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Embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices:

Women's frontline work

in

employability enhancement programs

by

Bethan A. Lloyd

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

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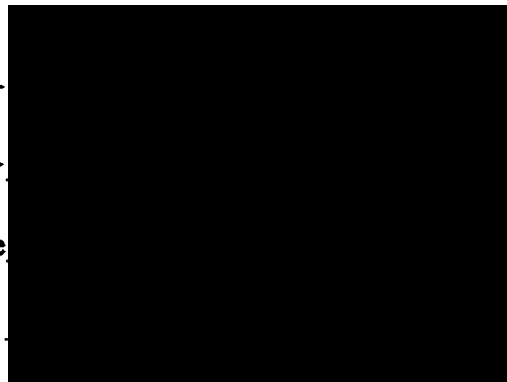
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to frontline workers

who engage in the everyday practices that

bridge the gap between policy and programming.

Their commitment to care, justice,

feminist collective action, and community alliance

in the face of ever decreasing government and public support

deserves our respect, our admiration, and our support.

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Abstract

For the last 10 years, adult educators, social workers, and community workers in Nova Scotia have worked in programs developed to enhance the employability of single mothers receiving social assistance. Gendered assumptions inherent in hegemonic understandings of work ethic and family ethic provide a contradictory conceptual framework within which frontline workers in employability enhancement programs operate. This research, based on interviews, dialogues, and focus groups with 23 women counsellors, instructors, and administrators focuses on their work of mediating social relations between a changing Canadian welfare state and a category of Canadian citizen, single mothers receiving social assistance.

Three patterns of socially organized practices emerge in the analysis. Through embodied practices frontline workers orient participants in time and space, dealing with current and past experiences of violence, addictions, ill-health, hunger, cold, and sexuality. Through coordinating practices they administer and manage policies, mandates, files, and forms to construct their program participants as actionable within bureaucratic systems. Through ethical practices they orient themselves toward socio-historically constructed humanist ethics of care, emancipatory ethics of justice, feminist ethics of collective action, and ethics of service and community alliance. Through these sets of practices, frontline workers demonstrate compliance with as well as resistance to the disciplinary control of both program and professional mandates.

The complexity and intensity of this mediating work arises from its articulation to socio-historical concepts of citizenship and hegemonic understandings of work ethics and family ethics. Frontline workers who engage in the employability enhancement of single mothers receiving social assistance participate in the categorization of those women as deserving or undeserving of state support, as worthy or unworthy of citizenship based on their successful or unsuccessful achievement of idealized notions of motherhood and waged work. This articulation to citizenship entitlements and responsibilities infuses the work with significance.

In the end, this research provides direction for the ongoing professional development of frontline workers expected to effect individual and social change with marginalized populations. These frontline workers have made a commitment to work in settings defined by intractable policy questions, questions that cannot be addressed from the singular perspective of any one group. Their frontline contact with program participants whose categorical citizenship they mediate demands education and training for the reflexive critique that can help them meet the challenges of their work. This research provides an example of how reflexive critique by frontline worker can be fostered; it also makes clear the contribution frontline workers have to make to policy development and analysis.

Acknowledgments

Chapter One   Employability enhancement as problematic

1.1   Introduction: Employability enhancement as problematic

In 1987 the province of Nova Scotia signed a federal/provincial agreement to cost-share education and training programs for those social assistance recipients (SARs) categorized as "unemployed employables." By 1992, frontline workers in employability enhancement programs provided services to over 300,000 Nova Scotians. The research outlined in this dissertation develops an analysis of this frontline work beginning in the accounts of instructors, counsellors, and program managers who, through their everyday practices, turn policy into programming, mediating social relations between their clients and the state.

The $6 million allocated to these programs fund four different categories of employability enhancement initiatives: Employment Resource Centres (ERC), specific skills programs, adult literacy programs, and pilot programs involving ERC staff. In addition, the provincial department of Community Services supports education and training for social assistance recipients through Work Activity Programs for "severely employment disadvantaged" adults, Career Planning for Single Parents, and discretionary support for individual social assistance recipients to a maximum of $200 per month for training and education expenses (usually childcare and transportation).

In addition, the provincial Department of Education funds school board continuing education programs and the community colleges. It also provides support services and resources for adult literacy and basic education programs through its Literacy Division. Federally-funded Canada

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Employment Centres sponsor five employment outreach programs for women and also purchase seats in skills training programs for individual clients.

Initially these employability initiatives concentrated on able-bodied men under the age of 45. Over the next five years, however, new categories of "employable" social assistance recipients received increasing attention, primarily youth and older workers displaced from manufacturing and resource-based industries. Eventually, the policy included single parent women, a category of citizen that occupies a contradictory space in Canadian welfare state history and in Nova Scotian social welfare policy.

Significant systemic barriers constrain the single mothers as they attempt to move from family benefits to waged work. The lack of affordable childcare and accessible transportation, as well as program structures that ignore the realities of mothering in a context of poverty, continue to restrict their participation.[1] "Training and education," Susan Wismer (1988) writes, "is necessary but not sufficient to create the economic changes which are needed for women" (p. vii). Changes in the material resources available to both poor women and the social welfare programs that serve them must be matched by changes in publicly-expressed values, values that serve to cement hegemonic understandings of the relationship between family, work, state policies, and corporate profits. "Patriarchy requires women to be dependent,"

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[1] In 1993, a single mother living in Halifax with one child could receive family benefits, the child tax credit, and GST credit for an annual income of $12,080. Using low-income cut-offs established by Statistics Canada, a family this size was considered poor if its total income was less than $18,398. Any child born into a single-mother household had a 74% chance of living in poverty compared to the 12.2% chance of children born into a two-parent family. Nova Scotia's unemployment rate hovered over 11% . With a minimum wage of $5.15 per hour experienced workers who worked 35 hours a week for 50 weeks made $9,012 per year. (Cox, 1994, January 1; National Council of Welfare, 1995, 1994).

Dorothy Miller (1989) argues, and "capitalism is served by the availability of a pool of low-wage labor" (p. 9).

Agents of the state, then, must address the contestatory space between the everyday lives of poor single mothers and "the clamour to decrease this dependent population and save taxpayer dollars" (Miller, 1989, p. 9). The state's only alternative "is to construct policies and programs that are marginally successful" (p. 20). Frontline workers in employability enhancement programs implement those policies and, in the process, find themselves working in those margins. They attempt to respond to the local needs of their program participants despite extra-local constraints on their time, energy, and resources.

This research focuses on the work undertaken by experienced and qualified adult educators and social workers, most of whom are women. It introduces 23 of these women who work in the community-based and institutional social services designed to meet the needs of single mothers "targeted" for employability enhancement because of their dependence and the dependence of their children on the state for simple survival. It explicates the social relations within which these program managers, instructors, and counsellors make poor single mothers actionable within state-mandated programs.

The state has constructed poor single mothers as simultaneously employable and unemployable, deserving and undeserving, guilty of transgressing both family and work ethics and thus unworthy of both care and justice. Nevertheless, women who are frontline workers undertake complex forms of mediation, attempting to personally, professionally, and

politically balance the conflicting expectations of those involved in funding, delivering, and receiving social services.

In explicating the frontline practices of employability enhancement, I seek not only to analyze how these practitioners mediate the social relations between the state and single mothers, but also how broader conceptual frameworks direct and underpin the development and maintenance of employability enhancement. Concepts such as "work ethic," "family ethic," and "citizenship" have complex socio-historical meanings, meanings that may be unavailable to the women who are given the frontline responsibility of enhancing the employability of unemployed single parent women.

In this dissertation I trace the threads articulating citizenship rights and responsibilities to social policy development, program funding, and the everyday practices of frontline work. At the same time, I highlight the frontline practices of resistance and activism that resist articulation to state relevances and the bureaucratic imperatives of social institutions. I seek to examine practices both of compliance and of contestation.

This chapter provides the groundwork for what follows. It undertakes the task of making employability enhancement problematic from within the sociohistorical location of women working as educators, counsellors, and program managers in 1993 in Nova Scotia. To begin, I locate the initiative of employability enhancement for single mothers within a historical context that begins before the English Poor Laws of 1606 (1.2). Then, I focus on public conversations as they appear in Nova Scotia's provincial and Canada's national newspapers (1.3). Arguing that the media frames public debate using ideological codes (Smith, 1993), I trace the discursive themes that ebb and flow throughout the years surrounding 1993 (1.4).

Following these conversations through media analyses allows us to see the context within which frontline workers advocate for "social justice" in a time of economic imperatives, advocate against "poverty" in a time of compulsory prosperity, advocate progressive understandings of "family" at a time when desperately poor single mothers and their children become the scapegoats of social policy determined to re-privatize care (1.5). These public conversations, I argue, constitute ideological practices which constrain the frontline work of enhancing the employability of single mothers receiving social assistance (1.6).

At the end of this chapter, after outlining the primarily evaluative research that addresses the efficiencies and effectiveness of employability enhancement programs, I map the construction of the dissertation (1.7). First, however, a brief overview of Canada's welfare state development explores the historical underpinnings of ideologies used to construct the conceptual frameworks within which these frontline workers accomplish their work.

1.2   An overview of the Canadian welfare state

Policy responses to the existence of an increasing number of able-bodied unemployed come out of a socio-historical context beginning before Canadian confederation and moving through nation building (1867-1914), laying the basis for the welfare state (1914-1945), the interventionist state built on stability (1945-1970), a period of contending paradigms (1970-80), and the re-discovery of industrial efficiency in the beginning of the 1990s (Brooks, 1988; Doern & Phidd, 1988). More broadly, conservative, liberal and social democratic eras demonstrate how Canadians supported, first, qualities of paternalism and voluntarism, second, the implementation of social

insurance and a quest for equality and, third, a balance between compassion and the power of privilege (Guest, 1985, pp. 234-235).

At the same time, and exemplifying the different theoretical models that can be developed to explain "true" or "objective" histories, the distinction between residual and institutional models of social welfare developed by Harold L. Wilensky and Charles N. Lebeaux helps us understand how policy makers and analysts shift emphasis between the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. To some extent, the immediate future for able-bodied unemployed individuals teeters on the cusp of major changes taking place globally, nationally, provincially, and municipally. Those who believe in a residual model of social welfare — one that locates the responsibility for providing the basic necessities of life with individuals, their families, benevolent associations, and the private marketplace — currently appear to be shifting the balance, overpowering those who believe in an institutional model — one that accepts the costs and benefits of modern society's economic growth and progress and believes individuals who pay the costs so that others benefit should not be left adrift, without support.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, social activist Charlotte Whitten aligned herself with a residual model, agreeing with the argument that a social policy response to private poverty would "undermine the pillars of North American civilization: responsibility for oneself and responsibility for the family group as an entity" (Kitchen, 1987, p. 229). Declaring it a national humiliation to proclaim that only through state intervention could certain Canadians maintain a decent standard of living, Whitten actively lobbied politicians for a more "scientific" approach to unemployment relief. Persuaded by the strength of her arguments, the National Employment

Commission hired her to find ways to assign waged employment to those who most needed it, to register and classify those who qualified for relief, and to supervise provincial and municipal relief budgets.

Whitten chose to focus not on individual and family need but on methods for enforcing the development of the work ethic. This involved, first, making the distinction between the rights of those who are employable and those who are not, and, second, hiring social workers to objectively distinguish between those who thus deserved state welfare and those who should be assisted in finding ways to help themselves. While she did not intend to set up a system of classification and surveillance, the sheer numbers of unemployed during the Depression soon overwhelmed the abilities of social workers to treat each client as an individual. Frontline work became a matter of distinguishing between the deserving and the undeserving poor.

During the social upheaval of the Depression it became clear that even those who struggle to maintain their independence through work and reliance on family can be held hostage to larger economic forces. In particular, economist John Maynard Keynes (1936) persuasively argued that full employment could no longer be assumed and government spending could result in renewed activity in the economic sector (Brooks, 1988, p. 26; McNiven, 1987, p. 300). Anticipating the return of soldiers after World War II, the federal government engaged in its first foray into employment-related training and education, the Vocational Training Coordination Act of 1942. Over the next 30 years, Leslie Pal (1987) argues, government labour market interventions moved from public works to mandated employment. With the formation of the Department of Manpower and Immigration in 1966 and the passage of the Adult Occupational Training Act the next year, the federal

government ensured its jurisdictional interest in the sphere of labour force development.

Cost-shared agreements initiated through the 1966 Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) also ensured federal influence in the provincial social assistance programs. By authorizing benefits solely on the basis of demonstrated need and by attempting to prevent poverty through "vocational rehabilitation" (training and placement services), distinctions between employable and unemployable, unworthy and worthy no longer existed as legitimate bureaucratic decision-making processes (Muscovitch & Drover, 1987, p. 30).

By 1973, however, the climate had changed. Competing paradigms tried to resolve issues of rights and responsibilities as the Liberals shifted their policy focus from social reform to reform of the individual (Brooks, 1988; Doern & Phidd, 1988). Increasingly concerned with visible signs of poverty, however, Canadians were not satisfied with the Special Senate Committee on Poverty set up to address these concerns. Controversial from its beginnings, four staff resigned from the Special Senate Committee. Equating poverty with violence, they asked whether Canadians could leave "great numbers of our citizens. . . to endure a life of poverty, exploited by an economic structure that continually reinforces their position of inequality?" (Adams, Cameron, Hill, & Penz, 1971, p. 1). At this point, contending paradigms competed to set the ideological framework for frontline work with poor single mothers.

In the 1984 throne speech "economic equality" became the focus of an articulated labour force development policy developed to mediate between economic and social conditions. This "new" version of economic equality, however, was articulated to the four other priorities included in the speech:

employment, the family, law and order, and privatized social security (Prince, 1987, p. 254). Over the next decade, political rhetoric and public conversations increasingly argued that any individual's right to economic equality required that those individuals demonstrate their commitment to a work ethic and family ethic based on acceptance of dominant social norms and willingness to become dependent on family or charitable organizations before asking for state-funded assistance. The return to a residual model of social welfare thus becomes officially sanctioned and built into frontline polices and practices.

The Dodge Report (Canada. Employment and Immigration, 1981) signaled this move into economic rather than social responses to the problems facing low and middle income Canadians. Although the Unemployment Insurance Act might be equitable and fair, the report suggested it was neither efficient nor cost-effective (Doern & Phidd, 1988). Recommending that direct payments to the unemployed be replaced with government-funded employability training initiatives, the report documented the policy shift from meeting the needs of workers to meeting the needs of private industry.

This shift to supply-side solutions marks the turning away from Keynesian economics toward monetarism and the social and individual benefits of capital investment. As Patricia Daenzer (1990) argues, it also reflects a Calvinist liberalism, locating deficits within individual workers rather than within a dysfunctional market:

> This focus on the jobless person meant that the liberal ideal of "individual fault" prevailed over the structuralist notion of state-induced "market deficiencies." This liberal ideology was also evident in the practices of both programs, which succeeded in blurring the distinction between "wages" and "welfare," and between "labour-market training" and "therapy." (p. 66)

The move toward "fixing" the unemployed individual rather than the economy becomes entrenched with the 1987 Canada/Nova Scotia agreement on enhancing the employability of social assistance recipients (1987). Promoted as "training and employment measures designed to help social assistance recipients obtain and hold stable employment" (press release) the criteria for success makes it clear that reducing "reliance on public support" will take precedence over reducing poverty.

As citizenship responsibilities replace citizenship rights in the 1980s the image of almost all Canadians as decent, hard-working, and compassionate recedes, replaced by the image of poor and unemployed Canadians as unmotivated, unskilled, and irresponsible. Single parents receiving social assistance, in particular, feel the effects of neo-conservative and neo-liberal interpretations of how and why they accept money from the state. Gertrude Goldberg roots these interpretations in beliefs that social welfare policies cause "unemployment, poverty, and family breakdown" and that "the single-parent family is a deviant family form supported and abetted by current welfare policy" (cited in Riches 1990b, pp. 108-109).

Indeed, such beliefs are evident in both the 1985 MacDonald Commission (Canada. Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada, 1985) and the 1986 Forget Commission (Canada. Commission of Inquiry on Unemployment Insurance, 1986). Both reports suggest that social assistance programs should be replaced with social services programs to remove any disincentives to work on the part of social assistance recipients and any disincentives to hire on the part of multinational corporations.

Themes of national pride and prosperity are not completely overcome by economic imperatives, however. Believing in a just government, a caring community, and a traditional family steeped in love and principled discipline, a variety of interest groups hope that a newly minted focus on "partnerships" might bring business, labour, and equity groups to the table to resolve the debate between those who advocate economic policies and those who advocate social policies as a means to resolve such private and public problems as child poverty. These themes focus the public conversations of Canadians unable to reconcile that in the context of their everyday lives they are being asked to answer the question "What's more important, compassion or money?" (Philp, 1994, January 19b).

In the next section of this chapter, the public conversations organized through provincial and national print media trace the patterns of debate that flourish from 1992 to 1995, during the time of this research. As this brief overview of Canadian welfare state development indicates, societal understandings of impoverished Canadians have been a matter of significant debates — debates which crystallize in policies and programs that directly affect poor people. Also materially affected by these debates, the frontline workers hired to enhance the employability of the able-bodied unemployed single mothers receiving social assistance are curiously absent from authorized accounts of "what the government is doing to 'fix' these people." Through the ideological practices that construct public conversations, the constellation of hegemonic beliefs that surround the frontline work of employability enhancement begins to form the foundation of both the research and the analysis arising out of its qualitative data.

1.3   Public conversations: The media and relations of authority

In the last decade of the twentieth century, single mothers receiving

social assistance become both a social and an economic issue, their children

become a moral issue, their relevances become objects of public, political, and

theoretical interpretation, primarily through textually mediated discourses.

The lives of these women and their children become a common currency

traded in places of government and business, in churches and schools, at the

meetings of service clubs and social justice action coalitions. Their lives

become the subjects of "public conversations," what Dorothy Smith (1995)

calls the

> many ongoing conversations carried in part in print, or as broadcast
> talk, or as images on television or film, and in part in the many
> everyday settings of talk among people that take up, take off from, or
> otherwise incorporate ideas or substance from public discourse. They
> are conversations among people who do not necessarily know one
> another except through that medium. (p. 25)

Access to the lives of single mothers receiving social assistance become public

not through their own narratives as they interact with others in private,

social, or public settings, but rather through expert discourses concerning

poverty and wealth, rights and responsibilities, employability enhancement,

work and family.

These "conversations mediated by texts" become public conversations

most fully when they are taken up by mass media. Members of the media act

"as selectors of which people can speak in public conversations, as

formulators of how these people are presented, and as authors of knowledge"

(Erickson, Baranek, & Chan, 1992, p. 242, emphasis in the original removed).

The sources of media accounts understood to be authoritative are credible

individuals who represent various institutions.

[Authority] appears . . . as the difference between the credibility granted to some sources and the treatment of others as mere opinion or as lacking credibility in some way. Authority bleeds from the institutional relations of ruling to the relations of authority at the surface of media. (Smith, 1990b, p. 101)

Journalists have the power to certify particular individuals as "authorized knowers" by including them within the story as sources. "Sources" may gain access to the media (and have an opportunity for favourable representation); they may gain coverage by the media (but risk unfavourable representation); or they may be excluded by the media and given no attention at all (Erickson, Baranek and Chan, 1992, p. 242). In most cases, representative spokespersons from government and non-governmental organizations become authoritative and the extent to which these spokespersons have access, as opposed to coverage, depends on the extent to which they articulate their positions to the positions of ruling elites.

Preferred readings, aimed at granting legitimacy, are given to organizations whose views articulate with the presumed consensus, and whose reformers are 'insiders' in the sense of being in accordance with state-mediated public interests. . . . Negative readings, aimed at marginalization, are given to organizations whose views do not articulate with the consensus, and whose reformers are 'outsiders' in the sense of being discordant with state-mediated versions of the public interest. (Erickson, Baranek, & Chan, 1989, pp. 261-262)

In the 1990s in Canada, those who have power to influence the media frame are, according to many media analysts, those who support the growing influence of the corporate sector (Desbarats, 1990).

While analysts may disagree about the extent to which a corporate elite directly influence daily news coverage (Winter, 1990), few disagree that members of the media in their day-to-day practices construct a frame through which members of the public view "important social dramas pertaining to

community and democracy, order and change" (Erickson, Baranek, & Chan, 1992, p. 398).

> Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports. Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual. (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7, original emphasis removed)

Editors assign and journalists write stories from a particular perspective, "a way of seeing an event that also amounts to a way of screening from sight" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 48). Those with the power and authority to construct the media frame maintain significant control over how the facts are presented to those who want to engage in public conversations but lack personal, professional, or political experiences on which they can draw. Indeed, "the power of the media frame to identify the issues in the first place preserves for the framers an important power over the very terms of public life" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 142).

Media frames both draw on and contribute to particular ideological practices. When members of the media construct unemployed single mothers receiving social assistance as front page feature section stories, the women are translated into ideological categories: "victims of the current recession," "representatives of the degeneration of family values," or "justifications for Canada's lack of labour force competitiveness." The authoritative accounts of these women's lives abstract what is known about them as individuals and enter these abstractions into generic forms.

The social relations of public textual discourses are distinct in their degree of abstraction from local actualities.

They constitute a discrete order of social relations characterized by the
detachment of discourse from the locally situated speaker and her
particular biography, the substitution of categorical forms for actual
members and of accounts for actual events, the anonymity of readers
(or watchers) and the one-way movement of messages. It is a medium
in which the world exists for the participant as a textual construct.
(Smith, 1990b, p. 123)

Media frames are not random, freely chosen by individual writers and

broadcasters; they are subject to, even as they perpetuate, a "free-floating form

of control in the relations of public discourse" (Smith, 1995, p. 27). They are

subject to, and producers of, ideology — "the desire to control reality with the

idea" (Griffin, 1982, p. 279).

Dorothy Smith (1995) argues that the "ideological/ conceptual/

theoretical command of the field of text-mediated relations. . . [is] immensely

powerful, the more so because it is largely invisible as power" (p. 26, original

emphasis removed). This command operates in part through ideological

codes, codes that "order and organize texts across discursive sites, concerting

discourse focused on divergent topics and sites, often having divergent

audiences, and variously hooked into policy or political practice" (Smith,

1993, p. 51). These ideological codes become "integral to the coordination and

concerting" of public conversations (p. 51).

The current economic "sacred text," for example, proclaims the

necessity of deficit reduction through social program cuts as a means of

promoting lower interest rates and thus bringing North America out of

recession. This belief "coordinates the terms of the debate, locking in even

those who do not agree with it" (Smith, 1993, p. 24). It is as if the discursive

field of social relations has come under magnetic influence wherein

conversations leading toward one conclusion inexplicably and inexorably

reorient themselves toward a self-contradictory end. How to explain these fluid realignments, like flocks of birds changing their flight paths in perfect formation, except as "'spontaneously' adopted and reproduced" (p. 28)?

Ideological codes may be traced through the language used in texts pertaining to "single mothers," who are "dependent" on the "state," dysfunctional "citizens" who contribute neither to their own "prosperity" nor to the prosperity of their "communities." By contributing to the "out-of-control deficit," to their nation's consequent lack of "competitiveness" in "global markets," they make evident the degree to which they require "human resource development" in order to enhance their "employability" and thus become "contributing" workers who are investing not only in their future, but also in the future of their children.

The categories, and vocabularies involved in this description point to historically developed concepts that organize and are organized through interests differently located in the ruling apparatus "those institutions of administration, management, and professional authority, and of intellectual and cultural discourses, which organize, regulate, lead and direct, contemporary capitalist societies" (Smith, 1990a, p. 2). However, the vocabulary and categories are used not only by those who benefit from relations of ruling but also by those who pay the costs. As indicators of ideological codes they become pervasive in public text-mediated discourses, "those relations of discourse to which, in principle, access is unrestricted within a given national population" (Smith, 1995, p. 24). At the same time these ideological codes become structuring principles guiding the work of frontline workers mandated to "fix" the employability deficits of single mothers receiving social assistance.

1.4   Ideological practices: The ebb and flow of public conversations

Media distill and disseminate the authoritative accounts produced in a wide range of other locations — debates and committee meetings in houses of parliament and provincial legislatures, Royal Commission hearings and reports, court arguments and decisions, interest and advocacy group forums and publications, ad-hoc citizen protests, political backroom machinations, international conference proceedings, individual opinion and commentary. During 1992, 1993, and 1994, as part of the research for this dissertation, I read every issue of the Globe and Mail, Canada's national daily newspaper, and the Mail Star, Halifax's daily newspaper. I clipped approximately 800 items, focussing on single mothers, social assistance, poverty, the family, labour force development, the deficit, and the need for social welfare reform. While these clippings are not the only sources of relevant public conversations in Canada, they are particularly key sources marking ideological shifts among those engaged in ruling relations.[2]

The Globe and Mail's editor-in-chief William Thorsell (1994, March) suggests his national paper's contents represent

> a set of beliefs about what matters in society. We define what matters as the "news." The news reflects the values of a people at any given moment in a nation's history. As values change, so the news changes, and the set of beliefs of what defines a newspaper changes. (p. 5)

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[2] "Ruling relations" is a concept central to the analysis in this thesis. Explored more fully in both Chapter Two and Three but used throughout this text, it refers to the term defined by Dorothy Smith (1999) as:

> that internally coordinated complex of administrative, managerial, professional, and discursive organization that regulates, organizes, governs, and otherwise controls our societies. It is not yet monolithic, but it is pervasive and pervasively interconnected. It is a mode of organizing society that is truly new for it is organized in abstraction from local settings, extra-locally, and its textually-mediated character is essential . . . and characteristic. (p. 49)

Globe and Mail editorials offer no pretense of objective reporting, but "define the personality of [the] newspaper," reflecting its "intellectual soul" (Bissoondath, 1994, March, p. 18). As such they offer a particularly important insight into public conversations. At the same time, the Halifax Mail Star documents those public conversations of importance to Nova Scotians.

Over the three year period from 1992 to 1994 distinct patterns emerge in the media discourse surrounding the employability enhancement of single mothers receiving social assistance. Particular ideological codes become apparent, beginning in 1992 when a cumulative obsession with constitutional concerns abruptly gives way to concerns about national prosperity and the search for pragmatic understandings of "poverty" in a perceived context of increasing demands for "special rights" and decreasing evidence of "family values." These debates lead inexorably toward the questionable future of universal social programs and demand distinctions between "need" and "want," between the destitution of the worthy and the sloth of the unworthy.

Throughout 1993, the focus on poverty ebbs and then flows over into an intense focus on the family. Social reform gains attention during the federal election and begins to organize public debate as New Brunswick and British Columbia agree to participate in federal/provincial pilot projects involving the employability enhancement of social assistance recipients. Throughout 1994, social reform as a means to deficit reduction becomes the dominant ideological code.[3]

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[3] In her 1993 book, The wealthy banker's wife: The assault on equality in Canada, Linda McQuaig suggests that attacks on universal social welfare programs illustrate the erosion of the post-war movement toward equality. In Shooting the hippo: Death by deficit and other Canadian myths, McQuaig (1995) convincingly argues against the position taken by "Canada's political and business elites, including the media," about the ideological code that organizes public, private, and social conversations concerning the deficit.

Throughout these years, public conversations take up the contentious issue of employability enhancement policies and programs. Stories about the public's responsibility for those disadvantaged by regional, national, and global economic changes shift toward stories about the individual's responsibility to take advantage of new economic opportunities, particularly those offered by technological changes.

A particularly clear example of this shift occurs on the editorial pages of the Halifax Mail Star. An August, 1993 editorial headlined "Don't punish the needy" urges provincial politicians and the general public to critically assess national public opinion poll responses that advocate "learnfare" or "workfare" for employable individuals currently receiving social assistance or unemployment insurance. While the editorial writers don't dismiss these options out-of-hand they warn that

> caution is needed to prevent UI recipients or those on welfare from being used as whipping boys [sic] for Canadians' general sense of economic frustration. Additional job training is always an advantage — provided it trains someone for a job that actually exists, or is likely to exist in the very near future. (Editorial, 1993, August 26)

Seven months later, in "Workfare worth a try," the editorial writers move from decrying these options to considering them as "acceptable social policy" — "a welcome sign of the times":

> Better for individuals to be given the chance to improve their own personal and job skills and enhance their feelings of self-worth. Better too for society as a whole if more of its members obtain new job skills and are fired with the desire to play fuller and more meaningful roles. (Editorial, 1994, March 29)

In the first editorial, those receiving unemployment insurance or social assistance appear to be responsible but frustrated individuals who want to work. In the second, they become individuals who require life skills and

work skills to become "fired with the desire" to work. In the intervening months their lack of desire rather than the country's lack of jobs has become the problem.

By 1994 a significant number of writers (and presumably readers) believe that unemployed adults are refusing to take either jobs that could support them or training programs that could qualify them for these jobs. Something happens in the years leading up to 1994 to move public conversations away from the understanding that Canadians, as a whole, are a hardworking, responsible people who willingly provided for themselves and their families even in hard times. Instead, Canadians who find themselves without work have become willfully unemployable, choosing to be undeserving rather than deserving Canadian citizens.

1.5   Ideological practices: Prosperity, poverty, and the traditional family

Ongoing constitutional debates in 1991 and 1992 emphasize Canadians' shared values: "freedom, fairness, caring, sharing, equality, the acknowledgment of difference, and respect for diversity" (Fraser, 1992, February 8). The Preamble to the Beaudoin-Dobbie Report expresses for many Canadians the emotional and spiritual component of a decade-long series of consultations and commissions. Its Preamble affirms that "We are the people of Canada, drawn from the four winds of the earth, a privileged people, citizens of a sovereign state" (Beaudoin-Dobbie Report, 1992, March 2). In contrast, the Charlottetown Accord, developed by first ministers on August 28, 1992, reflects a rule of law and brokering of bureaucracies centred on economic interpretations of well being. With the Accord's defeat, the struggle

between social justice and competitive economic imperatives becomes more pronounced.

A media backlash to the vision of Canada as "a home of peace, hope and goodwill" (Beaudoin-Dobbie Report, 1992, March 2) appears almost immediately. Business writer Diane Francis (1992, November 22) writes one month after the defeat of the Charlottetown Accord that "the unjust nature of confederation" has resulted in "seven provincial welfare bums whose appetites for cash seem insatiable, thanks to the forced generosity imposed on taxpayers living in the three wealthiest provinces." Each Nova Scotian receives $998 a year from transfer payments, she writes, and rather than "reduce Canada's competitiveness by forcing winners to subsidize losers who are able to spend more than they otherwise would," Nova Scotians without jobs should be forced to leave the region and find work elsewhere.

Other expert commentators also express concern about Canada's competitiveness and prosperity during this post-referendum period. In 1992, a $15-million federal initiative pulls together a "Steering group on prosperity" that develops Inventing our future: An action plan for Canada's prosperity. This elite group recommends that government "adopt the approach of successful modern businesses, which seek to maximize individual potential, set high standards of performance and train rigorously to achieve them" (Howard & Fagan, 1992, October 30; see also Galt, 1992, May 8; Howard, 1992, January 29; Latter, 1992, April 30). David McCamus, co-chair of the committee and the retired president of Xerox Canada, suggests that "the most unifying theme among ordinary Canadians now [four days after the Charlottetown Accord referendum results] is a fear for their economic security" and that security will only be forthcoming when Canadians decide

to trust business, government, and education to find the way to a more prosperous future (Howard & Fagan, 1992, October 30).

Increasingly media attention is drawn to concerns about Canadian prosperity. Increasingly experts and analysts suggest that without "a quantum shift in economic policy" the "pervasive fear that Canadian children will endure a lower standard of living than their parents will be borne out" (Philp, 1993, November 17).[4] In a series of articles by Globe and Mail social policy reporter Margaret Philp (1994, January 19a; 1994, January 19b; 1994, January 21; 1994, January 25) it becomes clear that this relative prosperity of fathers and sons has become the benchmark of national prosperity weaving together work ethic, family ethic, a strong economy, and the dream of a better life. Without the motivation of bettering their fathers financially, experts warn, young men pose a significant "threat to social stability" (York, 1994, January 22).

Public conversations about national prosperity and the right of each generation to surpass the financial success of their parents has their parallel in public conversations about individual poverty and the responsibility of families dependent on the state to claim no more than the absolute minimum required for survival. These conversations take place in two separate worlds, constructing the active anger of young, White, married men who can no longer increase their consumption of goods and services and the

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[4] Carleton University sociologist Craig McKie suggests the number of young men committing suicide had increased 500% since 1970s, "a warning sign that young men have reached their limit for social change" (Philp, 1993, November 17). It might be more accurate to suggest that "young middle class White men" have reached their limit since for young First Nations or Black men in Nova Scotia the current economic trends has not significantly changed their employment patterns.

passive apathy of young, non-White, single-parent women who expect to keep up with the everyday consumption of their employed neighbours.

Within the media discourse, definitions of "prosperity" never became problematic; it is considered self-evident that being prosperous requires being more prosperous than others. Definitions of "poverty" became highly contested, however, focusing on Statistics Canada's low-income cut-offs as a proportion of average incomes. As average incomes rise so will the number of poor people, many argue, especially as the gap between rich and poor widens. Indeed, with the approach of the millennium national and international agencies report that Canada's children are becoming poorer rather than less poor; politicians begin to feel trapped by a House of Commons vote to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000.

Two Globe and Mail editorials provide book ends for much of the subsequent debate concerning measures of poverty. The first suggests that minimal standards of living need to be set before meaningful measures of poverty can be undertaken (Editorial, 1991, December 16). The second, almost exactly one year later, suggests that this minimum can be found in work published by the Fraser Institute, a neoconservative "think tank" based in Vancouver (Editorial, 1992, December 28). While Statistics Canada sets its low-income cut-off for a family of four between $20,192 to $29,661 (National Council of Welfare, 1995) Christopher Sarlo (1992) argues that the same four-member family actually requires only $15,067 to meet their basic needs. "Advocates and lobby groups" inflate claims of poverty, the second editorial

argues. By overstating the problem they "distort public policy and give Canadians a chronic case of compassion fatigue."[5]

Throughout 1993 the much-publicized claim that the "cycle of welfare/ cycle of poverty" must be broken takes on hegemonic proportions while those with less authority try to counter-claim that the "cycle of greed" must receive equivalent attention. In mid 1993, a third Globe and Mail editorial recommends the use of an "indicator of income inadequacy" to distinguish those who "have serious difficulty in living a healthy and physically acceptable life" from those who are not really poor (Editorial, 1993, June 10). Suggesting a minimum survival income should "include sufficient allowances for food, shelter, personal needs, clothing and transportation, telephone, cable TV, and school supplies, as well as daycare for single-parent families" the editorial writer demonstrates a glaring lack of knowledge about the life circumstances of social assistance recipients and the working poor. Sarlo's $15,067 for a family of four would clearly not come near providing even shelter, food, and clothing costs for such a family.

During the public conversations concerning "poverty," a chorus chanting "family family family" can often be heard in the background. In April, 1992, after politicians shelve promised child care programs and before politicians end the 47-year history of universal family allowances, the Globe and Mail social policy reporter writes a feature headlined "June Cleaver-style moms back in fashion. Women are under new pressure to stay home with their kids — a luxury few can afford" (Mitchell, 1992, April 20). Drawing from government policies, a wide variety of experts, movie plots, magazine

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[5] A letter to the editor immediately responds that "'compassion fatigue' is just a cutesy attempt to justify greed and selfishness" (Berkman, 1993, January 13).

articles, advertising, and literature, Mitchell outlines a growing celebration of "momism," the glorification of motherhood and the craving of "ordinary Canadians" for a stability typified by the stay-at-home mom who sacrifices her individualistic desires for the good of the family.

Mitchell (1992, April 20) suggests the resurgence of "the traditional family" serves a political purpose: "Whenever social and political elites have felt at all threatened, a part of their response has been to argue for revival of 'stable' family values," bringing them into conflict with rhetoric about women's rights. Using figures provided by the Vanier Institute of the Family, she provides statistical evidence that the number of families below the poverty line would increase by 62% if mothers who work outside the home decided en masse to quit paid employment. Mitchell cites academics, business executives and advocacy group members debating the motivation behind women's second thoughts about working both inside and outside the home; are they evidence of post-feminism or a backlash against women's liberation? Or, could they be evidence of the government's decision to offload social responsibilities onto "the family," replacing actual services with the "information, education and emotional support" required by the women expected to carry out "their nurturing work."

A year later, leading up to the 1994 UN Year of the Family, columnist Michael Valpy (1993, October 12) hits a collective nerve. After spending a week in Ontario's public schools, Valpy writes that 40 per cent of school children come from dysfunctional families and concludes, "We can't possibly pretend that the profound shift in Canadian family life has not had negative side effects. The question is what we do about it."

An editorial the same day, "Time for a family talk" (Editorial, 1993, October 12) suggests if children arrive at school lacking requisite social skills and ethics then we have to find out what is wrong with the modern family. What is wrong, they suggest, is two-income households or, more specifically, "the growing participation of women in the workforce" and children's lack of "constant home-based attention that was once the norm in our society." The writer claims this problem cannot be blamed on feminism or on women who work outside the home. Instead, "it is simply a historical fact whose implications must be more fully explored" (Editorial, 1993, October 12). Only a few weeks later the Globe and Mail publishes a completely contradictory report based on new Statistics Canada data, claiming Canadian families were "thriving" and toppling "myths on divorce, marriage" (Mitchell, 1993, November 9). No editorial comment follows.

The discursive context within which frontline workers attempt to enhance the employability of single mothers receiving social assistance is one in which experts bemoan the decline of national standards of living, debate the accuracy of poverty measures, and connect the failure of traditional families to the increase in social problems.

1.6   Ideological practices: The hegemonic status of ideological codes

Alongside the themes of declining national prosperity, inadequate definitions of poverty, and family breakdown leading to social breakdown, runs the theme of curbing the national deficit by reducing social spending. Public conversations about "social strategies," "social policy reform," and "deficit reduction" proliferate in media accounts. A Globe and Mail series beginning January 19, 1994, typifies these public conversations as they appear

in news and current affairs media and demonstrate the power of ideological codes by asking what appears to be the key question: "What's more important, cementing Canada's tradition as a compassionate nation or curbing a runaway government budget deficit?"

Presenting a series of experts to bolster her argument, social policy reporter Margaret Philp presents a 1991 Statistics Canada study that shows "it was not social-policy largesse but tax breaks for corporations and wealthy Canadians in the 1970s, together with surging interest costs in the 1980s, that led to the ballooning of public debt." Despite this evidence, however, Philp concludes: "The burgeoning cost of the safety net cannot be ignored. . . . If changes to social programs are not made, the tax bite down the road will be far heavier" (emphasis added). The next sentence begins "If changes in the share of taxes paid by corporations and wealthy Canadians are not made" but this point gets lost as the series continues on the path set by the first sentence.

The public authoritative account thus breaks with what might appear to be the only logical argument; the ideological code cannot be diverted from organizing the public discourse according to the perspectives of the corporate elite that sustains Canada's national newspaper — even to the point of contradicting the arguments and evidence presented by on-site experts. As with any ideological code, "dissenting views must operate on its terms" (Smith, 1995, p. 24); in this case, even the contradictory findings of Statistics Canada are marshalled into an argument for retrenchment of social spending in the context of a budget squeeze.[6]

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[6] Charting the remainder of the series provides many other examples of how the hegemonic status of an ideological code renders it invisible in its organizing role within text-mediated public discourses. Indeed, tracing the headlines of Philp's lead articles provides a useful map for the shift from compassionate social reform to hard-headed economics: "In the beginning

The editorial concluding Philp's series suggests social programs need not be cut if the Liberal government would face reality by simplifying the system, coordinating social services, targeting the money to people who really need it, and providing the incentives for people "to work, train and, if necessary, move to find a job" (Editorial, 1994, January 26). If the government also saves money, "so much the better."[7] A few months after the end of this series, the House of Commons' committee on human resources development sides with neo-conservative ideology, calling for cuts in social spending and "the subordination of social security to the needs of the market" rather than "the expansion of social programs as part of a progressive economic strategy for creating good, decent-paying jobs" (Brown, 1994, April 5). The ideological code of deficit reduction through reduced social spending has reach its peak.

The single mothers who need both social programs and decent paying jobs do their best to counter the ideological code that subordinates their social security to the needs of the market, but they have no way of presenting their

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there was the report by Dr. Marsh," Philp writes (1994, January 19a). This report, rejected by the Canadian elite, nevertheless led to the "Liberals facing a heavy load of welfare" and subsequent "Insecurity: When jobs are scarce and the economy poor." The only suggested solution is to ask "What's more important: Compassion or money?" (1994, January 19b). The answer, it appears, is that the "Welfare system shatters dreams of a better life" and, therefore, "As bleak as life on social assistance is, [these] provincial programs put obstacles in the way of recipients who try to escape it" (1994, January 21). It will be for the good of everyone, therefore, if politicians pay attention to the "Consensus growing for social policy reform." Indeed, "The question is no longer whether to revamp Canada's costly welfare system, it's how" (1994, January 25).

[7] In a similar argument the day before from Geoffrey York (1994, January 25) of the Globe and Mail's Parliamentary Bureau argues that the Liberals' progressive and innovative social policies are "being mugged by reality.". Rescuing the best of these policies, may require punitive measures for those who insist they need social services not employability enhancement:

> Incentives for training and education could be offered to Canadians as a stick, rather than a carrot. Instead of providing more money to those who improve their skills, the Liberals might threaten to reduce payments to those who refuse to enter training.

voices so they may be heard and valued by those in authority. Non-profit organizations such as the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) develop information for those working with adult learners (e.g. Telling our stories our way, 1990); programs, coalitions, and government departments contribute to the growing body of literature by adult learners and students (e.g. Why not me!, 1989; Lloyd, 1989; Women, literacy and action, 1991; Literacy and poverty: A view from inside, 1992). These powerful voices bring poverty, prosperity, and the traditional family into sharp relief.

In 1989 the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) publishes a report based on the experiences of 89 former trainees, of whom 80 per cent are female and 65 per cent have at least one child. Contrary to dominant social myths about welfare recipients, respondents clearly want to gain economic independence. Many respondents face considerable barriers, with the "single greatest barrier to job training" being "access to affordable, quality child care" (NAPO, 1989, p. 51). Similarly, an earlier Manitoba study finds that "the provision of adequate, affordable, and accessible child care and the availability of stable jobs at good wages are the most important elements in any attempt to create employment solutions to welfare problems for female recipients" (Evans, 1987, p. 27).

