer goods but because the brand identity of their employer gives them access to a sought after identity that privileges beauty and style. Reaching past the Marxist notion of "false consciousness" this section has thus far shown how the women at L'Oreal are designing themselves within an Althusserian "illusion of freedom" where they are trading and exchanging aspects of their identity through identification with the corporate brand of their employer in return for feeling of being in the privileged part of a wider economy of "beauty."

The women at GE identify with the company due to the high stakes in being a women working at a male-dominated industry: they value the asexuality of the workplace because it corresponds with equality. However, the clothing they wear and what they say they like is a direct contradiction to this claim. On one hand, they engaged with the idea of "sexiness" and

femininity on their bodies — as I will show in the next chapter — but gave little acknowledgement to this in conversation. What I will research next is how writing the body with "sexiness" potentially came to be a powerful currency that women use in their daily lives, how this is a direct form of heterogeneity within the ideoscape of imported corporate codes of conduct, how women take pleasure in disciplining their bodies within a specific kind of normative femininity, and finally, my conclusions on what the implications of this are.

CHAPTER 4: "SEXINESS"

Within the contemporary concern on how local cultures react to the influx of traveling products and ideas, heterogeneity emerges as the pat comeback. To me a more significant question is asking what characterizes heterogeneity. I argue that in Hungary, the sexualized, feminized body is the site where an imported corporate culture is revised and transformed. The integration of global companies into Hungary has intersected with women's identity at the level of the imagination, on one hand, and on the other, the specific form of imagining is written on their bodies in the form of brightly colored, sexy clothing.

Finkelstein claims that the capitalist marketplace turns the body into a good to be consumed: "the human body, as if no different from other manufactured objects, can be used as a commodity to display power, prestige and status" (1991: 4). As I showed in the previous chapter, the ways women discuss their bodies in the terms of the corporate brand has given them new terms to negotiate social class and gendered inequalities in the corporate workplace. In this sense, bodies are ready to be written on, inscribed with various meanings, which makes women's body in the corporate workplace a useful site to examine how social and political changes have altered or rewritten the gender codes of corporate conduct.

As I discussed, women at L'Oreal and GE rewrote their social positions and renegotiated gender discrimination by regurgitating specific aspects of the corporate identity;

however the way that the women are signaling new meanings with their bodies varies from other studies done. Instead of having conservative length skirts, low heels, and aversion from showing the sexualized of maternal female body (as exemplified in Dellinger and Williams, 1997; Trethewey, 1999; Freeman, 2000), the women I interviewed showed and identified with the opposite. They expressed their gender identity through identification with particular sexualized, high fashion magazine images as well as in their attire all of which typified their attention to the wearing of obvious femininity and sexiness.

4.1 HISTORICAL DESIRE FOR BEAUTY AND SELF-EXPRESSION

"Sexiness" and "femininity" as strategies for self-expression may stem from Hungary's post state-socialist past. During socialism the desire for a mythical market and consumerism flourished due to lack of available products (True, 2003: 107). As many of my interviewees noted, there was a distinct lack of goods to consume and a strong desire for what was perceived to be Western. Further, commitment to beauty regiments were sometimes part self-expression and part resistance to state-sanctioned gender norms (Azhgikhina and Goscilo, 1996). Slavenka Drakulic describes the frustration faced by women living in state-socialism who found only one color of hair dye – "a burgundy red that gives the hair a peculiarly artificial look, like a wig" (1993: 24) and this was all that was available in a city, in an entire country. She describes the want of individuality, where women took extreme effort to avoid uniformity:

> Nothing is casual about them. They are over dressed, they put on too much make—up, they match colors and textures badly, revealing their provincial attempt to imitate Western fashion … to be yourself, to cultivate individualism, to perceive yourself as an individual in a mass society is dangerous… Make-up and fashion are crucial because they are political (1993: 26).

In this vein, after the regime change a more feminine, obvious fashion has characterized the move away from the bland aesthetics of state-socialism. One my interviewees, Eszter, the Corporate Communications Head at GE, describes a poignant moment when she noticed that beauty and femininity came to symbolize of the change from socialism to capitalism. This took place just after she was appointed Minister of Interior in 1989:

> The police chief told me a story about the day he came to my office and he saw there was a woman in a white suit with skirt. That day I was wearing a beautiful brand new white suit with a skirt. And I was very informal, I was leaning to the table, I was not sitting. And he said he saw me and he told me he just stared. Prior to the change when people went to see the minister they had to behave like they were soldiers, very formal. And here I was leaving to the desk, leaning. I had a casual conversation with him this police chief, and I was different, I was wearing a white skirt suit. That was the signal that the system changed, the police chief told me. I was it [sic].

Contrary to the claim that socialism eliminated gender inequalities with the revocation of private property, Eszter claims that her entrance into a position of political power as a feminine woman — evidenced by her light skirt suit and non-military mannerisms — symbolized the transition from socialism into capitalism. Capitalism is said to offer ways to redesign ones life and control through consumption (McRobbie, 2004). Attire, then, is a vehicle for this type of personalized change. As I will show, the women I spoke with desired to "be individual" and this meant consuming "sexy" and "colorful" attire to signal their participation in designing their own identities.

4.2 "CHOOSING" TO BE A SEXY "INDIVIDUAL" WOMAN

To get outside the limitations of verbal descriptions about appearance, for instance, of wanting to look "good" or "nice" or "elegant" which are all vague slippery words that are difficult to visualize, I passed around five images from specifically Hungarian, as well as

European and American magazines and asked the women to explain whether or not they would wear such clothing to work, and why or why not. The photos ranged from (image 1) a charcoal-gray -suit clad Hillary Clinton with helmet hair and low heels featured in *Forbes* to (image 6) a wide-eyed brunette wearing a ruffled, turquoise tube-top draped her cascading locks and strings of big beaded necklaces, featured in Hungarian *Cosmopolitan* (see Appendix C for images). The undisputed conclusions that all the women came to was a strong identification with slim, skin, and youth — and this was spoken about using soft voices, giggles, words such as "natural," and the desire to "show my personality."

I first passed around the photo of Hillary. She embodies a distinct, conservative professional look that Ann echoed. But *all* of my interviewees at L'Oreal, GE, the US Embassy and the PR firm gave adamant no thanks. "I would not wear that," said Orsi with a look of distain. "Too boring," "too dark," "not enough color," and "ugly" were other responses. "She is political, and this is nice for a meeting, but for me in my office I would not wear this," said Eva, 47, PR rep for GE. Csenga at GE said in her questionnaire that she finds "Hungarian and European style is much more feminine than American style, for women, the low heeled shoes and the not sexy at all clothes, for us here the natural feminine style is allowed."

However, none of the women felt they would want to look, or felt they could identify with, image 2, of Ildi and Andrea. They are two Hungarian 30/40-somethings wearing loosely tailored black and gray suits with a gray tank and black collared shirt, respectively. They were featured on the pages of Hungarian fashion and lifestyle magazine *Elite*. My interviewees balked. Picture shoulders shrugging and heads shaking. Kinga took a look, scrunched her nose, and passed the magazine along to Gabi, who responded: "this is really for lawyers and for banks and politicians [sic]." Between the two pictured women, the L'Oreal woman as well as the GE women agreed that Andrea looked better than Ildi, who

was, as Irma put it, “is so man like.” It is worth nothing that Andrea is also taller, thinner and wore a more tailored jacket. Zsuzsi said: “Black and boring. I would not dress like this — it is important to have some personality. Not gray or black. I don’t want to wear those suits.”

The response to a fashionable spread featuring options for age-based office-wear in American *Harpers Bazaar* was mixed. “These are too fashion for me,” said Zsuzsi. Though four of the L’Oreal women said they would wear the red skirt. “I like it because it is feminine and so light. It is pretty,” said Gabi. “Maybe I would wear this skirt with the jacket of Andrea,” said Orsi across town at GE. Her colleague Cristina agreed. Kinga at L’Oreal noted critically that this article places too much emphasis on fashion, which is not what she values, “real femininity is more important than fashion,” she said:

> I think it is important to be feminine and even a little sexy at work. Here we are trying to be pretty. It important to be a little unique. Maybe fashion – but in a small way – but not like wearing all the fashion but being yourself and a little feminine of course [sic].”

Heads nodded. At GE the word “sexy” was not used as overtly as in Kinga’s comment. Though femininity was clearly the lynchpin holding together ones sense of self with the difficulties of the workplace; sexiness slipped out of the GE women’s comments about elegance and professionalism. “You can be elegant with a casual outfit if you are wearing the right thing. But it is forbidden to wear shorts. We have more freedom [than our male colleagues in the summertime] because we wear skirts that can be shorter than the shorts,” said Orsi.

All faces smiled upon seeing the Chico’s advertisement (figure 4), featuring a tanned, thin blond woman in fitted white pants, with a white tank that just barely revealed cleavage, and an unbuttoned embroidered cream blazer. She wore a matching necklace set and had loose hair and a smile. The women all liked the ensemble. Irma:

> They always say that if you want to get into a better position you have to use your sexual control and look good. And this suit does that. She would be taken seriously but look good [sic].