Demonstrating that women understand only too well the structural reasons for their poverty, and the structural changes that would make a difference for them, author and activist Sheila Baxter (1988, 1991, 1993) describes their needs:

> What the women say they need are free bus passes, free education, real job training, and real jobs which pay a living wage. They say workers in social service offices do not listen to them enough — they feel they are

often treated as stupid or deviant. They want good, safe housing, a clothing allowance, recreational opportunities. They want dignity and respect in their lives. (1988, p. 13)

"I am poor because there are no decent jobs available" (p. 87) one woman says; another outlines the social welfare programs they require: "given sixty days of daycare and a bus pass, I personally could get off and stay off welfare forever" (p. 19).

In Nova Scotia short-term under-funded projects produce photocopied and spiral-bound reports structured around the first-person accounts of poor single mothers. In Gathering our thoughts: Women speak out on low income (1993) women in a Halifax public housing community express their weary awareness of continually being treated with "disrespect, intolerance and prejudice":

This treatment does not come from the ill manners and insensitivity of a few; rather, it is a result of deeply entrenched beliefs which are often reflected in the news media and in government policy and debate on poverty and social programs. (p. 6)

Clearly, the priorities of women and children come last because single mothers cannot help but fall short of meeting the demands of the dominant family ethic and the dominant work ethic (Blouin, 1989).

Alongside the narratives written by women in poverty and the accounts compiled by their advocates the Employability Resources Network (ERN, 1990, 1991b) reviews a growing literature on employability enhancement.[8] Even this more established authority indicates that the cost-effectiveness of employment enhancement in Canada suffers because of an over-emphasis on short-term labour market needs. They suggest

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[8] In Chapters Three, Four, and Five the findings of the Employability Resources Network (ERN) receive more particular attention.

fundamental social change to improve "the availability of jobs paying

adequate wages and with prospects for advancement" (ERN, 1991b, p. 8). This

will require a substantially different approach to employability enhancement,

they write, one that focusses on the everyday lives of program participants.

> The literature suggests that if employability enhancement programs for welfare recipients are to be productive, a holistic approach to program planning will be required, one that incorporates a multidisciplinary approach that takes into account the many interrelated elements involved in successful movement from welfare dependency to economic self-sufficiency. (ERN, 1991b, p. 7)

In particular, they recommend the inclusion of sufficiently-funded

community-based services (p. 8).

The exhaustive literature review undertaken by the ERN provides

very little insight into the experiences of those who provide either

community-based or bureaucratic services. The voices of the counsellors,

instructors, and program managers are almost eerily absent; although they

may be assumed to be active in the accomplishment of program objectives,

that activity is not visible. In adult education and social work, generally, it is

difficult to find descriptions of frontline work either in its day-to-day or

cumulative aspect. Frontline workers engaged in facilitating the voices of

learners may draw in instructors and counsellors (e.g. Gaber-Katz & Watson,

1991; Horsman, 1990). Frontline workers who return to universities for

graduate education may publish in academic journals such as Affilia: Journal

of Women and Social Work. Indeed, a significant number of faculty in adult

education and social work have come out of the frontlines.

In her research with employability enhancement programs Shauna

Butterwick (1992) — in many ways an advocate for frontline workers —

argues that policy frameworks focus on "supplying the changing labour

market with skilled workers, reducing government spending and privatizing training" (p. 53) rather than allowing programs the resources they need to implement more holistic approaches. Without these resources, inexperienced and burned-out program staff fall back on the "othering" discourses embedded in dominant policy frameworks and public conversations. "Given the structural constraints and ideological orientation of the dominant policy context," Butterwick writes, "it is not surprising that the staff tended to employ discourses in which the trainees were identified as 'deviant' subjects, needing to be 'fixed'" (p. 203).

Program counsellors, instructors, and managers often come out of postsecondary education with a highly individualistic and psychologized understanding of the context for unemployment and underemployment. They have no opportunities to engage in reflexive critique about their work and thus often construct poor single mothers as architects of their own problems. In a participatory action research project from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, agency employees and poor women describe the realities of living in poverty in comparable terms; differences arise, however, when they consider the impetus for change. Poor women concentrate on their need for money and decent jobs, agency workers focus on the need for low income women themselves to change.

> In comparison to the majority of low income women who credit a "job" for major change, workers emphasized attitude reformation as the primary and essential requirement for change. Thoughts must change before behaviour. Low income women must feel a value in who they are as people. They must realize their needs are important and that they can accomplish goals given support and encouragement. (Struggling & juggling, 1991, p. iii)

The authors of this study note their unsuccessful attempts to "steer the thinking" of low income women research participants "away from structural changes to the social assistance and municipal welfare systems" (p. 14). Instead, they suggest individual adjustments, particularly in terms of self-perception, indicating the extent to which prevalent ideologies of deserving and undeserving, good family members and good workers, economic and moral deficits may be taken up by frontline workers.

Nevertheless, as will be shown throughout this dissertation, frontline work is much more complex than might be considered given the horror stories that appear in individual narratives, media reports, reports by advocates and by interest groups as well as by some academic accounts. These texts provide remarkably little insight into the experiences, perspectives, and practices of the frontline workers in employability enhancement. The frontline workers charged with the responsibility of mediating between the needs of single mothers receiving social assistance and state policy directives formulated around "fixing" those dysfunctional mothers/dysfunctional workers rarely have the chance to speak out themselves (however, see Lloyd, 1991; Lloyd, with Ennis & Atkinson, 1994b). The research presented in this dissertation aims to correct this gap in available literature, by explicating the practices of women frontline workers engaged in the employability enhancement of single mothers receiving social assistance.

1.7 Mapping the dissertation

In this dissertation, I argue that those in frontline work — counsellors, instructors, and program managers — accomplish the task of enhancing the employability of the single mothers in their programs through a range of

work practices, which I categorize as embodied practices, coordinating practices, and ethical practices. Chapter Two outlines the epistemology, methodology and methods employed in the construction of this dissertation. In particular it provides a detailed discussion of the research design and the demographic characteristics and education background of research participants. Then it examines how dissertation research entails the production of an authoritative account, problematic in its articulation to relations of ruling. In conclusion, it details the steps taken in this research to build in reflexivity.

Chapter Three examines the embodied practices through which frontline workers in employability enhancement programs manage women's assimilation into mainstream workplace cultures. Discipline of the body — its appearance, its presentation, its femininity — signify the ways in which the mind and will are equally disciplined. Frontline workers demonstrate through example and through a cultural curriculum how employees are expected to physically locate themselves, as well as groom, dress, accessorize and conduct themselves. They work with the messy lives of single mothers receiving social assistance — lives inescapably tied to children, communities, bureaucracies; lives which include current and past physical and sexual assault, psychological terror, addictions, ill-health, hunger, cold, and sexuality.

The chapter begins by introducing three White frontline workers in skills-oriented employability enhancement programs, exemplifying through descriptions of their work the embodied practices of constructing employable, workplace-appropriate bodies. It also introduces four Black employment counsellors who highlight the race hierarchies as well as class and gender

assumptions embedded in the embodied practices of employability enhancement. In all cases, program workers convey messages about embodied practices to program participants through their own presentation of self, their own management of bodies.

Chapter Four examines the text-based coordinating practices which structure employability enhancement work, practices which articulate frontline work to state concerns that stress program efficiency rather than effectiveness, defining success through categorical and quantitative indicators rather than through the everyday experiences and increased competencies of women in their work as mothers, waged labourers, and community members. White frontline staff from three more programs will be introduced to illustrate how workers fit program participants into standardized categories in order to make them "actionable," how they manage files and paperwork, and maintain partnerships through referral networks. Again, four Black counsellors and instructors illustrate the complex mediation among the expectations of funding agencies, colleagues, program participants, and home communities.

In addition Chapter Four explores the ways frontline workers engage in the coordinating practices of their particular disciplines, practices they learn as social work and education students in postsecondary institutions. This postsecondary education includes gendered ideologies of "work ethic" and "family ethic" which pervade the field of employability enhancement and direct it toward particular notions of citizenship. Coordinating practices, and the professional postures they demand, separate frontline workers from their own sources of knowing, aligning them with the codified ethics and practices of professions. Of particular interest in this chapter are the ways in

which individual women resist as well as collaborate in coordinating practices, exhibiting epistemological integrity by keeping hold of what they know outside of the coordinating context.

Chapter Five examines the ethical practices of employability enhancement work. Since most single mothers in employability enhancement programs do not receive the kinds of training that will allow them to maintain independence from the state, the endeavour may be justified on grounds of decreased dependence and the moral imperatives of full citizenship. Attempts to reconcile the coordinating demands of an ideologically developed social welfare system with the irreducibly messy everyday lives of single mothers receiving social assistance, involves frontline workers in ongoing ethical struggles. Ethical practices embody values through day-to-day concrete choices as program staff draw on frameworks that may or may not be encompassed by the professional ethics of adult education and social work.

These ethical practices are highlighted through the work of six frontline workers in four employability enhancement programs. Given the current social, political and fiscal context the ethical stances of some frontline workers become contestatory and, therefore, political. The chapter examines in detail four types of ethical practices evidenced by the women in this research, drawing on socio-historically constructed humanist ethics of care, emancipatory ethics of justice, feminist ethics of collective action, and ethics of service and community alliance. Frontline workers ground their ethical practices in the personal and professional boundaries foundational to self-care as well as care of others. It is this political integrity that allows women to

continue with frontline work in the face of their contradictory commitments to care, justice, feminism, collective action, and community alliances.

Chapter Six examines in more detail the conceptual practices that surround and pervade the embodied, coordinating and ethical practices through which employability enhancement frontline workers accomplish this mediation. In particular, it examines how their practices articulate to citizenship as an organizing concept, a concept that provides coherence for the frontline work of mediating the rights and responsibilities of single mothers receiving social assistance. The concept of citizenship links work ethics, family ethics, ethics of care, justice, feminist activism, and community alliance, attaching them to notions of worthiness.

Finally the chapter explores how frontline workers can be given the opportunities they want and need to develop self-reflexivity in their work. I also recommend the participation of frontline workers in policy development and analysis as their mediating role gives them complex insights. The ontological, epistemological, and political strengths of experienced frontline workers do not currently enter into policy development or analysis and, as a consequence, we lack the efficient and effective programs within which frontline practices of committed adult educators and social workers can accomplish their work. To that end, this research provides some direction for the ongoing professional development of frontline workers who have been given the mandate to effect individual and social change with marginalized populations such as single mothers receiving social assistance.

Chapter Two   Research Practices

2.1   Introduction: Research Practices

This chapter outlines the epistemology, methodology and research methods employed in this research. After a brief explanation of institutional ethnography and standpoint methodology (2.2), it turns to a detailed discussion of the research design and subject selection (2.3). Methods of data collection and analysis are described (2.4) and I present demographic and other descriptive characteristics of the research participants. I then move into an examination of the ways in which academic research practices require the production of authoritative accounts, accounts which organize "what actually happens," articulating those happenings to happenings in other accounts (2.5).

Authoritative accounts abstract what is known about people's lives and enter these abstractions into generic forms and categories that can be taken up by institutions to create actionable situations. Produced through ideological practices, authoritative accounts objectify the subjects of the research gaze. Although I am necessarily engaged in the production of an authoritative account — a dissertation — I also work to counter the underpinnings of that authority, seeking to ground this account not in abstracted expertise but in concrete research practices that enhance its credibility.

The operationalization of a "strong reflexivity" (Harding, 1991) becomes one such practice as I focus on my location as a member of socially dominant groups whose relevances enjoy hegemonic status (2.6). I explore how I worked to develop a reflexive integrity through my research practices;

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in particular, I outline my attempts to remain consistently conscious of my own Whiteness and its impact on the research and writing processes (2.7). Finally, the chapter turns to those claims of authority and credibility I do make for this research account. Its credibility rests on the use of responsible epistemic practices; on grounding the work in the sphere of the everyday rather than the sphere of the conceptual; and on recognition and acceptance of the inevitable and permanent partiality of all knowledge claims (2.8). It also rests on deliberate attempts to avoid imposing coherence, to strive toward producing unalienated knowledge through responsible listening and a commitment to reciprocity.

2.2 Research practices: Epistemology and methodology

Liz Stanley (1990) highlights connections among method, methodology, and epistemology, suggesting that researchers' epistemological beliefs lead them to choose among particular methodologies which then lead them to particular research methods. My epistemology is the way in which I understand knowledge — "who can be a knower, what can be known, what constitutes and validates knowledge, and what the relationship is or should be between knowing and being (that is between epistemology and ontology)" (p. 26). My methodology is my perspective, the broad, conceptual framework within which I work. My methods are the techniques, the particular set of research practices that make sense within the framework of my methodology.

This research arises out of a conceptual framework based on the social organization of knowledge, a framework which provides an alternative to a Cartesian perspective that posits an objective way of knowing that can be

accomplished by researchers who follow scientific methods. In contrast, this research embraces a feminist social constructivist perspective that all knowledge carries with it the conditions of its production, is contextually located, and will be influenced by the subjective location and intellectual practices of those theorists and researchers who produce it (Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1993; Jagger & Bordo, 1989; Smith, 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999; Stanley, 1990). From within this perspective of socially situated knowledge, our ways of being and knowing, our ontologies and epistemologies, are socially constructed. They are not individual, based on rationality, freedom, and autonomy. Rather, they are embedded in our particular historical locations in a social organization grounded in relations of class, race, gender, age, sexuality, abilities, and citizenship status.

Stanley (1990) outlines five sites of feminist epistemology and identifies my major concerns: the importance of acknowledging the social relationships between the researcher and the researched; the importance of emotion within the research experience; the importance of the researcher's intellectual autobiography; the importance of acknowledging the differing realities and understandings of researchers and researched; and the centrality of the question of power in both the research process and the final production of documents. This understanding of feminist epistemology leads to a methodology that begins from the position of women located in their everyday lives, the position of women "actively constructing, as well as interpreting, the social processes and social relations which constitute their everyday realities" (p. 34).

The methodology of institutional ethnography, as developed by Dorothy Smith (1981, 1986, 1987), asks the question, "How does it happen as it does?" and "explores the social relations individuals bring into being in and through their actual practices" (Smith, 1987, p. 160). Using this methodology, the investigation of actual practices begins from the standpoint of particular persons who accomplish their everyday work through and with these practices. The practices include both talk and text, and can be discovered in both talk and text.

Smith (1986) outlines three main procedures in institutional ethnography. First, the ideological practices that make the particular work accountable need to be analyzed, making visible the social relations that articulate the work to institutional relevances. Second, the particular work processes are examined in order to make visible the ways in which the work supports institutional ideologies. Third, using the concept of social relations, the work processes are seen as happening in concert with other processes, "concerted sequences of action, performed by more than one and perhaps sometimes by a multiplicity of individuals not necessarily known to one another" (p. 9). These social relations are not limited to the realm of the everyday experience of individual workers and must be traced to the extra-local to make evident the discursive practices that articulate one process to another.

Smith (1987) argues that the most useful vantage point from which to begin research inquiry is the standpoint of those whose lives are affected by, but who themselves have little influence in, the social relations which coordinate not only their activities but also the activities of institutions. All

research must begin from a particular standpoint; the researcher chooses whose concepts and categories to use, whose experience to start from, in whose interests to frame research questions, and to whom research will be accountable. It is like the operation of a kaleidoscope — if you shift the standpoint from which you begin, the whole pattern changes even though the component parts of the pattern remain the same and must move in particular relations with each other, sometimes visible and sometimes hidden, sometimes magnified and sometimes diminished.

Thus, if research begins from the standpoint of academic discourses entrenched in traditional sociological concepts and methods, the potential for ever seeing the everyday relevances of frontline workers in their daily practices in employability enhancement programs diminishes. If research begins from the standpoint of frontline workers, however, the broader ideological and textual practices of ruling relations, the practices that bring those frontline practices into being and articulate them to other frontline practices, become visible through an investigation of workers' descriptions and interpretations of their everyday work practices.

This research begins, then, from the standpoint of frontline workers. As an institutional ethnography it focuses on the particular work processes of employability enhancement program counsellors, instructors and managers, making visible the ways in which their work processes support and resist institutional ideological practices. The ideological framework that forms the context for this research demands accountability through the social relations of program mandates and terms of funding. Ever-present in the work of the program instructors, counsellors, and managers, it becomes visible in the

accounts these workers give about how they accomplish the employability enhancement of single mothers receiving social assistance. The social, historical, economic and political relations which structure that work become visible by tracing outward their coordinating text-based practices.

2.3 Research practices: Design and subject selection

The research design includes three major activities. The first activity, accomplished over a decade of work and study as well as through more recent and structured background interviews, is constituted through my ongoing experience as a policy researcher and analyst in the field of adult basic education and employability enhancement (Lloyd, 1989); as a community-based activist involved in feminist, anti-poverty, and anti-racist collective action (Lloyd, 1987); as an action researcher working with both provincial and national front-line workers (Lloyd, 1991, 1994; Lloyd with Ennis & Atkinson 1994a, 1994b); and as a student with a particular interest in community psychology, the social organization of knowledge, social welfare policy development, feminist and critical adult education, and theoretical approaches to questions of ontological, epistemological, and political integrity. During the analysis and writing of this research I also developed and implemented employability enhancement support services and programming in a postsecondary college in another province. This experience further enhanced my understanding of frontline work.

The second activity focuses on an examination of texts, including political statements, federal and provincial policy documents, expert opinion as expressed through commissions and policy institutes, corporate

commentaries, professional and academic publications, media reports, the writings of social assistance recipients and their advocates, and texts used for practical and theoretical instruction in the disciplines of social work and adult education. Though in the final presentation of the research this information has been dramatically reduced, these texts nonetheless provide the conceptual and political backdrop in front of which I build my analysis. They organize the social relations through which frontline workers accomplish their work; they inform frontline workers' everyday practices and their interpretation of these practices; they structure the ways in which frontline workers interact with funders, co-workers, program participants, and the "public." The viewlines cleared by these texts appear to some extent in Chapter One, but more particularly in the second half of Chapters Three, Four, and Five, and throughout Chapter Six.

The third, and most significant, set of research activities includes semi-structured interviews, guided partner dialogues that take place without the researcher present, directed focus group discussions, and unstructured ongoing contact with women who work in programs funded at least in part through federal/provincial cost-shared employability enhancement agreements. In keeping with a methodological position that begins from the standpoint of frontline workers, this component of the research grounds the account. In subsequent chapters, I start from women's accounts of their daily work practices and move from there into analytic discourse.

Before beginning the formal research process I engaged in background discussions with government officials from the provincial Department of Community Services, people employed through Community Services offices,

School Board Continuing Education programs, provincial Community College campuses, local Canada Employment Centres, and the provincial Literacy Division of the Department of Education. I also spoke with staff and volunteers from women's organizations, welfare rights and anti-poverty organizations, and community-based resource and referral agencies. I contacted a full range of employability enhancement programs to identify key contacts.

Most of these initial discussions drew on personal, professional, and political contacts arising from past work as a researcher within the provincial bureaucracy and among community-based adult literacy and academic upgrading programs; from my involvement with the provincial steering committee that established a non-governmental adult literacy coalition; from my membership on the management team for an employment outreach program for women; and from my work as an advisor for participatory action research projects involving single mothers receiving social assistance. These experiences guided both my contact with frontline workers and frontline workers' response to me; just as I "knew" something about the sites in which I located my research, so did those active at these sites "know" something about me.

I began my subject selection by contacting all the programs funded in whole or part by the federal/provincial cost-shared Social Assistance Recipient Agreements within a 100 kilometre radius of Halifax. I wanted a core group of 10-12 research participants with at least five years' experience in the field, representing the full range of government-funded programs that focused on enhancing the employability of single mothers receiving social

assistance. I wanted White, Black, and Mi'kmaw[1] frontline workers from both metro and neighbouring counties who would agree to reflect on their frontline experiences by talking with me and with each other about the different and complex ways in which they organize and understand their work. Because women made up the very large majority of experienced frontline workers in these programs, the choice of women participants became a representative as well as a theoretical sample for this research. Each member of this core group then chose a research partner from among their colleagues. This second woman also had at least five years experience.

I wanted program counsellors, instructors, and managers with five years' experience because anyone who continues to work in this underfunded and project-oriented field for more than three years has demonstrated a marked commitment to the work. The field of adult basic education and employability enhancement has been marginalized within the fields of education and social work because programs tend to be short-term, underfunded, and caught between government policies based on human capital theory and program participants whose everyday lives present the kinds of practical problems that defy categorization or standardized curriculum. Also, the first several years of working in such programs leaves little time for reflection and, because I wanted them to stand back and look at their practices — to engage in critical reflection about what they do every day — they needed to be sufficiently detached from the "what" and "how" of what they do that they could discuss the "why." I wanted them to be able to lift their heads and look around at the social relations in which they are

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[1] Almost all aboriginal persons in Nova Scotia are members of Mi'kmaw Nation.

embedded and about which they have implicit, if not explicit, understandings.

During the background interviews, it became clear certain programs would not be represented. Frontline workers in the two Mi'kmaw programs decided not to participate in part because they were in the midst of responding to a funding crises but also because they do not define their work as "employability enhancement." English language training programs for the relatively small immigrant population did not at the time receive funding through employability enhancement policies. And, after significant background interviews with the owners/ managers of privately-owned programs it became clear that none of their instructors or counsellors had more than two years' experience working with adults.

Over a period of three months, three women outside the major metropolitan region of Halifax/ Dartmouth/ and Halifax County and six women from the metro region agreed to participate in the research; they all made the initial contact with potential partners. Some chose to work with women either in the same program or in a closely aligned program in the same building. Some chose friends or colleagues who work in programs quite different from their own and with whom they had a history of work-related discussions. One chose a colleague she wanted to know better. One asked to work with a research partner who had less than five years' experience and, given her isolation, I agreed.

All of the 18 women who participated in initial interviews were White. I had had background interviews with several Black women with two and three years' work experience in employability enhancement or social

services with single parents. Two were unable to commit the time for the research and one was not directly involved with single mothers receiving social assistance. As I began to prepare for the first set of one-to-one interviews, I realized my research design did not accommodate the experiences of the Black women involved in this field. In particular, Black women with five-years' experience move rapidly into administration and management positions with either government agencies or organizations rooted in the Black community. In addition, it was difficult for me as a White woman to connect with members of the Black community.

In the end, a Black woman who had worked in the employability field for three years provided the means for me to meet with some of her colleagues from similar programs. As my friend, neighbour, and colleague she asked her colleagues if they would come together to hear about the research and how they might contribute. (See Section 2.7 for a further discussion of this process.) As a result, five Black women agreed to participate and raised the number of subjects involved in this research to 23.

2.4   Research practices: Methods — Interviews, dialogues, focus groups

These 23 women engaged in this research in several different ways. I conducted one face-to-face interview with each of the 18 White women. The interview schedule was the same for all women, although the emphasis often differed.[2] These one to four hour interviews provide information about the women's personal, professional, and political backgrounds, the nature of

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[2] The interview schedule provided what Robin Jarrett (1993) calls a "a topical outline" (p. 187), guiding sufficiently to allow comparisons but open in terms of language and areas of depth. See Appendix VI for the Interview 1 framework.

their work within their programs, how that work does or does not fit within the program mandate and within their own professional, political and personal understandings of themselves as workers. The first focus group of Black women followed a similar format; I stayed for that meeting, clarifying my intent where necessary but not participating in the discussion. The interviews and focus group were tape recorded and transcribed; all the participants received transcripts and had the opportunity to respond with comments, additions, and deletions which were fully integrated as part of the final transcripts.

Drawing on the initial interviews and focus group I developed a discussion guide for dialogues between the nine pairs of White women as well as for the second and third focus group meetings of the five Black women (Appendix VII). I was not present for these dialogues and meetings but, again, they were tape recorded with the transcripts returned to participants for their response. These discussions each lasted from 90 minutes to two hours.

Finally, I developed a package of written material including my initial interpretation of what I had learned from the interviews, dialogues, and focus groups, as well as some summaries of relevant theoretical material I was using in my analysis. I organized a supper meeting for all interested research participants; seven women attended this meeting and it lasted over four hours. I also did individual and group interviews of 30 minutes to two hours for six women who met with me either individually or with their research partners. Again, these discussions were tape recorded, more selectively transcribed, and the transcriptions returned for response. During

the process of analysis and writing I contacted several of the women by mail and by telephone for informal information, clarification, and discussion.

Seven of the 23 women involved in the research live outside the metro region in the counties surrounding Halifax. For a variety of reasons (including medical leave, retirement and relocation, program shut-down, and a lack of interest in the research) three of these women had first interviews only and two had the first interview and engaged in a dialogue but did not take part in a final discussion. One had the first interview and final discussion but no dialogue. One participated in the Black women's focus groups. Eleven of the 12 White metro women participated in the entire research process. One had the first interview and engaged in a dialogue but did not participate in a final discussion. Of the five Black metro women, two participated in two focus groups, one participated in three focus groups, and two participated in three focus groups and a final meeting.

2.5 Research practices: The research participants

All of the 23 women involved in this research worked in programs funded at least in part through the employability enhancement policies of federal, provincial, and municipal governments. The women represent the services available in their areas, including Employment Resource Centres for social assistance recipients (ERCs), Career Planning Programs for Single Parents receiving social assistance, Canada Employment Centre (CEC) employment outreach services, continuing education academic upgrading and Grade 12 equivalent programs, social assistance recipient specific skills programs, work activity programs for the severely employment

disadvantaged, and a community-based advocacy, counselling, and education centre. Two women were self-employed, working on a contract basis with private training and counselling services, community-based advocacy organizations, government agencies, and school board continuing education programs (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Participants by geographic location and program type

	Employment resource or outreach	Employability Enhancement (specific skills)	Continuing education upgrading	Community centre and self-employed
Metro	6	7	1	2
County	4	1	2	
Total	10	8	3	2

Seven of the research participants worked outside the metro region within a 100 km radius of Halifax, while 16 women worked in the metro region. The women range in age from 25 to 63 with the majority clustering between 40 and 50 years old (see Table 2.2). The metro women are on average younger than the county women and the Black women are significantly younger than almost all the White women. To some extent this may be accounted for by the Black women's significantly fewer years of experience in the field.

Table 2.2: Age range of research participants

	25-34	35-44	45-49	55+
White	1	8	7	2
Black	5			
Metro	5	7	3	1
County	1	1	4	1
Total	6	8	7	2

Women who lived and worked outside Metro were much more likely to be mothers; in fact all the county women have children (See Table 2.3).

Twelve of the 23 women have experienced divorce. Of the 15 women who raised children, nine experienced sole support motherhood at some point in their lives. Four of those have received social assistance.

Table 2.3: Parental status of research participants

	no children	children	ever a single parent
White metro (12)	4	8	5
White county (6)	0	6	3
Black (5)	4	1	1
Total	8	15	9

As can be seen in Table 2.4, the 23 women involved in this research have a wide range of formal education. All but one of the education qualifications come from a university, teachers' college, or community college in Nova Scotia. While some women moved in a fairly straightforward direction from undergraduate to graduate degrees, most continue to upgrade their education throughout their careers. For example, five of the 23 women dropped out of high school before completing grade 12. They all returned to get a GED or to enter university as mature students. One woman received her GED as an adult, then went on to get a BA, MSW, MPA, and an Adult Education Certificate. Another woman entered university as a mature student and then received a BA, BEd and certificates in Life Skills, Adult Education, and Criminology.

Table 2.4: Highest formal education of research participants[3]

GED	1	Other bachelor degree	4
Incomplete degree	4	MEd	3
BEd	4	MSW	5
BSW	1	Other graduate	1

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[3] In total seven women had BEds and four women had BSWs. Of those, six also had masters degrees.

The older county women and younger Black women hold relatively fewer professional qualifications. Four of the women with no degrees are White county women and one is a Black woman. Of the nine women who hold graduate degrees, seven are White metro women.

Many of the women involved in this research have worked in their current positions long enough that the qualifications required by workers who might replace them do not reflect the qualifications required when they were first hired. Several women, particularly those outside metro, were hired for short-term projects that developed into longer-term programs. They moved into more permanent positions because they understood the context, the client population, and the procedures involved in these new positions. All the programs represented in the research require at least one undergraduate degree — usually in social work, counselling, or education — and three to five years' experience with the people and communities represented by the program participants.

As can be seen in Table 2.5 even though many women have long histories of employment in their field, most have not had correspondingly long histories in their programs. To some extent this reflects the history of adult literacy, basic education and academic upgrading in Nova Scotia (Lloyd, 1989). Excepting a few federally-funded programs, there has been little long-term or stable funding for programs involved in employability enhancement.[4] It is important to note that, despite their qualifications and employment histories, 17 of the 23 women earned less than $30,000/year.

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[4] Given this pattern it is not surprising that during the two years they were most involved in this research, over half the women significantly changed the nature of their employment.

Table 2.5: Number of years worked in current program and in the field

	Years in current program			Years in this field			
	1-4	5-9	10-14	1-4	5-9	10-14	15+
White metro (12)	5	6	1	1	7	2	2
White county (6)	2	3	1	1	3	1	1
Black (5)	5			5			
Total	12	9	2	7	10	3	3

The pattern indicated in Table 2.5 confirms anecdotal reports that women who work as counsellors or instructors in adult literacy, academic upgrading, and employability enhancement programs for more than three years tend to carry on, if possible, for more than five. Those who cannot find job stability or job satisfaction within three years move on to other fields. Of the women who left their positions or their programs during the research, the women with a BEd or MEd stay within the employability enhancement field, moving either to management or to a related setting; the women with a BSW or MSW no longer work in employability enhancement, in part because their credentials give them more options.

Although most employers look for women's formal education and relevant work history when considering qualifications, many of the workplaces represented in this research also want women to have personal experiences that help them understand the circumstances in which program participants find themselves. As outlined in this section, the 23 women in this research have a range of ages, a range of relationships with men, women, and children. They have histories of single parenthood and social assistance, they have complex patterns of education and employment. Their race and their geographic locations have influenced all of their lives in many different

ways. All their experiences have contributed to who they are, what they know, and what they do with that knowledge.

2.6   Research practices as the construction of an account

A defining aspect of research for academic purposes is the production of an authoritative account. Individuals who accomplish their work within institutions of higher learning receive validation, at least in part, through the ways in which their accounts are articulated to other accounts, also created within institutions that contribute to the ruling apparatus (see page 16). This academic mode of production has "a particular set of politics and ideology as part of the conditions of its existence, indeed as a defining feature of that existence," (Stanley, 1990, p. 4) and all those who take part in this production are implicated in that ideology and politics. As a dissertation, this research account must prove its author's ability to enter into that mode of production.

Composed of officially recognized idioms, vocabularies, paradigms of argumentation, narrative conventions, and modes of subjectification, authoritative accounts can be categorized as a means of interpretation and communication characteristic of those who are accustomed to ruling (Fraser, 1989, p. 165). Members of the ruling apparatus make up an intricate network of professionals, corporate managers, academics, and bureaucrats who produce the texts that mediate relations not only among themselves, but also between themselves and those whose behaviour is defined and governed by their texts. The partial, incoherent, differentiated actualities of their work are organized into a coherence predetermined by past practices. The ruling apparatus has the distinctive capacity to organize "particular actual places,

persons and events into generalized and abstracted modes vested in categorical systems, rules, laws, and conceptual practices" (Smith, 1987, p. 108).

Concepts and facts are essential elements of authoritative accounts. They organize what is happening within the account and link, or articulate, those happenings to happenings in other accounts. They become part of a process that not only conveys particular kinds of information but also coordinates particular kinds of activities. These activities contribute to the work of creating knowledge, work that takes place only within certain ongoing social relations (Smith, 1990, pp. 69-79). In subsequent chapters, these ongoing practices are examined in the context of particular programs and frontline practices. At the same time, however, both the writer and the readers of this account should remain aware that, as an authoritative account, the text has been written in such a way that it will fit into particular relations of ruling.

Facts and concepts work within authoritative accounts to make the constitutive elements actionable in the public realm of bureaucracies, corporations and professions. They produce a common set of relevancies, a synchronized perspective that articulates one author to another, one institution to another. Those who work within these relevancies, within this perspective, have authority — "a form of power that is a distinctive capacity to get things done in words" (Smith, 1987, p. 29). It is thus authoritative accounts that ground individual and collective power/ knowledge claims, that give these claims their credibility, and warrant their participation in the creation of a textual reality. As these accounts are taken up by institutions, the abstract categorization of real people's lives are used to define their reality and

thus create actionable situations. Through ideological practices, the research subjects become elements of a discourse, "a conversation mediated by texts that is not a matter of statement alone but of actual ongoing practices and sites of practices" (Smith, 1987, p. 214).

Real people often cannot find themselves in authoritative accounts of their lives. The accounts may be produced through the exclusion of those characteristics that make people particular, partial and contradictory. The characteristics that make them subjects, that give them identities, that challenge the authority of the account, may be suppressed. Since normative authoritative accounts claim their epistemic authority from the coherence and universality of their argument, from the accessibility and transparency of their truths (Flax, 1990, p. 49), anything that does not fit their conceptual framework must disappear from the textual reality (Smith, 1990, p. 94).

No writer of an academic dissertation can completely escape the conceptual and ideological practices used to produce authoritative accounts. In my own production of an account about the work of employability enhancement counsellors, instructors, and managers, I must abstract from, then categorize and, to some extent, objectify their experiences in order to analyze them. The transcripts of their interviews, dialogues, focus groups, and final meetings make up over 900 pages of text and I must tease out of these transcripts those elements that help me develop an argument concerning the frontline practices in which they are engaged. Although I use an oppositional framework, I am still required to demonstrate the ways in which that framework both comes out of and builds upon frameworks already constructed by established members of academic institutions. Thus I

concede a certain complicity in the ruling apparatus; as an academic researcher, I cannot be immune from those objectifying relations that arise between myself and the participants in my research.

In this account of my research, I take a feminist standpoint position that understands we all — writer, research participant, and reader alike — start from our own experience, as gendered, as raced, as classed, as aged, as grounded in our identities, our subjectivities. Although "we are the authoritative speakers of our experience" (Smith, 1990, p. 28) we must also be aware of the constraints under which we articulate that experience to the everyday experiences of those included in this work as research participants.

2.7   Resistance and the performativity of research practices

Everyone involved in the production of academic accounts must work with concepts, despite the ways in which this use contributes to the objectification of people's lives. Concepts are a necessary tool used to map out the ontological, epistemological, and political terrain of research. They provide a way into the work for readers, constructing a framework that both grounds the work and provides some internal coherence for the account. In this thesis, I develop that coherence for analytic purposes, imposing a temporary order on an inherently dis-ordered actuality in order to make sense of the social relations contained therein.[5]

I am fortunate that over the last 30 years so many feminist sociologists and philosophers, educators and policy analysts have provided accounts of

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[5] So too, the women who are research participants select and reduce their realities to fit their interpretive or analytic frames

their attempts to explore the terrain of knowledge. I use their work

throughout this thesis not only to ground the work in my intellectual history

but also to indicate the influence on my work of a variety of feminist theories

and practices, as well as progressive and critical theories and practices. They

contribute to current arguments concerning the disciplines of sociology and

philosophy, the professional training of adult educators and social workers,

the history of social welfare policy, and the accomplishment of academic

research projects. With their guidance and my own experience in developing

innovative research designs, I have engaged in concrete, material steps that

enter me into a reflexive critique of my own work, to guard against the worst

aspects of abstraction and objectification.

Patti Lather (1991) suggests four validation methods to meet feminist

postmodern insistence on "rigorous self-reflexivity" (p. 66):

1) triangulation to establish data trustworthiness;
2) systematized reflexivity to ensure construct validity;
3) recycling description, analysis and conclusion to a subsample of interviewees for face validity; and
4) attention to catalytic validity, "the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (p. 68).

To accommodate triangulation, I include multiple means of research

participation, particularly those that take place perhaps under my influence

but without my presence. That has helped me "seek counter patterns as well

as convergence" (Lather, 1991, p. 67) with my own conceptual frameworks.

Because the nine frontline workers I initially contacted chose their own

research partners, I have the benefit of learning from women often unlike

me in experiences, education, and/or political framework.

Lather (1991) also suggests questions that build in a systematized reflexivity and thus demonstrating how the text can work against itself; for example: "Did I encourage ambivalence, ambiguity and multiplicity, or did I impose order and structure?"; "What is most densely invested? What has been muted, repressed, unheard?"; and "Who are my 'Others'? What binaries structure my arguments?" (Lather, 1991, p. 84). Such questioning can identify moments when the researcher heads off into personally interesting but analytically suspect tangents; it can help highlight those moments when the researcher moves forward on the authority of her own interpretations, ignoring disagreements that arise in the accounts of her research subjects. By including research participants' resistant discourses within the body of the account, the researcher must acknowledge the partiality of her own perspective without having to deny the force of argument that comes from her experiences and analysis.

As described above in Section 2.4, I consistently recycled transcripts, descriptions, and preliminary analysis to the research participants. They had the opportunity to discuss these texts among themselves as well as with me. The final gathering drew women together to discuss the analysis as well as the theoretical groundwork in which it was embedded. Throughout this process they built on earlier understandings of their work practices, taking into account their colleagues' responses as well as my own. This activity demonstrates the catalytic validity that encourages individual reflection and allows for a more collaborative analysis, one leading to individual and collective changes in awareness and practice.

2.8 Reflexive integrity and the construction of Whiteness

As mentioned in Section 2.3, I experienced initial difficulty in finding Black women eligible for and interested in participating in this research. I came to realize during the process of subject selection that I had constructed "Whiteness" throughout the research design, engaging in what Adrienne Rich (1979) calls "white solipsism" — thinking, imagining, speaking "as if whiteness described the world" (p. 299) — and what Roxanna Ng (1991) calls "common sense racism," "those unintentional and unconscious acts which result in the silencing, exclusion, subordination and exploitation of minority group members" (p. 101).

I have worked with Black and Mi'kmaw women in Nova Scotia and Maliseet women in New Brunswick, as well as with White frontline workers in programs that include Inuit, Aboriginal, and First Nations women, Caribbean-Canadian women and southeast Asian and Asian women. I have read extensively about race, racism, and (increasingly) Whiteness, in ongoing attempts to locate myself within webs of privilege and oppression. I have made respectful connections between my experiences of gender, sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia, with race, racism, Whiteness, and White supremacy.

Nevertheless, I constructed this particular piece of research as White in such a way that Black women at first could not enter into it and later would make short shrift of a key research question. Through this experience — and the discussion, reading, and reflection that followed – I have become aware that as a White researcher working within a White dominant society I can

choose to become more (or less) consistently conscious[6] of the ways in which

1) my work embodies Whiteness, 2) my work coordinates its relevances to

ruling relations that have Whiteness at their centre, and 3) my work occurs

in a context of ethical awareness about systemic oppression and privilege.

Nonetheless, I, like others, always begin from my own socially located

positions.

Whiteness is both a social relation and subject position as Ruth

Frankenburg (1993) suggests:

> First, it is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it
> is a "standpoint," a place from which white people look at ourselves, at
> others, and at society. Third, whiteness refers to a set of cultural
> practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed. (p. 1)[7]

Whiteness is a relational category, existing with gender, class, sexuality,

immigration status, formal education, geographic location, and so on. It

varies across space and time, and it is seen most clearly from the subject

position of those oppressed by it even as the White researcher's gaze most

often has the authority to describe with words what happens. Within a

context of Whiteness, White people can "assume positions of familiarity, as

though their work was not coming into being in a cultural context of white

supremacy, as though it were in no way shaped and informed by that context"

(hooks, 1990, p. 124).

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[6] The phrase "consistently conscious" is borrowed by Andrea Ayvazian & Beverly Tatum (1994) from a Black man talking about what it is that White allies can do in the struggles against racism.

[7] It is interesting to note that Ruth Frankenburg does not use "culture" as a mystifying concept, but rather understands it as "constructing daily practices and world views in complex relations with material life" (p. 228).

During the process of subject selection 18 White women agreed to participate before I could find Black women who met the requirement of five years experience in the field of employability enhancement. I had not fully realized the material consequences of Nova Scotia's history of individual discrimination and systemic racism for both White and Black citizens. I had the theory — the knowledge — but I had not experienced nor sufficiently reflected upon the emotional, spiritual, and cognitive dimensions of this history. When I spoke with a Black friend and neighbour, she outlined succinctly why Black women who have survived Nova Scotia's White education system would not continue working for five or more years as the only Black women in historically White programs for $24,000 a year. Pushed by both politics and policies to "diversify," White-dominated service organizations had begun to look on qualified Black women as commodities. In 1993 in Nova Scotia, qualified Black women were, at least temporarily, highly desirable.[8]

My friend offered to arrange a series of meetings of Black women who currently worked as employment or life skills counsellors. I attended the first meeting to clarify the research questions, complete the ethical review, and become familiar with their voices. I did not attend the second or third meeting, giving them freedom to follow their own threads of relevances. They met to talk with one another, bringing personal, professional, political

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[8] My desire to include Black women in this research paralleled social service agencies' desire to have them represented as staff; the danger in both cases was that their race, rather than their experience and abilities, would become the measuring stick for their involvement or their exclusion. Their experiences and abilities — includingtheir experiences as Black women and their abilities that build on these experiences — clearly qualify them for their work with all people battling marginalization.

experiences they wanted to share only tangentially with a White researcher. Although they used frameworks for discussion that included the same topics covered in the interviews and dialogues of the White women, they were able follow each other's lead rather than my own.

This format offered the Black women a way to participate in this research from what Patricia Hill Collins (1990, p. 207) calls an Afrocentric feminist epistemology.[9] Collins puts forward concrete experience, the use of dialogue, an ethic of caring, and an ethic of personal accountability as the criteria for such an alternative epistemology. She describes the interactive nature of African-American talk, "the call-and-response discourse mode" evident in the focus group transcripts. The integration of thought and feeling, reasoning and emotion forms a core of what is being said. Indeed,

> the sound of what is being said is just as important as the words themselves in what is, in a sense, a dialogue of reason and emotion. As a result it is nearly impossible to filter out the strictly linguistic-cognitive abstract meaning from the sociocultural psychoemotive meaning. (p. 216)

For Black women, according to Collins, "knowledge claims are rarely worked out in isolation from other individuals" (p. 212); instead they are developed through dialogue with other community members, the research method eventually included in this particular piece of research.

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[9] Expecting Black women to become involved in research developed out of my standpoint, without the willingness to adapt it to their purposes, would have asked them to move away from their own subject position for my benefit. As Patricia Hill Collins (1990) says, traditional academic methodologies "ask African-American women to objectify ourselves, devalue our emotional life, displace our motivations for furthering knowledge about Black women, and confront in an adversarial relationship those with more social, economic and professional power" (p. 205).

Thus, I "learned by proximity" (Frankenburg, 1993, p. 4) some things about Whiteness and Blackness. I changed the research design to meet the everyday realities of Black women's lives — in particular the personal, professional and political relevances that connect them to other Black women. In the future, I will not again design or enter into a research process without significant consultation with members of groups who are "other" than myself in ways I cannot bridge alone!