Yes, agreed Gabi. "I like it. It is really classic. It looks good on her, very natural." At GE, after two of the participants left, I found women more willing to talk and the response was remarkably akin that that at L'Oreal. Said Cristina at GE: "I like her, I don't have a special style I am just very natural, very feminine — like this. She has a nice look that I try because I will not try too hard to be something that I am not. My fashion is nothing special [sic]." Her colleagues nodded in agreement.

Significant in this unanimous agreement is the undisputed intersection of "natural" "feminine" and "sexual control" and "nothing special," which apparently the Chico's woman does very well. She is thin, tall, blonde, with tan skin and straight white teeth. She lounges on a wooden lawn chair next to what appears to be an exquisitely decorated outdoor dining table. This is not a candid picture of your average business woman, which is what we had with image 2 in Ildi and Andrea, this is an advertisement. This woman is a model. She is selling a lifestyle – the Chico's lifestyle. That "natural" and "nothing special" look is actually constructed and unnatural, and in fact it is rather elitist. She typifies "sexy" with thinness, fitted clothing, and hints of cleavage. She exemplifies "femininity" with embroidery, light colors, long hair, and jewelry. Intrepidly – the lawn party – the model and her attire are associated with wealth — so a clear class identity is visible. Wow, professional Hungarian women see professional success as a thin, blonde woman who lunches?

Perhaps I am jumping to conclusions seeing as I was the one who choose the images. They were simply passing judgment based on my pre-selection. Much like what people do when they go shopping, choose between ideas that have been chosen from "above," be it the purchaser, the clothing designer, the magazine editor. Here, I was the editor and the authority

of what I wanted them to judge – and I selected a variety of images which all featured youthful, white women. In my defense, however, I bought magazines available at a newsstand near *Deak Ter*, a busy central metro station in the city. I did not look through the magazines extensively prior to purchase, but assumed that they would have suitable photos. And they did, though the images did not feature women in professional work settings. So in fact, while I did make the choice, the magazines were pre-selected for me, and the images in them by the editors, and the models by the agencies. Just describing this process gives cause to rethink the idea that there is much "freedom" in "free" choice. My interviewees choose, of six images, to identify with this particular image, but the choice was made within limited options. I concur with how Bordo problematizes this paradox of "choice":

> But do we really *choose* the appearances that we construct for ourselves? The images of beauty, power and success which dominate in US culture are generated out of Anglo-Saxon identifications and preferences and are images which, with some variations, are globally influential though the mass media. These images are still strongly racially ethnically and heterosexually inflected – reality that is continually effaced by the postmodern emphasis on resistant elements rather than dominant cultural forms … a definite (albeit not always fixed or determinate) system of normalizing boundaries sets limits on the validation of cultural 'difference' (1993: 196 – 197, italics mine).

Not only are things pre-selected, they have specific meanings written on to them. White is right, youth is attractive, thin is success.

What is significant is that *all* the women preferred the Chico image and identified a photo which embodied "natural" and was a look they aspired to have. While most of the women I interviewed were white[6] and as I mentioned earlier, none were unattractive – none

[6] Three women at GE chose not to fill out my questionnaire, which provided space to identity race, ethnicity, etc. Of these three, there was one woman who did not 'look' white; perhaps she was of mixed ancestry – I would guess Roma, Middle East – however it difficult for me to draw any definitive conclusions based on my clearly subjective observation of her appearance.

looked like this model. Yet the language they are using: "natural," "feminine" and "nothing special" glorifies very specific cultural ideals that Naomi Wolf might call "the beauty myth" (1992), which is something that might be physically unattainable. Clothing is fabric, but the way it sits on the body depends on the body. I pose this question: If Ildi, of image 2, were switched her conservative black blazer for the blonde woman's embroidered blazer, would the responses to her have been similarly unanimous?

Women from both GE and L'Oreal further developed their perspectives on clothing and the importance of sexiness with images 5 and 6, photos of a fashion spread from Hungarian *Cosmopolitan.* The bright colors and use of chunky jewelry made the women at L'Oreal laugh, saying they liked them, however Judit said they were too playful for her, Irma, who was wearing a similar style of fitted trousers and a long belted dress, liked the outfit. This is less surprising given my earlier analysis of how women at L'Oreal are latching on to the brand of L'Oreal as a marker of their identity. For GE women, it is less likely that wearing such playful attire would be a part of the corporate identity. However, these images struck a chord with the women at GE, who began to describe how they learned to balance femininity and sexiness with workplace standards. On the blue tube top, image 5, Ilona:

> Once I put on a top like this, it suited me well. It was comfortable. But … it wasn't comfortable in the office. People looked at me, not funny, but I think it was too sexy. Next time I did not wear this kind of shirt. Also when I wear very short skirts [it is uncomfortable]. I wear skirts that go to the middle of thigh, but not less.

Orsi picked up on this, recalling a time when she wore a short skirt. She said:

> I had a short skirt. My husband said it is not that short. But when I came in I thought it was too short. 90 percent of the technology department is men. So when I am going to have lunch it is ten people nine

> men and one woman. I know they are looking at the girls around they are checking out the girls and seeing what they are wearing and I realize that they may be discussing me as well and so I felt ashamed. I wanted to change [sic].

Heterogeneity within the interpretation of workplace etiquette is thus a "sexy" and "feminine" juxtaposition with a frustration at how to interact in a male dominated environment where the susceptibility to discrimination may be heightened.

Yet, this did not stop women form voicing desire to wear sexy clothing. Amidst claims of being professional, the women talked how they discovered where the line is between being too sexy and being too drab:

> I have a pair of stockings which is black from the mid thigh down and it is a purple color at the top. It can be an interesting thing with a shorter skirt I think it is very nice and can be sexy. But when I wore it to work which I liked I saw that it was showing the purple color and people were looking at it and now I think it was not so appropriate [*sic*].

With clear, albeit unwritten, rules about how much skin can show, why do the women of GE continue to privilege "sexiness" in, for instance, the attire they wore when I met with them and the magazine photos they identified with? On one level, it seems logical that the women would react similar to how women responded in United States sociological studies, with an aversion to showing skin and a desire to look as asexual, but with a hint of make-up. At GE, however, the women are advocating equity and meritocracy, though they do not want to be completely invisible even in their promotion of asexuality. "I am a woman, I think the men forget that," said Orsi. "I have to say that. I think they forget when they are talking about other women in front of me." In this way, it is desirable to move from invisible to feminine, because it falls within the parameters of equity – according to the imported guidelines of GE, as well as visibly marks the women as female.

Both of my research sites resist the desexualization of attire which characterizes corporate culture. The women do discipline their bodies, being feminine appears to carry more currency than androgyny. There is evidence that this could be a carry over from the former state-socialist past, however, the women described their wardrobe choices as reflective of their "individuality" which is an imported Western-capitalist discourse used to describe self. Moreover, this is paradoxical, as I pointed out earlier because all the women are choosing to be "individual" in the same sexy way.

What could contribute to this desire to be feminine and dress sexy in order to be an individual? Simmel argues that fashion and women are intertwined because women's subjected position in society alienates them from other ways to find empowerment and individuality, and fashion is one way to access this. He writes:

> Resting on the firm foundation of custom, of what is generally accepted, woman strives anxiously for all the relative individualization and personal conspicuousness that remains … Thus it seems as through fashion were the valve through which woman's craving for some measure of conspicuousness and individual prominence finds vent, when its satisfaction is denied her in other fields ([1904] 1957: 550 – 551).

At first Simmel's argument as to why women care more about their fashion than men appears too dated for relevance to the situation of contemporary Hungary. These women have jobs, why would they use fashion to gain satisfaction? However, as Freeman (2000) argues fashion assists women in achieving a specific kind of satisfaction and pleasure, a socially related one. Further, the men that I interviewed, while they voiced evident concern over their attire choices, the same level of anxiety, pleasure, and identification with the corporate brand was not there. For instance, Peter, a lawyer who works for GE, was very concerned that he has the right attire for the office as well as meetings with clients, and often travels to Berlin or

Vienna to shop for the business casual clothing. However his concern was not so different from Roy, who said that he is often more confused as to what to wear when he is spending time in the office as opposed to wearing a suit out for meetings. They were concerned, and rightly so, since attire gives clues into their attitudes, beliefs, and personalities. Particularly since these men did not wear a suit, they were discussing the corporate casual attire, the lines were more fuzzy. "While I really do like the comfort of wearing the casual clothes, you know the khakis, the polo shirt, I will admit that sometimes wearing the suit is easier because everyone knows what to expect," said Roy. Deviance from the suit represents a shift from the standardization characterizing corporate culture.