Yet even consultation and access do not balance the inequities and ignorance that arise from social relations of dominance/ subordination. Access, while essential, is not a sufficient counterbalance to the Whiteness embedded in research designs, however. At the first meeting of the Black women's focus group it became clear that a pivotal research question — "Do you consider your work political?" — suggested they have a choice about how to respond to the social relations in which they find themselves in almost every social moment. While the 18 White women varied widely in their responses, the five Black women made it clear that their very lives in 1993 in Nova Scotia are political. They have no choice about whether, from the time they awake to the time they lay down their heads, they must be political.[10] In this way, I realized that, in their response to this question, the research had been pushed off centre. They laid bare one of my central assumptions, that

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[10] Some White women, through other experiences, also expressed their conviction that every moment of their everyday lives was political. A woman survivor of sexual and physical abuse as a child talked about her own healing and her commitment to the healing of others as locating her life always within the political. Similarly, a White feminist lesbian whose life has centred on her commitment to feminist politics, women's community, and lesbian rights talked about her very existence as political. Ontologically, these two White women identified as political in the same way that the Black women did. To be whole in their bodies, they had to be political. And they both chose to be, and had the support to be, whole.

women have a choice about designating their work practices as "political," as embedded in social relations of dominance and privilege.

Of course, they embody race politics, as I embody race politics, as all the women in the research embody race politics. In complex ways, in White Nova Scotia and in Black Nova Scotia[11] we all lived raced lives. Only those "other" than White, however, are marked as raced. Two White women had married Black men and raised children who identify as Black. Their experiences in both White and Black communities has developed into a strong commitment to anti-racism politics. Nevertheless, even they appear to have choices about whether they make the kinds of commitment to political action that the five Black women talk about during their first meeting.

During this first meeting a third example of the way in which my Whiteness constructs the research became clear. During the process of developing a first interview guide I had not considered the possibility that frontline workers would talk about religious faith or the church as a source of support and sustenance. None of the interviews with the White women bring "faith" or "religion" to the foreground. During their introductions, however, two of the five Black women introduced themselves as "Christian Black women" and two others talked about the importance of the African Baptist church in their lives.

Again, I "knew" about the central role played by the African Baptist Church in the Black community. I "knew" that Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, and Cornel West (among many other authors), emphasize the important place, both historically and currently, of Christian faith and

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[11] And, of course, in Mi'kmaw Nova Scotia.

community in Black people's lives. However, I did not "know" deeply enough, at the level of common sense inclusion. My Whiteness — along with my urban, formally educated, spiritual but not religious, feminism — clearly worked to normalize my subject position and marginalize others. This norm was upheld by the White research participants, many of whom differ from me significantly along several other strands of identity.

During the analysis that informs this thesis, a fourth awareness of the importance of understanding "others" as part of the research process arose. Early on I found myself struggling to find in the Black women's talk the same kinds of reflexivity and analysis apparent in some of the White women's talk. I often found myself searching for ways to include the voices of the Black women because they sounded "different" when I read them aloud. The languages they used to describe their experiences appeared more colourful and concrete, less coherent and generic. Eventually, I realized I could not simply add them in as five women who participated with 18 women. I had to allow for our differences from each other; I could work with the transcripts separately and include multiple ways of speaking. I made a commitment to consistently respect both the Black women's and White women's descriptions, reflections, and interpretations of their work in the context of their everyday lives, their past experiences, and the histories of their peoples.

In the end, what I found most useful during the transcript analysis was putting the Black women's talk at the centre for a time and then putting White women's talk at the centre for a time. Looking at the differences and similarities arising from these positions allows me to write out of a place that decentres Whiteness yet does not privilege Blackness. Reflecting on emerging

analysis of Whiteness helped me realize how easy it would be to take the most complex and compelling of the Black women's conversations and the most unreflexive and simplistic of the White women's dialogues to construct a good/ bad juxtaposition.

I resisted the possibility of valourizing "otherness" by concentrating on how all our accounts of our experience come out of a complex combination of systemic and individual circumstances. At first, I tended to hear the Black women as if their experiences come out of a more determined, structural context than the experiences of the White women who emerge as individuals engaged variously in both resistance and complicity. As Leslie Roman (1993) suggests, however, understanding "race" as structurally determinate only for subordinate groups allows us to ignore race privilege, "the ways in which institutionalized whiteness confers upon whites (both individually and collectively) cultural, political, and economic power" (p. 72). While the Black women participated in the research as a group rather than as individuals or pairs, all of the them participated as subjects of their own experience.

While the analysis was one site of my struggle with Whiteness, writing the text presented its own problems, problems of coherence and linearity perhaps peculiar to Anglo/ European White discourse. Bringing Whiteness to the foreground can not be anything but an interruption in an academic tradition that assumes Whiteness without marking it as "raced." Calling attention to the conceptual and methodological shifts required by acknowledging Blackness as other than "Other" — allowing it to decentre Whiteness without, in turn, occupying that central space — disrupted that linearity.

In writing the text, I had concerns about communicating the call-and-response rhythms in the Black women's discussions. My inability to effectively convey either in presentations or in texts their rhythms of speaking highlights the cultural, epistemological and ontological differences between us. My concern over exoticizing what is for them an everyday way of communicating meaning continues. I am acutely aware that I have the opportunity to pull out of their everyday lives, for the illumination of White readers, something intriguing for us but highly contextual for them. I have tried to balance respect with the opportunity to learn something new by crossing cultural boundaries.

In constructing the text I determined that I would not problematize race for Black women without problematizing it for White women — that I would not, in effect, distinguish the Black women as "raced" unless I also "raced" the White women. This remains difficult because the White women rarely "race" themselves. They rarely say "as a White woman" in the way the Black women say "as a Black woman." They rarely comment on the race of their co-workers and they rarely distinguish their participants on the basis of race. Whiteness appears to be the norm in their talk; Blackness thus becomes marked as "other."[12]

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[12] I don't want to imply that all the White women lived and work in relation to Blackness and race or racism in the same way. A few of the White women had over the years participated in significant anti-racism work both inside their programs and in the general community. Discussion about racism, about the contributions of Black co-workers appears in the transcripts of White women on a fairly consistent basis, but talk about Whiteness appears in White women's talk in only two instances. To be fair, however, I failed to build into the interviews and dialogues a direct discussion of race/ racism/ Whiteness/ Blackness. In the final meeting, for example, the one Black woman in attendance pointed out that, as usual in gatherings with White women, she had been the only person to raise the issue of race. As one of the White women present, I was clearly as negligent as the others.

Finally, in constructing this account, I needed to realize that for the Black women in the research White dominance has been determinant in their everyday lives since before birth. My engagement with concerns about Whiteness has been a matter of choice for me; I can choose when, why and how I will practice that concern. The awkwardness, embarrassment and pain of complicity that I experience when trying to cross boundaries of race does not compare to the material consequences White supremacy, White solipsism and common sense racism present for those oppressed by it. Therefore, I did not expect or assume the involvement of the Black women in the feedback process where participants commented on drafts of description, interpretation, or analysis. This occasionally left me feeling paralyzed by the possibilities that I would be racist, offensive, colonizing.

Nevertheless, I managed to counter some of my concerns about the impact of my Whiteness by arranging to have portions of my analysis read by White women with more experience than myself in anti-racism work and by checking back with the Black woman who facilitated Black women's participation in the research. I included longer excerpts from the Black women's transcripts when I felt uncertain about how to summarize sections. I encouraged myself to get in touch with some of the Black women I didn't know well to ask for clarifications. It was a difficult experience that, I believe, improved my work with all the research participants.

My struggle in this research has been to go beyond recognizing my own locatedness in the politics of race and racism, to a place of understanding how social relations are also about Whiteness. As Marilyn Frye (1992) says,

> if one is white, one is a member of a continuously and politically
> constituted group which holds itself together by rituals of unity and

exclusion which develops in its members certain styles of and attitudes useful in the exploitation of others. (pp. 149-150)

This membership is compulsory, contingent, accidental, and authority is central to its practices. My responsibility, as bell hooks (1990) points out, is "to overtly articulate a response to this political reality as part of [my] critical enterprise" (p. 124).[13] My response has been focusing on Whiteness and White supremacy.

I finally stopped worrying about "getting it right." Instead, when I focused on "getting it less wrong," I engaged in research practices designed to counteract Whiteness or at least make it visible. Thus White researchers can continue to strategize around differences and to work with relations of dominance and subordination. We can insist on collaboration even when it is awkward or time-consuming, or potentially confrontational. We can take leadership from others, both in terms of research design and data analysis, without giving up the possibilities offered by our own perspectives. We can bracket particular questions, responses, and outside references — making them problematic not invisible. We can listen more and talk less, make ourselves go into situations where we are the minority in order to learn from embodied experiences as well as from texts. We can let go of being right, recognizing that there are things we will never know or be able to work around. And, we can relieve some of our anxieties by making a commitment to do it better the next time.

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[13] As Andrea Ayvazian writes in a dialogue with Beverly Tatum (1994),
   I have discovered that the issue is not how I respond to Beverly's Blackness. It is how I come to understand my own Whiteness. In the end, I believe the issue for me is how I have come to understand social, political and economic power and my unearned advantage and privilege as a White woman in a racist society. (p. 10)

2.9   Research practices and professional postures

As we have seen, the production of authoritative accounts — the most common culmination of academic research — tends to objectify research participants, abstracting from their lives those elements that fit theoretical and conceptual frameworks conceived from a standpoint outside of those lives. As much as possible within the bounds of an academic dissertation, I have worked to minimize those tendencies while creating a counter-authoritative account that, nevertheless, may be accepted by an institution within the ruling apparatus. As has been detailed above, a central component of this work is operationalizing strong reflexivity (Harding, 1991) — the ability to see the self from the situation of the other, as well as the other from their own situation. In addition I have tried to root my account in the everyday rather than the conceptual; to accept partiality and incoherence, rather than imposing order; and to attend to power relations within the research as well as more broadly. These measures can move us toward producing unalienated knowledge.

The choice cannot be between constructing authoritative accounts — all of them "bad" — and unauthoritative accounts — all of them "good." Rather, the choice is between constructing accounts in which those actually involved in what happens disappear, transformed into objects of the account, or constructing accounts in which those involved remain visible, subjects of an account in which they recognize themselves, both in the conceptualization of their lives and in the interpretation of their needs. As Dorothy Smith (1999) argues,

> Rather than undermining the very possibility of truth being told, it is precisely the multiplicity of experiences and perspective among people

that is a necessary condition of truth. Telling the truth is an active coordination of people's subjectivities in a social act and presupposes differences. (p. 128)

While I am somewhat less comfortable using the language of "truth" in reference to academic research, I believe it is essential that we at least understand that some truths carry more legitimate authority than others. The extent to which I claim the credibility of my account is the extent to which I have succeeded in making the everyday, rather than the conceptual, my research problematic. I have tried to ground the work in localized rather than abstracted actualities.

The authority of my knowledge claims rests not on the power of my expertise, but on my use of responsible epistemic practices (Code, 1991, p. 185). Grounding knowledge claims in the everyday lives of research participants counters the abstract intellectualizing that characterizes academic work. At the same time grounding the researcher/theorist as an actual person in a concrete setting helps to maintain awareness of knowledge production as a set of material activities, bound by time, place and history (Stanley, 1990, p. 12).

Grounding the researcher as an actual person, socially and historically located, means accepting the situatedness of knowledge claims emerging from the research. I recognize that my standpoint is both socially and historically situated, and therefore inevitably partial. It is only through recognition of that partiality that I carry authority within a critical postmodern feminism. As Patricia Hill Collins (1990) argues, "partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard; individuals and groups forwarding knowledge claims without owning their position are deemed less

credible than those who do" (p. 236). Adopting an activist postmodern feminist stance means agreeing to the permanent partiality of all points of view, including feminist points of view (Haraway, 1990, p. 215).

Rooting knowledge production in everyday, situated, partial claims requires letting go of *a priori* judgments, classifications, theories, and demands for objectivity and universality. Honouring the complexity of everyday experience requires knowing as much as possible about that experience before beginning to look for patterns, articulations to larger social relations. It means avoiding the tendency to impose coherence, by refusing to "silence women in the name of authoritarian expertise, and/or ... denigrate their experiential knowledge," (Code, 1991, p. 251).

As much as possible, I have tried to work "in ways that preserve the presence of subjects in the texts as knowers" (Smith, 1987, p. 211). As will become apparent in subsequent chapters, I have tried to hold on to the integrity of the research participants, introducing a few women in each chapter in the context of their programs and their particular practices, describing them as fully as possible without compromising confidentiality.

The postmodern feminist epistemological stance that "the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality" (Haraway, 1990, p. 223) brings into question the privileging of gender as the central subject of feminist theory (Flax, 1990, p. 43). I reject an epistemology that claims there is a common human position, or women's position, or critical position, or authorized position. Such unified positions are imperialist, building uniformity through excluding differences. Like bell hooks (1988), I believe that "women should think less in terms of feminism

as an identity and more in terms of 'advocating feminism'" (p. 182). I define

feminism as "concerned with adopting a moral-political stance to questions

of power and powerlessness," (Wise, 1990, 248) including and at times

focusing on questions of sex and gender but also willing to decentre such

questions to discover what else can be learned.

"The combination of feminism and post-modernism," Paul Atkinson

(1990) argues, "produces a powerful critique of the complacency of texts that

claim a privileged insight into a universe of stable meanings" (p. 149). I have

tried in this work to displace the privilege of complacency in favour of the

inherent complexity of credibility. Postmodern feminist praxis and a

commitment to "writing the social" (Smith, 1999) allows me to deal with the

contradictory implications of attempting oppositional work within an

institutional framework. Writing the social includes investigating

> the actual ongoing ways in which people's activities are coordinated,
> particularly those forms of social organization and relations that
> connect up multiple and various sites of experience since these are
> what are ordinarily inaccessible to people. (p. 129)

This intention allows me to work with the tensions that arise from having a

conceptual framework at the same time that I critique concepts, working from

a discourse grounded in politics and philosophy at the same time that I

interrogate the inherently restrictive nature of discursive practices.

In this chapter, I have outlined above some of the concrete steps I took

to "operationalize reflexivity" (Lather, 1991), to create the space for both

myself and the research participants to focus on contradictions in both my

practice and the practice of the frontline workers. These are actual work

practices, material practices that enact a commitment to reciprocity, to a

process that "doesn't impose the researcher's understanding of reality, that doesn't say what things mean via a privileged position and theoretical presuppositions," (Lather, 1991, p. 93). Sequential interviews; dialogues and focus groups without my presence; altering the research design to meet the needs of specific participants; enabling women to have differing levels of involvement with the research; an extensive feedback and interpretive process; and facilitating women's dialogue and mutual education by providing a forum for them to talk together about the emerging analysis — all of these steps are part of constructing an interactive approach that allows both "the researcher" and "the researched" to be subjects.

True reciprocity in research, Lather argues, requires theory building between the subjects and the researcher rather than theory imposition by the researcher alone. Whether I was interviewing a frontline worker from an employability enhancement program or gathering background on current policy developments from bureaucrats or from media accounts, from position papers produced by interest groups, it was important to remember that the individual people and their positions, have integrity. A true commitment to "understanding others on their own terms," (Brodkey, 1987b, p. 41) includes those who begin from a standpoint very different from my own. Eschewing dualities means there can no longer be divisions based on "us" and "them"; there can only be credible investigations into what happens and principled responses to the consequences.

The demands for reflexivity, for working at a respectful and rigourous understanding not only of others on their own terms but of yourself on your own terms, is a profoundly ethical demand. Redefining and producing

authoritative accounts from an oppositional standpoint is an ethical act. It is no surprise then that different theorists have developed ethical research methods through an insistence on listening responsibly, on listening in ways that make us able to respond. My claims to credibility, to authority, in the research account you are about to read lie in my claims to have listened responsibly, to have listened respectfully across differences and disagreements, to have listened attentively to silences as well as voices, to have listened openly to contradictions and partial stories without erasing complexity through coherence.

All the women and programs included in this research have been given pseudonyms. Excerpts from women's interviews, dialogues, focus groups, and final meeting will be identified by their pseudonym and the occasion when they made the statement. For example, (Barbara Cox, Interview 1), (Lucy Salt, Dialogue), (Zora Neale, Focus group 1), (Alexa Jones, Final meeting), (Leah Moody, Interview 2). In Table 2.6 that follows, I have provided a chart that includes the pseudonyms of the women involved in this research, the names of their programs, where the account of their work occurs, and the type of program in which they worked during the time of this research. Women are listed in the order they appear in the research.

Table 2.6: Women who participated in the research and appear in the thesis

Subject Name (Research Partner)	Program (Thesis Section)	Program Type Section Title
Alexa Jones (Leah Moody)	Moving Over (3.2)	Employability Skills Be there on time clean and clean
Betty Phillips Pat Mercer	Lining Up (3.3)	Employability Skills I looked at me and there I was
Barbara Cox Jennifer Tannen	Getting In (3.4)	Employability Skills The idea is to show by example
Irene Jessup Zora Neale Georgia Ross Ella Sparks Faith Upshaw	Black Women's Focus Group (3.5) (4.5)	Employment Outreach Look the part, feel the part, dress the part A memo comes on my desk and this is the process
Leah Moody (Alexa Jones)	Carrying Caseloads (4.2)	Employment Resource Centre Forcing people, always, into categories
Margaret Lindsay (Mary Campbell)	Building Bridges (4.3)	Employment Resource Centre There's a lot of work that goes on behind these numbers
Susan Smith	Juggling Resources (4.4)	Single Parent Resource Centre I'm trying to be more efficient, more effective
Julia Scott (Jane Lesley)	A Healing Centre (5.2)	Community-Based Program If every individual was treated as sacred
Jane Lesley (Julia Scott)	Contract Work (5.3)	Academic Upgrading Contracts Transformational perspective Freirian Learning — It's all waiting
Mary Campbell (Margaret Lindsay)	Supporting Women (5.4)	Employment Outreach Sometimes we can give them that little boost
Zoe Brown Lucy Salt Zora Neale	A Feminist Collective (5.5)	Employment Outreach It's the political agenda that gives you hope for change

Chapter Three   Embodied Practices

3.1   Introduction: Embodied Practices

Frontline workers in programs funded through social assistance recipient policies carry the expectation that they will enhance the employability skills of single parent women, that they will manage women's assimilation into mainstream workplace cultures. As a first step, program counsellors, instructors, and managers must engage in embodied practices that demonstrate through example and with a cultural curriculum how employers expect employees to locate themselves in space and time, appropriately groomed, dressed and accessorized, displaying the body language as well as the verbal language that will facilitate their entry into paid employment. The frontline workers, as part of their mandate, must manage the self presentation of program participants through their own presentation of self, through their own management of female and feminine bodies — bodies socially defined through sex and gender as generic workers available for and attentive to generic work.

The standards of dress, hygiene and deportment by which both the program staff and the program participants will be measured are rooted in race, class, and gender hierarchies. While the workers themselves may personally oppose these hierarchies, they remain caught in the contradiction of reinforcing them, maintaining the social structures through which both they and their program clients struggle to succeed. Furthermore, if the workers want to remain employable themselves, they too must address the realities of presentation of self that are embedded in mainstream understandings of "employability." Discipline of the body — its size,

appearance, presentation, bodily functions, passions — becomes a sign that the mind and will are equally disciplined.

Some women experience minimal contradiction when confronted with the requirements of embodied practices. They comfortably adopt the dress, appearance, and deportment expected of them. Other bodies cannot so easily fit into the moulds that define acceptable images; they are the "wrong" size or shape, not sufficiently feminine-looking, too old, too tied to children, too much the "wrong" colour. Not being able to "fit" into the dominant discourse of femininity can become a serious matter when appearing acceptably employable through self-presentation becomes a matter of material survival. It means that assimilation into raced, gendered, and classed notions of appropriate workplace femininity cannot always be met because female sexual and maternal bodies cannot always be left behind, at home. The embodied practices of program workers not only accomplish this for themselves but they also transmit this message to participants.

This chapter introduces three women whose work in employability enhancement programs involves embodied practices, practices geared toward constructing employable bodies. Alexa Jones from Moving Over (3.2) works with the most seriously disadvantaged clients, those who need to practice presenting themselves in the right place, at the right time, clean (sober), and clean (well-groomed). Betty Phillips works in Lining Up (3.3), the program next in line. As well as teaching a particular skill (word processing) she works with those program participants who experience difficulty getting family matters under control. Barbara Cox, the manager of Getting In (3.4), expects herself and her staff to model behaviours that might move single mothers

from entry level clerical positions to the secretarial positions that could provide them with sufficient income to support their families.

All three women, Alexa, Betty, and Barbara, teach through example those embodied practices that prepare their program participants for workplace-appropriate performance. Their embodied practices model for program participants messages of appropriate femininity, female respectability, and membership in the "mainstream." All three of these women are White.

The four Black Employment Counsellors introduced in this chapter (3.5) highlight how all embodied practices must be understood as raced as well as gendered. Irene Jessup, Zora Neale, Georgia Ross, and Faith Upshaw everyday, from the time they get up to the time they lay themselves down, grapple with the contradiction of being professional Black women in a world where professionalism is most often defined, by default, as White. Indeed, in Nova Scotia in 1993, employability itself assumes an assimilation to, if not the embodiment of, Whiteness. In this context, these frontline workers mediate not only the race of their program participants, but also their own race through the social relations entered into with co-workers and colleagues, government funders and referring agencies. Their embodied practices thus enter them into contestatory practices in which they are always marked as "other."

After introducing these frontline workers and their employability enhancement programs, in sections 3.2 through 3.5, the remaining sections of this chapter will turn to an explication of the embodied practices these workers exemplify. The analysis will weave together the experiences of the workers with research literature that can help make sense of their accounts.

This pattern will be repeated in chapters 4 and 5, with descriptive accounts at the beginning of each chapter introducing specific workers and programs, illustrating issues which will subsequently be taken up in more thoroughgoing analysis.

In this chapter, starting with section 3.6, the analysis will show that through their embodied practices employability enhancement instructors, counsellors, and managers work with participants to deal with past and current violence, abuse and addictions; with demands made by others on their bodies; with the intrusion of family matters into the work day. They teach participants "impression management," grooming the women for a class-based notion of femininity, as shown in section 3.7. The program workers facilitate the entry of participants into a cultural curriculum that rejects both sexual and maternal bodies as inappropriate. As section 3.8 argues, a class-bound and race-bound discourse of femininity dictates that women who do not fit into a respectable workplace need to make over their "Otherness" to become appropriately presented selves.

The role of frontline workers, section 3.9 argues, is to train participants in those practices that may produce recognizably feminine and appropriately businesslike bodies, gestures and appearances. Some women (both workers and participants) refuse to mould their bodies to fit these requirements; others cannot do so, constrained by the limits of their bodies and perhaps the colour of their skin. Their bodies remain, inappropriately present, resolutely Other. In particular, as discussed in section 3.10, the Black frontline workers struggle to maintain "ontological integrity," their very sense of themselves and their reality, in the context of programs that demand they re-shape that reality to one more work-appropriate. Almost all the women in the research

speak, at some point, out of their own embodied lives, which provide the passion required to continue this frontline work. Yet they must demonstrate for program participants the ability to reconcile the passions of their own bodies with the requirement that bodies and responsibility for bodies cannot be allowed to interrupt the work day.

Though their embodied memories of poverty, marginalization, violence may qualify them to do the work they do, the passion of that remembered experience threatens to put them on the wrong side of professionalism, as examined in section 3.11. Women's professional practices, always embodied, must somehow reflect a disembodied, dispassionate ideal. Frontline workers teach by example that to receive respect, women must appear businesslike, leaving bodies, families, and feelings at home. Disciplined bodies, which demonstrate disciplined hearts and minds, are the mark of professionalism.

3.2 Be there on time, clean, and clean

Alexa Jones: Moving Over toward the mainstream

Alexa Jones works in the program I call Moving Over. One of the first things she told me is that the program she manages is "always potentially violent. Every day I've come to work for the last seven years, my adrenaline starts when I walk in the door" (Interview 1). Serving what the government calls the "severely employment disadvantaged," the 11 instructors, counsellors, and administrative staff require a particular physical alertness, an embodied awareness of themselves in relation to their program participants, for the program to function with a minimum of crisis management.

Most of the participants are between 25 and 35 years old; half are usually women and half the women are usually single mothers. Many participants have less than grade 9 formal education with an actual reading, writing or math proficiency far below that. They may have undiagnosed learning disabilities although it is more likely that cognitive problems have been brought on by extended substance abuse, physical assault, or untreated trauma, such as childhood sexual abuse.

The participants must be at the program on time, every day, clean (no drugs or alcohol), and clean (washed and brushed). They must consistently locate themselves in time and space and their "selves" must be appropriately embodied, inside and out. Being on time, Alexa says, may be the most straightforward accomplishment for many participants.

> One, they have not grown up in a household where time and punctuality is very important. Two, they've been out of school and perhaps in a home or out on the streets where time is again not an important issue. And, three, sometimes they can't tell time and it's as simple as that. (Interview 1)

Teaching someone to tell time starts in academic upgrading where the math review begins with counting to 12, adding, subtracting, and learning the fractions that allows a person to get to the bus by "half past eight." It carries on into life skills where the group discusses "being on time" as one of the dominant cultural values that underpin the working world. In the specific skills classes routine tasks are built around schedules and deadlines.

Teaching someone to conform to dominant cultural values concerning hygiene, grooming, dress and deportment is a much less straightforward activity — and Alexa acknowledges that developing and enforcing rules concerning body odour, hair styles, make-up, jewelry, and clothing are "dicey

issues" (Interview 1). At the beginning, she says, most participants simply cannot locate in their closets or their mirrors the image they are expected to produce for the program.

> You say to a woman, "You can't wear spandex pants in an office. You just can't do that." So they come in a party dress and believe they're dressed appropriately. And how do you tell them they aren't? . . . We always have to respect them and the message they're trying to give us and help them understand that we're not talking about them as people when we talk about their dress. (Interview 1)

Despite these words, and the attempts staff make to frame their corrections, Alexa recognizes that for many participants giving up their particular look means giving up their particular identity. The staff are talking about "them as people" when they talk to program participants about dress. They are talking about them as members of particular social and cultural groups: the majority of the program participants will have to disavow expressions of race, class, and sexuality as they learn to recognize and then emulate a "mainstream" model of White, middle class, heterosexual, and unambiguously gendered representation.

What saves the teaching situation from being a neoconservative nightmare, Alexa says, is her insistence that staff remind themselves and the participants that for 30-weeks these women and men have committed themselves to moving over into the mainstream:

> In theory, not always in practice, the people who come into the program come in by their own free will. They haven't been forced in. What they have said by virtue of doing that . . . is "I want to be part of the mainstream." (Interview 1)

After their experiences with Moving Over, participants can decide if they want to continue making the kinds of cultural compromises that mainstream existence requires of them. By that time program participants should be clear

about the basic embodied practices they will be expected to perform to gain admission to the waged labour force.

Alexa expects her staff to actually embody the mainstream values they counsel, teach, and administer every day. She says they have to understand it as a game played out by everyone, including herself:

> When I go downtown to a [policy planning] meeting I don't wear my jeans — that would be totally unproductive. Not because I don't want to wear jeans or I feel embarrassed but because I have a certain role to play and if I want to have an impact, I have to dress the part. . . . . I also know that if a 20-year-old participant sees a 53-year-old woman in jeans he's going to say, "What's going on here? She's the manager?" When I say to this person, "Come into my office," I want them to know that they're not dealing with some hippie, they're dealing with the manager who has some authority and some wisdom. (Final meeting)

Without referring to Erving Goffman's (1959) theory about the presentation of self in everyday life, Alexa nevertheless articulates her understanding that everyone engages in role-playing, everyone has a part to play in the social relations that structure the labour force. These relations of ruling are raced, classed, sexed, and gendered and everyone entered into them becomes subject to their discipline either as players on the stage, behind the scenes, or in the audience. Because most of the workers have made a choice not to work in more institutional settings, with more rigid rules and regulations, they face contradictions when they enforce rules regulating their participants' presentation as business-like and ready for employment. Nevertheless, program staff are subject to the authority of their program managers and bureaucratic administrators just as program participants are subject to the authority of the program staff.

Having located themselves in space and time, having physically cleaned up their act, Alexa's program participants can concentrate on getting

the rest of their lives in order. Accomplishing these basic embodied practices, modelled for them by the program workers, qualifies participants to enter further employability enhancement programming and many of Alexa's successful participants will continue to work on academic upgrading or specific skills development in settings that require them to move over into more sophisticated forms of physical accountability.

3.3   I looked at me and there I was

Betty Phillips: Lining Up with the mainstream

Betty Phillips works in the program I call Lining Up. To be admitted to this program participants must have a social insurance number, stable housing, access to a phone, and some evidence of success in budgeting, finding childcare, and arranging transportation. They must, therefore, be able to locate themselves not only as participants in relation to the program, but also as citizens in relation to the state and consumers in relation to the marketplace. They cannot have pending criminal charges or active substance abuse, thus indicating they have aligned themselves parallel with rather than intersecting the justice system. They must be able to demonstrate that they have, as the program brochure states, the "ability to overcome physical/ mental/ emotional barrier(s) that would affect entry-level employment" (Lining Up, 1993); they must be able to demonstrate that they can learn, retain, and apply new skills.

At any one time the five frontline workers in this employability enhancement program provide 40 to 45 program participants with academic upgrading, life skills counselling, and specific skills training. Betty Phillips, the clerical instructor, describes herself as "the heavy" in the program. She

tries to teach her participants that if they want to maintain an orderly life at work they must have their life under control at home. Crises at home cannot be allowed to interfere with their program work. Playing with one of the more commonplace excuses that participants bring to explain their absence she says, " You have to pull it together. Whatever else is happening at home, your grandmother can't die again" (Interview 1).

Like Alexa, Betty acknowledges that expectations centred on punctuality, presence, and work-appropriate clothes, makeup, hair, and accessories reinforce the social control of dominant class and race business relations. "It's the way a capitalist society works," she says pragmatically and then with some exasperation, "I don't care if they wear shorts to class. . . . or sunglasses, or hats, or if they're typing with a weapon on. I don't care, but their employer will" (Interview 1). For one participant, she recalls, making the kinds of changes in appearance outlined by a potential employer came at too great a cost in terms of her identity: "She literally couldn't. She left. It was her strike out for independence and she walked out on it" (Interview 1).

Part of Betty's exasperation stems from her acknowledgment that although she dresses appropriately for work as an instructor, she cannot seem to help her students put together a "look" that would qualify them as clerical workers: "I don't know how to approach it in a nice way or in a way that can work. Maybe I should cut out pictures" (Interview 1). By recognizing that it is "pictures" rather than personal preferences or professional practicality that governs how women dress in a business setting, Betty points to the "discourse of femininity" (Smith, 1990a) that is omnipresent in the mass media and financially and physically unattainable for most of her participants. While Betty admits that she is expected to be a role model for the

women in her classes, despite their differences, what she can do, she believes, is "in some way to inspire them and tell them stories" (Interview 1).

One of her favourite stories concerns a successful participant who found herself on work placement lining up with others engaged in the morning mainstream rush to get downtown and into work on time:

> I can always remember this one woman going out on work placement. And she said, "I looked at me and there I was, walking down Brunswick Street at 8:30 in the morning, all dressed up. And a bunch of people were walking along with me and I was walking with them." (Interview 1)

Betty identifies with this feeling of seeing one's self, positioned in time and space with others who, because of their embodied practices, deserve respect as subjects — as competent women who can act on their own behalf. She starts, however, from the other end of the day, heading in a different direction:

> Sometimes I'm walking home and I'm thinking "Here I am, dragging home with the mainstream." And I look at other ways of earning a living, of being freelance, having a day off here and there when you want it. But I understand the need to be also part of the mainstream and to be doing "the right thing." (Interview 1)

She brings this understanding of aspirations to join the mainstream to her work with her program participants.

Unfortunately, many of the single mothers in her program cannot afford to take a $14,000 clerical job and leave the subsistence security of Family Benefits. Given the loss of medical benefits and the increased costs of clothing, transportation, and childcare involved in becoming employed, they cannot choose to move over and line up for entry level mainstream positions. Their only real choice is to find another employability enhancement program that provides a childcare allowance.

Betty hopes that if they make this choice they will choose something other than clerical or secretarial training. She knows they are attracted to office work because they have been exposed to women who do this work and who appear to have authority over their access to services. Betty says that even though she soon dispels any illusions they may have about the authority of office work, she cannot dispel the dream:

> [Office work] has this aura of respectability. You can make more money cleaning. You can make more money going to the hospital and being a line cook — getting into those unions. But it has this aura of "I get dressed up. I do my hair. I put on makeup . . . and I'm not ashamed to see the public." (Interview 1)

The discourse of femininity that codes their embodied presentation of self in the program comes out of and carries over into their lives pre- and post-program. Betty, like Alexa, embodies her example to her program participants — she embodies messages of appropriate femininity, female respectability, and membership in the "mainstream." Like Alexa, her role as the embodiment of a status quo she disagrees with continues to raise tensions and contradictions.

3.4 The idea is to show by example

Barbara Cox: Getting In and staying in the mainstream

Barbara Cox works in the program I call Getting In. Getting In has been called the finishing school for women who have participated in the entry level clerical skills courses offered by other Metro programs such as Moving Over and Lining Up. As program manager Barbara Cox believes her graduates should be able to find work that pays $7.50/hour, significantly more than the minimum wage in Nova Scotia in 1993, but still less than many women

would receive from social assistance after deducting work expenses. She admits that women who take the risk of future advancement over current stability have to be "hungry for success," (Interview 1), they have to have the determination required for getting into the mainstream.

Barbara has developed an assessment and interview process that helps her decide who — of the 135 applicants she gets for each course — will most benefit from the program. They must achieve an academic grade 10 on a standardized test for reading, writing, and math. They must indicate in writing why they think they are ready to become independent wage earners. They must participate in a face-to-face interview with Barbara and her administrative assistant. In the end, she chooses 30 single mothers receiving social assistance, including at least two members of a "visible minority," two First Nations women, two women with physical disabilities.

The most important message Barbara wants to give these participants is that they can take secretarial skills wherever they want to go if they learn how to present themselves as "professionals" from the moment they walk into their work placement or job interview:

> We have to accept in life that first impressions are very subjective and very superficial. They are based on what you are wearing, how your hair looks, do you have missing teeth or dirty fingernails. . . . It is my belief that the impression you give should reflect who you are and what you may be capable of doing. (Dialogue)

Barbara insists that her seven program staff be both willing and able to "show by example" what participants need to do to move from entry level positions to positions that might, eventually, provide them with an income sufficient to support their families. She begins with herself as a role model:

> I, as the project manager, always try and look professional. That doesn't mean a suit every time I appear before the class but it does mean that I

am coordinated. I am always well-pressed. My hair looks as though I took some time with it in the morning. Very often I'll wear a skirt and a blouse, but will have a jacket with me. (Interview 1)

In her program, professional means more than clothes and grooming — Barbara also works with women's body language, verbal language, and general deportment:

> The manner in which you address other people; the tone of your voice; the way you stand, sit, walk — I put the term "professional" on these things because to me they are important and to other people they are important. If you are chewing gum and standing with one hand on your hip and the other hip thrown out and tossing the hair, it's not creating a business-like appearance. (Dialogue)

Whether Barbara likes it or not, elements of professional deportment are part of how the women who take her program will be assessed in the workforce.

While she acknowledges that these concerns may seem "very subjective and very superficial," Barbara suggests that if she did not provide her participants with this professional armour of appearances she would be derelict in her duty, no better than an officer sending foot soldiers to war without first giving them the skills and weapons they will need to defend themselves.

> I call myself the sergeant major and you may wonder why. But I've made the analogy that a sergeant major teaches his troops to save their lives. And that's what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to see that they learn what the real world is all about. Give them skills that will help them in that real world and it'll save their lives. Otherwise they're going to be on social assistance until social assistance runs out. (Interview 1)

Like Alexa and Betty, Barbara also teaches through example, embodying for her program participants not only the clothes, make-up, and hairstyles that will help them appear professional, but also the walk, talk, posture, mannerisms that will help them pull off the performance. Barbara is

preparing her graduates for more than simple survival in a work-based world; she is preparing them for success.

3.5 Look the part, feel the part, dress the part

Black women workers: Marginalized by a racialized mainstream

In all three programs presented thus far, the frontline staff are expected to teach assimilation into a mainstream workplace culture through their embodied practices — to show, through the curriculum and by example, how participants can locate themselves in space and in time — appropriately groomed, dressed and accessorized — displaying the body language and verbal language that will facilitate their entry into the mainstream.

Although these women may experience some disjuncture between "who they are" (their personal identity) and "who they appear to be in their programs" (their workplace or professional identity) none of them indicate that these embodied practices feel transgressive. Jennifer Tannen, Barbara Cox's research partner, talked with Barbara about the seamless way in which they both move from work to home to community: "With you and me it isn't a role; it's who we are" (Dialogue). As with many other women involved in this research, their abilities to both conceive of and then embody class-based notions of femininity allow them to put together a business-like appearance so they can be at work every day, on time and clean, in order to show by example how women can physically make themselves over into workers.

Alexa, Betty, Barbara, and Jennifer are all White women. They are teaching and modelling not only class-based but also race-based notions of appearance and deportment. Their embodiment as White women makes it

both easier and more difficult for them to do their work. It is easier because they already have at least one foot up onto the stage of mainstream employment — they present themselves as White not only because they have grown up with Whiteness but because they are White. That also has the potential to make their work more difficult because a significant number of their participants are not White.

By pointing to this difference I do not want to imply that all the White women in this research live in relation to Whiteness or Blackness in the same way. Women are no less complexly positioned in relation to race in this society than we are positioned in relation to class, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and so on. However, whatever that relation becomes in the end, in Nova Scotia in 1993 women who are White begin from a position of privilege and entitlement.

Because the five Black frontline workers accomplish their work as Black women, as women whose practices are at every moment and in every place marked "raced" in a way that the White women's work is not, all of their work practices become embodied practices. The "raced" character of their work contributes to their current value as commodities, something Zora Neale makes perfectly clear. No matter her qualifications or her work experiences, she knows that she may be hired because she is Black, because she has had Black experiences within Black communities and Black experiences within White communities, including White workplaces and educational institutions. In 1993 in Nova Scotia, being Black makes her someone that historically White employability enhancement programs desire:

> White people are hungry for you and if they can find you, they snatch you up. They snatch you up quick. . . . My [White] co-worker said to me that if our project ever closed, I would find a job faster than her or my other co-worker because I am a commodity. I am a commodity and I never thought of myself in [those] terms. . . . It has always been about racism, sexism, classism. . . . And all of a sudden not only am I living "isms" but I am living around commodification. (Focus group 1)

What she experiences as commodification, she says, arises from parasitic social relations, relations of flesh, of blood, of skin: "You know, [White people] have been parasitic with me all my life and all of a sudden they are parasitic with me again" — in a different way (Focus group 1).

Zora describes how she must groom, dress, accessorize, and deport herself every minute of every day that she is in public space. If she does not, she puts her "employable" status at risk:

> Someone I was working with said, "Zora, you always look so good." . . . and I thought, "part of that looking good is making sure that people in that society outside of my office walls know that I'm qualified to do good work." (Focus group 1)

Looking the part can entail deliberate manipulation of symbols to construct an appropriate presentation of self. With the other Black women, Zora discusses going to work downtown on the bus under the White gaze, carrying a briefcase:

> And the reason that I got the damn briefcase is my mother said, "You need a briefcase. Don't be diddly-dallying with plastic bags, keeping your papers. You look the part, you feel the part, you dress the part."
> . . . . You can't get on that bus, you cannot go to work, looking like you just woke up. I iron my clothes for five days in a week so I'm not rushing in the morning to iron out something. You have to take the time to do your hair. I don't have that White girls' hair. I can't go in the shower and just fling it back! (Focus group 1)

Zora will be judged according to White-dominant standards of appropriate appearance, despite the fact that she does not possess the features White

women tend to possess. Thus she must manipulate the symbols that are within her control, to approximate as closely as possible the accepted images of professional women.

Zora concludes that "work has just so many other elements for Black women" — the same elements faced by program participants who are moving into alien and often hostile territory as they exercise their employability. Getting located in space and time, for example, requires four of the five Black women to leave their communities and go into primarily White suburban or commercial zones. As they move over into the line getting in to work, they have to somehow become less visible even though they are "marked" by their categorization as "visible minority."

Excepting Irene Jessup who works in a Black community with Black co-workers and clients, the closer these women get to their place of work the further they move into territory where they have to assimilate into the mainstream. Because they want to earn a middle class income, they are expected to adopt middle class values, middle class culture, middle class looks. Like the program participants, the more different they appear to be from mainstream norms the more they lose as they move toward a generic identity. And this generic identity in Nova Scotia in the 1990s is White identity. Through their clothes, hair, accessories, voice, speech, body language, body size they come to represent, in embodied form, "a business-like appearance" not only to their program participants, but to their community. Their "business" not only requires them to represent "professional," it also requires them to represent "acceptable in a White workplace." Because of their professional status and their embeddedness within Black community, they come to embody "life skills" at a material

level and "hopes and dreams" at the level of desire. Their bodies mark them as Black at the same time that their bodies' place of work or focus of work mark them as not-Black.

One after another, these women talk about how and where they are located among their peers. Faith Upshaw shares with many Black adults a childhood experience of dislocation. Referred to as "a living example of life skills" (Focus group 1) she says her place within the Black community gives her an ability to relate to others' difficulties and successes.

> I can understand where the clients are coming from. I can relate. I know their affairs so I can understand what they are saying . . . the way they are going about it. I can see that they might turn to drugs and crime. But I am an example to them, I can show them that there is another way to go. (Focus group 1)

Faith knows she embodies the lessons she is trying to convey to her program participants. Irene Jessup points out that all the Black program staff carry within themselves the tools for their work.

> They see it. They'll look at me and say, "You have so much confidence. You are right on top of the world when you are talking about going out and marketing yourself." And I don't have to tell them because . . . they can see it, they know me. (Focus group 1)

Georgia Ross makes the link between the conceptual world of employability enhancement and their own embodied employability: "We are models not just theoretically but practically. We are living, breathing models and whether we speak it, our clients can feel it" (Focus group 1). Their example is in their bodies and their bodies' experiences and responses. There is no need for words, for speaking, because their physical selves embody the point.[1]

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[1] Georgia not only makes the link between her program work and her role within her community she also makes the link between her program, her community, and this research. During the first focus group meetings she made it clear that her reasons for participating were

In the third focus group meeting Georgia illustrates this embodied experience of race and gender by beginning a discussion of the difficulty she faces working with White clients and White women colleagues. Suggesting that there are many subjects or events she cannot discuss with her co-workers, she describes a recent incident with a White client where her Black body was first an unknown and then a shock: "When they talk to you over the phone, "Oh, great!" and when they see you, oh boy!" (Focus group 3). Drawing on her authoritative position within the program — "Because this is my space" — Georgia made visible the client's underlying discomfort. She offered the "confused" White client an opportunity to speak with a White counsellor.