The fact that men voice concern about their appearance and find meaning in looking good does not disprove Simmel's thesis that women care more about fashion than men in order to find satisfaction in something that they cannot seem to find elsewhere. I say this not to discount these men's opinions on the suit and corporate attire, which themselves could be very revealing of how traveling attire and the corporate workplace have shifted and changed social relations and enough for another paper at that, but because it is important to emphasize the focus on sexiness which emerged from my interviewees which suggests that a certain level of satisfaction is being achieved through sexiness that is allowing women to capitalize on the gendered perceptions of "femininity" that are more often than not deemed the acceptable way to be a woman.

4.3 PLEASURE IN LOOKING "GOOD"

Thus far I have indicated that a productive definition of Foucaldian power emerges from the evident pleasure the women I interviewed get by identifying with "beauty," "style" and "equality" in their imaginations. Equally important to note that the women also take pleasure in the processes of looking "good." All women spoke of their physical bodies not

only with respect to their brands, but with respect to a more generally noted love/hate relationship with their size and shape.

To briefly illustrate this trend, I will use two examples of women finding pleasure disciplining their aspects of their body to meet specific norms of femininity: hair (achieved through products, and also going to the hairdresser) and body (achieved through dieting and exercise). The pleasure taken in rituals associated with these parts of the body I argue furthers Bordo's claim that women self-discipline, curb their choices, and internalizing external social standards of femininity that consequently limit acceptable bodily appearances in order to act out shared culturally specific assumptions about beauty and femininity.

At L'Oreal most of the women said something about how lucky they are that their hair/skin/bodies are "naturally" in "good" condition, for Zsuzsi, it is hair:

> Really important for me is my hair. I think that it should be healthy and shiny and because my brand is about healthy and shiny and I take care of it. And my hairdresser says your hair is so healthy and shiny. And have this fear of it getting greasy and dirty in town and I was discussing with my colleagues but now I don't know why maybe because I am pregnant it is getting better. What I prefer to do wash it every day or two days. I like to show that my hair is shiny and healthy. Hair is more important than clothes I guess for me [*sic*].

Here she is linking the physical and social pleasure of maintaining her hair with the tenets of her brand in order for it to look "natural." She washes her hair frequently and noted on her questionnaire that she spends the most money on hair products – even though working at L'Oreal she gets products at a discount — and she has her hair cut every six to eight weeks. The on-going maintenance gives her pleasure, but this is a disciplined pleasure that is specific to social expectations of what beautiful women's hair should look like, which is something that her brand at L'Oreal reinforces.

At GE Ilona exemplifies a worldwide trend of bodily disciplining through diet and exercise. She spends 10,000 HUF each month on gym membership in order to keep her body fit and firm. Piroska at the US Embassy mentioned a sort of depression related to her perception of her body, which stemmed into her thoughts on family and her desire to get married:

> I am now a bit overweight. I am really depressed about it. I used to be 55 kilos so ten kilos less. About five years ago it started and ever since I have been gradually putting on weight. I feel overweight. But I know there is BMI thing and I am normal. I think that it has to do with the age. You get above 30 then you tend to put on some weight and get wrinkled. I have been doing some sports, some aerobics. Sometimes I have a little diet [sic]. But it does not last for long. I managed for two weeks but it should be for 90 days. At least I lost three kilos but this Easter. But I think I put it back on … when I went to the US I also put on about 20 pounds. But then when I got back I immediately lost it. My body had gone so crazy. I lived with a family and they loved McDonalds. And anytime we went somewhere we went there. They had six kids. And at Thanksgiving all the family came together. I love these give family celebrations. There is an Italian or Greek lost in me. Many people altogether eating, celebrating. I am an only child, just me. My parents divorced. I am a lonely child. I want to have kids, three might be nice, I wouldn't mind having three. I just need to find the right guy [pause] I think that I am running out of time … I should take another little diet and begin to run around the island [sic].

This monologue reveals the pleasure Piroska takes in monitoring her body, with an equally powerful sense of loss of self when her body goes "crazy." This on-going flip-flop between being in and out of control illustrates the profound grip that social norms can have by on women's bodies which takes place through self-disciplining. No one is telling Piroska to look one way or another, just as no one told Judit that she should be thin to work at *Luxury* brands, or Ilona that professional work will be easier if she is not overweight.[7] Pleasure found in monitoring them to fit specific norms by using their bodies to perform a certain kind of message is a clear form of Foucaldian internalized self-discipline of the body.