That offer solved the difficulty with Georgia's client; it did not address her lack of authentic communication with co-workers. Nothing overt was admitted, there was no verbal exchange that could be pinpointed as demonstrating "racism" and thus there was no racist incident to process. Nevertheless, during their discussion it becomes clear that being a target of body language is commonplace, an everyday experience for the Black frontline workers. And, as often happens during the focus group discussions, one Black woman's description of her experience elicits a response from her colleagues, included in the next quote within square brackets.

> But these things you can't call. [You have to deal with them.] Like I can't talk to these White co-workers [White co-workers]. I can't. I can pinpoint the body language. [Oh yeah! Looking for the diploma on the

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two-fold: to enter into discussion with her peers and to represent Blackness within research that appeared to over-emphasize gender and under-emphasize race.

> And I must comment on racism because that is why I am here. I am here as . . . a Black woman who is proud. I must say that racism has prepared me for sexism. Sexism to me is almost elementary compare to what I endure as a Black woman. People see me second as a woman and first as a Black person. (Focus group 1)

wall to see if you are qualified.] And I can see it. And I tell them out and out to clarify the issues: "Do you have a problem with me that I am Black?" [Otherwise you aren't going to get anything out of that. It's good to do that.] (Focus group 3)

Zora immediately points out that the choice offered to the White client — to change from a Black to a White counsellor — is not offered to Black clients who find themselves sitting opposite a White counsellor: "They don't give her the choice you gave that woman" (Focus group 3).

Zora then brings in her everyday experiences of the confusion White clients exhibit when they realize that, despite her not-Black last name, they are going to be counselled by a Black woman. This confusion arises not only because Zora is Black and in an office counselling White women, but also because Zora is Black and in a historically White part of the city.

And when they do see you in an office — and I hate walking down [that street] anyway [It ain't my Sunday afternoon stroll!] — ... they're taken aback. It's amazing — they just do a double take. . . . And sometimes I don't want to confront it. I just like them to feel uncomfortable and let it go. (Focus group 3)

In that final sentence the weariness of her tone refers back to the centuries of White racism in Nova Scotia that made parts of both urban and rural communities off-limits to the raced bodies of their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. They could not put their bodies on that street unless they were coming to clean White homes and offices or to care for White children.

This weariness also arises from the constant requirement that Black women who work in historically White programs are required, simultaneously, to represent Blackness so the program can claim diversity and to take care of White colleagues and clients so that the programs do not have to change fundamentally. Nevertheless there are consequences for Black women who, as they embody "possible success" for Black program

participants, might also embody "possible failure" for White program participants. As an example, Zora talks about her experience during a telephone call from a White woman. Explaining her situation the potential program participant said, "The reason I can't get a job is because all those Black people got all the jobs — all that affirmative action." Zora eventually told her she was talking to a Black person and the caller responded "Oh, I don't mean you!" (Focus group 3). Underlining the contradictory roles Black women play every day, another focus group member adds, "You are one of the good Blacks" — successful, but in a helping role where White women will benefit from their work.

Thus far, this chapter has introduced three programs and eight frontline workers, all of whom in some way exemplify the embodied practices through which frontline workers are expected to enhance the employability of their program participants. All of the women teach by example, and some by teach by direct instruction, professional standards of dress, hygiene, and deportment. All of the women face some degree of contradiction as they struggle to convey standards rooted in race, class and gender hierarchies that they may personally oppose. The Black women workers themselves embody those contradictions as they live professional lives always already marked as "raced" even as they model success in a White-dominant world for their Black clients.

Next this chapter will turn to an explication of the embodied practices that include not only inculcating dominant discourses of femininity, but also working with incidents of violence and coercion in women's lives. Through these frontline practices, program instructors, counsellors, and managers

enter both themselves and their participants into a discourse of gendered, raced, and classed femininity; they enter into a cultural curriculum that rejects both sexual and maternal bodies as inappropriate. Professional postures ask of women that they discount or repress the passion of their own experiences, their own embodied lives. Carrying within themselves embodied experiences that to some extent qualify them for their jobs, frontline workers carry their own memories of what it means to be poor, marginalized, objects of addictions and violence, subject to abuse and disrespect. Yet the straight forward expression of that passion puts them on the wrong side of professionalism positioning them as emotional rather than rational beings. They thus discipline their bodies to demonstrate that they can and do discipline their hearts and minds. Assimilation into raced, gendered, classed notions of appropriate femininity is practiced by program workers, and taught by example to participants — and this begins with taking care of family matters.

3.6   Taking care of family (matters)

The entire domain of cleaning and caring, the process involved in getting to a workplace on time, clean (no drugs or alcohol), clean (washed and brushed), appropriately dressed, ready to line up, get in, and stay in specific workplace cultures requires program staff and participants to enter into raced, classed, sexed, and gendered social relations. Their everyday appearance at their workplace or classroom requires them to lay themselves down to sleep in good time so they may wake up, wash, feed, clothe, comb, and transport their bodies to what is often alien territory. After hours, they must return the way they came, stopping to buy the commodities and services required to set

themselves up for the next day. For every child, there is another, parallel, process involved. For every parent and grandparent, every other body dependent on the program staff or participant for care, there is another, parallel, process.

For some women this is a single track activity. What they must do to play a part in business affairs is also what they must do to play a part in affectional, familial, and community affairs. They need one hairstyle, one set of clothes, one shelf of makeup, one time set on the alarm clock. They ride the same bus on the weekend that they ride during the week. Their children play with other neighbourhood children most of whom go to the same school, church, swimming lessons, and soccer games. Other women, however, have lives that move along more than one track. When they leave their work on Friday they move to the margins of mainstream culture. Their race, class, sexuality, political and spiritual identity take those same bodies to places peopled very differently than the places where they accomplish their paid work.

When Betty Phillips of Lining Up says her program participants must have their lives under control at home if they are to maintain an orderly life at work, she refers to participants' embodied lives. In these lives, grandmothers die and grandsons are born. Women go dancing and fall in love. They get sick. They celebrate a sister's return or grieve for a brother beaten in the streets. They remember childhood sexual assault and physical abuse. They go to church with family and friends to experience community, to sing, to feel beloved and watched over. They count out the money required to feed, clothe, house, and transport all the bodies for whom they are responsible. A niece moves across the country, an uncle lands in jail.

Dislocation happens. And, through it all, their embodied selves have to make it in to their program on time, clean, clean, appropriately dressed, ready to line up, get in, and stay in specific workplace cultures. Those who take responsibility for otherbodies — parents, children, partners, siblings, second cousins, church elders — multiply their chances of interrupting their accomplishments in one culture by caring for or cleaning up after people from another.

This ability to keep extended families functioning like clockwork while still attending to business is most often called "life skills," the skills required to maintain life, to keep bodies on track. Identified by the Employability Resources Network (ERN), as one of six components of successful employability programs, life skills programming is one of the most controversial aspects of employability enhancement programs for single mothers receiving social assistance (ERN, 1991b, 1991c, 1992b). In the programs ERN evaluated, "life skills" stands in for the ability of participants to manage their own lives and the lives of others in their care. Time management, money management, stress management, anger management, appropriate self-image, self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-actualization required the participants to manage the demands made on them by others and focus instead on their individual selves. This movement away from collective responsibility and toward preservation of self prepares women to be workers.

In two of the programs ERN evaluated, participants were considered more employment-ready when they learned how to deal with their leading barrier to employability: "taking care of family matters that interrupt the work day" (ERN, 1989, 1992a). Not only did they become better able to

organize shopping and meals, children and childcare, they also began to work with histories of incest and substance abuse, sexual assault, and psychological terror. They learned to take care of themselves by recognizing and then choosing whether or not to meet the demands others made on their bodies. Often program staff facilitating these changes have to confront in their own lives the issues they put on the table for others.

For other women, however, this shift in emphasis — from "family matters" where matters is a verb to "family matters" where matters is a noun — does not make sense. The frontline workers face the task of convincing women to move from an active and rewarding subject position where their contribution to family and community are (at least potentially) treasured to an object position where they are expected to subordinate those activities and rewards to a minimum wage service sector job. Instead of nurturing their own children, their own elders, they must learn to nurture strangers. Instead of cooking, cleaning, shopping, and celebrating with their families they must learn to deal with the everyday needs, desires, and detritus of strangers. And, in order to meet their own standards, program staff have to model taking care of their family's (embodied) matters on their own time; their work of attending to those bodies who are paying for their services cannot be interrupted.

Yet the "real work" of enhancing the employability of single mothers receiving income assistance must include those women's bodies, as Betty Phillips, Lining Up, indicated earlier in this chapter. Women embody their family status even as they try to fit it within workplace standards and a discourse of femininity. In recognition of this reality, one program evaluated by ERN provides participants with a $250 clothing allowance (ERN, 1991a, p.

6). It also recognizes that at least half their participants have been physically or sexually abused at some point in their lives. This is not uncommon and it is not always in the past. Yet another program estimates that "at least 40 per cent of [program] women were physically and/or sexually abused either during the project or prior to the project" (Reichert, 1988, p. 43). Although both these programs teach neatness in self-presentation and task completion they also acknowledge the messiness of many women's past and current lives. Embodied practices include working with critical incidents of violence and coercion in women's lives as well as with their presentation of self.

3.7 Embodied practices as the subtext for employability enhancement

Embodied practices are thus a subtext for the employability work of both program participants and program staff. Clearly, women's bodies do the moving over, lining up, getting in, staying in, and looking the part. By choosing to focus on what is appropriate and inappropriate within mainstream culture, women who are single mothers receiving social assistance must put aside their self-presentation as "women," sexual beings, and become "lady-like," asexual beings.

Barbara Cox of Getting In says she lets students know from the first day of orientation that "if they really want to succeed" they will need to learn how to become more business-like and less bedroom-like:

> And I might just put it this way, "If you wear the latest fashion, the wildest new hairdos, the junky jewelry, the short short mini-skirts or tight pants — that, in the business world, could be construed as sexual. I believe you want to give the impression that you are neat and clean and could go to the president's office to do some work for him, or go into the mail room and still be very comfortable." (Dialogue)

In order to develop and maintain this appropriate-anywhere appearance, women become chameleons to ensure that they do not stand out as having come from anywhere specific or having anywhere specific to go. They have to fade into the background, their femaleness muted until their femininity becomes quietly reassuring (Young, 1990b, pp. 141-159). Demonstrating through their marital status that they have been unable to attract or keep a man who makes a family wage, they must no longer dress for individual men but for work. And asexual beings are, of course, heterosexually asexual.

Barbara believes women can achieve satisfaction from creating this business-like appearance. True to her strategy of showing by example, she explains how she budgets her money, sews her own clothes, occasionally buys a good quality jacket or skirt that will coordinate with the classics she already has. This requires planning ahead, laying away what you want right now until you can pay for it later. Barbara believes being able to delay gratification is a trait many young single mothers will need if they want to escape from their dependence on welfare. It requires managing daily life, daily desires, so you can do something worthy in the future.

Those program participants who are willing to make the sacrifices often do so because, even if their child's conception was unplanned, their future can be anticipated.

> Those who have done very well financially and have progressed since
> 1989, they have had a deep love of their families, their children. They
> want better lives for their children. They want a better life for
> themselves — all of them say that when they come to their interview,
> but [those who are successful] have a very deep, deep desire to [give] to
> their families. (Interview 1)

Program staff work with this maternalism to motivate the program participants. They encourage women to deny their bodies, to sacrifice their own needs, for the future benefit of their children.[2]

The embodied subtext of employability enhancement work has been highlighted in other research. Ruth Horowitz (1995) puts forward black and white options for employability programs, employability staff. In her ethnography of a single parent program in which all the participants are Black, she identifies two categories of staff: arbiters and mediators. The arbiters (all middle class Black women and men) are typified as hiding behind a "cloak of professionalism and efficiency" (p. 59) while the mediators (mostly White) are typified as putting forward a "rhetoric of seniority and community" (p. 61). The first group emphasizes asexual middle-class White-acceptable appearances and behaviours while the second acts as surrogate mothers and sisters, listening to the young women celebrate their babies and boyfriends in a way that affirms both their past and their current behaviours.

This program's mandate, remarkably similar to those involved in my research, focuses on finding ways "to build motivation, basic skills, confidence and responsibility in managing daily life" (Horowitz, 1995, cited p. 5). As I have already outlined, "managing daily life" requires leaving embodied everyday life outside the program door. True to stereotype, therefore, the arbiters require the young women to develop an "acceptable public identity" (p. 74) that denies their bodies as sexual or maternal. They believe the essential skill of "presentation of self" can become a ticket to a better life: what the body does, the attitude mirrors. The mediators believe the

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[2] This "family ethic" will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

young women are being forced into "impression management" that draws an inappropriate line between their private life and the life they present to instructors and counsellors. Because Horowitz aligns herself with the mediators' open and intimate method of communication with students she portrays this erasure of the private as an example of the program's failure. The arbiters, on the other hand, interpret the same behaviour as an accomplishment — something students need to survive in the business world.

By insisting that specific staff members must be either good or bad, must either like her or hate her, alienate the students or nurture them, Horowitz (1995) misses the complexity of interactions in programs where a variety of staff engage a variety of students in the accomplishment of employability enhancement. She does not question, for example, that the only two White staff in the program deliver the parenting skills component — reflecting the maternalistic policies of early philanthropic societies (Carniol, 1990; Gordon, 1990b; Mink, 1990). She does not disclose her own Whiteness until long after she has raced and categorized as good/bad everyone else involved in the program. She does not consider that the approach used by the two mediators to gain participants' trust may be appropriate within the context of a support group but inappropriate within the program components that focus on computer skills or punctuality and dependability.

From Horowitz's (1995) perspective, the arbiters insist on a clear distinction between public and private worlds, they emphasize work ethic rather than ethic of care. They ignore the young women's maternal and sexual lives, believing that "family participation, household maintenance,

and the nurturing of children is not an alternative form of participation as a citizen" (p. 241). Within my own research Horowitz might categorize as "arbiters" all the frontline workers in employability programs who focus on embodied practices, who put under surveillance the self-presentation of both staff and participants.

For example, it would be easy to take statements by Barbara Cox, Getting In, out of context so that she appears equivalent to Horowitz's (1995) Roberta. Roberta, also a program manager, is said to believe that "women became more successful when they changed their wardrobes," had their colors done, toned down their accessories, modulated their voices (p. 190). While a focus on "presentation of self" may seem trivial to middle class formally educated women who have worked as professionals, other women may not have had the opportunity to recognize and make choices concerning how they are perceived by others.

As Betty Phillips, Lining Up, and Alexa Jones, Moving Over, both point out many of their participants cannot always decide between "appropriate" and "inappropriate" presentation of self because they cannot find in their mirrors or their closets anything that does — or does not — appear to be appropriate. Similarly, for most of the women in her program, Barbara Cox passionately believes a modulation of voice, a modulation of clothing, gesture, and energy itself, may be their only chance to bring themselves and their children out of poverty. [3] For her, this is not a trivial matter.

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[3] It's important to acknowledge that, although Barbara Cox might be considered small "l" liberal, other women considered more radical in their politics go through the same processes. For example, Lucy Salt, introduced in Chapter 5. Section 5.5, admits she has no option but to point out mainstream realities:

3.8 Embodied practices as cultural curriculum

What Horowitz (1995) does not acknowledge in her work (nor does

Barbara Cox, Getting In, in hers) is that all of us (women and men, program

staff and participants, policy makers and politicians, corporate executives and

executives' spouses) are constrained in our choices by a discourse of

femininity that is gendered, raced, and classed to an extent that limits or

extends individual options. Dorothy Smith (1990a), argues that grooming

women for a class-based notion of femininity has been organized across time

and space through articulated sequences of action. Actual practices bring

employability programs into existence through policy initiatives that require

a common cultural curriculum if programs are going to meet their mandates.

Program participants are expected to learn and program staff are expected to

teach that the everyday world may not intrude upon office hours.

Female sexual and maternal bodies must be left at the door when

women enter the workplace (unless, of course, their work involves selling

that body or being substitute mothers). Women must step out of bodies that

nurture family and express desire and step into bodies that accomplish waged

labour. Should they bring either their maternal or their sexual bodies to work

they become inappropriate, drawing attention to themselves in a way that is

very un-ladylike. By refusing to present a business-like appearance, they place

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If you're an unemployed woman and you're looking for work, you better learn pretty quickly how to take on the white middle class values —how to negotiate that system, how to appear to be part of what they want. A whole lot of what I do is change people from who they are to what they have to be in order to be successful. ... Politically we may think that it's not right that the employer wants these things but . . . . I can't change the world to match the woman. All I can do is work with the woman to become more cookie-cutter like all the other workers. (Final meeting)

themselves at risk of a paternalistic or a sexual response, something a professional would eschew. Whether they are asked for cookies or quickies, women are responsible for inappropriate requests as long as they cannot (or refuse to) distinguish between spandex shorts, a nursing bra, a downtown dancing dress, or coordinated skirt and jacket in neutral tones and a matching peach blouse with a small amount of lace at the neck.

And, indeed, both staff and participants must take some responsibility for accomplishing the work of self-presentation. They can learn from women who show by example, who find appropriate images in books and magazines, who provide a political context for the need to project dominant cultural values concerning hygiene, grooming, dress, and deportment. Although staff and participants cannot help but be drawn into the social relations of raced, classed, and gendered policies, they also have the opportunity to develop individual expressions of self and self in relation to consumer capitalism:

> Women are not just the passive products of socialization; they are active; they create themselves. At the same time, their self-creation, their work, the uses of their skills, are coordinated with the market for clothes, makeup, shoes, accessories, etc., through print, film, etc. The relations organizing this dialectic between the active and creative subject and the market and productive organization of capital are those of a textually mediated discourse. (Smith, 1990a, p. 161)

Textually mediated discourse, when applied to employability enhancement programs, becomes core curriculum. Life skills manuals and employability workshops delineate for the workers, who then delineate for the participants, a narrow range of acceptable behaviours.

This cultural curriculum also takes root through popular media. As Paula Chegwidden (1993) documents, the make-over mentality trumpeted by Canadian Living magazine as a "dynamite new look" will make the

difference for 15 program participants trying to re-enter the labour force. One of the women involved in a re-entry project suggested "she was regarded as a success because she learned to look and act like a middle-class person" (Chegwidden, 1993, cited p. 26). Drawing on women's experiences in other settings, re-entry programs share a discourse not only with popular media but also with psychiatric programs. As Barry Glassner (1992) points out,

> more than a few progressive psychiatric hospitals employ full-time cosmetologists. After all, an important step for any of us when we move from a private sphere to a public one is to dress and groom ourselves accordingly. (pp. 117-178)

> Valerie Polakow (1993), in her chilling explication of alienated and

marginalized motherhood, demonstrates how

> poverty has been artfully reconfigured as a social/ cultural/ psychological pathology, corroborated by a public educational discourse of deficiency and remediation. It is otherness that is at risk, reframed as an individual or minority problem in need of redress. (p. 3, emphasis added)

In absolute seriousness she makes the link between "redress" and "re-dress," recognizing that government policies and program mandates support the belief that those women who do not fit into a nuclear family or a respectable workplace need to make over their "otherness" so they can become appropriately presented selves. Their ability to do this not only marks them as sane, it marks them as moral members of a capitalist society, using the discourse of femininity to attach themselves to "a market and the production of commodities" (Smith, 1990a, p. 171).

Learning to model the mainstream women in magazine advertisements and stories is not an extracurricular choice. Making the effort "to appear as lean, attractive, and youthful as the people in the ads becomes

crucial for economic survival" (Glassner, 1992, p. 13), as crucial for the

program staff as for the program participants. Their work requires them to

"look clean and neat. . . . to give [participants] the message that how you take

care of your body, the way you dress and carry yourself, says a great deal about

your self-esteem" (Glassner, 1992, p. 139). They are as constrained by the

discourse as their participants.

Pragmatically, women like Barbara value the self-presentation skills

they have acquired throughout their lives. Many of them have survived

difficult circumstances because they force themselves to put on the patina of a

business-like appearance and continue working as their personal lives fall

down around them. For others, the cultural costs of normative femininity

are too high and, unwilling to subordinate their identities to dominant

discourse, they will let go of their chance to merge with the mainstream.

Like Horowitz (1995), we can deride the superficiality of this

acquiescent strategy. Barbara acknowledges this herself. Program staff who

believe that program participants deserve "empowerment," including a

lengthy process of coming to an authentic understanding of the interpersonal

dynamics involved in the collapse of a woman's dreams, may be ignoring the

material consequences of their philosophical positions. The time and space

required for this process are, for most women, material luxuries and

authentic understanding is also a socially organized practice. In the end, as in

the beginning, bodies need to be fed with food. To draw on "the skills

involved in going shopping, in making and choosing clothes, in making

decisions about colors, styles, makeup, and the ways in which these become a

matter of interest among men" (Smith ,1990a, p. 163) may be the only way in

which a woman can put food on the table for herself and her family and thus make the everyday possible.

3.9 Resistance and the performativity of embodied practices

As Smith (1990a) makes clear, "femininity" and "appropriate behaviour" are not "things" to be acquired and then pulled out from time to time in certain settings. They are also not positions defined by and located in discourse. Rather, femininity is "an extended collection of instances" (p. 164) in which individuals embody the social relations through which the discourse of femininity can be constructed and reconstructed. Erving Goffman (1959) discusses these "instances" as moments of action in which players, in role, work as a team to stage an idealized performance. He also suggests that gender, as a tool used to negotiate social relations, is "a pattern of appropriate conduct" (p. 75) that involves "the presentation of proper performances ... expressed in terms of sacrifices made for the maintenance of front" (p. 36). Employability program participants are enjoined by staff to play their part well. In Goffman's terms, staff act as "service specialists," trainers who

> have the complicated task of teaching the performer how to build up a desirable impression while at the same time taking the part of the future audience and illustrating by punishments the consequences of improprieties. (p. 158)

Goffman's use of performance as a metaphor, however, falls short when we watch actual women in actual places trying to fit themselves into costumes that do not fit, that make them look foolish and ill-at-ease. Performance is more than a metaphor, it is survival.

Sandra Bartky (1990) explores the effect of the normalizing discourse of femininity on women's identity and subjectivity by examining "those disciplinary practices that produce a body which in gesture and appearance is recognizably feminine" (p. 65). Bodies are required to be a certain size and shape, to bring forth "a specific repertoire of gestures, postures, and movements" and to display secondary ornamentation of clothes and accessories. Recognizing the differential effect of these disciplinary actions, she suggests that poor women who want to improve their standard of living must either perform or stay poor.

Some women cannot mould their bodies to fit a discursive norm, however — the phrase "mutton dressed as lamb" comes to mind. Some women are simply too old, too fat, too much the wrong colour, too tired, too desperate to refuse yet sufficiently aware to know they cannot look the part or dress the part or feel the part because the role requires more than acquiescence to external standards that cannot be incorporated into embodied every day and every night realities. They cannot find "ontological integrity " (Young, 1990a, p. 131) in playing the part. Some women resist fitting into the norm yet this performance of resistance may often be confused with ignorance. It is not that they do not know, however, it is that they are ignoring what they know in order to resist.

In her article about Mennonite women, Linda Boynton Arthur (1993) focuses on the ways in which "the social body . . . constrains the physical body" (p. 69). Women who resist the dress code resist the demands of the community; as a woman who left the community suggests, "when you're having trouble with the rules, your clothing can show it" (p. 76). However superficial that may sound, Elizabeth Wilson (1993) uses Kaja Silverman's

statement that "clothing is a necessary condition of subjectivity" (cited p. 51) to argue that deviance, dress, and desire are ineluctably united. In that context, femininity becomes a normative discourse where performing must be, by definition, raced, classed, gendered, and (un) sexed.

The performativity of gender can be understood as potentially liberatory, offering choices beyond the feminine (or masculine) for women willing to take their chances (Butler, 1990). Unfortunately, for the single mothers receiving income assistance and for the educators and counsellors who work with them, an understanding of gender as "performative," as disciplined by discourse and thus open to discursive manipulation, gives them no excuse to get it wrong. In the same way that lesbians and gay men can be typified as choosing a "life style," one that can also be un-chosen, women who do not conform to the discipline of normative femininity can be typified as not really wanting to become part of the mainstream. Program participants, many of whom cannot conform whether they are willing or not, experience what Iris Marion Young (1990a) calls "border anxiety" (p. 146). They know their bodies are considered by those representative of dominant culture to be out of place, inappropriately present. Yet they are caught; they are "imprisoned in their bodies" (p. 123), vulnerable to surveillance and judgment, categorized as Other. Their performance of gender is constrained by the limits of their bodies and their bodies' performance (see also Devor, 1989).

Women marked by the colour of their skin know, from the embodied behaviour of those around them, that they are visible in places where they are very much the minority. Their discursive consciousness may be aware of the impossible demands made on their embodied presence at the same time

they recognize they have no choice but to attempt to meet those demands. At the same time that they recognize the embodied responses others make to their presence, those others most often remain unaware of the consequences of their unspoken expression of dominance:

> Members of oppressed groups frequently experience . . . avoidance, aversion, expressions of nervousness, condescension, and stereotyping. For them such behavior, indeed the whole encounter, often painfully fills their discursive consciousness. . . . Those exhibiting such behavior, however, are rarely conscious of their actions or how they make the others feel. (Young, 1990a, pp. 133-34)

No matter the success of their performance, participants in employability enhancement programs will encounter the limits attached to their bodies. So will the program staff, Black and White. They must find ways to teach the importance of the performance while recognizing their own and their participants' everyday embodied boundaries.

3.10 Ontological integrity and the passion of embodied experience

In her chapter, "The scaling of bodies," Young (1990a) uses Anthony Giddens' three-level theory of subjectivity to distinguish between discursive consciousness (when what is happening can be named, put into words), practical consciousness (when what is happening elicits a response on the fringes of consciousness because of its routine nature) and basic security systems (when what is happening can be understood as threatening who we are) (p. 131).

Thus, when the Black women involved in this research met as a focus group, they spoke out of discursive consciousness, trusting that their colleagues share both vocabulary and experience. They had the freedom to bring forward what most often remains in the background, their routine

experiences of racism or their White colleagues' ignorance of what actually

happened with them on a daily basis. They named their impatience, their

anger, their exhaustion — consequences of having, always, to protect their

very sense of themselves and their reality. They relate their struggle to

maintain "ontological integrity" (Young, 1990a, p. 131) in a context of constant

denial. In their call and response support of each other, they celebrate not

only their ability to continue working in the context of White supremacy but

also their courage in naming their reality in the presence of White women —

"the courage to bring to discursive consciousness behavior and reactions

occurring at the level of practical consciousness [in the face of] denial and

powerful gestures of silencing" (Young, 1990a, p. 134).

Being constantly assaulted by everyday body languages goes beneath

the superficial surface of the skin. bell hooks (1993) writes that, as a

consequence of continuous embodied gestures of avoidance and aversion,

"black people are wounded in our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits" (p. 11).

Maintaining a positive sense of Black identity within a complex

understanding of social reality, maintaining ontological integrity becomes a

political act. Staying sane, choosing wellness, becomes a political act that does

not come without its price. Through the core curriculum of cultural

imperialism, "Others" are seduced by "the promise of mainstream success"

(hooks, 1992, p. 17). If Black women in employability enhancement programs

agree to adopt a business-like appearance, they must re-shape "the nature of

everyday life, how we talk, walk, eat, dream, and look at one another" (p. 10)

for themselves and for the participants in their programs.

Zora Neale speaks of her outrage at being constructed as a commodity

by colleagues in historically White workplaces that, in the name of diversity,

seek out educated Black women. As she said, "White people are hungry for you and if they can find you, they snatch you up" (Focus group 1). bell hooks reinforces this sense of the contradictions and betrayals that must be confronted when Black women struggle side-by-side with White women. No matter the sisterhood pledged by each woman, White women's transgressions — the stuff of Black women's practical consciousness — cannot help but betray the theory in the practice. This constant commodification, even in the midst of political struggle, leads to bell hooks' (1992) impassioned essay, "Eating the other: Desire and resistance," in which she expresses Black women's "over-riding fear . . . that cultural, ethnic, and racial differences will be continually commodified and offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate — that the Other will be eaten, consumed, and forgotten[4]" (p. 39).

The ground out of which hooks' writing springs is the suffering "often expressed through the body, what it knows, what has been deeply inscribed on it through experience" (1994b, p. 91) And out of that experience comes "a privileged location, even as it is not the only or even always the most important location from which one can know" (p. 91). In Zora's earlier speech, the passion of her experience articulates the outrage and the pain of betrayal that comes from being treated as a commodity within a community of women that most often refuses to take up the issue of race as a matter of Whiteness as much as a matter of Blackness.

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[4] This more-than-metaphor appears in Outlaw culture: Resisting representations (hooks, 1994a) where she writes that

> blackness as commodity exploits the taboo subject of race; that this is a cultural moment where white people and the rest of us are being asked by the marketplace to let our prejudices and xenophobia (fear of difference) go, and happily "eat the other." (p. 55)

Other women involved in this research also speak out of the passion of experience. Lesbian women discuss some of the same disjuncture between their everyday lives and the sudden omnipresence of lesbians in public and expert discourse. The commodification of their sexuality by heterosexual women and by men interrupts their own explorations of the ontological integrity of sexuality and its consequences. They suggest, for example, that the simple comforts a counsellor might give to a client are denied them. Always aware that at any moment they can be "Othered" by a charge or even suspicion of sexual exploitation, their bodies must be kept separate from their practices. Some heterosexual women believe this concern is paranoia; lesbians remember just such an unsubstantiated charge against and firing of a lesbian program worker in the not-so-distant past. At the level of discursive consciousness, practical consciousness, and identity, lesbians hold in their bodies their experiences of homophobia and heterosexism.

Almost all the women in this research spoke, at some point, out of "the passion of experience, the passion of remembrance" (hooks, 1994b, p. 90). They spoke out of their embodied lives, the auto/bio/graphics of their childhood, their youth, their adolescence, their birth families, extended families, chosen families, their marriages and motherhood and grandmotherhood, their sexuality, their absence of sexual desire. I realize, writing, that I cannot use their accounts of embodied practices in the same way I will use their accounts of coordinating and ethical practices. There is something "personal" about embodied accounts that set them off from the professional and political practices that inform their work.

I can tell you that the 23 women who participated in this research include Black and White women, lesbians, heterosexual, and celibate women.

They include poor and working class women who experience class as distinctions made within bodies and through their embodied practices. They include women who are children of alcoholics, who are incest survivors, survivors of wife battering. They include women who are mothers of mixed race children, mothers of children who have died, who have been incarcerated, and who have become young single mothers receiving social assistance. Some of these women were taken away from their parents, some had children taken away from them. They have mourned the loss of dignity and self-respect and then celebrated their return.

Despite these experiences, program staff are required to show by example how program participants can learn to discipline their bodies to be clean and clean, on time, appropriately clothed and thus able to disappear into the background of mainstream workplaces. Having a body that requires attention, even discipline, indicates an immaturity in social conduct. If women continue to be responsible for bodies that interrupt the work day, they have not learned how to separate out the private from the public, caring from accountability. They demonstrate their inability to show respect for the requirements of paid labour; they are not respect-able since "respectability consists in conforming to norms that repress sexuality, bodily functions, and emotional expression":

> [Respectability] is linked to an idea of order: the respectable person is chaste, modest, does not express lustful desires, passion, spontaneity, or exuberance, is frugal, clean, gently spoken, and well-mannered. The orderliness of respectability means things are under control, everything in its place, not crossing the borders. Respectable behavior is preoccupied with cleanliness and propriety, meticulous rules of decency. (Young, 1990a, p. 137)

Thus program workers must repress the passions of their own bodies, even as they teach the program participants to do the same, in the name of enhanced employability.

3.11 Embodied practices and professional postures

Most of the women included in this research as program staff have chosen their work because they identify with many of their program participants. As Faith Upshaw says, "they have been there" and, now that they are no longer there, they want to help those who remain. Many of them have been hired because they carry within themselves embodied memories of what it means to be poor, marginalized, objects of addictions and violence, subject to abuse and disrespect. They work out of the passion of experience, a passion that often puts them on the wrong side of professionalism because its expression may be perceived as emotional rather than rational.

Iris Marion Young (1990a) observes, "professional behavior, which in this society signifies rationality and authoritativeness, requires specific ways of sitting, standing, walking, and speaking — namely, without too much expression" (p. 139). Thus Zora Neale is admonished by her mother to "look the part, dress the part, be the part" of a professional, a person who is other than Other. Women, who are relentlessly defined by their raced, classed, gendered, and sexed bodies and thus excluded from professional groups, must "adopt professional postures and suppress the expressiveness of their bodies" (Young, 1990a, p. 140).

Writing out of front-line experience, Gerald de Montigny (1995) analyzes his experience as a social work student learning the "alien ways" that erased his working class background, his political commitment to

empowerment, his everyday knowledge of communities in which working people are poor.

> I had to learn . . . not only a new language, but a grammar of expression and a professional form of disembodied presence marked by containment, control, and managed emotionality. This professional imperative to produce emotional composure, rationality, and regulated expression seemed not only alien but antithetical to the passion and outrage that I felt were essential to political activity from the standpoint of the working class. (p. 41)

His ability to take care of family (background) matters required that he put together an appropriately business-like appearance. Having been chastised for inappropriate behaviour that exhibited unprofessional judgment, de Montigny realizes that he must discipline his body to demonstrate he can and will discipline his heart and his mind: "I confessed my errors, got a haircut, shaved my sideburns, bought white dress shirts, wore a tie, and appeared respectable" (ftnt. p. 228).

Workers marginalized through class-based notions of professionalism can pull together a persona that will pass. As a White, heterosexual man, de Montigny (1995) did not have far to reach. The Black women involved in this research made it clear that a shave and a haircut, coupled with middle class White clothes, will not make them respectable in a context of systemic racism. As Zora said, "I don't have that White girls' hair" (Focus group 1) and hair, for all its supposed superficiality, becomes a focal point for respectability.

Lawyer Paulette M. Caldwell (1991), writing "A hair piece: Perspectives on the intersection of race and gender," argues that "judgments about aesthetics do not exist apart from judgments about the social, political, and economic order of a society" (p. 393). When one of her students insists on studying a case (Rogers v. American Airlines) in which Black women are

fired for wearing to work a hair style remarkably similar to her own, Caldwell

has to confront the contingent nature of her own employability. For herself,

as well as for other Black women, lining up with other women to move over

into the mainstream, into the professional class, becomes a matter of

embodied rejection of Otherness.

> Hair becomes a proxy for legitimacy and determines the extent to
> which individual blacks can "crossover" from the private world of
> segregation and colonization (and historically, in the case of black
> women, service in another's home) into the mainstream of American
> life. (p. 383)

Acceptable self expression is socially organized through ruling relations in

which the White gaze determines which racialized physical characteristics

can or cannot become part of a professional identity.

Mona Harrington (1994) outlines how thinking as a lawyer means

becoming mind alone. In a society where Black women are everywhere and

always defined by their bodies, Black women lawyers must "signal their

detachment through clothing" (p. 100) and somehow restrain hair which is

otherwise "too powerful a symbol of carnality to be contained within an ethic

of rationality" (p. 101). Forced to decide between extravagant display and

defiant close cropping, Harrington suggests that women will always be Other

because they cannot deny the significance of their bodies everywhere on

display as sexualized, maternalized, or feminized everyday images.[5]

Thus women's professional practices, always and in every way

embodied, must somehow reflect a disembodied ideal. In a liberal democratic

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[5] As an example of how reality cannot begin to counter image, a third lawyer, Patricia
Monture-Angus (1995) describes a negative class evaluation that, she writes, "suggested I wore
'too many beads and feathers to class.' Try as I may, I can never remember wearing feathers to
class" (p. 66).

society, one in which assimilation into the mainstream defines not only success but also respectability, a business-like appearance becomes the "normative background" for whatever else is inscribed through behaviour. Black women, fat women, women with disabilities, masculine-appearing women, disfigured women, women marked in some way Other because of their bodies, have to fight to reinforce their right to respect.

As Iris Marion Young (1990a) convincingly argues, frontline workers who deviate from the norm share with their program participants the oppression of powerlessness. Because "the oppression of powerlessness derives in part from an ideal of respectability which contemporary society retains in the virtues and behavior of the "professional,"" (p. 139) many program staff are ironically emblematic of both the oppressed and the oppressors. As Barbara Cox, Getting In, understands, both business and public institutions require employable women to adhere to a code of respectability that, if it cannot be contained within the body, must be contained within the body's exemplary grooming. Bodies must be schooled if they cannot otherwise be made less brutish.

The abject, those who offend through the otherness of their very selves, become targets for the violence fostered through cultural imperialism. Unable to reflect cultural norms, they must reject their basic security system, become practically conscious of their need to assimilate and thus, through discursive and professional compliance, indicate their willingness to deny whatever it is that might make them marginal. bell hooks (1992) recognizes that "a culture of domination demands of all its citizens self-negation. The more marginalized, the more intense the demand" (p. 19). As members of the dominant culture practice cultural imperialism, they define their own

position as "unmarked, neutral, apparently universal position" (Young, 1990a, p. 123) and constantly reinforce the Otherness of others by always and everywhere marking it as aberrant.

Young (1990a) argues that "self annihilation is an unreasonable and unjust requirement of citizenship" (p. 179). The women in the three employability enhancement programs described in this chapter come to understand that, in order to receive respect, they must appear business-like. Bodies, families, and feelings must be left at home and professionalism (or at least para-professionalism) must be put on enroute to programs. Appropriately classed and raced and gendered notions of femininity must be reproduced on their bodies and through their practices. Program participants learn this lesson well. As Betty Phillips, Lining Up, ruefully admits, she has little success convincing single mothers to prepare for unionized blue-collar positions. Instead, they continue to pursue work in pink and white collar job ghettos. Though the blue-collar positions would offer more money and greater security, the women are reluctant to move from one category of Other — single mothers receiving income assistance — to another category of Other — women in non-traditional, male-defined field. They might gain economic independence, but at the expense of appropriate femininity.

3.12   Discussion: Embodied Practices

For the last 10 years, single mothers receiving social assistance in Nova Scotia have been a "target" group for employability enhancement programs. Many frontline adult educators, social workers, and community workers have welcomed the opportunity to focus on single mothers even though the raced, classed and gendered assumptions inherent in dominant discourses of

workplace-appropriate femininity raise complex contradictions for frontline workers. Counsellors, instructors, and managers accomplish the task of enhancing the employability of the single mothers in their programs through a range of work practices, including embodied practices, coordinating practices, and ethical practices. Embodied practices, examined in this chapter, provide the subtext of academic upgrading and specific skill programs, orienting participants in time and space, working with current and past experiences of physical and sexual assault, psychological terror, addictions, ill-health, hunger, cold, and sexuality.

The lives of single mothers are messy, inescapably tied to children, parents, friends, and community. Evaluations by the Employability Resources Network (ERN) found the spill-over of family matters into work hours a major barrier for the employability of single mothers. Moreover, single mothers — tied to bodies that are resolutely female, maternal, sexual, non-generic — appear undisciplined. Through their own embodied practices frontline workers demonstrate for program participants how to discipline their selves, through appropriate clothes, hairstyles, makeup; how to construct an appropriate presentation of self through gait, postures, mannerisms; how to assimilate with assumed-to-be generic standards of professional self-presentation.

But as this chapter has shown, the standards of professionalism are not neutral; they are infused with class, race and gender, as well as age, body size, and (dis)abilities. Taking on the guise of neutrality and demanding of program participants that they assimilate to socially, historically and culturally specific standards becomes a form of cultural imperialism, where

dominant groups "project their own values, experience and perspective as normative and universal":

> Victims of cultural imperialism are thereby rendered invisible as subjects, as persons with their own perspective and group-specific experience and interests. At the same time they are marked out, frozen into a being marked as Other, deviant in relation to the dominant norm. The dominant groups need not notice their own group being at all; they occupy an unmarked, neutral, apparently universal position. But victims of cultural imperialism cannot forget their group identity because the behavior and reactions of others call them back to it. (Young, 1990a, p. 123)

At the same time that the embodied practices of the program workers function to draw their program participants into these culturally imperialist discourses they also draw the workers themselves into the same discourses. As we have seen, however, not all workers, nor all participants, are equally able to assimilate. Black women in particular remain marked as Other, called back to group membership in a non-dominant social identity. Nevertheless, some women also choose resistance to the accepted norms, enhancing their ontological integrity at the cost of their employability.

As we shall see in the next chapter, program workers accommodate another set of discourses, the discourses of the state concerning categories, efficiencies, and accountability. The coordinating practices which structure employability enhancement work involve texts rather than bodies; they focus on making program participants fit onto forms rather than into norms of appearance. Workers manage files and paperwork rather than hygiene and personal crises; they manipulate mandates rather than clothing and self-presentation. Coordinating practices, as the next chapter will show, are structured by textual realities.

Chapter Four   Coordinating Practices

4.1   Introduction: Coordinating Practices

In the previous chapter, it becomes clear that the embodied practices of employability enhancement frontline workers focus on life skills that locate participants' bodies in time and space, brought under control through a cultural curriculum that focuses on raced, classed, and gendered notions of appropriate self-presentation. Participants are expected to become progressively more proficient at managing not only their own material lives, but also the material lives of those who count on their care and support. According to Employability Resources Network (ERN) evaluations, the leading barrier to single parents' employability is their inability to contain family matters within non-working hours. By spilling over into the time when the participants are accountable to employers or employability programs, these "messy" relationships indicate an unwillingness to measure up to the demands of the business world.

As we shall see in this chapter, program participants are not the only individuals whose best efforts at employability enhancement have been evaluated and found wanting. Program administrators are also brought to task for "messy" caring relationships that interfere with management demands by funders (4.6). Their programs may achieve success in terms of individual program participants; in terms of reportable results that can be quantified on paper programs may appear less successful. Program managers and workers are encouraged by the state and their funders to focus on their efficiency rather than their effectiveness; to concentrate on case management rather than case work; and to measure their success in terms of quantifiable

categories rather than the quality of their relationships with program participants.