[7] I am discussing the social imagery associated with weight, not the health related value.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has addressed how power intersects with visions of gendered professionalism through self-corporeal disciplining for women working at corporate workplaces in Budapest. Multinational corporate employers, with well-polished human resource strategies and liberal language and policy promising "diversity" and "equality" are locally celebrated as prestigious employers. They have made room for women to simultaneously use negotiate complex power relations regarding reconfigurations of class and gender identities at the level of the imagination. I have shown how "sexiness," "style" and social value emerge as common threads between the experiences of women at L'Oreal and GE, who are firmly orientated towards keeping a "feminine" sometimes "sexy" look to their vision of professional attire. By adorning themselves in such a way, the women take ownership over the corporate brand they are work for, grafting a localized vision of professionalism onto a global concept. In doing so these women find personal pleasure in negotiating the unclear, sometimes unfair standards of equality and beauty. However the pleasure hides the fact that productive power is at work in the form of Foucaldian self-disciplining.

It was not within the scope of this project to answer why "sexiness" takes such primacy and indeed would be an interesting point-of-entry for additional research on the phenomena. However, my research suggests that the partiality for "femininity" and "sexiness" may stem from an aversion to state-socialism, as well as a contemporary social desire for constructing self through consumer "choice" as trumpeted possible by Western neo-liberal democratic discourses.

Overarching, my research serves two important purposes. Firstly, it fills a sociological research gap on women, beauty, sexuality and professional work. The post-state socialist

context is a particularly interesting context to ask the questions I have raised since it has witnessed the large-scale introduction of global corporations to its economy only in the last twenty years. Prior to 1989 countries like Hungary had different professional cultures, consumer cultures and discourses about femininity (see Stitzel, 2005; Gal, 1994; Kligman, 2005). The women I interviewed said they take care of their appearance and find pleasure in this. They internalized certain institutional and cultural stereotypes, but these stereotypes and specificities when it comes to beauty and sexuality are by no means shared with their counterparts in other parts of the world, or of the workplace. Women in Hungary use color, patterns, and specific cuts in order to redefine the corporate code, thus redefining what is acceptable and considered feminine-professional in the corporations.

Secondly, the important contribution my thesis makes is that it reinvigorates Appadurai's theory of heterogeneous globalization by adding in to his "-scapes" characterized by "disjuncture" the important element of gendered productive power relations. I have argued through out this thesis the practices of women at both professional sites I compared provide support for Bordo's application of Foucault's of the body and power. But my argument is more than just a case study of this theory: women juggle mixed and varied rules and regulations of the body and in doing so, simultaneously adopt imported identities and values — in this case the brands of the companies they are working for — yet still maintaining a distance from completely encapsulating themselves in something that is altogether different from their sense of social aesthetic by keeping up appearances of femininity.

The oscillation between complete acceptance and total rejection of these imported ideas within a framework of clear power relations sheds light on how power functions in the modern world. As I have pointed out, there are two type of power administered within the corporations where the women are working: something remarkably similar to the state-

socialist totalitarian power, where the corporation hopes to win the hearts and souls of the employees through training sessions, hot-lines, and tests on corporate policy. This heavy handed discipline is hidden behind friendly terms about “diversity” and “equality” and “merit” at GE, and “beauty,” “cosmopolitanism” and “style” at L’Oreal. These value-added terms shield women employees from a reality heavy with top-down power, low-pay and gendered inequalities by giving them space to find imaginative pleasure in their positions.

My study raises important questions about the involvement and complacently of individuals living and working within institutional settings. It would be nice to be able to say that the disjunctures that Appadurai claims are rapid through out globalization are actually sites of resistance. But my research indicates that even though there is a very clear heterogeneity within the application of corporate policy, it cannot be easily labled either resistance or corporation, which as I have argued, complicates the classic Marxist notion of “false consciousness.” These women are not being “duped.”

My research on the gendered aspects of globalization within corporate settings as manifested in attire offers an important framework for understanding globalization — one which takes into consideration power relationships within disjunctures and flows. In this, my research reveals some troubling questions about the processes which take place allowing people to identify with, as well as participate and take pleasure in, power structures which profoundly shape their lives. In this way, my thesis invites further research on questions about how institutions intersect with forms of subjectivity, power, and imagination.

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8.0 APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWEES

	Name	M/F	Martial Status	Age	Employer	Years employed at present job	Job title	Citizenship	Highest level of education achieved
1	Adam	M	Single	27	GE — Lawyer	1	Lawyer	H	JD – Boston U.
2	Anniina	F	Single	31	GE	1	Staffing recruiter (formerly)	Finn	MA, presently CEU PhD student
3	Ann	F	Single	34	**US EMBASSY**	12 (in Hungary, 1)	Press Attaché	USA	Bachelors – 4 year
4	Cristina	F	Single	32	GE	2	Design Engineer	H	MA Chemistry
5	Csenge	F	Married (3 years)	28	GE	4.5	Design Engineer	H	MA Chemistry
6	Eszter	F	Married	Approx. 50	GE	12	Communication and PR Manager	H	Two MA degrees: poly sci, management
7	Eva	F	Married (25 years)	47	PR company works for GE	1	Account Manager	H	MA Public Policy
8	Gabi	F	Single	26	L'Oreal	3	Event Planner	H	Bachelors – 4 year
9	Heléna	F	Married (12 years)	43	CEU	5	Administrator	H	Bachelors – 4 year
10	Henriette	F	Married (1 year)	27	GE	1	Design Engineer	H	Masters of Chemical Engineering
11	Ilona	F	Single	31	GE	7	System Engineer	H	Bachelors – 4 year
12	Irma	F	Single	21	L'Oreal	3 months	Intern with Matrix brand marketing	H	Bachelors – 4 year
13	Judit	F	Single	29	L'Oreal	4	Luxury Brand Rep	H	Bachelors – 4 year
14	Kinga	F	Single	25	L'Oreal	2	Marketing	H	Bachelors – 4 year
15	Orsi	F	Married (2 years)	31	GE	4	Gov. Funding Coordinator	H	Bachelors – 4 year degree
16	Peter	M	Single	22	GE	1	Optical Engineer	H	MA Physics
17	Piroska	F	Single	32	American Embassy	3	Administrative Assistant	H	Bachelors – 4 year

18	Roy	M	Married	30	GE	5	Product Manager	South Africa	Bachelors – 4 year degree
19	Todd	M	Single	42	Pedersen Recruiting	8	Recruiter/Manager	USA	MBA Int. Business
20	Viktoria	F	Single	27	GE	4	External Sales and Marketing	H	MA — Business
21	Zsófia	F	Single	38	CEU	5	Program Coordinator	H	MA – IRES
22	Zsuzsi	F	Married (3 years)	28	L'Oreal	7	Brand Manager	H	Bachelors – 4 year

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

ATTIRE AT WORK:

****PERSONAL INFORMATION:**

First Name: **Age:** **Gender:** **Ethnic background(s):**
Single/Married/In a relationship: **Children? N/Y #? ___** **Nationality(ies):**
What is your sexual orientation (e.g. bisexual, straight …):
Educational degrees attained: **Number of years studied:** **Subject(s) studied:**
Place of work: **Job Title:** **Years employed at present job:**

INFLUENCES AND PREFERENCES:
What influences your work clothing choices? (Check all that apply):
___ what friends wear
___ what business colleagues wear
___ what role—models at work or elsewhere wear
___ what you see in magazines/on billboards
___ what is popular in shop windows
___ what celebrities/models are wearing
___ what you decide looks good on your body type (to you, what defines "looks good"?):
_____
___ other:
_____

ATTIRE AND PROFESSIONALISM:
To what extent do you feel your professional capabilities are conveyed with appearance? (1= appearance does not matter → 10=appearance is very important in conveying implicit messages):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

To what extent do you feel that your colleagues judge you by your appearance? (1 = never/rarely → 10=always)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

To what extent do you feel you can be sexy or show your sexuality through your attire at work? (1=not appropriate → 10=anytime).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

To what extent have you felt professional dress codes inhibit your ability to express your personality? (1=cannot express self, dress codes limit identity → 10= dress codes provide freedom for me to express myself):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What is most important to you …
fashionable/stylish and spending money? or being clean and tidy and saving money?

SHOPPING AND SPENDING:
How do you shop (check all that apply):
___ With friends – it is social activity
___ When I vacation to new places
___ When I need something – shoes to match a jacket or a new shirt for a meeting

___ When I want something new
___ Other reasons:
_____
__

Where do you get your clothes? (Check all that apply):
___ Brand name stores, (please list)
_____
_____
_____
___ Places you walk past and like what they have in the window (please list)
_____
_____
_____
___ Shops that have clothing on sale: (please list):
_____
_____
___ Out of the country – where? (Please list) and when?
_____
_____
_____
___ Secondhand stores
___ trade/borrow clothes with friends/family
___ other (write in):
_____

Do you have a credit card? Y_____ N_____
If yes: Do you purchase clothing with your credit card? Y_____ N_____
Do you pay off the balance at the end of each month? Y_____ N_____

Do you budget for clothing?
___ I buy clothes when I want to – I do not consciously budget
___ I budget strictly, I set aside money from each paycheck
___ I budget loosely, I try and not spend more than I should but I don't always keep track
___ Other:
_____
_____

How often do you shop?
___ Once a day
___ Twice a week
___ Once a week
___ Every other week
___ Once a month
___ Every other month
___ Every season
___ Twice a year
___ Once a year
___ I do not buy clothes every year
___ Only when I get my paycheck
___ Other:
_____
_____

BODY

What aspects of your body do you take care to maintain? How much money do you think you spend on this?