The coordinating practices through which frontline workers attempt to meet these demands include entering participants into standardized, predetermined categories in order to make them "actionable" under the mandate of their own — or someone else's — program. Leah Moody, from Carrying Caseloads Employment Resource Centre in Metro, illustrates this focus on individual files rather than individual bodies (4.2). In addition, the frontline workers in this chapter maintain partnerships through referral networks, articulating their work to the work of instructors and counsellors in other programs. Margaret Lindsay from Building Bridges Employment Resource Centre will illustrate this aspect of coordinating practices in a less urban setting (4.3).

One of eight Single Parent Career Counsellors in the province, Susan Smith from Juggling Resources details her efforts to maximize efficient use of resources through appropriate management of her paperwork (4.4). Demonstrating "fiscal responsibility" through these efforts, she believes, sufficiently meets state accountability requirements. The five Black employment counsellors and life skills instructors introduced in the last chapter focus here on the complex web of coordinating practices through which they mediate among the mandated expectations of their funding agencies and the expectations of their colleagues, program participants, and home communities (4.5). At the same time, they must also meet performance objectives based on standardized criteria.

The daily work of these coordinating practices — of using standardized forms and assessments, to categorize and refer clients to a network of other

programs and institutions — takes place within a broader social, economic and political context in which the emphasis is on business-like management, corporate-style efficiencies, and fiscal bottom-lines (4.6). Program workers guided by standardized reporting procedures that structure their work in ways that produce quantifiable results find their work articulated to the work of others across a range of local settings. As part of this process, program workers enter clients' everyday lives into textual realities centered on bureaucratic relevances.

Frontline workers must make their clients' narratives fit on to bureaucratic forms by using bureaucratic categories to make them actionable within the context of existing services. Frontline workers learn to enact authority through the coordinating practices of categorization and accounting as part of the disciplinary training they receive in postsecondary institutions, primarily in social work and education (4.8). Increasingly the women who do this work must have the credentials of an undergraduate or graduate degree; by entering into postsecondary education they also enter into ongoing discourses coordinated to particular social relations whose concepts, categories, and relevances coordinate the work of employability enhancement. It also enters them into raced, classed, and sexed conceptual practices.

Those discourses are coordinated not only toward particular bureaucratic relevances and particular social relations of race, class and sex, but also toward pervasive ideologies of "work ethic" and "family ethic" (4.9). Single mothers receiving social assistance are defined as "defective," as dysfunctional family members (because they are single parents) and as dysfunctional workers (because they are unemployed employables). Through

the work of employability enhancement instructors and counsellors mediate the most basic relationship between women and the state — citizenship — by trying to operationalize and balance notions of "good-enough family" and "good-enough mother."

Frontline workers find themselves forced into a professional stance of dispassionate knowing as they mediate between the demands of the state and state bureaucracy and the needs of the client and client families. At the same time, they coordinate the textual relations through which these needs and demands are documented (4.10). To qualify as "knowers" within the bureaucracy, they must abstract from the everyday lives of their program participants only those relevances that fit within the pre-authorized categories used to construct an authoritative account.

Coordinating practices that deny the everyday lives of participants also deny the everyday lives of program workers and the kinds of knowing that both informs and is informed by those lives. In order to meet the demands of their positions they must become impartial conduits of standardized information communicating the textually appropriated needs of program participants to hierarchically organized positions in their municipal, provincial, and federal bureaucracies. Coordinating practices cannot accommodate program workers as subjects; professional postures demand that they distance themselves from their own sources of knowing, aligning themselves with codified ethics that coordinate their behaviour to the professions through which they are credentialed (4.11).

4.2   Forcing people, always, into categories

Leah Moody: Carrying Caseloads in an urban centre

During her dialogue with Alexa Jones of Moving Over, Leah Moody

describes how her day begins at the program I call Carrying Caseloads, the

Employment Resource Centre where she has worked for six of her 12 years'

experience in employability programs.

> The front desk will call and say, "Your 9:30 appointment is here." My
> feeling is, "Oh god, another one, another new one." I go and get the
> file, I do a quick read, and then I'm ready. Within 10 minutes, I am
> absolutely enthralled and I forget about all the other things that are
> going on. I'm there with that person until the interview is over.
> (Dialogue)

After the one-hour interview, Leah spends 30 minutes completing the paper

work for the client's file and contacting frontline workers in other agencies or

programs to get follow-up information or make referrals. Then the process

begins again. Most days she sees two or three new clients in the morning and

works with ongoing clients in the afternoon. Her movement from file to

face-to-face to phone-to-phone and back again to file is familiar. Aware that

she presents a professional, caring appearance to her clients she says that,

inside, "I'm fighting with the next client that will be there and the file work

that didn't get done, and the upcoming staff meeting" (Dialogue). What she

expects of herself is "always to be there, to be present," to locate herself in

space and time within the everyday experiences of the individuals who sit

down across from her — an embodied rather than a coordinating practice that

often puts her at odds with the mandate of her program.

Funded by municipal, provincial, and federal governments, Nova

Scotia's 12 Employment Resource Centres (ERCs) are a cost-shared

consequence of the Social Assistance Recipients Program Agreement (1987).

Using the administration and management of texts — policies, mandates, files, and forms — ERC Employment Counsellors construct individual income assistance recipients as "actionable" within the bureaucratic systems of municipal and provincial social services. As Leah says, a large part of the job involves "forcing people, always, into categories" (Interview 1). Every person who receives municipal income assistance meets with a Financial Aid Caseworker to fill out forms, providing the information that will go into their files. A computer listing of these files goes to a social worker who verifies that each client is coded correctly. A letter then goes to the clients, asking them to attend one of the weekly orientation sessions at Carrying Caseloads. Clients who do not appear are sent a second letter; if they still do not appear, they receive a visit from their caseworker.

Following an afternoon-long orientation to the services provided by the ERC, clients make an appointment to meet with an Employment Counsellor. Those in short term crisis or having longer-term difficulties go through an assessment and classification process. More straightforward clients develop case plans that include referral to job search clubs, job readiness programs, employability programs such as those outlined in the last chapter, training and education programs, or work placements. Approximately 66 per cent of the ERC clients are men, 27- to 40- years-old. Other municipal income assistance recipients will have been referred to Youth, or First Nations, or Black employment outreach programs.

The nine frontline workers at this ERC carry a caseload of 70 to 100 clients each. Approximately one third of the 70 people on Leah's caseload will be waiting to see her; she is booked up to three months in advance. Another third will be involved in academic upgrading, skills training, job placement,

or intensive counselling. The last third are "active" and at least 10 of these will be in crisis. One afternoon a week, Leah facilitates one of the orientation and intake groups. Another afternoon she attends a staff meeting where, in theory, colleagues engage in case reviews and provide each other with support and supervision. In practice, however, they learn about new policies, new programs, and new requirements for maintaining case files. Leah noted that, recently, they discussed maximum caseloads and when to say "no" to clients who constantly return for counselling.

Like her co-workers, Leah categorizes, counsels, and refers municipal social assistance recipients so that they can leave their financial aid worker's caseload and lighten the city's welfare roll within the shortest possible time. In 1993, Carrying Caseloads' mandate included the expectation that the Employment Counsellors would enhance the employability of its clients; the program did not, however, have to meet a quota of clients employed after a certain amount of time. They do generate statistics: the number of people seen; the number referred to academic upgrading, employability training or work placement; the number referred to vocational, psychological, or medical assessment; the number referred to personal counselling. Leah describes this work as the ongoing brokering of social services and, despite the best of intentions, "there are times that the numbers pressure you, that you want to move people more quickly so you have some breathing space" (Interview 1).

During the first interview Leah begins the process of categorizing individual clients. She evaluates clients' ability to find and maintain employment in the paid labour force using an employability assessment tool developed by her office and used province-wide. She has the option of immediately referring clients to someone else in Carrying Caseloads so they

can develop a standard case plan. She may refer them to another agency or to an employability program. She may make a series of appointments for those who need to explore employability options. Over the last year, Leah says, she has been sensing a shift in her work as the word "employable" gains more currency at the level of policy discussions:

> Employable, unemployable — it seems to me that there is a real thrust to make that determination and once somebody's unemployable, then you are supposed to throw them away, forget about them. (Interview 1)

Because "unemployable" has traditionally been a category applied to people with disabilities, the designation "employable/ unemployable" for every municipal assistance recipient acquires indexical properties that go beyond the indication that at a person is currently unable to work. Once the category has been applied, it is difficult to remove. Equally, however, Leah finds it difficult when clients insist that they are employable even though her experience leads her to believe that ongoing full-time job search is not in their best interest. She says "I don't think the funders have any idea" of what it means that everyone is currently required to accept or reject a label that assumes there are only two positions.

To counter some of the overly-deterministic aspects of her work within the policy context of employability, Leah occasionally enters into an ongoing counselling relationship with a client. Taking the opportunity to use her professional training and skills to resist dualistic categories and engage in a more holistic understanding of what it means to become employable, she may schedule a series of bi-weekly appointments and, as she says, "fudge" the forms. The boundaries between what she can and cannot do remain clear, however. Recent work with a young woman on her way out of an abusive relationship shifted when the woman disclosed a history of sexual abuse.

Because of this history, the client will qualify to receive free counselling at a community agency; until the disclosure, there had been no one offering free counselling to whom she could be referred. Leah will also work on arranging volunteer work or a Social Assistant Recipient work placement for the client:

> So my role will work more into my mandate. . . . I could have closed the file immediately and said, "Oh, you're not suitable for employment-related work." She is doing that [work] — the road is just different for her to get there. (Interview 1)

Another way in which her work is constructed through categories became clear when, during our first meeting, Leah suggests she might not be an appropriate participant for research interested in programs serving single mothers receiving social assistance. For the last two years, all single parents had been referred to a Single Parent Career Counselling program located in the same building. When asked to describe the women who did come to her office, she reviewed her appointments from the week before and realized one of her new clients had spoken of little else than her family commitments. Although she had three children, the youngest had just had his nineteenth birthday and no longer qualified as a dependent. Overnight, at 54 years of age, this woman has just made the leap from "unemployable" to "employable" status. "On any formal document she's not a single parent," Leah says, even though "her whole identity is wrapped up in her role as a parent" (Interview 1). This client not only has to come to terms with a shift in her sense of identity, she also faces significant material consequences. As a single employable person she qualifies for much less financial support:

> Financially she would have moved from about $750 on family benefits, plus she worked part time and had the ability to earn $200 a month. So she was living on $900 plus and now she gets $350 from the city and earns her $200. She's living on $550. (Interview 1)

Similarly, clients whose children are taken into temporary foster care because of substance abuse must prove they are in recovery and stable for six months before their children can be returned. Because they are reclassified as "single" during that period they receive only $350 per month they cannot find the kinds of accommodation considered acceptable for families and their children continue to be held in care. Women whose children have run away or been apprehended as young offenders face the same dilemma. Once government policy disqualifies them as "mothers," women responsible for children lose their right to the material benefits that will allow them to requalify. They have to find paid work that supports them in a one-bedroom apartment before they earn back their children. Until they do, the coordinating practices that structure Leah's work means they are "actionable" only within the category of "employable, single."

4.3 There's a lot of work that goes on behind these numbers
Margaret Lindsay: Building Bridges with paperwork and meetings

About 100 km outside Metro another Employment Resource Centre serves a town and largely rural county with several villages. Margaret Lindsay, the program's Coordinator and Employment Counsellor, oversees an active caseload of 300, one half of whom are single parents. Unlike the urban program Carrying Caseloads, the municipal and provincial governments in this region send all their clients to the program I call Building Bridges. Excepting single parents, most of her clients are men, with the largest cluster in their mid to late twenties. "It's easier for men to get up and go," (Interview 1) she says, since they usually have access to a family vehicle, they don't have to find childcare, and they're more likely to be part of

the informal seasonal labour markets. There is no bus system in either the town or the county and there are only 35 subsidized child care places for the 600 single parents receiving income assistance.

Not surprisingly, most of Building Bridges' clients come from the town, with people further afield struggling to find both a vehicle and the money to put gas into it. Margaret and her staff cannot do home visits and rarely do outreach to the villages. She considers someone's ability to come into town part of their employability assessment:

> I realize that there are people who live a distance who are ready [for programs] as well, but if they find a difficulty getting here for an interview and an employability assessment, then they're going to find a difficulty getting into other things. You have to be realistic. (Interview 1)

That rural reality means that single parents, in particular, need to move into town if they want to access services. It also means that people receiving municipal or provincial income assistance cannot be required to register for ongoing assessment and referral; there are neither the resources nor the employment opportunities to justify mandating clients to be in full-time training or job search. And, Margaret adds, Building Bridges' caseload of 300 clients "is not even the tip of the iceberg" (Interview 1).

Like Leah Moody, and using the same forms, Margaret starts her day completing employability assessments with new clients. She records

> their family situation, their personal stability, their educational level, their work skills level, past work experience, what they need to do in the future, the goals they want to set or reset. Any parole or probation, health, child care — even mental health . . . . Anything that might prevent them from being employed. (Interview 1)

This kind of personal questioning can be difficult at a first meeting, especially since she was born and raised in the area and may know her clients from

other situations. The forms provide a buffer of impersonality, she says, as she tries to assess the needs of the individuals in front of her, and the categories they may fit: "Perhaps they have indicated there are some real problems. They may need more counselling, to see the family therapist. These are the things we talk about" (Interview 1). During this conversation she may uncover a need for services — such as immediate mental health interventions — that are simply not available in the area. As a consequence, Margaret says,

> there are a lot of things that are not in my job description that I do. . . . I will never see anybody sent out the door if they want to talk. I just close the door and listen, do what I can. Some potential suicides, what do you do? Refer them to Mental Health and they might get in six months later. (Interview 1)

Nevertheless, Margaret tries to assess the client's needs and create a match with the kinds of services available in the region. By sharing her own experience both as a single parent receiving income assistance and as an ongoing postsecondary student she tries to "normalize" clients' experiences with welfare, demonstrating that it can become one step in a person's path toward self-sufficiency. An initial assessment of a client may lead to an upgrading program at the community college, a program running through the local Canada Employment Centre (CEC), a life skills course she leads, or a job search workshop with her co-worker.

Margaret and her co-worker continually assess the current needs of their clients and collaborate with other programs and agencies in complex partnership arrangements to provide appropriate programming. For example, the School Board sponsors a GED (grade 12 equivalent) program on-site at the ERC. As soon as they have 15 or 20 people who could benefit from a

multi-occupational skills program, Margaret approaches the CEC to

coordinate a program through Social Assistance Recipient (SARs) federal/

provincial funding. She may refer people to Neighbourhood Work

Activities, to courses offered through the school board, or to one of the three

levels of upgrading offered by the community college which also offers

"regular courses — merchandising or drafting or mechanics or auto body"

(Interview 1).

> We send people to continuing education for very short courses, like
> computer. Continuing education also ran a Level 1 upgrading in the
> evening. . . . There are some single parents going to a parenting
> program through the Children's Aid [where] the Parent Counsellor
> program is . . . bringing in life skills. (Interview 1)

Margaret accomplishes a significant portion of her work through the use of

connections to other agencies, individuals and programs — connections she

has built through her years of work in the field. She believes she was hired

for her current position because of her familiarity with crucial referral

networks: "They knew I was familiar with the whole system. . . . I knew what

was going on, I knew how the program ran, I knew the caseload" (Interview

1).

A major portion of Margaret's day will be taken up with paper work

and meetings concerning that caseload: "I could attend noon hour meetings, I

could have a meeting in the afternoon. I could have a meeting after work" —

"and then," she adds, "there's the paper work in between" (Interview 1):

> It just seems to be a lot of meetings, meetings, meetings, and everybody
> goes to the same meetings, so [sometimes I think we] should just have
> one meeting under one umbrella and take care of everything! . . . City
> Council, CEIC, strategic planning with the school board . . .
> Neighbourhood Work Activity for client selection . . . meeting with
> Family Benefits and Municipal Assistance people to update them on

what I have done to this point with their referrals, SARs liaison meetings . . . meeting in Halifax with head office. (Interview 1)

In a non-urban region frontline workers tend to be involved in every inter-agency committee since they cannot afford to duplicate services or develop something that is not a high priority for other programs as well. Similarly, Margaret is involved in prevention strategies:

> I am on the strategic planning [committee] of the public school board and one of our objectives is how to better deal with community resources. . . . I see this as something that, in a round-about way, comes back to me. (Interview 1)

At the same time, she is sufficiently well-known that she no longer has to show "the face of the program" (Interview 1) at every meeting. Colleagues from other programs will ensure the needs of Margaret's clients are met; keeping clients moving from one caseload to another is essential if they are to make the final shift to full-time employment.

Margaret has learned over the years that her clients also benefit from informal encounters: "If you see somebody in the mall and you sit down and talk to them for half an hour, that is a support and a help" (Interview 1). This work outside the formal boundaries of her program, including her involvement in volunteer activities, does not make it onto her time sheets or, more importantly, into **Building Bridges'** quarterly reports.

> We've got all kinds of numbers, we've got all kinds of people. What is not included in the stats is the number of times you might see a person and what you talk to them about and the number of people you might contact, the telephone calls, the calls you make at home at night, the things you might have to do on the weekend. (Interview 1)

What the municipal, provincial, and federal bureaucrats don't understand, she says, is that "There's a lot of work that goes on behind those numbers" and much of that work is simply not countable in quantitative terms.

Margaret says the increasing emphasis on formal, quantitative reporting may also reflect an increasing emphasis on formal credentials for the frontline workers and a more impersonal program delivery, including quotas for trained, educated, or employed clients. "It wouldn't work," she says "[because] people need to progress at their own rate. . . . When they start putting quotas on me, that's when the program will suffer" (Interview 1). The young single mothers that Margaret finds "nesting" in apartments with their young children may soon face increasing pressures to take minimum wage jobs. With little or no family or community support, with histories of physical and sexual abuse, their first steps toward enhancing their employability should be affordable counselling and adequate housing. Instead, Margaret says, they will either remain on income assistance until their children reach the maximum age for Family Benefits and they are desperate. Or, if they are determined or lucky, they will make their way into Metro and up the stairs to Leah Moody's office where they will be re-assessed and referred to a program that will help them move forward rather than round and round on the same circle of self-esteem workshops, job-finding clubs, academic upgrading, and minimum wage skills training.

4.4 I'm trying to be more efficient, more effective:

Susan Smith: Juggling Resources across three counties

Susan Smith provides career services to single parents who receive provincial family benefits in the most isolated regions of mainland Nova Scotia. One of eight Single Parent Career Counsellors in the province, she covers three counties that range from relatively prosperous to desperately poor. Despite her claim that she doesn't work on a rigid schedule it becomes

clear that she has been forced to become more efficient in her attempts to juggle people, paper work, resources, and referrals in the constantly changing context of a resource-based economy and labour force. Mondays, she says, are generally spent in the home office of the program I call Juggling Resources:

> That might be a day that I would have an appointment booked every hour. . . . It might involve meeting with a community resource. It might mean an in-office meeting with colleagues. I sit on the board of a program that's designed to serve severely employment disadvantaged persons; it could include one of those meetings. (Interview 1)

On Tuesdays and Wednesdays she works in the area that has the majority of both clients and resources, including a university and two community colleges. Thursday she returns to her home office and every second Friday she goes to the area with the smallest caseload and least resources. Susan says her work there cannot be measured by the time spent in her office; instead, she basis her schedule on the way resources are used: "Right now, that caseload is higher than it's ever been and every person who is a client is involved in a full-time education or training process" (Interview 1).

For Susan, "resources" include community colleges and universities, high schools and employment centres — programs to which she can refer her clients. In an increasingly corporate-like model of service delivery, these agencies become "resources" to her. Traveling long distances each week to maintain these resources cuts into Susan's time to manage her caseload. In the past she has given priority to appointments over paper work. That has had to change, she says, as she works to become "more efficient, more effective" by using the telephones more and by scheduling time to maintain her files and records.

> I used to go there and see people every hour for the two days I was there. But I was finding that when I came back to my home office, for

> the days that I serve that area and the third area, I was using that time to process the paperwork. So what I've tried to do . . . is see people for one day or for a day and a half and to reserve some of that time for paperwork. (Interview 1)

Susan says her work will also become more efficient as clerical staff take over the initial contact with clients. This movement away from the frontline follows the shift in program delivery that demands more and more paper accountability and less and less direct contact with clients.

Whenever possible, Susan works closely with Employment Counsellors in Employment Resource Centres (ERCs) and Canada Employment Centres (CECs), Guidance Counsellors in High Schools and Community Colleges, and private trainers running Social Assistance Recipient (SARs) training projects. Working closely with other frontline workers also enables her to arrange group programs for her clients, a mode of service delivery she considers both efficient and effective:

> I really believe in group work not only from the perspective that it is an efficient way to deliver information or assistance, but also because I believe that if a group is well-chosen and well facilitated, it provides peer support and encouragement that you can't get with just one-to-one [counselling]. (Interview 1)

Also in the name of increased efficiency, Susan focuses on single parents who will benefit most directly from her work. She agrees with Margaret Lindsay that, although rural women in her area might actually be most in need of her services, lack of transportation will prevent them from making use of services provided. She is able to make home visits to rural women "only in rare circumstances":

> If I were to try and do home visits in all the rural areas that I serve, I would not be able to effectively deliver the program in that I would spend so much time driving and meeting with people in their homes that I wouldn't have time to effectively spend with those people who

can get into the office and get access to their community college or community-based program. (Interview 1)

Despite her own assessment of need, Susan has learned to work toward maximum efficiency from the scarce time and resources she has available.

Unfortunately, the drive to efficiency has reduced the time Susan can spend with clients, the direct contact that has kept her in the employability field for over 12 years. She spent her first six at an employment outreach program where co-workers and community mentors encouraged her to make the most of her abilities. After a divorce, she worked doggedly to provide for her four children, complete her high school education, and benefit as much as possible from a growing involvement with provincial and national organizations that focus on women, education, and work. Six years ago, in order to access increased job security, medical benefits, and a pension plan, Susan left the outreach program and move into the provincial bureaucracy. She maintains membership in some of the organizations that nurtured her early career development, however she finds she cannot keep up with the information: "I feel I do well to read the necessary things that come across my desk!" (Interview 1). She feels even less able to link herself to anything other than local networks: "You do your networking on a very isolated basis. You work in three different areas, you have three different networks that you're dealing with" (Interview 1).

Susan maintains her involvement in one area of concern, an area she thinks provides the biggest barrier to single mothers' abilities to support their family. Like Leah Moody in Carrying Caseloads, she works as a broker sending clients to a variety of education and training program. While she is willing to consider everything available, she strongly resists provincial or

federal funding for programs that restrict women to minimum wage, dead end, shift work jobs such as office work, factory work, human services, child care, and personal care.

> I think we can be really concerned and talk about the quality, or lack of quality, that's involved in the training programs that are being put forth by Canada Employment Centres or by private trainers. But we also have to take the responsibility of being the referring agencies. . . . I think we have to be very very careful that we don't [refer] some of our single parent clients who have the potential to be able to command a better salary. (Interview 1)

Part of the problem stems from the streaming that happens during women's high school education, Susan argues, streaming that leads teenage girls away from the math and sciences required for technical programs such as dental assistant, nuclear medicine, laboratory technology. And, even if women are willing to go back and complete those courses, the counties have not coordinated their programs to make that possible and the institutions that might provide the academic background of an adult high school do not encourage women to consider non-traditional jobs.

Working for the provincial government, Susan has learned to reconcile the responsibility she feels toward both her employer and her program participants. Her accountability to the state "has mainly to do with fiscal responsibility" with "watching very carefully that . . . the training dollars that are available are used wisely." As part of that process she considers her own estimation of cost/ benefit ratios:

> I think my responsibility to both my employer and my client are well-served in that I don't recommend that we spend money training people for those [minimum wage] jobs because it's not going to result in a lessening of their dependence on government assistance. . . . I think that looking at the financial responsibility to my employer can work both in my employer's and my client's best interest. (Interview 1)

4.5 A memo comes on my desk and this is the process

Black women workers: Managing Mandates for community members

The five Black women involved in this research work as Employment Counsellors in Outreach programs and as Life Skills Instructors in employability programs. As outlined in the previous chapter, they accomplish this work as Black women in a context of systemic racism that has, historically, confined them to waged labour caring for and cleaning up after White employers. As they discuss their program mandates, job descriptions, everyday work activities, and reporting requirements, they reveal a complex web of coordinating practices that requires them to manage mandates explicitly outlined by their federal funding source and implicitly expected by their program participants, their colleagues, and members of their home communities.

The four employment outreach programs they represent have a mandate to serve either women (specifically including Black women) or various Black communities. While their work occasionally overlaps that of other outreach programs (e.g. First Nations, immigrant populations, displaced older workers, and youth) they are not supposed to duplicate existing services. Their programs' intake procedures should screen out clients who could be referred elsewhere. A single woman receiving municipal assistance from the City of Halifax, for example, could be sent to Leah Moody's program, Carrying Caseloads. In practice, however, any woman receives at least 60 minutes of listening time with an outreach counsellor before she is referred elsewhere.

Zora Neale outlines three dimensions of her mandated work:

> I am supposed to help women get work and then gather statistics on that to make our project feasible and fundable for next year . . . [and] to make sure that CEIC looks good in terms of the national economic and employment picture. (Focus group 1)

She accepts her accountability to her community of women, her program colleagues, and federal funder. What she questions are the constraints put on her performance by an obligatory assessment guide that does not acknowledge structural barriers to employment. Theoretically, Zora's use of this generic assessment tool coordinates her work with the work of employment counsellors in both Canada Employment Centres (CEC) and employment outreach programs serving other targeted populations. Practically, it provides no space to acknowledge systemic discrimination based on race, sex, or age. As a generic process developed for generic Employment Counsellors working with a generic population of unemployed and underemployed people it does not serve populations that are, by definition, not-generic. Outreach programs exist exactly because their clients' employability needs fall outside standard coordinating practices of federally funded agencies.

The Employment Counsellors administer intake forms, employability assessments, and academic achievement tests; they engage in career counselling; they refer to training and academic upgrading programs as well as to postsecondary institutions. They facilitate resumé writing workshops and send clients to job interviews or work experience placements; they network with individual and organizational contacts gathered over their many years of community involvement; they advocate for clients they often know personally as well as professionally; and they facilitate clients' access to technological sources of job information such as data banks and the internet.

They engage in Black community development and are expected to take their programs to centres that already serve as their participants' meeting place. This may include parent resource centres, academic upgrading programs, transition houses for battered women, church groups, and so on.

These coordinating practices — using standardized forms, assessments, labour market information, referring to other federally-mandated programs and institutions, teaching textually-mediated forms of credentialism, connecting clients to entry-level career positions — link them up with already coordinated contacts both in their home communities and in a computerized landscape. The counsellors and instructors might be assumed to move outside the corridors of coordinating practices when they create opportunities for women to access information and support in non-institutionalized settings. These sites are also marginal, however, limited by the same constraints as the outreach programs themselves. In the end, as Ella Sparks suggests, they all fill the gaps between services designed for members of the mainstream culture and the needs of marginalized target groups. They are the response to claims that members of certain communities are "falling through the cracks."

Irene Jessup describes her county program as a "go-between" for CECs and members of her community. She knows most of the program participants and their families and they know her not only as an Employment Counsellor but also as a mentor and role model. She must constantly respond to people's expectations of what she can do as an employee of a program subject to the vagaries of bureaucratic and political processes. Irene talks about a recent experience working with community members who had heard that a particular training program was coming to

their area. "You know how things keep snowballing," she says, "we had everybody calling and coming to the office." Then, just as suddenly, the government tells them another area is going to get the program instead: "I'm sorry it could have been yours but it's not. It's theirs." She has 50 people lined up outside her door, potential staff and potential participants, looking toward this opportunity.

> I said, "Okay we'll do step 1. Calm down, calm down. We'll go through the tests. . . . And then I will pass the list on to somebody else who will do something." . . . "I will do what I can for you" — and then I will give it to somebody else and let them deal with it. (Focus group 3)

Ella responds that she, too, has to be clear that "I'm just following orders from whoever gave me these rules. A memo comes on my desk and this is the process" (Focus group 3).

It isn't easy, Ella adds, because they have face-to-face rather than memo-to-memo relationships with their clients. Working in both a suburban mall and a drop-in office outside Metro, she says the dialogue goes deeper when clients trust you, when they know who you are and where you come from: "We find out more personal things than a CEC Employment Counsellor would find out. We are more down-to-earth . . . our techniques are a lot different" (Focus group 1). Nevertheless, she adds, frontline workers must set up boundaries that make it clear what they can, and cannot, do as well as what they will, and will not, do. Women who share the personal details of their lives must know that "whatever happens with her [social] worker is her business." She's clear that "if you want to talk about [something sensitive], it won't go in my notes. . . . And that's the key. . . . this won't go on anybody's record" (Focus group 3).

Like the other Black women engaged in this research, Ella does not receive a woman's file when the woman herself walks in their door. She also does not add to a woman's file when she leaves. She does not enter into the bureaucratic exchange of information that coordinates the mandated work of other agencies. Working outside that coordinated loop has consequences for programs that serve marginalized communities. The frontline workers in these programs are often forced to meet significantly larger needs with significantly smaller resources. As Zora suggests, they really do not have the option of doing otherwise because they have more than one mandate:

> I am ultimately responsible for the quality of service I provide to the Black community in [her area]. On top of being responsible to them, I meet the needs of my funders. I meet the needs of my co-workers, I meet the needs of my board. [And yourself, too.] And yourself. . . . it is always about accountability. (Focus group 3)

And, as with the other frontline workers involved in this research, accountability means more than producing the requisite statistics on the proper forms to prove the program's efficiency to the state — it is multidirectional, responsive to a multiplicity of demands.

The women and programs introduced thus far in this chapter illustrate a range of coordinating practices engaged in by frontline workers in employability enhancement programs. Leah Moody, from Carrying Caseloads, indicates the centrality of a focus on individual files as she struggles to enter participants into standardized, predetermined categories in order to make them "actionable." Margaret Lindsay from Building Bridges points to the less-formal aspect of coordinating practices that entails maintaining partnerships, referring to other agencies, and articulating the

work of one program to that of others. Susan Smith of Juggling Resources strives to meet state demands for maximum efficiency and fiscal responsibility through appropriate management of her paperwork. The five Black employment counsellors and instructors mediate between their program mandates established by funding agencies and the expectations of their communities, program participants, and colleagues.

These coordinating practices take place within a broader socioeconomic context which emphasizes management, efficiency and an institutionalized need for quantifiable results. This chapter will turn next to an explication of the coordinating practices through which program workers and managers enter clients' everyday lives into textual realities centered on bureaucratic relevances. Further, it will examine the postsecondary training program workers receive in social work and adult education, which enters the workers into ongoing discourses whose concepts, categories and relevances coordinate the work of employability enhancement.

These discourses also enter the workers into particular social relations of race, class and sex as they operationalize ideological understandings of "work ethic" and "family ethic." Caught between the demands of the state and the needs of their clients, frontline workers find that they must dispassionately abstract from the everyday lives of their program participants only those relevances that fit within pre-authorized categories. Coordinating practices cannot accommodate either the single mothers or the program workers as full knowing subjects; professional ethics demand that workers distance themselves from their own ways of knowing, aligning themselves with codes of ethics that further coordinate their activities to their

professions. The most visible step in this distancing, is entering into relations of accountability centered on quantification of "success."

4.6 Taking care of accountability (matters)

Frontline workers introduced in the preceding sections demonstrate the coordinating practices involved in developing and maintaining caseloads, partnerships, resources, and mandates that facilitate interactions among clients, co-workers, communities, and funding agencies. As individuals located in time and space they clearly use their bodies to carry, build, juggle, and manage the relationships required to facilitate the employability enhancement of their program participants. But it is not their bodies, or the bodies of those with whom they interact, that focus this work. Unlike the frontline workers described in the previous chapter, they do not demonstrate their professional proficiency by managing individual bodies; instead, they manage individual files. They account for clients' presence or absence in particular places at particular times by appropriately categorizing, counting, effecting efficiencies, and meeting mandated quotas at the same time that they struggle with ill-fitting forms, uncalculated claims on their time, emotionally messy interactions, and communities created and destroyed on paper despite their socio-historically embodied presence in urban settings, small towns, and resource-based counties.

The frontline workers in these Employment Resource Centres must demonstrate how they enter individual women into existing categories; maintain partnerships through referrals; maximize efficiency through proper paperwork; and negotiate social relations by mediating between the expectations of their funding agencies and the expectations of their clients

and communities. They have to prove they meet standardized criteria of success despite the differences in their program models, paid personnel, and particular community of participants.

The Employability Resources Network (ERN), contracted by the federal government to evaluate 12 programs funded through social assistance recipients agreements, focuses on three kinds of data: "clinical data about the progress of individual clients in the program; administrative data about the human and capital resources of the program and their costs; and performance data about the achievement of the program's objectives" (Project evaluations, 1990, p. 6). While agreeing with other policy analysts that employment-related initiatives present particular evaluation difficulties (Quiviger & Roboudi, 1991), ERN works with an analytic framework of six questions:

●Did the project assist the participants in obtaining and maintaining employment?
●Did the project end/reduce the participants' dependence on Social Assistance?
●Did the project strengthen the participants' personal sense of employment readiness?
●Did the project improve the participants' financial situation?
●What were the costs of the program compared to Social Assistance?
●What interventions contributed most to increasing employability? (ERN, 1992a, p. 6)

After working with a range of programs, ERN concludes that a lack of organizational infrastructures, clearly-defined performance objectives, and administrative tools and resources constrain program managers' ability to answer these evaluative questions. In particular, program workers' reluctance to distinguish between direct service and program management results in a lack of measurable targets (ERN, 1992a, p. 7). Most important, however, program workers' inability to develop and meet measurable targets stemmed

from "inherent conflicts between caregiving and accountability" (ERN, 1989b, p. 33). When forced to choose between expending limited resources on frontline work with participants or administrative work with paper, program managers chose the participants. As outlined in Chapter 3 above, these inherent conflicts affected program managers as well as program participants.

Betty Parker's research partner Pat Mercer, from Lining Up, struggles with these conflicts; she suspects the "bottom line" in the targets is about looking good on paper:

> They're definitely looking at reducing the unemployed. [pause] Sometimes I think it's just looking good. I think people have to get away from the statistics. . . . They want something that looks good on paper. It's really hard to take these people and put them on a piece of paper. (Interview 1)

She believes women leave her program more employable, even when they do not necessarily meet a quantifiable target: "I think you have to get rid of all of that [paper] and look at the one that's being helped. Is that person being helped? If yes, then [the program has] succeeded" (Interview 1). Nonetheless, Pat says, she feels pressured "to produce those certificates." Margaret Lindsay, Building Bridges, understands the reasons for statistical accountability, but still finds it frightening: "I understand what stats are about. I understand that they have to see where the programs are going and what's happening. . . . You've got to know what you've done for x number of dollars," but she adds that the new emphasis on corporate-style management "scares" her (Interview 1).

In the ERN evaluations, a program cited for its success in shifting participants' time and energy from family matters to employment matters

also received criticism for its own inability to shift time and energy from

clinical matters to accountability matters:

> The clinical or counselling orientation of the programming is
> commendable in terms of the quality of interaction that occurs with
> clients. However, its orientation conflicts with the quantifiable
> measurement of program results. . . . The measurement of results is
> important for management and accountability purposes. (ERN, 1989, p.
> 31)

Just as participants have to confront their overarching need to allocate time

toward taking care of their families, managers have to confront frontline

workers' overarching need to allocate time to service delivery. In both cases,

it interferes with taking care of accountability; a lack of discipline in these

everyday matters has longer-term consequences for the financial viability of

both parents and programs.

Kenneth Barter (1992), writing for the Canadian Council on Social

Development (CCSD), describes the inclination to look after bodies rather

than paper as indicative of a breach between the coordinating intentions of

policy makers and the coordinating practices of program staff. "Some see the

public welfare system as too focused on process and not enough on outcome,"

he warns, "too identified with the recipients, too idealistic, too little

interested in administrative politics" (p. 12). Frontline managers'

unwillingness or inability to locate themselves in an increasing

neoconservative time and space has resulted in their being out of step with

the move toward more rigid management, a move that "makes cost-

containment the sole criterion of the effectiveness of programs" (p. 13).

Where single-parent participants have to become more aware of their bodies'

business-like appearance, managers have to become more aware of their

paperwork's business-like appearance.

A shift toward "the corporate management process" (ERN, 1991d, p. 17) has caused problems for programs that hire experienced counsellors or educators as program managers. Unlike those with business or public administration backgrounds they distrust a human capital model based on economic productivity where taxpayers' investment in social assistance recipients should result in immediate and direct economic returns (Hasenfeld, 1989; Stoesz, 1988). This functional relationship between social welfare programs and social welfare policies supports changes in funding models that increasingly rely on contracting out and privatization, forcing "welfare professionals . . . to base their advocacy less on moral grounds and concentrate more on factors that show cost-effectiveness" (Stoesz, 1988, p. 58).

According to ERN (1991c) the primary goal of employability enhancement programs is an increase in participants' potential to become employed. Because potentiality cannot be measured in quantitative terms, however, other outcome data has to be generated. Based on the six evaluative questions outlined above, those quantitative outcomes include participants' success in finding and keeping employment, reducing their dependence on social assistance, improving their financial situation, and providing an efficient cost-benefit ratio for the funding agency.

Using data from programs that exemplify efficient program management, evaluators can calculate a cost benefit ratio based on participants' subsequent employment income history. For example , evaluators calculated that provincial and municipal governments saved an average $126.25 per month for each participant who completed a particular program (ERN, 1991c). In six months, this decreased dependence on income assistance recovered the cost of the program for those participants. Thus, "the

project was successful in shifting participants' dependence for their main source of income from social assistance to wages, thereby reducing reliance on income assistance," the report concludes, noting, however, that program participants' financial situation did not improve (ERN, 1991c, p. 15). In fact, when reduced medical, dental, and childcare benefits are taken into account, program participants pay a financial price.

Similarly, another study indicated that overall 60 per cent of participants in an employment-related project left income assistance for paid employment; "in terms of quantifiable benefits, a benefit to cost ratio of approximately 1.1 to 1.0 was attained by the project" (Quiviger & Roboubi, 1991, p. 6). Again, the financial situation of participants did not improve; a benefit to cost ratio for their families would have been less than 1.0:1.0. Clearly, taking the perspective of funding agencies suggests that the "definition of 'success' is weighted toward savings for the state, not escape from poverty" (Miller, 1989, p. 12). While economic self-sufficiency may be defined by funding sources as empowerment through decreased dependence on social assistance, "intangible aspects of the program, including the relationship between economic self-sufficiency, self-esteem, and a sense of empowerment, may be ignored" (Freeman, Logan, & Gowdy, 1992, p. 136).

Margaret Lindsay, Building Bridges, admits that she will not refer single parents to what she calls "puppy mills," private programs that set participants up with student loans and unrealistic expectations of their abilities to both complete the curriculum and move into the labour market: "I can't help somebody create hardships for themselves," she says. Instead, she tells them "you're better off staying at home with your children until they get a little older, bringing in Family Benefits, than trying to get job training

and job placement for minimum wage" (Interview 1). Betty Phillips, Lining Up agrees: "There just doesn't seem to be any benefit to me for somebody to go to school for six months to get out and make $5.00 an hour when they could have done that before they went in" (Interview 1).

The intangible work of program staff such as Margaret and Betty may be less quantifiable — and therefore may fall outside the scope of "targets" — but it is no less important to either the workers or the program participants. As Margaret says,

> How do you explain on a stats form somebody that has come in at some point and say, "Oh, I'm so stupid. I couldn't do the GED I'm so stupid." And then they gradually get into the GED program and they're like a flower. You start to see it! Then you'll get a phone call and say, "Hello," and you get a scream, "I passed my GED!" ... It's all part of employability, long-term employability. (Interview 1)

This distinction between aspects of their program that frontline workers know enhance the long-term employability of single mothers, and aspects of their programs that lead to quantifiable results suited to target-setting and target-meeting results in a focal tension for counsellors, instructors, and managers. The intangible aspects of their work are not accountable in numbers; they may not move program participants into new and better categories.

Yet this movement matters to funding bodies in an era of fiscal restraint. As part of its final recommendations, the Employability Resources Network project staff developed standardized data management software to track programs' success in meeting performance objectives. This response assumes program managers lack only the mechanical means of delivering on externally-defined and textually-documented accountability measures. It does nothing to address the problem that what matters to workers — the

enhancement of long-term employment potential — still falls outside quantifiable baselines and targets. The Standardized Administration and Reporting System (SARS) package works toward the comprehensive coordination of management control; it does nothing to challenge the categories through which single parents become actionable, the extent of resources available to meet their needs, or the mandates that limit rather than expand opportunities for intervention.

4.7   Coordinating practices as text for employability enhancement

When a single mother receiving social assistance first arrives at Carrying Caseloads she comes with a file that contains forms completed during her initial interview with an intake worker. Throughout the assessment and referral process, she will continue to be asked questions for which there are a limited number of acceptable answers. For example, as Leah Moody explains in Section 4.2 above, the single mother of a child who has been apprehended by Children's Aid cannot be a "single mother" as defined by the bureaucracy that administers Family Benefits. If the mother reads the words "single mother" and assigns herself that category, Leah must explain the meaning of the category within the bureaucratic context and suggest another. It makes no difference whether Leah agrees or disagrees with the mother's perception of her current situation; as part of her case management responsibilities she must verify the accuracy of forms filled out and filed as part of the client's record. This paper work becomes part of the authorized text that designates an individual as actionable within the social welfare system (Smith, 1990b, p.125).

Within the field of employability enhancement generally it is

acknowledged that people who are disadvantaged can be very difficult to

categorize. Their lives may be complicated by disabilities, addictions, a lack of

formal education, secure housing, or family support. They may be "trapped in

poverty situations where they have dependents but few resources.... Others

may be experiencing ongoing abuse" (ERN, 1992a, p. 3). Although clients'

most pressing needs may not be employment-related, once they meet the

definition of employable, their case file will be organized in relation to that

employability.

As Dorothy Smith (1990b) suggests, the process of turning an

individual's everyday life into a textual reality centered on bureaucratic

relevances is a process regulated by relations of ruling. As becomes apparent

later in this section, no one involved in the referral of individual clients to

categorically defined services can work idiosyncratically. Informal networks

may be used to exempt an exceptional client from required activities or to

help an exceptional individual jump the queue for a particularly effective

program. But, by definition, these exceptions prove the rule. If frontline

workers want to provide services to the clients who come to their offices then

they have no choice but to make these clients "fit" into bureaucratic forms

and categories.

> Where gaps and disjunctures appear between the actualities of people's
> lives and the categories and concepts laid down for the bureaucratic
> and professional textual realities that make the world bureaucratically
> and professionally actionable, those in direct contact with those
> actualities work hard to reproduce the sense of the enforced and
> enforceable categories in which they are to be made accountable.
> (Smith, 1990b, p. 104)

While we may want to make an exception of Leah and other conscientious and caring counsellors, we must also admit there is little room to maneuver. There are only so many times she can "fudge" the form before that form and the work it intends become meaningless.

Before the 1980s, policy makers assumed that most unemployed workers had very particular reasons for their unemployment; there were a limited number of categories to describe their trouble in getting and keeping employment. Women re-entering the workforce after their children reached adolescence could access Outreach programs, as could unemployed members of Black and First Nations communities. The severely employment disadvantaged, including those who had been in conflict with the law, who had addictions, learning disabilities or medically-controlled psychiatric disorders, could be served by federally-funded programs. In the mid to late 1980s, however, employment policies began to focus on "the able-bodied unemployed," formerly-employed men laid off from resource-based and factory work, often because of technological change. Never-employed youth became a concern at the same time that increasing numbers of men and women turned to social assistance after their unemployment insurance ended. And, finally, single mothers became "those newly categorized as unemployed employables" (Riches, 1990b, p. 112).

As the categories of unemployed Canadians become more numerous, ongoing research into the reasons for this proliferation identifies a variety of client profiles (Quiviger & Roboubi, 1991). It also identifies a variety of barriers to employment with most of the barriers existing outside employment-related matters. What Smith (1990b) in another context calls

"troubles" have to be contained within certain boundaries if unemployed clients are to qualify for any assistance at all.

> The world that people live in and in which their troubles arise is inscribed in the systems set up to control it by fitting them and their troubles to standardized terms and procedures under which they can be formally recognized and made actionable. These processes are intrinsic to the workings of professional and bureaucratic forms of organization. (p. 125)

As a professional working within a bureaucracy, Leah Moody, Carrying Caseloads, must engage in everyday workplace practices that facilitate the shift from one material state to another. And, not only does this work depersonalize her clients, but it also depersonalizes her. Should she refuse to continue the categorization and leave her job, Leah points out, she will be replaced by another Employment Counsellor required to make the same judgments:

> The functional part of the job remains the same. The same paper gets pushed, the structures — the flow chart — remains the same. But, the flesh that goes on the skeleton doesn't remain the same. ... As a frontline worker, you are basically told that you are replaceable. That's why all the paper's there, that's where the information is, that's the continuity. (Interview 2)

The standardization of the marks that are made on paper, "the functional part of the job," allows for the referral of clients, the compilation of data, the generation of statistical reports, and the evaluation of policy and program performance objectives. It is Leah's job to engage in "a process of practical interchange between an exhaustibly messy, different, and indefinite real world and the bureaucratic and professional system that controls and acts upon it" (Smith, 1990b, p. 126).

Clearly frontline workers do not do the work of categorizing alone. Figure 1 (below) illustrates that everyone involved in employability

Figure 1: The coordinating practices of employability enhancement

8) coordinating the work ethic, family ethic, and professional practices

| media focus |

politicians

| public opinion |

cabinet members

policy analysts

policy makers

corporate elite and regional business interests

interest groups

academics

advocacy coalitions

7) that will be analyzed and acted upon by those who enter into debates

demo-graphics	social policies	economic policies	social unrest	unemployment rates	the state of federal/ provincial relations	governing political parties

6) dependent on economic, social, and political contexts

part-time minimum wage stable	part-time minimum wage unstable	full-time minimum wage seasonal	full-time family support wage	income support	depend on partner's income	return to parent's home	illegal activity/ corrections	life on the streets

5) to the extent that they successfully apply for, get, and keep jobs

• history of abuse • lack of transportation • physical/cognitive/psychological disabilities •
lack of stable housing • lack of childcare • lack of family or peer support • ill health • lack of skills •

4) who are mandated to address their barriers to employability

private training	school board upgrading	community college	employment outreach	employment resource	employability enhancement	community-based empowerment

3) and eligible for referral to a program staffed with professionals

Black	First Nations		at-risk youth	re-entry women	in conflict with the law	able-bodied unemployed	drug dependency	single parent on social assistance

2) to categorize them, to make them actionable

Social Worker • Employment Counsellor • Community Worker

1) Individual women must find a frontline worker with the mandate

• a 30-year-old hair stylist, substance abuse, college diploma (10 years ago)

• a minimum wage food service worker, two children, grade 8 (5years ago)

• a suburban recently-divorced up-scale retail worker, one child, BA (10 years ago)

• 19-year-old rural teenager, pre-school child, grade10 (3 years ago)

•38-year-old social assistance recipient with a 12 year old child, mental health disability, gr 7 (20 years ago)

•18-year-old girl, sex trade worker, gr 9

enhancement has their position on a flow chart, including office receptionists who answer the first phone call or hand out the first forms and cabinet ministers who allocate ministry budgets. A single mother seeking to enhance her employability must first find a frontline worker who can help her enter into an appropriate program. She may need to pass a clerical worker who acts as the first level of gate-keeper; as we saw in Section 4.4 above, Susan Smith of Juggling Resources increasingly relies on clerical workers to screen applicants. That initial screening begins the intake and assessment process during which an appropriate category for the new client must be found.

Throughout the entire process of employability enhancement, distinctions must be made between categories such as "employable single female over 25," "severely employment disadvantaged youth," "target group: Black," "single parent social assistance recipient." This determination prioritizes clients' issues for them; it assigns them particular problems, demonstrable barriers. As clients move through the flow chart, skillful frontline workers will know when to shift their primary classifications to help them take advantage of particularly effective or efficient programs. As demographics, labour market conditions, political priorities, or global markets shift, most program mandates also shift; nevertheless, the client profiles stay the same.

The office receptionist and the cabinet minister may never meet face-to-face, but their everyday activities are connected by texts, by the words on the forms in the files that become data reported statistically as justification for ongoing policies and program practices. They both participate in the creation of "text-mediated discourse . . . social relations coordinating multiple local historical sites and the locally bound activities of actual people" (Smith, 1993,

p. 50); they both work at opening and closing gates although only those with decision-making authority work at the conception, construction, regulation of the gates themselves.

Each person's position has its place in the hierarchy. While the receptionist and the frontline worker both have the option of ignoring or subverting coordinating practices, they cannot change them. And, ultimately, their subversion or ignorance will be discovered and they will either be forced to enter into ruling relations or leave their positions. Frontline workers in Employment Resource Centres, connected directly through program mandates to government administration, are integrally involved in "the organization of particular actual places, persons and events into generalized and abstracted modes vested in categorical systems, rules, laws, and conceptual practices" (Smith, 1987, p. 108). These categorical systems, rules, laws, and conceptual practices require that frontline positions be filled by those willing to engage in the necessary coordinating practices. However essential the position, the individual in the position is replaceable. Because the government policies, program mandate, and job descriptions remain the same, because the same forms fill the same files applying the same categories to (virtually) the same clients, the bureaucratic work continues.

What is not replaceable, therefore, is the communication between the positions since "the work of administration, of management, of government is a communicative work" (Smith, 1987, p. 17). The forms, categories, and statistics allow workers in a variety of programs, in a range of local sites to get things done through words. The assessment and intake categories determine whether an individual woman is referred to Alexa Jones' *Moving Over* or to Betty Phillips' *Lining Up*. The implications of inaccurate categorization of

clients are especially visible for Ella Sparks, for example, because her program is located within sight of an area CEC. When an Employment Counsellor in that office realizes a client does not qualify for Unemployment Insurance or another federal program and, therefore, cannot contribute to their office's positive employment or training outcomes, Ella says they see that client coming out the CEC door and through their door.

> "Oh, you are not on UI? Here you go." They give them a pamphlet. "Go across the street" and they send them over. We are looking at them saying, "What can we do with you? You have been assessed, your goals have already been determined. We know what you need. We can't give you what you need." (Focus group 3)

At the same time, the categories coordinate not only the experiences of the clients across sites, but also the work of the frontline workers themselves. As we saw in Section 4.6, there is increasing pressure to be accountable to the state in statistical terms, to quantify the results of interactions with clients. This sets up more categories on more forms for counsellors, instructors, and program managers to complete in order to report the work of the program to its funders. The pre-existing categories encourage staff to make the intangible aspects of their work visible in terms that will count. The reporting requirements encourage them to represent their work "as actionable in the textual realities of administration, management, professional discourse" (Smith, 1990b, p. 97). For example, finding a way to recategorize a woman may move her off one worker's caseload and on to another's, giving both the opportunity to count the woman as an accomplished task.

The system of networks, programs, agencies and referrals coordinated by texts usually works relatively smoothly. Individual clients enter in at the bottom of the flow chart (Figure 1), and proceed through the system. For

example, almost all of the clients at Carrying Caseloads are referred by one of the 24 Financial Aid Workers (FAWs) in the region. With caseloads of 120 or more, most FAWs want the Employment Counsellors to take care of their clients, either referring them to other programs and agencies or holding on to them for further counselling. They communicate with their peers using an agreed upon language that facilitates the process of referral.

Occasionally, however, the process does not work. Individual actions and attitudes get in the way of coordinated activity. Leah points out that her ongoing communication with 23 of the 24 Financial Aid Workers she interacts with usually proceeds routinely. That exceptional FAW appears intentionally punitive and disruptive, but even the others will occasionally interrupt an otherwise well-coordinated working relationship:

> I'm clipping along and I think [the working relationship] is okay. And then, BANG! All of a sudden this awful thing happens to a client and I can't figure it out. . . . [Otherwise] if I say, "Things are okay, don't worry about this individual," they really don't. (Interview 1)

In some instances, however, the standard operating procedures of the bureaucracy itself become obstacles to single parents' progression through the flow chart. Leah refuses to keep clients with documented substance abuse on her caseload because employability enhancement without prior detoxification makes a mockery of her work. Although caseworkers may respond that Leah cannot simply close these clients' files, Leah will not risk her credibility with colleagues in particular employability programs. She recognizes her actions put the FAWs in a difficult situation: "They have a policy that says, [employable clients] must either be job searching or actively in some skill training and that's the bottom line"; Leah's bottom line is that she will not coordinate a farce (Interview 1). As Zora Neale points out, some clients end

up saying "Well I'll go to this program to meet my worker's needs" (Focus

group 2) but that certainly is not something that can be counted upon.

Faith Upshaw remarks that while some clients may be referred

inappropriately, others simply defy any possible definition. Despite a

frontline worker's best intentions she remains helpless when faced with

those who have no way of accessing the system.

> What about people who have no source of income? What about those
> people who aren't on UI, who aren't on social assistance? Where do
> they go? . . . What do I tell [them] — "I can't accept you or consider you
> because you have no source of income?" (Focus group 2)

Individuals who remain outside all coordinating practices have no one who

can act with authority to categorize their need and refer them to a program

with the mandate to respond to their needs. Some people get "lost in the

shuffle somewhere," Ella admits. "'I haven't seen my worker in two years,'

they say. 'I don't know who my worker is any more. They've transferred'"

(Focus group 1). People can only become actionable in the employability

enhancement system if they fit the right categories and find the right workers.

The system of networks and referrals coordinated by standardized

categories and forms meets the relevances of bureaucrats but not necessarily

the messy realities of women's actual lives. Nevertheless, the majority of

individuals — both frontline workers and single mothers receiving social

assistance — can be assigned positions within the bureaucracy whether they

embody the actualities intended by that position or not. There is a repetitive

process through which the individual bureaucrats who create and authorize

the categories "displaced older worker," "re-entry women," "at-risk youth"

become faceless; the context through which the category came into being

becomes uneventful. What remains is the bureaucratic activity that takes the

abstracted intention, assigns it quantifiable baselines and targets, and enters it

into the performance objectives of particular programs. A distinctive feature

of text-based coordinating practices is that

> categories and concepts are constructed such that they intend particular
> interpretations; yet both the social construction and the perspective
> from which the concept has been constructed disappear from view —
> the concept floats free and neutral, as a 'tool' simply to be used in one's
> work and one's talk. (Manicom, 1988, p. 64)

Yet the concepts, categories, and relevances which coordinate both the work

of frontline workers and the lives of their clients, are not free and neutral.

They arise out of socio-historically constructed perspectives common to the

disciplines in which most employability enhancement frontline workers

have been trained.

4.8 Coordinating practices as postsecondary curriculum

When frontline workers undertake the communicative work of

textually organized practices they use a common language in the files that

follow program participants from one site to another. Their jobs include

solving concrete problems using abstract principles since "this disappearing of

the concrete into the abstract through categorization makes possible and co-

ordinates an institutional articulation" (Walker, 1990b, p. 16). Leah Moody,

after moving from Carrying Caseloads to a health setting, says "I am really

amazed at how the categories are different, the specific issues are different, but

the underpinnings are the same" (Interview 2). Although the institutional

change means Leah has to learn new categories and interpret those categories

within the context of particular issues, the overall framework has not

changed. A highly experienced and politically aware frontline worker no matter her institutional location, Leah engages in everyday practices which

> produce work that conforms to appropriate styles and terminologies, makes the appropriate deferences, and is locatable by these and other devices in the traditions, factions, and schools whose themes it elaborates, whose interpretive procedures it intends, and by whose criteria it is to be evaluated. (Smith, 1987, p. 61)

She must conform to these styles and languages, "to be recognized as a proper participant" in the discourses of her field (Smith, 1987, p. 61).

In order to qualify for positions that give them authority to get things done with words (Smith, 1987, p. 17), frontline workers are increasingly required to carry with them the credentials of formal education in recognized disciplines. As we saw in Chapter 2, the women in this research have a range of educational backgrounds, most commonly social work and education. Donald Schon (1987) suggests that disciplinary training helps teach workers to adopt particular frameworks through which to interpret their worlds: "Depending on our disciplinary backgrounds, organizational roles, past histories, interests, and political/economic perspectives, we frame problematic situations in different ways" (p. 4).[1] In the case of this research, women shared disciplinary backgrounds but the complexity of their perspectives came from their histories, interests, and political perspectives.

At the Maritime School of Social Work (MSSW) where she completed undergraduate and graduate work, Leah acquired a knowledge base that includes social work practice and methods at micro (clinical practice), mezzo (administration), and macro levels (social planning and community

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[1] For example, Barbara Cox, Getting In: "I didn't even know I was an abused woman until I went back to university." There she learned a label for her experience, a recognized and actionable category into which to put her own former life.

organization). Core textbooks at MSSW deliver both standardized content

using an ecological systems framework (Hepworth & Larsen, 1990) and a

feminist and critical theoretical framework. In the first line of a key

undergraduate text, Ben Carniol (1990) acknowledges that

> social workers — like their clients — are under pressure. At times they
> feel beset from all sides: from dissatisfied clients, from their managers,
> from official policy, from politicians pushing cutbacks in social
> services, from a sense of failure at having daily to confront a
> bottomless pit of social problems. Yet their job is to provide help —
> "social security" — to people in need, the "clients." (p. 11)

Dean Hepworth and Jo Ann Larsen (1990) have updated editions of their

more traditional text to introduce a more generalist theoretical orientation,

including organizational as well as individual and relational barriers to

change, "ethnocultural" issues, and new categories of vulnerable

populations, including AIDS patients, immigrants, and pregnant adolescents.

Again, though the focus on particular issues and categories constantly

changes, underpinning it all is an understanding of political economies,

institutional organization, professional ethics, client advocacy, and everyday

social service delivery as well as the need for workers to articulate their work

to the work of others through forms, files, and standardized work processes.

Dorothy Smith (1990b) argues that postsecondary education is a

conceptual practice of power; as Zora Neale says, it provides "the tools to

conceptualize" lived reality (Focus group 3). It not only provides frontline

workers with the content of specialized training and education it also

provides them with an understanding of how "professional and bureaucratic

procedures and terminologies are part of an abstracted system" (p. 125)

developed to control "an exhaustibly messy, different, and indefinite real

world" (p. 126). Workers must not only account for their own work, they

must also account for the work of their clients whether those clients are students or parents or, occasionally, colleagues. When they reckon up their accountability, they do it using normative language developed to describe functional and dysfunctional students, parents, workers, patients, etc., depending on the relevances of their institutional contexts. As Carniol (1990) stresses, the language and relevances learned in postsecondary education structure the daily experiences of both clients and frontline workers:

> The structures and relations of social work form one set of walls, for both worker and client. The larger structures and institutions of society — government, business, education, media, religion, family — form another set. Although these invisible walls do not by any means represent a unified system, they are closely linked, and together they take a heavy toll as we collide with them day in and day out and feel less and less certain about which way to turn. (p. 20)

In her early work on feminism and bureaucracies, Kathy Ferguson (1984) points out that universities are integrally involved in the construction of these "walls," through the professional training that co-ordinates with the ongoing relevances of bureaucracies:

> The creation of bureaucratic discourse reflects the nature of the links between the university and the public and corporate bureaucracies. The universities provide the training grounds for the professions, and the professions are able to control recruitment. . . . The government and the corporate bureaucracies then employ these professionals. (p. 79)

Certainly, formal education provides the professionals involved in this research with both an identity as a social worker or an educator and an identity as a participant in a professional bureaucratic discourse.

Leah's research partner Alexa Jones, Moving Over, argues that, "the education you get in professional schools, which are state institutions, is going to serve the purposes of the state" (Final meeting) because a central lesson taught through postsecondary curricula involves "obedience to

authority" (hooks, 1994b, p. 4). Simultaneously, students must learn to take authority themselves, to enact authority through words and texts, through participating in practices of categorization and accounting, through making social assistance recipients and other clients "actionable." The concepts and ideologies that frame this work will be learned at school even if the impetus that gets them to that school door comes out of their personal experiences. For example, women who attended the Maritime School of Social Work (MSSW) talk about courses in Marxism, feminism, and anti-racism that helped them understand their experiences of marginalization and of privilege. In particular, they believe that critical and feminist courses allowed them to choose between blaming the victim and applying a structural analysis to individual problems. Although those who attended in the 1980s felt unprepared for the harsh realities of social work practice, those who attended later had the opportunity to do a community-based practicum that allowing them to identify some of the gaps between theory and practice, policy and programming.

In sharp contrast, women who have degrees or certificates in education present far less positive postsecondary experiences. Betty Parker, Lining Up, returned to get a BEd after receiving a BA in psychology and sociology. She recoiled from the conservatism she saw in both faculty and students, describing the year she did her BEd as "the most restrictive, non-thinking, parroting, awful year that I've ever lived through" (Interview 1). When she later completed the Certificate in Adult Education needed to keep her job, Betty says the curriculum was "either completely common sense or so outrageously useless that I had to leave the room" (Interview 1). Pat Mercer, Betty's research partner and colleague at Lining Up, agrees that her education

degree and adult education certificate offered neither the content nor the process required to become a successful teacher. Nevertheless, she says, "those pieces of paper got me the job" (Interview 1). Although Pat has also earned certificates in criminology and life skills coaching, she believes the wisdom that qualifies her to effectively teach adults comes with reflective experience and that, as a young graduate, she lacked both awareness and compassion, something she believes the elitist and overly-intellectual atmosphere of the university did nothing to mitigate.

The frontline workers believe that "credentialism," the coordinated practices of getting "those pieces of paper" that qualify them for their work, is increasing as employability enhancement becomes a "field" of both study and employment. This credentialism affects women in urban areas differently than those who have an extensive work history outside the metropolitan region. Some of the county women had been hired for short-term projects that developed into longer-term programs; as we saw in Section 4.3, despite her lack of postsecondary education Margaret Lindsay, Building Bridges, has been "rolled over" into progressively more responsible one-year contracts because she is a "known quantity" who understands the social context, the client population, and the procedures. Nonetheless she has been studying part-time to complete her education degree in part because she knows that someone newly-hired into her position would require at least an undergraduate degree in social work or education, with a graduate degree preferred.

Those women who lack formal educational credentials find this not only works against changing jobs, it also works to reduce their credibility in the positions they currently occupy. Susan Smith, Juggling Resources, who

has also been working part-time on an undergraduate degree, says

overcoming people's assumptions about her abilities and perceptions has

been difficult:

> I can't emphasize how much I wish that I had that university degree. . .
> . I feel that I have had to work extra hard to establish and maintain
> credibility because I couldn't claim the formal educational experience
> to lend credence to my work. (Interview 1)

Whether the expectation that frontline workers will have entered into

postsecondary education is a formal requirement or an informal assumption

the workers feel pressured to engage in educational practices that enter them

into ongoing discourses coordinated to particular social relations, without

that coordination they are at a loss for both credentials and credibility.

For some women postsecondary discourses become especially

problematic when they highlight raced, classed, and gendered differences. The

Black women in this research struggle with the consequences of engaging in

credentialing practices that may gain them respect in their workplaces, but

leave them alienated from their families, friends, and communities. Ella

Sparks collects calendars from a wide variety of institutions, trying to decide

between a range of qualifications:

> I say, "Do I really want to do this with myself? Give myself three or
> four years to devote to this and, then, where do I go from there? Can I
> do it with the experience alone?" . . . I have all these applications at
> home. I have masters degree program applications at home. I have BEd
> I have everything there and I am saying, "Where do I go?" (Focus
> group 1)

The Black women have all engaged in ongoing education and, among them,

they possess undergraduate degrees (or credits toward degrees) in sociology,

psychology, community studies, social work, and business administration as

well as a graduate degree in divinity. They all talk about struggling with "the

contradictions between the behavior necessary to 'make it' in the academy and those that [allow] them to be comfortable at home, with their families and friends" (hooks, 1994b, p. 182).

The sense of being outside the coordinating practices that fit students' bodies into appropriate futures comes early. Ella says her conversations with teachers at a high school reunion have been painful as, one after another, they express surprise that her family members, the only Black students in the school, hold responsible jobs: "One person in particular expected my brother to be some kind of a triple murderer and he's working for the prison system!" (Focus group 1). Singer and songwriter Faith Nolan (1995b) writes about the expectations imposed on poor Black children in Nova Scotia's secondary schools. They were told "Don't aim high cause you won't get far/ a nurses aid, or a check out clerk" and too many have lived up to the expectations — "we fill your jails and your mental wards/ poverty was our crime." If Black women have the opportunity to continue with postsecondary education, Zora Neale adds, they will find themselves forced, day after day, to be in the presence of a postsecondary curriculum that constantly reinforces "the way in which White society frames my reality for me" (Focus group 1).

The coordinating practices of postsecondary curriculum in both social work and education require Black women to open themselves to conceptual practices permeated with race, sex, and class biases. "It [is] assumed that any student coming from a poor or working class background would willingly surrender all values and habits of being associated with this background," bell hooks (1994b, p. 182) writes in Teaching to transgress. While education may be a prime means of class mobility, the accompanying life changes are more than monetary: "class is more than just a question of money . . . it [shapes]

values, attitudes, social relations" (p. 178). For Nolan (1995a), as for many other Black women, finding a way out of the poverty that "makes our souls burn" means turning the mother who "worked two jobs" to pay for the daughter's postsecondary education into an object rather than subject. The coordinating practices of postsecondary curriculum qualifies Black women to "manage the needy for the state," (Nolan, 1995a) when the needy are so often family, friends, and neighbours. The answer to the song's question "How will we find our way out?" is to "walk and talk with Babylon's mouth," no longer caring for the disadvantaged, blaming them for their own victimization.

The words that come out of "Babylon's mouth" are the words articulated to the professional role that locates frontline workers in professional discourse. We need to be schooled in the discipline of the discourse, Gillian Walker (1990a) writes, if we are to "appropriate institutional forms and administrative procedures" (p. 171) and engage in the coordinating practices that make up the everyday operations of program management, instruction, and counselling. Those practices coordinate the activities of both program workers and program participants to a postsecondary discourse; they cannot escape the social relations that articulate the professional discourse taught through postsecondary curriculum to the ruling apparatuses, "those institutions of administration, management, and professional authority, and of intellectual and cultural discourses, which organize, regulate, lead and direct, contemporary capitalist societies" (Smith, 1990a, p. 2). As we shall see in the next section, not only are those discourses coordinated toward bureaucratic relevances and particular social relations of race, class and sex, but they are also coordinated toward broader ideologies of work ethic and family ethic.

4.9 Resistance and the performativity of coordinating practices

When frontline workers complete the postsecondary education that prepares them to work as program instructors, counsellors, and administrators, they learn a particular curriculum. This curriculum allows them to engage in coordinating practices as professionals, as experts who construct individuals as actionable within and across social service, education, training, and employment bureaucracies. They learn how to manage a caseload of clients, using categorical procedures that sort out and arrange "the living actual world of people" (Smith, 1990b, p. 43). Both social work and adult education disciplines qualify practitioners to address deficits in individual abilities. Despite the best of intentions, practitioners working in bureaucratic settings, or settings accountable to bureaucracies, must organize their work in terms of what the client needs to "fix": "The roles available to the client are defined negatively, by reference to nonroles or to unfulfilled roles — one becomes a dropout, an unwed mother, a culturally deprived child, a nonemployable person" (Ferguson, 1984, p. 137).

Within the context of employability enhancement programming, social workers and adult educators are directed to focus on those behaviours that signify dysfunctional family members and dysfunctional workers. Administrators and managers must organize their programs to ensure that performance objectives based on "good family member" and "good worker" can be met. Their accountability practices must somehow include a continuum of achievement within the construct of "family ethic" and "work ethic." They must ensure that program participants become employable single mothers who, while they may not become financially independent, at

least become less financially dependent on the state to meet their own

everyday needs and the everyday needs of their family members. Again,

program workers direct their efforts toward overcoming or alleviating their

clients' deficits in "family ethic" or "work ethic":

> Service workers typically respond to the systemic constraints on their
> work by distancing themselves from their clients, lowering their
> opinions of and their hopes for clients. . . . The more
> "professionalized" the workers become, the more likely they are to see
> the problems of their clients as stemming from defects of socialization
> or individual motivation, to be remedied by exposure to expert
> guidance. (Ferguson, 1984, p. 142)

Either implicitly or explicitly, instructors and counsellors must mediate the

most basic relationship between women and the state — citizenship — by

trying to operationalize both "family ethic" and "work ethic" as organizing

concepts for employability.

The discursive assumptions that single mothers receiving social

assistance are "bad" mothers and "bad" workers cannot be counteracted by

any one frontline worker of any one employability enhancement program.

The postsecondary curriculum that provides frontline workers with their

credentials to do this work cannot help but reflect hegemonic beliefs since

core texts present as "facts," information about social assistance recipients that

"coordinates the activities of members of a discourse, a bureaucracy, a

management, a profession" (Smith, 1990, p. 69).

It would be simplistic to categorize these workers only as "agents of

social control" in the thrall of textually constructed normalizing practices.

Nevertheless, the predominance of systems theory in social work attributes

"adjustment deficiencies" even where it critiques a "moral deficiencies"

framework. Thus the program participant must be taught how to "cope"

within the dominant culture: "Despite the tolerance of systems theory for some reform, the main emphasis of skills training is on the adjustment of the individual client or family to cope better within existing social conditions" (Carniol, 1990, p. 48). The basic tenet of the dominant liberal ideology, Ben Carniol continues, is the "belief that each individual has both the responsibility and the opportunity to 'make it'. The ideology avoids any serious consideration of community or collective responsibility for poverty and for social improvement" (p. 91).[2]

Such liberal ideology is also hegemonic in the field of adult education and the equivalent to systems theory can be found in human capital arguments that claim a high-yield investment in resourceful humans will benefit individuals, families, communities, national economies, and world economies if all players are willing to sacrifice personal gain and support the greater good of the ecological system. Anthony Carnevale (1992) suggests that the human factor "x" provides the key component for increased productivity and, "according to available research, the variation in "x" efficiency is rooted in motivational and cultural differences" (p. 49). He enjoins employers to invest in human capital to strengthen the US economy.

Throughout human capital discourse and ecological systems theory both implicit and explicit references to a family ethic and work ethic feature prominently. Within neoconservative discourse, in particular, the prevailing

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[2] Some of the frontline workers pointed out the transparent weaknesses of this ideology when they noted the assumption that there are actually job opportunities available. As Betty Phillips, Lining Up commented, "I can't 'quota' them out there in the job market — there isn't even a job market, for god's sake" (Interview 1). Similarly, Alex Jones, Moving Over, asked, "When society talks about getting people off social assistance and into the workplace, where are these jobs? They are not there. I can't get university-educated, young, energetic, articulate, white women employed" (Final meeting).

opinion concerning programs for social assistance recipients includes

performance objectives "consistent with the traditional values of work, thrift,

and self-help" (Stoesz, 1988, p. 58). Ernie Lightman's (1990) writing on the

conditionality of social assistance demonstrates that market values are

unambiguously pre-eminent, that all employable individuals must work "to

promote autonomy, self-reliance, and independence within a market

economy" (p. 98).

> Associated with the work ethic or following from it is a variety of other value-based goals that are imposed on the applicant for assistance. The process is clearly not just one of meeting needs (welfare as a right) nor even one of requiring work in exchange for benefits (welfare as a contract) but, rather, one of imposing a wide variety of potentially extraneous conditions that prescribe the applicant's entire life (welfare as social control within a contractual setting, which embodies the classic values of the market). (Lightman, 1990, p. 98)

When the applicant is a single mother, her entire life becomes a part of the

contractual setting, as both her embodiment as mother and her embodiment

as a worker are brought into the classic value system of the market.

Frontline workers recognize and resist the contradictions contained in

the normative messages coming at single mothers from all directions,

particularly from discourses of work ethic and family ethic:

> It's kind of a catch-22. You're a single mum, "You should be out earning a living, supporting that child." So the single mum goes out to work and scrapes along. Then somebody else, their neighbour, their family, is saying, "You shouldn't be leaving that child alone. You should be raising that child." So you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. (Margaret Lindsay, Interview 1)

They know that most single mothers caught in this double-bind are working

at minimum wage jobs, making less than they might receive from social

assistance if that social assistance was available to them. For these women,

employability enhancement programs may provide a third option and hope

for the future. In the current climate of credentialism, "employers treat educational qualifications as a screening device to distinguish new workers in terms of personality traits" (Rubenson, 1992, p. 8).

According to Carnevale (1992), employers believe that "education has always correlated strongly with the work ethic" and they therefore use education as "a sorting device" (p. 57). Similarly, politicians, policy-makers, and public opinion supports the claim that "better-educated people make better economic decisions, do better career planning for themselves, and as citizens make better economic decisions for the community as a whole"; education and training programs can provide people with "occupational and job skills that encourage employment and reduce public dependency" (Carnevale, 1992, p. 59). In other words, education can help "fix" some work-related deficits.

For most frontline workers there are few opportunities to engage in reflexive and analytic discussions concerning contradictory claims surrounding work ethics, family ethics and the construction of the "single mother receiving social assistance." In her first interview Jennifer Tannen, Getting In, spoke passionately about "luck" as the only difference between herself and her program participants. After reflecting on the transcript of that interview, she resists discounting what she identifies as her hard work and good management, products of what she calls her "culture," her family and community belief system. In contrast, she says during her dialogue with research partner Barbara Cox, Getting In, many of their program participants come from cultures where they are encouraged "to accept their circumstances" (Dialogue). As they both struggle to understand and expand

upon the concept of "culture" in this context, Jennifer identifies a difference

between their program's first group of participants and their current group:

> I am finding now that there is more of a difference between myself and
> the women on social assistance. . . . The mentality I am picking up on
> is more, "Yes I want what you have, but I want it given to me and, if
> there is a problem, it's not my problem." (Dialogue).

Here, the cultural deficit becomes a work-related deficit.[3]

As Jennifer and Barbara explore the role of "culture" in the

development of women's "mentality" they grapple with the philosophical

tradition of social Darwinism. Bluntly put, this philosophy argued that "if all

relief were withheld, the poor would either develop proper moral qualities to

equip them for survival, or they would die" (Thomas Malthus cited in

Carniol, 1990, p. 27). Fundamental beliefs that underlie capitalism emphasize

"survival of the fittest" and "advancement based on merit" (Hoagland, 1988,

ftnt. p. 78). As Weber (1958/1976) points out, however, those who generalize

from natural sciences to social and economic sciences are often influenced by

religion; in this case, the work ethic develops "from the connection of the

spirit of modern economic life with the rational ethics of ascetic

Protestantism." (p. 27). In the modern nation state, Weber argues, "the

pursuit of profit, and forever renewable profit, by means of continuous,

rational, capitalistic enterprise" (p. 158) excluding cost-intensive

programming for single mothers as a waste of time, "the first and in principle

the deadliest of sins" (p. 158). According to philosopher Sarah Hoagland

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[3] Margaret Lindsay, Building Bridges, also engages in reflection about her own history of
marriage breakdown, single parenthood, and reliance on social assistance. She wonders what
helped her take the steps required to re-establish a middle class standard of living: "there
was a difference maybe in my upbringing. . . maybe more of a work ethic. . . higher education"
(Interview 1).

(1988), "The protestant work ethic holds that if we work hard, we will 'make it.' But this implies that if we didn't 'make it,' we didn't work hard or hard enough" (ftnt. p. 78), we are deficient in some way.

In this context it becomes clear how contemporary social and economic writers can argue why, even if the mother herself is unable to profit from employment, she must be a target for human capital investment. "Education . . . benefits families and ultimately the American economy, because the family is the incubator for the nation's human capital and our primary and cheapest provider of human services" (Carnevale, 1992, p. 59). In this context, single parents can meet the demands of both family and work ethics by providing cheap human services for their own families and for the families of others. The state will supplement the cheapest possible rates for the latter by providing income assistance for the working poor because "children raised in poor families where someone worked, have a much reduced chance of remaining poor themselves as adults as compared with children raised in poor families where no one works" (Carnevale, 1992, p. 63).

Abhorrent as some of these statements appear to be, it is important to realize the hegemonic and, at times, pragmatic force of these arguments; the language of the statements boldly state the assumptions and expectations hidden behind many public conversations, especially those shrouded in political rhetoric. The connection between the coordinating practices that inform the work ethic and those that inform the family ethic are both ideologically determined and conceptually connected. In her first interview, Barbara Cox, Getting In, makes a clear connection between the family ethic and the work ethic, the production and reproduction of citizens. While searching for a way to describe the differences between single parents who

have been married and those who have not she suggests that "the women without spouses tend not to be as careful about the rules of life as those that were married":

> Single parents who have not been married have a deep, deep love for their children ... but they don't have — If I can give an example of what I'm saying, the group who have been married are more inclined to be on time every day for school. Those that don't have a previous spouse, are a little more cavalier about promptness. That's the only way I can express it. (Interview 1)

The family ethic is a raced and classed ethic that gives priority to economic stability, stability operationalized as "a culture" that insists on the value of promptness as an indicator of respect and obedience, of worthiness. This ethic also provides an ongoing articulation of single mothers to the relations of ruling that pre-determine the value of particular children. Feminist research in a variety of disciplines has described and analyzed how family (matters) are differently constructed for women of different races, ethnicities, and classes and how those differing constructions are linked: "The construction of some groups of mothers as full-time, stay-at-home, and worthy rests on the construction of other groups of mothers as employable and unworthy of public support" (Glenn, 1994, p. 20).

Zora Neale outlines the pivotal role played by single Black mothers in the raced, classed, and sexed coordinating practices of capitalist communities. They can be blamed for the deterioration of both family and work ethics:

> [People think,] "You bear children and you live on social assistance and we can blame you. We can blame you because you're part of the problem. You are the one who's driving up my taxes ... I see you stroll with your cigarette in your mouth and your [baby] carriage walking down the street." (Focus group 2)

Across North America, Patricia Hill Collins (1992) writes, the Black welfare

mother signifies everything that threatens hegemonic values. Unlike the

mammy and the matriarch, this mother neither works (work ethic) nor

nurtures future workers (family ethic): "She is portrayed as being content to

sit around and collect welfare, shunning work and passing on her bad values

to her offspring" (pp. 76-77). Only after 1993 did provincial governments

begin to force the mothers of young children into work for welfare. At the

time of this research they could not be exploited as cheap or free labour and

because of this, they signified "a costly threat to political and economic

stability" (Collins, 1990, p. 76) by undermining dominant social values.

The social values single mothers receiving income assistance threaten

include those that ground the discursive construct of the "standard North

American family" (Smith, 1993). Crossing time and place, and embedded in

the work of various social institutions (p. 51), the standard North American

family as ideological construct includes

> a legally married [heterosexual] couple sharing a household. The adult
> male is in paid employment; his earnings provide the economic basis
> of the family-household. The adult female may also earn an income,
> but her primary responsibility is to the care of husband, household,
> and children. (p. 52)

Susan Smith, Juggling Resources, zeros in on the pervasiveness of this

coordinating concept when she suggests that there must somewhere be an

official text that outlines this ideological code:

> I don't know the policy, I don't know where it would have been
> written, but it seems to me that it was the expectation of our
> government and politicians that .... women's function is to nurture
> and care for children. Their other aspirations — in terms of education,
> training, taking an equal position in their communities — are still
> secondary to their prime function. (Interview 1)

Families who fail to meet these unwritten standards become defined as "defective families, overwhelmingly families without a male breadwinner"; the aim of programming becomes fixing the family defect, rather than meeting an unemployed worker's legitimate claims upon the labour market (Fraser, 1989, p. 150).

At the same time, while pervasive notions of "proper family" and "proper mother" guide individual judgments as well as policy directions, equally pervasive notions of "responsible citizen" and "good worker" leave single mothers caught in the middle. Susan identifies the reality that "if we don't work, we don't really exist very much," and single parents who "don't exist" cannot participate as "fully functioning members of their community" (Interview 1). While a strong work ethic may motivate some single mothers to seek employability enhancement, they risk being perceived as correcting work-related "deficits" even while exacerbating "family-related deficits." For the women who participate in Susan's programs, however, there is often no separation between the work ethic and the family ethic, since "it's important to them for their children to recognize them as being a real part of their community" (Interview 1). They satisfy the needs of the family ethic by enhancing their marketability; it all comes together as a package, "the virtues of hard work, industry, respect for family, institutional authority, and an unquestioning respect for the nation" (Giroux, 1987a, p.3).

4.10   Epistemological integrity and the dispassion of coordinating practices

Frontline workers have to become expert in the coordinating practices of bureaucratic discourse if they want to accomplish their work of making clients actionable. By using categories that reflect hegemonic beliefs about the

work ethic and family ethic, they define their clients in terms of deficits. The network of programs developed to enhance single mothers' employability hire frontline workers who have demonstrated skills in assessment and referral. These counsellors, educators, and managers are assumed to be expert in the completion of forms and the maintenance of files that construct each individual as appropriately prepared for the next step in their "rehabilitation."

As Kathy Ferguson (1984) argues, both workers and clients are component parts of modern bureaucracies. The frontline workers participate in "a complex rational division of labor" (p. 7), where those in authority place their trust in the standard operating procedures that facilitate the proper movement of the proper people through the proper channels. Hierarchically organized administrative staff maintain "a complex system of written record-keeping" (p. 7) articulated to management control and accountability. With "objective recruitment based on impersonal standards of expertise" (p. 7) managers can expect compliance from those who have been hired to investigate and document the compliance of others. Frontline workers are expected to align themselves with the mandates of their organizations despite what they may or may not know about the organizations' efficiency or effectiveness, despite the reality that they are "the only authorized contributor to the making of the [clients'] case record who has any kind of direct access to the situation and people involved" (Smith, 1990b, p. 99).

Every time Leah Moody, Carrying Caseloads, sees a client she enters their "particulars" onto individual forms that go into individual file. Day after day, she says, she abstracts from clients' stories those details that "fit" within the already existing categories of her workplace. Over the years, she

begins to recognize that the details that don't fit also form a pattern and she begins to create her own accounts based on what she has learned. Within the bureaucracy, however, there is no space for non-authoritative accounts:

> Your hope is that you build up enough of these individual cases that you can then go to the next layer [of bureaucracy] and say, "Look, there are all these cases. Doesn't it look like we have to change policy here?" (Interview 2)

No one takes up her concerns, however,

> no one makes a decision, no one takes it a step further. So you go to the next layer . . . and they say, "Oh yes, well, very interesting. I'll talk to so-and-so about that." It filters through, it gets lost, the flavour gets lost. (Interview 2)

"The flavour" of what Leah knows from her everyday work must be diluted, she says, because the everyday reality of employable of single mothers raises controversial questions and concerns and only someone with professional expertise, someone who "occupies a position midway between theory and practice" can create knowledge. As a practitioner, she may only apply the knowledge already established (Code, 1991, p. 242).

Leah says her lack of authority leads her to make compromises she finds difficult to justify, "it robs me a little bit every day I go to work" (Interview 2). According to Ferguson (1984) the process of taking what frontline workers know and abstracting from it what fits within already existing structures is a literal theft:

> the bureaucratic organization of work, with its separation of conception from execution, originally entailed the literal theft, for the worker, of knowledge about the work process. This knowledge [is] then standardized, taught to managers, and reapplied to the work process so that it [is] carried out in the interests of the owners. (p. 11)

As a reflexive practitioner, Leah understands that her role involves "mediating what it is the consumer wants with what the bureaucracy says it

can give, negotiating between the layers of government" (Interview 2). Her

integrity becomes compromised, she says, when she knowingly watches

people fall through the cracks, especially since she recognizes that the better

she does her job, the more she facilitates the subordination of what she

knows.[4]

This mediation occurs on the level of repressing knowledge about the

process of articulating single mothers' needs to policies that operationalize

hegemonic interpretations of work and family ethics. It also involves using

the intermediary position in the other direction, to help program participants

understand the most basic of coordinating practices, the return of a telephone

call. This is particularly true for the significant number of frontline workers

who have been social assistance recipients on one side of the desk and

workers within the bureaucracy on the other side of the desk. What social

worker Carol Moffat[5] knows, she says, is that even the basics are complex:

> I know that sometimes . . if a message isn't returned it's because [the government worker's] got a stack of messages this high. . . . At the same time, I know it's hard for clients. . . . I [need to] get to a point where you go beyond "right" or "wrong" — there's a middle ground. It's not always about the worker being wrong. Sometimes it is. It's not about the client being wrong. And sometimes it is. (Interview 1)

Like Carol, many women experience the complexity of holding on to

what they know when they locate themselves on the middle ground between

two local and everyday realities, that of individual clients and individual case

workers. Other women participate in coordinating practices one or more steps

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[4] Dorothy Smith (1990b) applies Marx's concept of alienation to "a relation between the work individuals do an external order oppressing them in which their work contributes to the strength of the order that suppresses them" (p. 19).