Categories	How important are each of these aspects of your body to you? (Rank from 1 (not impt) to 10 (very):	Estimate how often you pay to have maintenance? (e.g. a facial – 10,000HUF, once a month)
Nails		
Face/skin condition		
Face, make up		
Teeth		
Hair, including cut and color		
Body/skin, including tanning/solarium		

SHORT ANSWER

What does "professional" attire/ dress mean to you?

How has working for a foreign company affected your sense of professional dress? Is the dress code different than you expected?

How much influence do other styles have on your style … for example "American," or "French." Why or why not?

Can you think of a time when you have worn the "wrong thing" to work? What did you do wrong? What were the consequences?

Anything else you would like to say?

Thank you so much for filling out the questionnaire. I am really looking forward to meeting you and talking about clothing, style and fashion. Until then, thank you and all the best. Sincerely, Monika.

*** All information is confidential. This data is collected only for statistical purposes for this research; further, all names will be changed in the thesis and are only gathered so I can match the interviews with questionnaires*

APPENDIX C: IMAGES

Image 1: Hillary Clinton in *Forbes*.

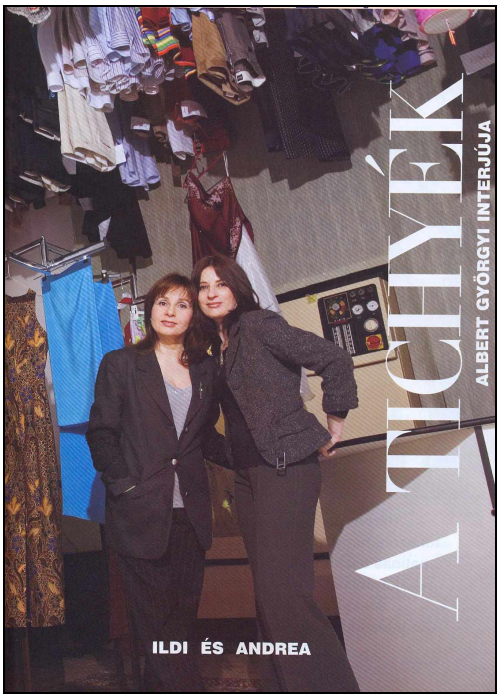

Image 2: Hungarian women, in a feature article on fashion in *Elite*, a Hungarian magazine.

Image 3: What to wear to work spread in *Harpers Bazaar*.

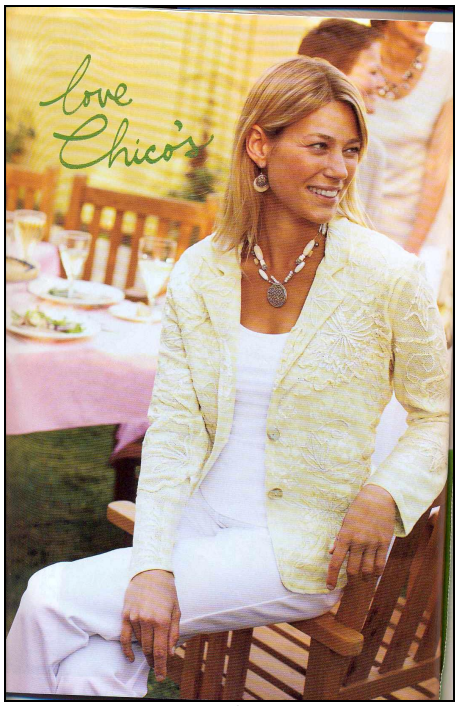

Image 3: Advertisment for Chico's suit clothing in American *Harper's Bazaar*.

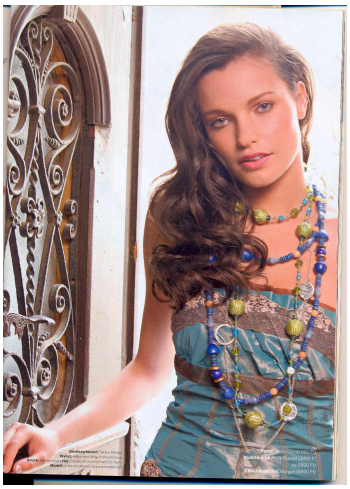

Image 5: Hungarian *Cosmopolitan*

Image 6: Fashion spread in Hungarian *Cosmopolitan.*