[5] Carol Moffatt worked in several programs represented in this research, including two during the period of interviews and meetings. For reasons of anonymity she has not been introduced in detail.

removed from their programs, occupying the space of "professional expert."
As someone with an extensive range of frontline and management
experience, for example, Alexa Jones, Moving Over, has become involved in
program and policy analysis at the municipal and provincial level. As a
"community" representative, she is expected to move from the local to the
extralocal, from the particular to the general, from the concrete to the abstract.
On the fringe of ruling relations, she engages in abstracted activities that
coordinate program practices to government policies, including those that
directly affect her work when she returns to her office.

On one occasion, Alexa participated in a round-table consultation
where bureaucrats discounted suggestions that program participants require
childcare before they can enter either training or the workforce. Public
opinion polls have shown that childcare is not needed, they said, and because
potential program participants are members of the public it must be true.
Community representatives, therefore, must be ill-informed if they suggest
childcare is an issue. "I'm sitting at this table," Alexa says, "thinking, 'This
doesn't make sense to me. I know it is a problem because we hear it everyday
at work'" (Final meeting). This "bifurcation of consciousness" (Smith, 1990b)
highlights the tensions experienced by frontline workers when they must
move over, away from their everyday work of embodied and coordinating
practices and into the "governing mode":

> What becomes present to us in the governing mode is a means of
> passing beyond the local into the conceptual order. This mode of
> governing creates, at least potentially, a bifurcation of consciousness. It
> establishes two modes of knowing and experiencing and doing, one
> located in the body and in the space it occupies and moves in, the other
> passing beyond it. (Smith, 1990b, p. 17)

Alexa resists the notion that engaging in coordinating practices as part of ruling relations will change what she knows as a frontline worker. Although it may present "a daily chasm to be crossed" (Smith, 1990b, p. 20) she believes it is possible to make that leap from program worker to bureaucrat:

> I think the benefit of having a little more influence does not diminish your capacity to "know" as a frontline worker. In fact, I guess I would say that's part of what it is to be professional. You have the professional knowledge but you [also] have this knowledge [of the participants' reality]. (Final meeting)

Even if individual women can hold on to what they know as frontline workers, they realize they must not appear to speak out of their own understanding; as mediators they are expected to act as a conduit of information, impartially communicating the position of the program participants to the policy makers, and the position of the policy makers to the participants. "The knowledge is with the participants," Carol Moffat states, her role is to dispassionately pass that knowledge on (Final meeting). "You learn that if you speak from your own experience nobody listens," Leah Moody confirms, "so you learn to speak from the experience of the participant/ client/ consumer [whose experience] is seen to be more rich than your own." What works best, she adds, is having a client "that can work with you to make some noise" (Interview 2).

Susan Smith, Juggling Resources, has learned over the years that when she advocates for clients she has to "disappear" as part of the narrative:

> I have to be very careful about presenting myself as knowledgeable owing to my own particular circumstances because, on at least a few occasions, my advocacy is interpreted as "over-identification" with clients. (Interview 1)

At the same time, Susan recognizes that this principled position has worked against her own and her clients' interests. Her supervisors and colleagues accept that she is an advocate for her clients. The way she presents her arguments, however, makes a difference in how her concerns are received:

> I have to be very careful about presenting myself as knowledgeable owing to my own particular circumstances because, on at least a few occasions, my advocacy is interpreted as "over-identification" with clients. So, sometimes I am able to say "Well, because I have this experience, I feel that what I have to say is valid" — as long as it isn't interpreted as "Oh, my god, you're one of those single parents. No wonder you're saying these things." (Interview 1)

Susan acknowledges that her views may now be received more respectfully both because of her years of experience and because "my advocacy techniques may have become a little refined" (Interview 1). To refine her advocacy techniques, Susan has learned to become more dispassionate. She has learned not to align herself linguistically with the private world of single parents receiving social assistance, but rather with the bureaucrats who govern the social relations between participants, program workers, policy makers and analysts.[6] Frontline workers who step outside these social relations may misalign not only themselves but also their clients; they may render them un-actionable:

> To use a language that is not already fitted to the circular frameworks established by the professional division of labor, ensures that what is said will have at best an uncertain place, lacking authority. If it cannot be resolved into the appropriate terminology, it cannot gain currency within the system. (Smith, 1990b, p. 100)

Nevertheless, many frontline workers find they cannot make the compromises required to "gain currency within the system." Zora Neale

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[6] As Kathy Ferguson (1984) says, "to be firmly grounded in the nonbureaucratic is to be removed from the arenas of available public speech" (p. 23).

knows her job description includes appropriate referral from her program to programs that provide training and education, but "there is a reality out there, too" (Focus group 2). Zora knows there are no jobs "out there" and, even when there are jobs, racism and sexism act against her clients: "They go through a [hotel reception] program, they get on-the-job training, they get the work placement. They do really well. A job pops up and they offer her a [position] as a cleaning maid" (Focus group 2). Trained as a social worker, Zora has a strong sense of what it means to act out of that discipline, that profession. She also knows that there are two kinds of training: one you get in your family and on the streets, one you get in school. Her grandmother, she says, taught her that "You've got to work twice as hard, do better work," in order to keep up with her peers and she has to do that because she is Black in a society permeated with systemic racism.

> You [have to] raise Black children differently than you raise White kids — Black kids come out differently. We have to come out with a sense of toughness even before we know how to spell tough. My formal education didn't help me with that. (Focus group 3)

Ella Sparks calls that "street sense," something you get from your extended family and your community. Irene says what she knows about "who am I, where am I going, what will I be — I get that from my family relationships. They taught me who I am, where we come from. My grandparents, they struggled and now, we're struggling" (Focus group 3).

Wendy Luttrell (1989) learned through her research with Black and White women in academic upgrading classes that Black women distinguish "schoolwise intelligence" and "real intelligence." The schoolwise intelligence women "gleaned from textbooks or school authorities [and] can come in conflict with working-class, especially black working class, experiences and

values" (p. 41). The very real differences among women in this study demonstrate that Black and White women do not know all the same things but "what they do have in common is the organization of knowledge as a social relation that ultimately is successful in diminishing their power as they experience the world" (Luttrell, 1989, p. 44).

Women's power to act out of what they know about their private and professional lives comes in part from their passionate commitment to themselves, their families, their frontline work, and their communities. The further they are required to move from these places of knowing, the more dispassionate they are expected to become. Their attempts to bridge the gap between the coordinating practices of bureaucracies and the embodied practices of frontline practice alienate them from their work with members of marginalized communities, including themselves. The more successful they become at interpreting between program participants and policy makers, the less they are expected to identify with the everyday pain and suffering engendered by employability enhancement policies.

bell hooks (1990) expresses the very real horror that comes from realizing how many people enter into policy and practice debates from a position behind bureaucratic discourse. "Distanced from the pain, the woundedness, the ugliness" (p. 215) they can depersonalize subjects that cause discomfort; they can "dis" passion, deride its effectiveness and efficiencies, make it "other." Dorothy Smith (1990b) writes that "to know is always to know on some terms, and the paradox of knowing is that we discover in its object the lineaments of what we know already" (p. 33). What frontline workers learn to know in this context is that coordinating practices cannot accommodate program workers as subjects; should they want to move into

positions of influence they must speak either from the position of their program participants or from the position of their managers. In the process they remove their selves from the exchange.

4.11 Coordinating practices and professional postures

When program counsellors, instructors, and managers move into ruling relations, separating themselves from program participants in order to engage in coordinating practices, they move to a greater or lesser extent into professional roles. Coordinating practices privilege bureaucratic knowing, credentialed knowing, and dispassionate knowing. They also depend upon a codified form of ethical knowing: certified social workers have an explicit Code of Ethics, adult educators align themselves with philosophical rather than professional allegiances. And, no matter the credential, frontline workers have learned to frame their everyday practices in particular ways, in keeping with the framework and traditions of their disciplines as well as with the mandates of their programs and their commitment to their colleagues and communities. They share conventions, as Donald Schon (1987) suggests, taking particular epistemological perspectives in order to share a vision of what their work is and what it might become. They come to think like "adult educators," "social workers," "employment counsellors," "skills instructors," and "program managers"; in the process, they form a community of practitioners who distinctively coordinate their work:

> They share conventions of action that include distinctive media, languages, and tools. They operate within particular kinds of institutional settings. . . . Their practices are structured in terms of particular kinds of units of activity. . . and they are socially and institutionally patterned so as to present repetitive occurrences of particular kinds of situations. (p. 32)

First semester social work students learn that they are on the way to becoming members of a profession. In their core text they read that, as a member of a professional community, they must adhere to a particular code of conduct, "a formalized expression of accountability of (1) the profession to the society that gives it sanction, (2) constituent practitioners to consumers who utilize their services, and (3) practitioners to their profession" (Hepworth & Larsen, 1990, p. 11). As we have seen, operationalizing performance objectives can lead to accountability through quantifiable behaviour rather than qualitative behaviour. When asked for her understanding of professionalism, Zora Neale first proposes the disciplinary function:

> It's about accountability. As a social worker, a complaint can go to the NSASW [Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers] or the ABSW [Association of Black Social Workers] . . . [a client can] say, "I don't think the quality of service that I received from Zora Neale adhered to the ethics of social workers. (Focus group 3)

She also acknowledges "the sense of sanity" her professional affiliation gives her by connecting her with other politically aware, justice-seeking Black women.

This understanding is not disavowed by the Canadian Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics:

> Social workers are dedicated to the welfare and self-realization of human beings; to the development of resources to meet individual, group, national and international needs and aspirations; and to the achievement of social justice for all. (cited Carniol, 1990, p. 37)

Nevertheless, Ben Carniol (1990) argues that, in its entirety, the Code of Ethics leads him to question the extent to which social workers are expected to demonstrate professional allegiance to the coordinating practices of their

mandated agencies before their allegiance to their clients, their colleagues or their community (pp. 81-83). Having experienced censure because of his participation in advocacy activities, he argues that the hierarchical structure of the profession reflects the hierarchical structure of an inequitable society. If frontline workers want to progress beyond the frontlines, they will have to become "apologists for the system" (p. 74).

Carniol believes social workers should not be denied the option of moving into spheres of influence with "higher pay, more influence, more prestige, a sense of personal security" (p. 74). At the same time, he agrees with Graham Riches (1990a) that while social work professes to serve the most vulnerable members of a society, social workers are funded through "political and bureaucratic imperatives that . . . place profits before people and efficiency ahead of human values" (p. 297). Based on individualist rather than collectivist traditions, Riches argues, "it should not be surprising that [the profession of social work] can readily adapt to the employment policies of the right-wing state and support and promote the philosophy of blaming the victim" (p. 297).

Despite vigourous debate, adult educators have not constituted a professional code of ethics. A president of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, William Griffith (1991) argues that "every recognized profession is expected to have a code of ethics that sets out the responsibilities of that profession, individually and collectively toward clients, community and the world" (p. 4). Without a code of ethics, a standardized set of practices, he claims, adult educators have no guidelines outside hegemonic values. However it is the question of standardized practices that has blocked the development of the discipline as a profession.

As Ralph Brockett (1988) points out the discipline of adult education is not "disciplined" at all; it is "characterized by extreme diversity in both ideology and practice [and] there are few, if any, universally accepted practices or beliefs" (p. 1).

Those who advocate "for interdisciplinary identity and credibility for adult education" (Connelly & Light, 1991, p. 233) contend that the contributions of instructors to the development of coordinating practices at both the policy and program level are discounted because they cannot agree on professional standards. At the same time, others contend that while individual practitioners can engage in ethical practices without a professional code, the process of professionalization "results in the formation of legally licensed realms of technical expertise requiring specialized training and conferring definite social privilege" (Crew & Easton, 1992, p. 5).

Those who teach adult educators do not wish to be seen as training trainers, as merchandisers of techniques. From this perspective, the ideals of the adult educator cannot and should not be codified and brought under control. In what appears to be a direct hit on social workers Robert Carlson (1988) emphasizes that educators cannot be aligned with "rhetorical facades of public service erected to preserve and enhance a profession's independent and monopolistic control over an area of social interaction" (p. 165).

Of course, things are rarely that simple. As Zora Neale has already indicated, Black women can use membership in their profession to articulate them not only to codified standards of behaviour but also to their community and each other. At the same time, Ella Sparks says, White society has collapsed professional identity and status: "You are a doctor, you are a lawyer, you are a teacher ... you are these things" (Focus group 3). Being Black and

being professional, especially in the context of historically White agencies,

sets up a tension between being a professional that members of the White

community may respect and that members of the Black community may

suspect. In the Black community, it's important to have the letters but not

necessarily to show them — Ella Sparks says it's like taking off and putting on

hats:

> When I walk into the white community that I work in I keep my hat
> on all day. My hat is there. I go into a store, my hat is there. I go to the
> library, my hat is on there. I go into buy maxipads in the store, my hat
> is on. I am there, I am professional, and I cannot go out of that mould
> because they are just waiting [waiting for you]. . . . But when I get past
> those city limits, I am home and I am myself again. (Focus group 3)

"Even with the changing of the hats," Zora continues, "at the core, I know

who I am." Trying to maintain the variety of coordinating practices required

by marginalized peoples everywhere, means "you are always out with

somebody else's reality and struggling to survive" (Focus group 3). As a rule,

only the very privileged can go bare-headed into arguments concerning

professional constraints.

Even within her own community, Zora says, coordinating practices

force her to acknowledge how "it is always about accountability":

> I am ultimately responsible for the quality of service I provide to the
> Black community in the North End. On top of being responsible to
> them, I meet the needs of my funders. I meet the needs of my co-
> workers, I meet the needs of my Board. [And yourself, too.] And
> yourself. (Focus group 3)

Staying in right relation with her community does not mean she cannot

maintain her professional affiliation. It just means that she has to be seen to

be giving back to that community. "I have to get in there so they can build a

trust . . . going the extra mile," Ella says (Focus group 3). Going to Tupperware

parties, going to church, sitting down and eating with others, making banners and marching with others are part of "professional ethics" for those who have more than one affiliation. The coordinating practices that arise out of professional postures provide both protection and privilege, sometimes at the cost of passion.

4.12   Discussion: Coordinating Practices

In 1987 federal policy makers and provincial bureaucrats enabled each other to include single mothers receiving social assistance as a "target" group for employability enhancement efforts. Working with these new clients adult educators, social workers, and community workers in employability enhancement programs have to grapple with the gendered assumptions inherent in hegemonic understandings of work ethic and family ethic. Taken together these ethics suggest that men should provide for women and children, and women should care for men and children. Thus, "the proposed solution to the feminization of poverty: marriage for women and the creation and preservation of good-paying jobs for men" (Nuccio & Sands, 1992, p. 27). These gendered assumptions construct a contradictory conceptual framework that structures employability enhancement programs for single mothers, coordinating the efforts of clients, workers and administrators toward externally-defined understandings of progress and success.

That definition of success increasingly comes from the world of business. A corporate model of effective programming in which cost-benefit analyses — with the fiscal outcome for the state at the center — becomes explicit through the critiques leveled by the Employment Resources Network (ERN). The impact of this corporate approach is acknowledged by others who

write in the field of employability enhancement (e.g., Barter, 1992;

Cummings, 1980; Hasenfeld, 1989; Riches, 1990a). Yeheskel Hasenfeld (1989),

as editor of a special issue of <u>Administration in Social Work,</u> writes that

social services are now under attack and have to demonstrate effectiveness

and efficiency if they are to continue to have a role at all. Increasingly time

and money are being directed toward "administration, supervision, policy

analysis, staff-training, planning, and research," rather than "caregiving,

counselling, case management and concrete service-giving" (Cummings,

1980, p. 11).

In this chapter we have seen how the work of frontline employability

enhancement workers is socially organized — we have seen their compliance

with and resistance against the ways their work is ideologically rationalized

and textually controlled. Coordinating practices provide the text for the

program workers who act as education and training resource brokers, using

the administration and management of policies, mandates, files, and forms to

construct their program participants as actionable within bureaucratic

systems. Just as the program participants in Chapter Three were admonished

to take care of family matters, in this chapter administrators and frontline

workers were directed toward taking care of accountability, entering

themselves and their clients into authorized accounts structured by

bureaucratic forms toward bureaucratic relevances.

Similarly, just as in Chapter Three a cultural curriculum was shown to

delineate for program participants an appropriately presented personal/

embodied self, in this chapter postsecondary curriculum was shown to

delineate for program workers an appropriately credentialed professional/

coordinating self. Their education articulates the workers to broader guiding

discourses that define "good-enough mother" and "good-enough worker" as bases for bestowing citizenship rights. Moreover, the professional discourses learned through postsecondary curricula define deviations from these socially sanctioned statuses as deficits to be overcome.

Finally, the coordinating aspects of professional practices instruct frontline workers to know dispassionately, to distance themselves from their experiential knowing, to strive for impartiality in their communications as intermediaries between state bureaucrats and program participants. Professional codes of ethics further coordinate them toward the adoption of standardized guidelines for behaviour, as well as toward particular values and principles.

At the same time that we have seen how standardized categories, forms, curricula, and codes of ethics make possible and coordinate institutional articulation (Walker, 1990b, p. 16), we have also seen program workers' resistance to those coordinating practices. Kathy Ferguson (1984) warns that people are always more complex than their organizational positions imply.

> There is a temptation toward reductionism in discussing bureaucracy, which is often seen in the identification of individuals entirely with their organizational roles or in the identification of the actual functioning of organizations with the organizations' own descriptions and defense of their function. It is important to remember that concrete existing individuals are temporal beings who have complex social histories and multiple possible futures; real people cannot be collapsed into their organizational identities. (p. 37)

As we have seen in this chapter, individual women resist as well as collaborate in coordinating practices and mandated policies by fudging forms, negotiating or manipulating mandates, "going the extra mile" for clients. Most significantly, they exhibit epistemological integrity by keeping hold of

what they know within the coordinating context. They resist the disciplinary control embedded in standardized content through the recognition of differences in the face of professional posturing.

It is also true that within the social work and adult education disciplines there are contradictory ethical pulls that can open up space for resistance to bureaucratic mandates. Graham Riches (1990a) believes that though social work is individualist in orientation, it is also committed to social change, a positioning which can pit social workers against "political and bureaucratic imperatives that rest on assumptions that place profits before people and efficiency ahead of human values" (p. 297). In response, says Nancy Naples (1991), "many social service workers . . . address the problems of long-term welfare recipients in imaginative and effective ways" (p. 35). Advocacy is part of the professional stance of both social workers (Foley, 1994) and adult educators (Griffith, 1991). As we shall see in the next chapter ethical practices, both personal and professional, provide the context for employability enhancement work, drawing on frontline workers' orientation toward socio-historically constructed humanist ethics of care, emancipatory ethics of justice, feminist ethics of collective action, and ethics of service and community alliance.

Chapter Five   Ethical Practices

5.1   Introduction: Ethical Practices

As becomes clear in Section 4.6, mainstream definitions of "successful" employability enhancement focus on efficient program provision that reduces participants' reliance on income assistance by shifting their main source of income to wage-labour. That this defines success even when participants experience financial loss or no appreciable gain highlights the moral and ethical basis of employability enhancement work. Accountability in this context arises out of short term cost/ benefit analysis, and program managers, instructors, and counsellors who evaluate their own work and the work of others on different grounds find themselves caught in inherently conflictual relationships and expectations concerning care giving and accountability.

"The actual delivery of services to clients is secondary to two more crucial functions," Kathy Ferguson (1984) states, the regulation and control of client behavior and the maintenance of links with other organizations. In a context in which success and accountability can be measured in objective terms of efficiency rather than in subjective terms of effective intervention, "the clients are an interference with the worker's ability to complete the forms" (p. 141). Program workers become responsible for managing the poor for the state, mediating between those who develop social welfare policy and those targeted to benefit from subsequent programming initiatives. They thus find themselves in an "ethical struggle with the incongruities inherent in the social welfare system" (Finn, 1990, p. 59).

The coordinating practices explicated in the previous chapter make the troubles real people experience actionable by sorting, categorizing, and shaping the often incoherent stories told to frontline workers in their offices. This process of accurately completing forms and creating files must co-exist with irreducibly messy accounts of individual lives, lives most often defined by ever-present embodied distinctions that defy articulation within standardized procedures. The ethical practices of frontline work thus arise in relation to local and particular circumstances, complex interactions with program participants, funders, colleagues, and self. As adult educator Phyllis Cunningham (1988) argues, "It is in the politics of practice that the question of ethics is confronted" (p. 139).

Sarah Hoagland (1988) notes that, "typically, when we reach for ethics, we want rules or standards or principles" (p. 10). In this chapter, ethics refer to concepts such as ought, should, duty, moral rules, right, wrong and obligation. More than static rules and standards that provide certainty about what is right for ourselves and others, however, ethical practices result in the day-to-day making of concrete choices. More than an adherence to formalized professional codes of ethics, ethical practices provide an over-arching context for employability enhancement programs, drawing on frontline workers' orientation toward socio-historically constructed humanist ethics of care, emancipatory ethics of justice, feminist ethics of collective action, and ethics of service and community alliance.

The disciplinary transmission of ethical codes, and the social organization of frontline work itself, do not provide sufficient ethical grounding for program workers.

The reality, or water in which we swim, is defined and controlled by the groups that are dominant. As a result, the structural hegemony that controls our interpretation of our personal values and our social roles does not provide an adequate basis for making ethical decisions. (Cunningham, 1988, p. 139)

Confronted with constant practical ethical dilemmas, program staff develop or draw on ethical frameworks that may or may not be encompassed by the professional ethics of adult education and social work, as they "forge new understandings of social roles and relationships through dialogue," and "bring to life and to practice the personal values that are congruent with a democratic society" (Cunningham, 1988, p. 139). Ethical practices, therefore, come into being through the "day-to-day choices . . . consistent with one's moral beliefs" (Fenby, 1991, p. 34).

In this chapter five more frontline workers will be introduced, highlighting aspects of the ethical frameworks women employ and the ethical practices in which they engage. Julia Scott, a community worker from the neighbourhood centre A Healing Place, articulates a deep caring and respect for clients (5.2). She is motivated by an intense belief in social justice and the innate value of all life, as well as a commitment to community service and community alliances with feminist activists. Jane Lesley engages in Contract Work providing literacy training and adult upgrading through municipal school boards (5.3). She struggles in considerable isolation to implement an ethic of social justice and emancipation, a central component of critical education pedagogy. Mary Campbell, from the Employment Outreach program Supporting Women, exemplifies an ethic of care that has been a guiding ethic of social work and social service provision (5.4). She values above all else her own ability to show each client respect and unconditional positive regard. Finally, Zoe Brown, Zora Neale, and Lucy Salt

from the outreach program A Feminist Collective illustrate the centrality of collective and individual action toward social change as they articulate their feminist political ethic (5.5).

After introducing these women and their ethical practices, the chapter will turn to explicating how the articulation of employability enhancement work to a particular social, political and fiscal context — the relationship between the state and program staff — constructs the ethical stances of some frontline workers as inevitably contestatory, and therefore political (5.6). Four types of ethical practices evidenced by the women in this research will be examined in detail. An ethic of care provides the context for employability enhancement work, pervading in some way all of the other ethical stances examined here (5.7). A humanist ethic of liberal individualism and its emphasis on the nurturance that underlies an ethic of care is challenged by the collective emancipatory aims of an ethic of social justice, an ethic examined here as part of the critical theory of adult education (5.8). The abstracted theory, however, remains elusive in practical terms without the framework of collective action.

That collective action forms the cornerstone of feminist political ethics, along with a commitment to negotiating the power relations that pervade social differences such as race, class and gender (5.9). The political integrity of frontline workers' ethical practices (keeping hold of what they do and why they do it) is maintained through the development and maintenance of community alliances (5.10). The mutual compassion and respect, as well as the material knowing of concrete interactions prevents an ethic of community service from becoming a form of paternalistic charity as frontline workers accomplish their daily work of crossing boundaries and building

alliances. The ability to enact political integrity becomes centred in, and central to, the personal and professional boundaries foundational to self-care as well as care of others (5.11). It is this political integrity that allows women to continue with frontline work in the face of their contradictory commitments to care, justice, feminism, collective action, and community alliances.

5.2   If every individual was treated as sacred

Julia Scott: A Healing Centre commits to growth through respect

Julia Scott is a Community Worker in a non-profit neighbourhood centre that receives funding from a variety of sources, including the United Way. The centre, which I call A Healing Centre, has a 21-year history in Metro serving low-income residents of the surrounding community. Although its ongoing activities adjust to accommodate the priorities and policies of ever-changing governments, the core staff have been able to maintain their focus on empowering individuals and families who struggle to escape the consequences of poverty and violence.

In 1993, Julia's job included supervising people who had been ordered by the court to do community service instead of prison terms; supervising non-custodial parents who had court-appointed "supervised access" visits with their children; counselling incest survivors; coordinating volunteers who work on the front desk; and individual and collective advocacy work. She also spends 50 per cent of her time administering an academic upgrading class that prepares students for the grade 12 equivalency exam (GED). That includes outreach and intake for the nine-month four-day-a-week program, collecting fees, monitoring attendance, and providing ongoing support for

students struggling to make the transition from home to school. Approximately 75 to 80 per cent of the program participants receive social assistance and many have been referred by municipal and provincial caseworkers or social workers. Employment counsellors also send clients to the Centre for individualized six-month work placements during which Julia provides support and counselling for these clients' transition to full-time employment.

There have been significant changes in the categories of clients referred to the Centre. "Up until November, 1992, most of the people in this program were single parents," Julia says, "but now [the referring agency] focuses mainly on able-bodied people" (Interview 1). Here the category "able-bodied" means employable men or women who have no dependents. These clients may be reluctant participants who attend because their only other option is to leave income assistance, whereas the single parents Julia used to work with often asked to be placed at the Centre. Non-voluntary participation violates the Centre's mandate and Julia's own philosophy. "I believe very strongly that the individual who comes to me knows what they need, knows what they want," she says (Interview 1). When policies or funding requirements dictate those needs then she feels she must either refer people elsewhere or find a way to meet their actual needs. "I negotiate it," she says, and she expects her executive director to "manipulate in writing" any conflict between the letter of the contract or agreement and the actual work clients accomplish.

This manipulation is a coordinating practice that orients the Centre's mandate to the government's mandate. Julia believes that these coordinating practices are unhealthy and ethically suspect. In the short term they may facilitate clients' participation in Centre programs, but in the long term they

eat away at the integrity of her work, work meant to restore clients' sense of self-worth, self-respect. To ground that work in the manipulation of words instead may reinforce the nature of some clients' original injuries, injuries arising out of lies, secrets, and silences.

She also struggles with the ethics of providing someone with time-limited space and support for growth and healing, usually a six-month period of work placement, or for the duration of an upgrading program after which they return to their everyday lives. Julia's anger over this injustice is rooted in her own experience of coming to work at the Centre at a time when she needed healing. The staff used their mandate to support and nurture her through that time, validating her personal work by giving her an opportunity to heal others.

> They didn't take that work and say, "Oh! You're an incest survivor so you can't do da ta da ta da ta da ta." [They didn't] paint it with a brush and say it's a terrible thing. Instead, [they] looked at my experience and said, "That can help you do something." (Interview 1)

What helped her, and what she believes helps the work study participants, is being in an environment that allows people to grow, that expects people to grow and that acknowledges that growing can be difficult at times and can lead to mistakes.

The staff hired by the Centre must be "open and gentle and caring." They must have spent some time developing self-compassion as well as compassion for others, self-respect as well as respect for others. They need to believe in their own dignity and the dignity of others. As a child, Julia says, she was not treated with dignity or respect by those around her. With the help of others, she has been able to heal. At the base of the ethical belief system out of which she does her work is the understanding that if her

abusers had been given "an opportunity to be less confused than they were, then they never would have treated me that way" (Interview 1).

> I believe that if every individual was treated as sacred and if we treated our environment as sacred, and we treated our animals as sacred, then we wouldn't be doing what we're doing to each other. (Dialogue)

Informed by this belief, that "things could be different if people were given an opportunity to sort some things out," Julia works with colleagues in the Centre to advocate for everyone's right to heal, to become less confused: "It's community people like me who go out and say "This is not right""

(Interview 1).

In the process of doing that community advocacy work she is consistently confronted by policies, programs, and bureaucratic practices that work to restrict opportunities for change. This confrontation multiplies as one person after another, over the weeks and months and years that Julia has been doing this work, finds that available programs and services are not suited to their needs. It has become an ongoing battle, fought on individual fronts — for individual clients, with individual bureaucrats and workers. More and more she sees herself as a lone warrior rather than part of a community-based movement for change.

> Because the community's so fragmented it's the same fight over and over and over again, for different people, in different circumstances, but similar issues. . . . It's really frustrating to work one day to get funding for someone and then have to go through it [again the next day] with someone else from a whole different point of view and you may or may not be successful. It takes a lot of work, a lot of energy. (Interview 1)

Much of that energy would be better spent if she could move beyond the individual fight against injustice, to change the rules, instead of to define her individual client as an exception to the rule, time after time after time.

For someone who says "I experience my whole being as political,"
(Dialogue) this one-to-one advocacy is extraordinarily frustrating. Julia
believes the municipal, provincial, and federal governments have split the
social service community, pitting agency against agency, until they are "so
busy fighting over small amounts of money," that there is no time for a
collective stance against social injustice. It appears to come down to the bald
statement that "I don't see people like I used to see people" and that makes it
difficult to keep the fires burning.

> If I could really believe that I was a sacred being, if I could really, really
> believe that of myself and if there was more support for that, then
> there would be more fire! But there's not enough support. Even I, in
> all that I have, in everything that I have, still fight for that little piece.
> (Dialogue)

It is difficult to name the complex ethical practices Julia brings to her work.
She works out of a place of deep caring and respect for her clients; she is
grounded in a strong need for social justice; she daily operationalizes her
ethical belief that all life is sacred; and she roots her life and work in feminist
and humanist community activism. The isolation and individualism of her
work trouble her so much precisely because she is so deeply committed to
collective action and community service.

5.3 Transformational perspective — Freirian learning — It's all waiting! Jane Lesley: Contract Work with inner city single parents

Like Julia Scott, Jane Lesley has worked in her field for many years. In
her case, it is the field of adult literacy and basic education and her work is
almost always Contract Work. She has taught in prison programs,
community-based upgrading programs, one-to-one literacy programs, school

board night school classes, programs for youth and for those who have severe employment disadvantages. In 1993 she had three contracts through the Continuing Education Departments of municipal school boards. She coordinated an adult literacy program sponsored by a community-based library, she prepared single parents from an inner-city public housing complex to write the grade 12 equivalency exam (GED), and she did the same work for adults in a suburban community just outside Metro.

The adult literacy program at the library involves volunteer tutors and students working at any level from basic literacy to GED preparation. Jane interviews potential students and tutors, trains the tutors, and assigns one-to-one pairs that meet two mornings a week for two hours. She is on hand during the tutorials to provide ongoing support, field questions, and talk with people who want to find out about the program. Outside these hours, she attends meetings with library staff and other literacy coordinators, and she may engage in informal counselling with students who want to discuss further options for training. The school board pays her $25 an hour for 12 hours a week.

The single-parent program in public housing meets two hours a night, two nights a week, for nine months. The program in the suburbs meets three hours a night, one night a week, for four months. Jane is paid for each contact hour and she receives nothing for preparation time or time spent before and after classes with students who want to talk about their work. There are no benefits or job security with these contracts and no accountability once a minimum registration has been reached. Following the classes, students may or may not pay $25 to write the GED exam administered by the province's Department of Education.

Relevance and isolation become the overwhelming themes that emerge during my conversations with Jane. During our first interview Jane keeps returning to the difficult class she had had in the public housing complex the evening before. For most of the single parent participants, this class provides time away from their family responsibilities, social time during which they can meet with other women in their community. Some of them are looking for ways to escape their current realities and others are there to confirm that the current reality is all they will ever have. Jane says they are "adults with attitude," a group of students who challenge her ability to teach them anything they need or want to know. The previous night she had to "pull rank" to keep them focused on the curriculum.

After some good work with a writing activity, the class moved on to grammar exercises. One young woman said in frustration "Let's do something that's life!" and that cry for relevance tapped into Jane's reserve of frustration with her work and her working conditions. When they came to analyze the grammatical structure of a particularly ridiculous sentence ("When I moved it hopped away") Jane responded sarcastically, "Here's some real life content for you women!"[1] Reflecting on the incident, and the lack of relevance of standardized curricula to the lives of her students, Jane said, "I feel really isolated" (Interview 1).

In her early years of adult literacy work Jane was involved with a flickering provincial adult literacy movement. But after a while she could no

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[1] In the suburbs curriculum relevance doesn't appear to be a dilemma, Jane says, because those students appear to know who they are, where they want to be, and how they're going to get there. They don't need "life" injected into the GED content because the content already reflects their reality. With the single parents receiving income assistance, "It is all political [because] you are trying to get people to move" (Dialogue).

longer generate the passion and commitment it takes to overcome the structural constraints of a standardized curriculum and the provincial adult education department's lack of vision and commitment. "It's a young person's game, almost, unless somehow you're so fired by it you can't help it" (Interview 1). Now that she is older and a mother she cannot deplete her store of energy fighting a system that has become more and more disconnected and narrowly defined.

In her dialogue with Julia Scott, Jane says the lack of connection among adult educators in Nova Scotia means that in order to bring about the kinds of curricular change she and her students desire she would need to take on the initial organizing — from past work in that arena she knows it would not be easy.

> When am I going to do it? How am I going to do it? To what extent without any support? But, you see, what I tend to do is see [the lack of connection with students] as simply a shortcoming in myself. . . . It is much easier to internalize it. (Dialogue)

The isolation she experiences as a contract worker and as an adult educator without a vibrant community of other adult educators, leaves her individualizing the problems of a curriculum that is irrelevant to the lives of her students.

As with most of the more experienced and well-qualified adult educators in Metro, Jane has lobbied the school board for a local adult high school. All their lobbying has not, in the end, been able to overcome bureaucratic inertia. Key positions, she says, require vision, "and there's blessed little we can do unless the person that has that position has some vision" (Dialogue). Both the structural and individual constraints that the bureaucracy and bureaucrats place around the work of adult educators serve

to isolate them, to remove any possibility of a community of students and teachers.

Jane anticipated with dread the interview question "do you consider your work political?" She was shocked that some women involved in this research were surprised by that question. Jane feels intensely "aware of the politics involved in education, especially . . . working with single parents on family benefits" (Dialogue). She knew that by agreeing to participate in the research she was agreeing to reflect on aspects of her work that cause her pain; questions concerning the politics inherent in adult education with oppressed groups "bring to mind that this is something that I don't do, or that I don't know how to do, or that I can't do, or choose not to do. And, yeah, I feel guilty" (Interview 1).

Jane has been immersed in an adult education ethic based on the politics of empowerment and liberation At the same time, she is unwilling to shoulder all the responsibility for not being able to tap into the "transformational perspective" and "Freirian learning" taught during her graduate education degree. "It's all very well to take the Brazilian model where you've got 20 exploited peasants who can give you their mornings," she says, but that isn't the reality here where "you've got the breakfast dishes and a wage to earn" (Interview 1). She agrees that, theoretically, her work is political but without an everyday structural framework for undertaking political collective action, there is no way for the contract practitioner to fulfill the role for which she was trained. She ignores the political and ethical demands of adult education work,

> because I have a job and a family and a dog and it's just too big to tackle alone. I can't do anything alone. There are no structures. There's not an association of GED instructors who would like to politicize the high

> school equivalency examination. There's hardly an association of adult educators that doesn't include representatives of the bureaucracies that maintain this . . . adult education void. So I concentrate on [teaching] fractions. (Dialogue)

Jane would prefer to pay attention to the politics she believes are inherent in her work; if she felt able, she would make politics the content of her classes, she would give her class "life or, if you will, politics" (Interview 1).

The link between the politics of education and the ethical practices of educators is critical for Jane. There is a "big, big gap in educational ethics," she believes, a gap that is "close to criminal," to suggest that students' lives will change if they finish the GED preparation and pass the test.

> What are we doing [with] this dinky little outdated GED test in an age when we're talking about global competition? It really needs to be re-thought [but] there's no commitment to do that, to make policy at that level. (Dialogue)

Yet, at the same time, the GED is " a second chance . . . certification, pride. It's something tangible that people can do" (Interview 1). And, Jane acknowledges, "people come [to] get prepared to write this test. Who am I to not give them their money's worth?" (Dialogue).

Repeatedly Jane articulates the dilemma of being caught between an adult education ethic or politic of empowerment and liberation and her intense, somewhat polarized, and significantly constrained relationship with the single-parent students. She recognizes that her "adults with attitude" may have very good grounds for being suspicious of her intentions.

> I haven't said this consciously to myself before — but I don't want to set myself up for "Who the hell does she think she is?" Exactly! Who do I think I am to try to liberate anybody? Or to have them question their circumstances and their choices? I can hardly deal with my own! (Interview 1)

The theories of liberatory politics through popular education work less well in real life, in a public housing project in Halifax, with a standardized curriculum and an under-paid isolated contract worker. Nevertheless, Jane identifies a real need for liberation of some sort — she sees "[a] real degree of sadness" in these students, a sadness that she believes comes from a lack of choices, "[an] overwhelming feeling of having no recourse to any kind of personal growth . . . personal space" (Dialogue).

In the end, the lack of relevance of her teaching and the isolation that prevents her from working effectively with other adult educators to change that, leave Jane feeling hopeless. "Sometimes I just long . . . for a full day's work," work that includes an ongoing and committed relationship with colleagues and with a body of students. "All this stuff I do in units, bits and pieces" (Interview 1) leads to a feeling of futility. While she does get a measure of satisfaction from knowing that she has made a difference for individual students, on a larger scale she knows that "my work is political, but it isn't," a crazy-making contradiction that leaves her with "a cop-out":

> I can [only] take refuge in the fact that I have this narrowly-defined work space and it is much easier for me . . . to teach someone to do multiplication and write coherently than it is to approach the empowerment [of my students]. (Dialogue)

The failure of the emancipatory ethic of her training to match the reality of her isolating piecemeal work situation leads Jane to abandon political ethics in favour of a much more pragmatic approach. She does her work out of this pragmatism more than anything else, even though that leaves her feeling guilty, frustrated and angry. In Section 5.8 we will look more closely at the ethic of social justice that informs Jane's adult education work.

5.4   Sometimes we can give them that little boost

Mary Campbell: Supporting Women with unconditional positive regard

Mary Campbell works in an Employment Outreach program in the same town and building as Margaret Lindsay (4.3). For 14 years, the program that I call Supporting Women has received federal funding to assess women's job readiness and refer them to appropriate services, such as a transition house, legal aid office, family support centre, daycare services, mental health practitioners, social assistance workers, or family court. During their first years, Supporting Women had a mandate to serve single women; now they provide employment counselling to any woman who finds her needs best met in this two-woman office. With an active caseload of 75 to 80 clients each quarter, 90 per cent are single mothers referred to the program through media reports, municipal caseworkers or protection workers, family therapists, and Social Assistance Recipient training programs. Although the town has Canada Employment Centres (CECs), Mary says she and her co-worker are expected to "go the extra mile" for those women who require more non-employment-oriented services.

Supporting Women conducts 10-week workshops for single mothers every three or four months with professionals from the community acting as resources to teach life skills, assertiveness training, and time management. Most women also require academic upgrading; anyone with less than a Grade 10 formal education may participate in a GED course with instructors from the School Board's Continuing Education division. Although many participants would like to register with the local Community College, anyone not receiving Employment Insurance goes on a very long waiting list. Though much of her work centres around ongoing routine programming

and referrals, Mary always has to be prepared for the unexpected. The day of her interview, she had arrived at work to find a woman in crisis; she spent the rest of the day helping this woman pro-actively problem-solve and then access the services she needs.

Helping women take control of their own lives, beginning with small steps, is what Mary finds most satisfying. She tries to give them "that little boost" that encourages them to make changes in their lives.

> An example is GED. Some may feel they could not do something like that because all their lives they've been put down, believing they couldn't make any positive changes. However, when they get that GED certificate in their hands they say, "I did it, I can go further." (Interview 1)

Mary and her co-worker provide clients with the personalized support they need to make their own decisions. Their problem-solving model includes empathetic listening and positive feedback beginning from the client's standpoint.

> If I have a client who is distraught, I show her unconditional positive regard, respecting her as an individual and listening. I will not interrupt saying this is employment outreach. This may be the first and only time that she has been able to open up and express how she is really feeling. (Interview 1)

Although it can be frustrating if someone seems to be "on an emotional roller coaster," Mary feels grounded through her job description. "I know where I can go with a client. If I feel that it is something beyond . . . what I'm qualified to do, I will make a referral" (Interview 1).

Like other programs, Supporting Women's accountability takes the form of program statistics concerning the numbers of résumés generated, job search workshops sponsored, life skills classes delivered and so on. They submit reports each quarter and are monitored once a year. The work they do

with women attempting to overcome past and current trauma is difficult to document but, because their funding agency understands the barriers faced by single mothers, Mary doesn't feel pressured by either the statistics or quotas. She believes the funders accept the necessity of less tangible forms of employability enhancement such as healing, personal growth, and self-esteem building

These aspects of her work are crucial, Mary says; once women can recognize they have some control over their problems they can decide to make changes. After that decision, there is very little they cannot do.

> They may be really timid, unsure of themselves and I can say, "Hey, go on, you can do it." . . . Once they start to look at themselves and say, "What can I do for me?" then . . . that's where the change is going to begin. (Interview 1)

Helping women understand they are not alone, that there are others facing the same feelings of fear and isolation, increases with their self-esteem, Mary says. That increase in self-esteem promotes positive growth elsewhere in their lives. "There is so much offered to women today that many are grabbing on to the challenge" (Interview 1).

Mary believes that effective employment counsellors must combine "natural style with formal training" (Interview 1). She argues that effective counselling calls on her both to identify with women in order to be empathetic and to detach herself in order to remain non-judgmental. Reluctant to use either negative or positive personal life experiences as a measuring stick for others, she asserts that her education and training has taught her how to respond professionally. Acting professionally means treating clients with respect and a non-judgmental attitude.

What can I do for this client at this time? I'm to respect her as an individual at all times and to respect her privacy, her confidentiality, and her dignity. Part of being a professional person is to respect that client for who they are, where they are. I show unconditional positive regard for every client — to respect where they are at that time with a non-judgmental attitude. (Interview 1)

This includes everything from putting the telephone on call forward to avoid disrupting the counselling session, to delicately balancing her own instincts, life experience, and training. She has to see both the individual and the social context, and separate stereotypes from reality. "We are all individuals with our own set of values," Mary says. "Each client should be treated as a unique individual and shown respect at all times" (Interview 1).

Mary does not understand her work as political and expressed surprise that I would suggest her advocacy work may have a critical component. "When I see positive changes and growth in a woman who has struggled for so long, it creates much personal satisfaction within, knowing they did it," Mary explains. "It has nothing to do with politics" (Interview 1). In her eyes, politics is about power and she should communicate neither power nor privilege in the counselling process. Similarly, she doesn't see working with women as a political position; she wants to work with people in a caring field and it would make no difference to her if her program changed its focus to youth or to families that include men.

Whereas Julia Scott, A Healing Centre, was frustrated with the limitations of individual advocacy and longed for increased community-based social change efforts, Mary Campbell grounds her work in an ethic of individual equality and growth. Mary does her work out of a firm commitment to the right of each individual to expect respect, nurturing and support for the personal growth that comes with being held in positive

regard. In her daily practices she operationalizes an ethic of care, an ethic we will examine in more detail in Section 5.7.

5.5   It's the political agenda that gives you hope for change
A Feminist Collective: Balancing individual and collective politics

In 1993 Lucy Salt marked her thirteenth year as an employment counsellor in the program I call A Feminist Collective. A founding staff member, she has seen governments change, policies shift, colleagues move on, and companion programs appear and disappear. Their clients change "amazingly, depending on the economy and the time of year" (Interview 1), although at any one time about 40 per cent are social assistance recipients and about a third single mothers. At least half their clients are referred by word of mouth, while the rest are referrals from community-based agencies such as transition houses. A smaller number come from Canada Employment Centres (CECs).

The local Canada Employment Centre funds the program through its non-profit board, the "Management Team."[2] This board acts as a support group for the Collective, meeting with the three staff members once a month to share expertise, act as a sounding board, undertake contract negotiations, and facilitate links with various women's communities. Lucy believes the organization has a good reputation and is known to be "a good place to work." People know the employment counsellors are happy there: "All they have to do is look and see that the average length that a counsellor stays here is seven years. That's a pretty good reputation" (Interview 1).

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[2] At the time of this research, I was a member of the Management Team for A Feminist Collective

The Collective has explicit performance objectives that address how many clients they see, cases they complete, and employers they visit. There are also implicit objectives, what Lucy calls "the hidden agenda": "We're supposed to see the clients that are too difficult or too time-consuming for [CEC Employment Counsellors]" (Interview 1). This hidden agenda has become more visible over the years. The program mandate has shifted from focusing on re-entry women (those who have been out of the workforce while they raised families) to focusing on women receiving income assistance to women who are not receiving income assistance or employment insurance. Lucy's job, she says, has stayed much the same: supporting women who are trying to find a balance between everyday realities and the possibility of change.

Even when she thinks clients' hopes or dreams or expectations are unrealistic — or at least improbable — Lucy sees her role as supporting their choices and laying out the steps necessary to achieve that goal from where they are right now.

> It's not a question to me of whether they will ever achieve their long term goal, but of whether they will take the first steps in that direction. And maybe down the road they'll come back and say, "No, I don't think I'm ever going to be a brain surgeon, what do you think about vet assistant?" (Interview 1)

The support she provides is especially important for offering hope when times are tough and the opportunities for women are few.

> I think that a lot of what I do is give people hope. [Women] are coming to me saying, "There's no chance" and I can't say, "There's no chance." They didn't come here for me to confirm that life is hard. They came here for me to say, "Life is hard, but —" and they are hanging on to that "but." (Interview 1)

The Collective identifies as a feminist organization and is very public about that self-identification.

> I think [what] has actually worked very strongly in our favour is that we have never tried to hide the fact that we were feminist and see ourselves as an advocacy group. We have been quite up front about that and quite willing to explain what that means to our funding agents. (Lucy Salt, Dialogue)

For all three counsellors in the Collective that feminist ethic makes a difference in the ways they work with women, the attention they pay to social differences of gender and race, the emphasis they place on social action and community development, and the centrality of a political agenda to how they understand their work.

Zora Neale, a Collective staff member hired a year earlier to work with Black women, points out that they use their positions to help clients through the crises common to the lives of women on social assistance. "For most of these women there has been a [physical] crisis in their lives," she says. "Part of my responsibility is to support them when my mandate can get them this or get them that" (Focus group 2). During the times that the Collective's mandate simply does not stretch far enough to help some clients, Zora hopes that some of the political and community development work all Collective staff undertake will provide longer term solutions.

> My workplace encourages all of us — myself and the other two counsellors — to be involved in our communities; [we all understand] there is something that is valuable to us to be political. It doesn't necessarily have to be connected to our work but something that is connected to our soul and that we have passion about. (Focus group 1)

Lucy has been engaged in political activism for many years, particularly through feminist and trade union activity.

> I've been involved in a lot of feminist groups and feminist activities, too. And probably a lot of being prepared for what I do comes from a sense of self-esteem and that people can make changes and do things differently. . . . I've been leading revolts — social action — for a long time against basic injustices that I perceive. (Interview 1)

She believes being involved with feminist and other political organizations gives women "a sense of how to organize, how to get people involved, how to make things happen" (Interview 1). It also cuts down on women's isolation; in her work she tries to get women "interested and involved in doing something else in the community" (Interview 1).

Zoe Brown, the third Collective staff member, has been in this job for nine years. Like her co-workers, she focuses on a particular political activity, in her case violence against women:

> I do a lot of work with battered women through the transition house and going in and saying, "Now here's what you have to do to find a job," [often] makes no sense. . . . If they can't sit and talk to me without crying then there's no point in working with them on getting job interviews. (Interview 1)

Similarly, working with women in poverty requires an acknowledgment that "if you're seeing a client who's selling her furniture to feed herself, you've got to work with that, with what's going on. Job search may not be the thing she needs" (Interview 1). Zoe feels having a job description that balances individual counselling, group work, and social action has made it possible for her to stay in her position without succumbing to burn-out. "If you're only doing individual counseling," she says, "it's a fight not to get stuck in that, to start blaming the victim" (Dialogue).

"Blaming the victim" becomes unavoidable only when government policy positions are equated with common-sense responses to recognized social problems. Because women want to work, the state funds programs

mandated to enhance women's employability. If program staff do their job, program participants will get work and everyone will benefit. Under the assumption of common sense, Lucy says, there is a catch.

> When the government says, "Get them off social assistance," and the woman says, "I want to be off social assistance," those two ideas are compatible. But after that I think they go off on two totally different tangents. The government is saying, "Clerical, earning $16,000-17,000 a year to support you and a couple of kids is fine," and women are saying, "No, that's not fine because that's poverty." (Interview 1)

The Collective's feminist perspective takes the ethical position that women cannot be made scapegoats for their own oppression. If the workers are not pro-active in their response to state oppression, they are complicit.

> You can't just [say], "Oh, here comes another woman who was sexually harassed at her last job and left." Or, "Here comes another woman who suffers from chronic depression." Or "Here comes another woman whose husband gave her enough money to come on the bus and that's all the money she has in her pocket." (Lucy Salt, Dialogue)

Hearing the same stories over and over "naturally leads to social action to address the collective problems," Lucy says. "That balance comes out of a feminist philosophy that you don't just work with the individual, you also have to work for social change" (Dialogue).

Respect for the program participants, though, means recognizing that they come to the Collective looking for support, not a lecture in "political ideology." Although issues of sexism and racism may not be anywhere in the lesson plan, they often arise:

> If you provide an atmosphere where women feel comfortable and you ask, "What's the biggest problem in terms of getting work?" then they feel comfortable to talk about harassment or sexism or childcare concerns or that their husbands do not want them to work. (Lucy Salt, Interview 1)

Though careful never to preach feminism, feminist ethics guide all three workers in the Collective. Lucy argues that among the most revolutionary things women can do "is to be happy and have money to spend." Though this may sound individualistic, she believes that "to be happy is a political statement for women" (Interview 1).

To help women be happy and have a lot of money requires a balancing act between the desire for social change and the reality of making women more employable in the work world. The Collective members are under no illusion as to their role in helping all sides somehow reconcile wants and needs.

> If you're an unemployed woman and you're looking for work, you better learn pretty quickly how to take on the white middle class values —how to negotiate that system, how to appear to be part of what they want. A whole lot of what I do is change people from who they are to what they have to be in order to be successful. Politically we may think it's not right. . . . but you have to talk about this. (Lucy Salt, Final meeting)

The wants and needs of the Collective staff have to be reconciled outside individual counselling sessions and small group work. Understanding that you cannot change the world is essential to maintaining physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Therefore, Lucy says in her first interview, "I can't see doing the job without being political, because this work would burn you out, it would break your heart . . . . if you did not have a political agenda." When she returns the transcript of that interview with her comments she added, "It is the political agenda that gives you hope for change" (Interview 1). The feminist political ethic that drives the work of the members of the Collective will be examined more fully in Section 5.9.

Thus far in this chapter we have been introduced to six women and, through them to the ethical orientations they have to their work in employability enhancement programs. Julia Scott from A Healing Place works out of caring and respect for her clients, as well as a belief in social justice and the sacredness of all life; she anchors her work in feminist and humanist community activism and service. Jane Lesley, isolated in her contract work, struggles to implement the critical adult education ethic of social justice and emancipation in which she believes. Mary Campbell, of Supporting Women, exemplifies an ethic of care, focusing on showing each individual client respect and unconditional positive regard. Finally, Zoe Brown, Zora Neale, and Lucy Salt of A Feminist Collective concentrate on the collective action and social change that emerge from their feminist political ethic.

The social, political and fiscal context, as well as the articulation of employability enhancement work to ruling relations, requires that all frontline workers adopt ethical stances as they struggle to reconcile complex and inherently conflictual demands. The next sections of this chapter will examine the political context, conveyed primarily through funding decisions, which makes the relationships between the state and some workers inherently contestatory. Then it will turn to a closer examination of the ethical practices demonstrated by the women in this research: an ethic of care, an ethic of social justice and emancipation, a feminist ethic of collective action and a politics of difference, and an ethic of service and community alliance.

5.6 Taking care of the political (matters)

As demonstrated in the last chapter, frontline workers in employability enhancement programs enter into coordinating practices that orient their work, first, toward the relevances of the state, second, toward the relevances of professional colleagues, and, finally, toward the relevances of program participants. Their own relevances, what makes their work meaningful within the context of their lives, become subsumed within the texts that organize their work. The categories delimited on forms that are put in files and delivered from one site to another become the gateway through which their clients must pass in order to become actionable. Any individual woman's reluctance to engage in the ruling relations inherent in these categories affects her ability to articulate her everyday work with the everyday work of others. Her frontline practice must be organized by her program mandates; she must contribute to the delivery of performance objectives and program outcomes that justify (or not) continued funding. But at the same time, each woman's work is guided by ethical practices within a political context that is manifested through funding decisions.

Leah Moody of Carrying Caseloads recognizes the defining nature of this fiscal reality: "there are factors around funding that make us behave in certain ways, that drive not only the shape of the organization but the kind of work that we have to do" (Dialogue). As an employment counsellor in a program closely aligned with municipal, provincial, and federal bureaucracies she must constantly reconcile the conflicting needs of the state, her colleagues, and her clients. Although the four programs introduced in this chapter are at two or three removes from bureaucracies, their status as "projects" renders them vulnerable to the vagaries of shifting funding

formulas and, therefore, ties them to bureaucratic impulses. Yet, as with all the women in this research, their compliance, cooperation, compromise, or contestation arises out of the ethical contradictions inherent in the policy concept "employability enhancement."

Working with the material realities of single mothers receiving social assistance within the context of this concept the political dimension to their work becomes more distinct. As adult educator Phyllis Cunningham (1988) writes, "it is in the politics of practice that the question of ethics is confronted" (p. 139). Program workers "must face up to ethical choices that are defined as everyday activities rather than as mystifying, abstract, elitist concepts" (p. 143). They must recognize these choices as embedded in debates concerning quality of care vs. quantity of care, effective management vs. efficient management, social justice vs. administrative expedience, family ethic vs. work ethic, systemic discrimination vs. individual deficit.

In programs such as these, ERN evaluators conclude, "two radically different schools of thought must come to terms with each other" (ERN, 1989b, p. 3) even though they must be understood as inherently conflictual. While those who attend to accountability may be assumed to operationalize their values through their definition of what they can count, it is not always evident how those who attend to empowerment operationalize their values through their definition of how they actively engage with social relations. Nevertheless, relations of ruling are omnipresent in both locations — although the former may be most visibly located in the political realm, the latter also engage in ongoing practices that articulate their participants to policies that cannot be separated from their source ministries.

"Politics is the space between established policy and an emancipatory movement's claims on equality," Anna Yeatman (1993, p. 230) writes and although advocates of empowerment may stop short of demanding social justice for whole categories of persons, that stopping short also entails a political position. Within the work of employability enhancement no one can escape either textual or face-to-face interactions that define oppositional locations:

> Politics requires and depends on the interlocutory and performative dynamics of what is a contestatory *relationship,* demanding an ethical response from both those who are positioned as privileged by policy and those who are positioned as wronged by policy. (Yeatman, 1993, p. 230, emphasis in the original)

Whether frontline workers acknowledge this contestatory relationship or deny it they engage in political contexts that point toward particular ethical practices. Whether they comply, cooperate, compromise, or contest, all the workers operate out of particular ethical stances in relation to policy and the broader political context.

During the time of this research, the mandate for Lining Up (3.3) changed from an employability skills program that included preparation for the Grade 12 equivalency exam (GED) to an academic upgrading program that coordinates its curriculum with that of the provincial Community College. Betty Phillips moved from teaching office computer skills to managing the program; Pat Mercer moved from teaching the GED to teaching high school math. During a joint second interview they say the majority of current participants are employable single men, the "life skills" component has been replaced by job readiness activities, and the few single mothers that now enter the program "have their acts together. They're well-organized, they don't lose

time because of their children" (Pat Mercer, Interview 2). Both the family matters of the program participants and the accountability matters of the program managers are under control; it is easier to put these clients on a piece of paper when their success can be evaluated through standardized tests.

When asked why the program shifted so dramatically, Betty replies "the way that all programs change — things change with [the funder's] focus. . . what they're willing to put their money behind" (Interview 2). It would be easy to interpret Lining Up's shift in mandate as an instance of social control during which bureaucrats in a monolithic state apparatus dictate the mandate of a community-based program, coordinating its activities to the activities of state institutions and, in the process, promoting the client group of employable single men at the expense of employable single parent women. Certainly, as Roxana Ng (1990) suggests, funding agreements do enter community groups into "the coordinated activities of the state" (p. 167); it is not useful, however, to construct state activities as monolithic:

> I think it is much more appropriate to conceptualize the state as a set of social relations which (a) legitimizes certain courses of action, thereby rendering other (alternative) forms of action illegitimate; and (b) organizes how people relate to one another. What is important to grasp is that these social relations are relations of power. (p. 178)

Because these social relations are relations of power they are political but not deterministic. They remain a relationship.

If, as Cunningham (1988) suggests above, "it is in the politics of practice that the question of ethics is confronted" (p. 139), Betty and Pat make an ethical choice when faced with the state-mandated shift in their embodied and coordinated practices. No matter how politically fraught the underlying implications, they not only comply with the change in their mandate, they

fully welcome it. They believe their current students are better equipped to compete in the labour market than those they used to serve with short-term specific-skill programming. "The Level 4 [students] that graduate here can hold their own with any Grade 12 student going to community college" Pat says; some students now move from Grade 7 through to academic Grade 12 before they leave the program.

For both women, the satisfaction they gain from their work is not connected to the age, race, sex, or family status of their participants. Pat believes that the most ethical stance she can take is "looking at each person as an individual," (Interview 1). If "politics is the space between established policy and an emancipatory movement's claims on equality," (Yeatman, 1993, p. 230) then Pat and Betty have a politic based on every individual's claim on equality, no matter their group membership or engagement with social justice movements. Because of their commitment to working with disadvantaged adults, they have made a conscious choice to continue with Lining Up despite the fact that they receive half the salary of colleagues in the Community College.[3] Valuing compassion, hard work, wisdom, and an individual willingness to face up to and move beyond both past mistakes and current injustice, Pat and Betty use constantly shifting policies to provide the best possible services to any adult who has both the ability and the willingness to move from second class to first class citizenship.

During the period of this research frontline workers at A Feminist Collective also faced funding directives that would have changed not only

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[3] As Pat Mercer, Lining Up, says "We get these adults who I think are really worthwhile, yet they appear to be classified as second class citizens, so there's no money to spend on their education. ... Staff, it goes without saying, get paid second class wages" (Interview 2).

their mandate but also their effectiveness in working with program participants. Their funders approached them with the request that they begin to serve "older displaced workers," a category of social assistance recipients that almost exclusively includes men over 45 years old laid off through technological change. A short time after this suggestion they were told that their next contract would include salaries for two rather than three Employment Counsellors. Based on the program's 13-year commitment to feminist work with unemployed and underemployed women, Lucy Salt, Zoe Brown, and Zora Neale; along with their Management Team, resisted what they consider a co-optation of their competence and their labour.

The attempts to reconfigure their work, they believe, demonstrates both a lack of respect for their years of solid employment-related service and a disregard for their work within the women's community. They have demonstrated their long-term commitment to effective organizing around questions of social justice and as a consequence they have the support of a wide variety of community groups and individuals. Nevertheless, as Lucy indicates, it was a difficult decision to put their jobs on the line rather than compromise the ethical basis of their work:

> The real sense of power came when we said . . . we would sooner fold and lose our jobs than [make these changes]. And once that was something the workers decided on, it really did free us up in terms of relating to people as who we really are, as opposed to caricatures of who they wanted us to be. I found that extremely liberating. (Dialogue)

Recognizing that their ontological integrity — who they believe they are and the consequent ethical position out of which they do their work — could not accommodate this dramatic shift in their program mandate, they decided to

confront those who would demean their contribution to both the employment-related community and the women's community.

Zoe believes that the mutual respect demonstrated during subsequent negotiations helped her realize that she had learned over the years to "work within that whole funding structure" and to enter into social relations without an automatic response that "they" must inevitably defeat "us" because of the ruling relations that cannot help but govern their interactions.

> I respect the fact that they are the funder, they have the purse strings. But I'm also feeling a respect back from them . . . I think they respect the work we're doing. I think they [now] respect the fact that we are well established in the community. (Dialogue)

It also became clear, Lucy says, that "[funders] give a grudging respect for the fact that when we have principles we stick by them" (Dialogue). "I think probably some of them envy the fact that we can do that and they, who are working in a bureaucracy, can't." Zoe agrees, but there are trade-offs: "I envy their salary, they envy our working conditions" (Dialogue).

Alicia Schreader (1990) argues that state funding forces small organizations to articulate their work to the work of the state. Nevertheless, she says, entering into conspiracy theory explanations of ideologically driven policy decisions leads to a perception of "the state as monolithic, unified and threatening" (p. 185). While there may be a very real risk of co-optation, community-based programs must recognize that "real power lies in our political clarity and ability to challenge the political positions of the state" (p. 197), as demonstrated by A Feminist Collective. Similarly, Ng (1990) argues that it does no good to interpret a lack of resistance as simple compliance nor to understand funding as "only a means of social control" (p. 165). For those frontline workers who agree with the political positions of the state, or who

feel it is an ineffective use of their resources to challenge them , or who believe that they can put their funding to good use, no matter the political impetus behind its allocation — for these women employability enhancement work does not have an overtly or inherently political dimension.

Whereas Zoe believes that "just coming to work every day is political when you're working with an underfunded community-based organization with a mandate that includes advocating for social justice" (Dialogue), Pat and Betty — who work in an employability program that does not include advocating for social justice as part of its mandate — understand that "coming to work everyday" reflects their commitment to individual rather than social change, to an ethical rather than political commitment to dealing with individual suffering. They consider themselves part of a contestatory relationship where those who consign employable social assistance recipients to second class citizenship stand in opposition to those who work not only to address individual deficits but who also to refute the initial categorization. They describe this as political neutrality, however if we accept that political neutrality indicates "that one is quite satisfied with the present organization of social relationships and the distribution of resources in the society" (Cunningham, 1988, p. 136), then it becomes clear that Pat and Betty may distance themselves from political activism or party politics. Their political neutrality indicates a specific ethical stance, one that does not require political activism.

Funding makes employability enhancement work inherently political, as Leah Moody indicates at the beginning of this Section. As a material articulation of political positions assumed by the state, program funding

aligns the everyday practices of frontline workers with the politics textually organized through program mandates and performance objectives. For Yeatman (1993) politics arise out the gap between state policies and the claims of emancipatory movements. Of course, not only members of emancipatory movements stumble upon gaps between the textual reality of state policies and the embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices of frontline workers within state-funded programs. Each counsellor, instructor, and manager adapts their behaviour to often simultaneously comply, cooperate, compromise, and contest particular state policies. These responses, together, make up each worker's ethical framework. What makes some ethical stances more overtly political than others is their categorically contestatory nature vis-a-vis the state.

Thus, all the frontline workers engage in ethical practices when they or their programs concede to or resist the social organization of their work. The articulation of employability enhancement work to ruling relations requires that the workers adopt self-defined ethical stances — ethics of care, ethics of justice, feminist ethics, and ethics of service — as they struggle to make the choices required to reconcile complex and inherently conflictual demands (ERN, 1989b). Their ethical practices allow some women to accept changes in their program mandates that others might reject, such as those concerning target groups, mandated clients and other structuring realities of their work. Their ethical stances allow some women to continue enacting a strong ethical position of caring for individual clients, even when faced with political and structural constraints that they prefer to ignore or dismiss.

5.7   Ethical practices as the context for employability enhancement

Maternalism and an ethic of care

When frontline workers engage in the face-to-face coordinating

practices of intake and assessment they can, as Leah Moody, Carrying

Caseloads, says, "make it nice" and "give it a human face," even if coercion is

the consequence of those practices. The file may contain "not nice"

categorizations, it may note non-compliance; nevertheless, during the time

and in the place of embodied interaction, program counsellors, instructors,

and managers can communicate caring and respect. By conveying warmth

through their tone of voice or eye contact they can soften the blunt reality of

the textual record, they can render their work palatable. Acting as 'second

persons' (Annette Baier, 1985), they "care about the quality of the

engagement" (p. 86).

The compassion and care expressed through the quality rather than the

quantity of these interactions provide the context for the employability

enhancement of women who are single mothers receiving social assistance.

The ethics of care, according to Iris Marion Young (1997) "emphasizes

contextualized issues of harm and suffering rather than a morality of abstract

principle" (p. 81). Pat Mercer, Lining Up, like many of the other women

involved in this research, traces her understanding of program participants'

lives through her own caring relationships. While her formal credentials

meet the coordinating requirements for the job, her growing awareness of the

consequences of life mistakes augments what she calls her "bright-eyed and

bushy-tailed" caring:

> In my own family, of my siblings there are three on welfare. One is a
> single mother. I would say if anything that has given me insight and
> the compassion to do this work — because they are not losers. They

just took that wrong road and they have to suffer for it for the rest of their lives. (Interview 1)

As Young argues, however, it is channeling this personal response through social work, teaching, and other caring professions that moves a private ethic into a public sphere: "The values of an ethic of care," she argues, must extend "beyond face-to-face personal relations, to the interconnections of strangers in the public world of social policy and its implementation" (p. 82).

Altruism, a cornerstone of social work practice, requires frontline workers to work with strangers as if they were family. Workers must enter into relationships that embody the good intent of the nation toward its citizens. The first paragraph of an introductory social work text enjoins students to recognize that

> social work has a rich heritage and has achieved distinction as *the* profession that advocates for the poor, the disadvantaged, the disenfranchised, and the oppressed. Social work, in fact, can take pride in being referred to as the profession that serves as the nation's conscience. (Hepworth & Larsen, 1990, p. 3, emphasis added)

Social work thus epitomizes the caring professions.

Instructors, counsellors, and managers work within a mandate that operationalize "care" in many different ways. As indicated earlier, Mary Campbell, Supporting Women, considers "unconditional positive regard" a requisite component of professionalism. She focusses on nurturing self-growth, and connecting personally with her clients. With respect and a non-judgmental attitude she puts aside the material tools of her work and engages with the client as a 'second person':

> For example, if you have a client in your office show her respect by putting your phone on call forward if possible. Don't have someone barging in the door. If the phone continually interrupts the counselling

> session the client feels she's not important, that you're really not listening to her, or don't care [about her]. (Interview 1)

Mary's attention to the connection between listening and caring is echoed by Leah who suggests that not listening betrays the client/ counsellor relationship:

> I feel like I am being unfaithful to clients when I can't remember their stories and who they are. . . . I never talk about it because it means to admit that maybe I'm not handling my caseload, maybe I'm not listening. Somehow I feel like I'm not good enough. (Dialogue)

"Unfaithful" is a strong word to use in connection with her clients; it evokes a love relationship.

As a feminist and a social worker with many years experience, Leah both "knows" that she provides her 100-client caseload with a high standard of service and "knows" that the gendered nature of caring exacts a heavy toll on all women, especially those in caring professions (Baines, 1991; Freedberg, 1993; Gilroy, 1990). Despite this knowledge about her role, however, she cannot avoid knowing in her heart that "caring incorporates both labour and love" (Baines, Evans, & Neysmith, 1991, p. 15). If she really cared, she should remember not only the facts she finds in their files, but also the bits and pieces they disclose when they tell the story of their lives.

Caring, that particular labour of love, is traditionally women's role. No matter the context, taking care of the whole person — their mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being — falls to women

> as mothers, daughters, and wives in the context of individual relationships, in the community as volunteers, through the professions of nursing, social work, and teaching, and as low-wage workers in hospitals, child-care centres, and homemaking services. (Baines, Evans, & Neysmith, 1991, pp. 11-12)

This "caretaking" approach to women's work has been valourized, demonized, and dispassionately debated by theorists and practitioners across disciplines and professions (e.g. Belenky et al., 1986; Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976; Elshtain, 1982, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Ruddick, 1989). What appears to be common to their arguments is the link between caring and mothering and the link between an ethic of care and maternalism (cf. Baines, 1991).

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, maternalism both incorporates and coordinates raced, classed, and gendered constructions of mothering skills. It gives some women the right to insert themselves into the parenting relationships of others, carrying with them hegemonic conceptions of the family ethic. Either as middle class matrons acting out of benevolence and their sense of themselves as successful parents or as social workers acting out of a professional expertise and their sense of themselves as caring service providers, women enter into relations of power with other women. For the professionals, "the combination of expertise and care often produces situations of paternalistic power and discipline" (Young, 1997, p. 85).[4] Even when women act out of the best of intentions, however, and without the systemic authority suggested by paternalism, it is difficult not to respond at least some of the time from within the dominant framework of caring, that of parent and child.

During her dialogue with Barbara Cox, Jennifer Tannen, Getting In, expressed frustration at the "acting out" sometimes displayed by their

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[4] Joan Gilroy (1990) is even more harsh in her assessment: "Practising empathy and warmth while remaining unaware of the structured inequalities in which social worker-client relations are embedded ends up being patronizing and manipulative" (p. 71).

program participants: "It is almost like childrearing," she says, "you nurture them. You have your good days and your bad days." At the end of the bad days, she adds, it is hard to resist the maternal response of, "'Gosh we're doing so much for you. . . . how much does it take before you appreciate what is going on here?" (Dialogue). Barbara argues that, "I never thought of myself as a do-gooder" (Interview 2), but as part of her total dedication to her clients she constructs herself as more than professionally involved with her program participants: "I have told them all, 'Call me. Even if I'm not working, my number's in the book. Call me!'" (Interview 1)[5].

By entering into the role of "moral mothers," Wendy Luttrell (1996) suggests that women open themselves to claims they are naturally or culturally constructed as nurturing and that these claims "seriously limit the kinds of authority and mastery that women are allowed to exercise" (p. 346). "Trapped within a concept of nurturance" (Luke & Gore, 1992, p. 10) they are drawn into dualisms that put care, interest, and non-judgmental response on the inside and justice, impartiality, and evaluative response on the outside. When frontline workers align themselves with the 'feminine' ethic of care, with its emphasis on interdependence and relational commitment, they agree to take on the job of mediating between society and their clients (Collins, 1986, p. 216). Although professionally-trained program instructors, counsellors and managers understand that "this process requires conscious, disciplined thinking and clearly defined personal boundaries," from the position of ruling relations it appears that rather than maintaining a dynamic

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5 See the discussion on professionalism and appropriate boundaries later in this chapter. Barbara Cox, Getting In, is one of a few women involved in this research who does not have a degree in either social work or education.

balance of boundaries, these workers are enmeshed in "affective engrossment" (Freedberg, 1993, p. 538)·

As women commit themselves to the empowerment of program participants through the strength of a caring relationship they often "stop short of a politicized understanding of social structures that condition an individual's situation (Young, 1997, p. 91). Thus, Jennifer and Barbara cannot understand the commodity or even non-caring relationship that might exist between private training programs and participants. They express concern that "there are people who are . . . putting on programs for these women whose only concern is making money. It has nothing to do with changing the woman's life or making a difference for anybody" (Jennifer Tannen, Interview 1). Indeed, they cannot conceive of an appropriately bureaucratic relationship between program funders, staff, and participants that distinguishes local from extra-local social relations, personal from public responses. They regret that funders do not evince a caring response, in part because "they really were not as interested as they should have been in the day-to-day workings of the program and in the staff" (Jennifer Tannen, Dialogue).

Correctly identifying bureaucratic coordinating practices — "they were only there as a rubber stamp" (Jennifer Tannen, Dialogue) — the frontline workers reject them as insufficiently committed to ethical practices that include mutual relations of caring and compassion:

> If [the funder] has certain expectations of these clients then surely they're entitled to have expectations of him and one of them would be to know me as an individual. Take the time that's required to get to know who I am and what my problems are. (Barbara Cox, Dialogue)

As Young (1997) identifies above, Barbara's lack of "politicized understanding" both informs and is informed by her inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the structural constraints under which she is working. Indeed, as we saw in the previous section, Barbara rejects any suggestion that her work of employability enhancement has a politic; despite her self-identification as "feminist" she understands feminism as a personal belief and politics as a public grandstanding. "It's not political with us," she says, "it's real" (Interview 1).

Jennifer, on the other hand, recognizes the gap between established policy and program practices and puts herself squarely in the middle of a process that trains women for pink-collar jobs during a recession when nobody's hiring:

> I have days where I come home and think, "What am I doing? Who am I trying to kid? This isn't going to make a difference to this woman. Let's face facts here. This woman is so-and-so old, looks such and such a way. . . . after so many weeks on a computer doesn't know how to do the basics. (Interview 1)

Identifying with the task of being the nation's conscience, she says, "It bothers my conscience a great deal" that, while she has immersed them in caring, she has also "hung them out to dry" in the job market (Interview 1).

Julia Scott from A Healing Centre finds that by the third month of a six-month work placement "everything falls apart" (Interview 1) for her clients.

> I think things fall apart because they're in an environment that's a healing environment and so it just naturally happens. It becomes really difficult because . . . then that's it. They have to go and they're not ready to go. (Dialogue)

They do not want to leave the Centre because there is no where else for them to continue the healing they have begun, yet their time at the Centre is up. "I

see them later and ... they are really struggling," Julia says, "because they have tasted something different and our society doesn't allow them to have that" (Dialogue). "If a [frontline] worker is aware of the broad structural forces that shape human lives," Joan Gilroy (1990) argues, "she or he is left in the contradictory position of knowing that concrete material resources are needed, that the service offered is not sufficient, and that the conditions under which it is given are dehumanizing and degrading" (p. 67).

Julia is clearer than Jennifer that the problem is, at least in part, an inherent limitation of the impact individual caring can have. Caring, though important to both Julia and Jennifer is insufficient when there are broader issues of social injustice that need to be resolved. Tackling the "broad structural forces that shape human lives" draws women into an ethic of justice and practices of empowerment.

5.8 Ethical practices as empowerment
Critical theory and an ethic of justice

For analytic purposes, contrasting an ethic of care with an ethic of justice constructs a telling set of dichotomies. According to feminist social worker Ketuyan Gould (1988), "justice is the abstract form that caring takes when responsibility is not defined simply in private terms, but also in relation to societal commitment" (p. 414). Seen as more rational (less emotional), more objective (less subjective), more theoretical (less practice oriented), more structural (less individual), more transformational (less coping) more mind (less body) and more ideal (less everyday) — justice in the public world is the purview of men, caring in the private world belongs to women. In the civil world, where caring becomes a public responsibility,

women tend to do the frontline practice while men manage (e.g. Carniol, 1990; Cummings, 1980). In the context of academic disciplines and helping professions, these dichotomies also point to differences between critical adult educators (who focus on justice and the transformation of disadvantaged students) and social workers (who focus on care and the life skills of dysfunctional clients).

This is all too simplistic, of course; as bell hooks (1994) writes a "commitment to engaged pedagogy is an expression of political activism" (p. 203), nevertheless activism without love cannot lead to liberation:

> Without love, our efforts to liberate ourselves and our world community from oppression and exploitation are doomed. As long as we refuse to address fully the place of love in struggles for liberation we will not be able to create a culture of conversion where there is a mass turning away from an ethic of domination. (hooks, 1994, p. 243)

Caring, then, is not opposed to social activism, it is the basis of it. As a feminist and critical educator, however, hooks insists upon a critical rather than feminine ethic of care — one that demands of both men and women that they enter into adult education as the practice of freedom (p. 203).

As hooks demonstrates, and Susan Okin (1989) somewhat tersely asserts, "the distinction between an ethic of justice and an ethic of care has been overdrawn" (p. 15) as has the distinction between adult education and social work. Paulo Freire, a social worker before he became an educator, says that, "social work practice whether casework, group work, or community organization, is inherently and substantively educational," that the two professions can share a dream of "the permanent transformation of the world... of a society without injustice" (Freire & Moch, 1990, p. 5). Nevertheless, most of the frontline workers involved in this research draw

sharp distinctions between the work of instructors and the work of

counsellors.[6]

As outlined earlier in Section 5.3 above, Jane Lesley experiences

isolation and alienation in part because of the nature of contract work but

also because of her primary identification as an educator. "For the most part,"

she says, "the people who do this work are not [teachers]":

> That's my training, my inclination. On the good days, it's my joy. Most
> other people come from a different background [especially] social work.
> Even people who teach in clerical programs, they know how to be a
> good clerical worker, [but] don't come with a theoretical understanding
> of how people learn. (Interview 1)

In coalition, Freire says, the critical social worker and the popular educator

can work together. In reality, however, contract workers find coalition hard to

come by and, in the end, Jane simply feels unable to fully enter into popular

education, to take up the gauntlet of a participatory ethos and tackle the big

picture required for critical consciousness. She has no access to "the larger

political and economic pressures; the links to other communities and

countries; the impact of historical forces such as sexism and racism; the pros

and cons of various alliances and strategies" (Pollak, 1994, p. 12).

Jane understands that adult education with disadvantaged adults

"should" follow a model of popular education, "should" be both critical and

creative, "should" start with individual student's experience and work

toward collective action (Barndt, 1991, p. 19). "I have clearly seen how all this

teaching also involves development in hope and confidence. . . . It is all

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6 Those with backgrounds in social work, for example, express concern about the lack of a
professional code of ethics among those with backgrounds in adult education. Those with
graduate degrees in adult education, on the other hand, expressed concern about the lack of
accountability toward colleagues or program mandates among those with backgrounds in social
work or education psychology.

political ... you are trying to get people to move," she says in dialogue with Julia Scott, A Healing Centre. "I'd love to work in a place where you were really trying to create life-changing experiences." But, she adds, "I don't know how to do it myself — within and around the framework of a curriculum, of content, I can sort of try — but I don't know how to do it myself"[7] (Dialogue). Although she recognizes that one person cannot do it on her own, she continues to worry that she is just making excuses for her unwillingness to sacrifice the moderate comforts of her everyday life to take on the utopian dreams of those who advocate for a critical democracy.

Henry Giroux (1987a), one of the North American advocates of what he calls "the Freireian model of emancipatory literacy" argues that teachers must be both willing and able to contextualize students' experiential stories, providing them with a political context and positioning them in relation to "a wider project of possibility and empowerment" (p. 6). For Giroux this project must be located within a discursive understanding of both critical democracy and radical utopianism, "forms of moral discourse that exemplify the importance of critical democracy as a way of life, ethical practice as a discourse of solidarity and caring, and hope as an important precondition for a radical utopianism" (1987b, p. 30). He suggests that educators who care about their students cannot choose to ignore the possibilities of a critical pedagogy anchored in an understanding of social justice where ethical practices become

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[7] It is worth noting that Freire acknowledges the tendency of "first world" academics to isolate themselves from frontline workers, indicating that transformational work cannot be done without coalition. In his dialogue with Ira Shor (Shor & Freire, 1987) he says:

> What is very important to me, Ira, is how not to work alone, how to know the others, how to establish relationships so that we could come to a meeting and say "I work outside the school where I observe these things, and do any of these realities help you who work inside the school to do transformation better?" (p. 131)

a discursive cornerstone, providing teachers and students with the necessary foundation for both interpreting and transforming reality.

Giroux (1987a) rejects, first, a conservative functionalist perspective that aligns curriculum with job markets and, second, a liberal humanist perspective that aligns curriculum with the logic of a dominant culture that disciplines bodies and minds through "the regulation of time, space, textuality, experience, knowledge, and power" (p. 14). Recognizing the importance of both embodied and coordinating practices in the politics of domination, he (1991a) emphasizes the importance of engaging in practices that acknowledge ethical practices as a "radical responsibility" (p. xii) arising out of an analysis that distinguishes between hegemonic indoctrination and empowerment, between "the meaning of freedom, the demands of social justice, the obligations of citizenship, on the one hand, the accumulated suffering, domination, force, and violence that permeates all aspects of everyday life on the other" (p. xv).

Giroux's fiercely argued imperatives come into conflict with the frontline workers who must translate critical education theory into everyday practice. Positioning himself in a North American context he believes educators must refuse to engage with "management pedagogies, accountability schemes, and teacher-proof curricula that . . . define teachers merely as technicians" (1987a, p. 25). Instead, those who believe in freedom must enter into the political sphere with "a radical theory of ethics" (p. 27) based not on professional codes of conduct, but on their stance as "transformative intellectuals . . . helping students acquire critical knowledge about basic societal structures, such as the economy, the state, the workplace,

and mass culture so that such institutions can be open to potential transformation" (Giroux, 1988, p. 90).

Jane Lesley responds with a very clear statement about her own orientation to her work: "I'm not a scholar, that's not where my bent is. I'm a practitioner . . . someone on the front lines who likes to do that initial contact" (Interview 1). It is perhaps understandable that she feels sidelined because of her preference and talent for frontline work, her inability or unwillingness to be a "transformative intellectual." Given, for example, Giroux's (1988) fundamental focus on "forms of moral and ethical discourse exhibiting a preferential concern for the suffering and struggles of the disadvantaged and oppressed" (pp. 174-175), it is not surprising that Jane feels burdened by the assumption that any educator with a political understanding of their work can or will act on that understanding, can or will engage with a political agenda. Bound by the GED curriculum, however, and unwilling to introduce either a content or a process that could be construed as a response to the "false consciousness" of her students, she feels unable to make the politics overt and, therefore, believes politics are absent: "You can't say, 'Oh, it's political because I'm teaching people to read and that's a very political issue' and then never address it" (Interview 1).

Because of his affiliation with Paulo Freire and the field of adult literacy Giroux represents a particular perspective on the ethics of employability enhancement. He is not alone, however. Ralph Brockett (1988) identifies three inter-related dimensions of ethical practice in adult education: personal value systems, institutional accountability, and the education practices that manifest values of justice, autonomy and freedom

(pp. 10-12).[8] Peter McLaren (1987) suggests that adult educators, especially

adult literacy workers, need to participate in "a public discourse in which

empowered individuals are capable of critically engaging the social, political,

and ethical dimensions of everyday life. . . . to exercise the kind of moral

courage needed to change the social order when necessary" (p. 232). Michael

Collins (1991) argues that adult educators should reject the lure of

standardized curricula developed to meet the needs of bureaucracies and big

business. They should consider their work a vocation:

> creating critical discourses and pedagogical strategies that aim to
> honour, at the very least, and preserve traditional liberal values. These
> are values that have to do with justice, freedom, and rationality. A
> transformative pedagogy would envisage their realization through
> actual political engagement, communicative action and genuine
> participatory democracy. (p. 119)

Like Giroux, all of these authors place political empowerment and an ethic of

social justice at the centre of adult education practices.

In contrast, Teresa MacNeil (1992) responds to these idealistic

constructions from her perspective as an administrator in Nova Scotia: "The

major question for adult educators is not one of whether there is a place for

political learning. Rather, it is the extent to which political learning can be

part of their professional endeavor" (p. 163). Recognizing the relations of

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[8] Stephen Brookfield (1993) lists Susan Collard, Michael Law, Michael Collins, Donovan
Plumb, Methild Hart, and Michael Welton as examples of critical and progressive educators.
They all have some conceptual link with what he considers the major influence for critical
educators,

> the Frankfurt school of critical social theory and neo-Marxism . . . concerned with
> identifying the dominant cultural values and hegemonic processes embedded in practice
> and the ways in which capitalist forms of organisation are reflected in adult education
> provision. Practice, research and theory are scrutinised for the extent to which they do,
> or do not, pay attention to the variables of 'race,' class and gender. Others, drawing
> primarily on traditions of progressive liberalism, see critical analysis as focusing
> essentially on exploring theory-practice connections and discrepancies, and on helping
> adult educators clarify their own implicit, informal theories in use. (pp. 64-65)

ruling that construct most frontline work, MacNeil suggests that only those who have tenured university positions can exhort frontline workers to engage in oppositional activities that include "political engagement, communicative action and genuine participatory democracy." Without systemic supports, MacNeil asks, do these theorists suggest community-based educators work for free? It is these kinds of suggestions that lead Jane Lesley to feel guilty about her lack of emancipatory political action:

> These are all things that take passion and commitment and I don't — it seems I'm having trouble putting that all together. You know, young kids, family . . . .You're supposed to somehow squeeze it in with everything else — or not get paid. (Interview 1)

In the late 1980s, Phyllis Cunningham (1988) also questioned this idealistic appeal to emancipatory practices arguing that educators cannot be expected to construct a "genuine democracy" with "full citizen participation, freedom, equality, and justice" (p. 135). Pointing out that the ethical choices of adult educators are everyday activities rather than "mystifying, abstract, elitist concepts" (p. 143), she draws attention to the paternalistic approach of male theorists who want to organize the work of primarily-female frontline educators. Reflecting the maternalism through which middle class women define "care" for disadvantaged mothers, this paternalism defines "justice" for the disadvantaged student at the expense of the (relatively) disadvantaged worker. Cunningham suggests both approaches require a reevaluation of the concept of "empowerment."

Making terms such as "empowerment" and "learner-centred" problematic, frontline workers draw attention to the ways in which theory and practice diverge (Alden, Horsman, & Westell, 1991; Lloyd, 1994). Feminist social workers and educators have suggested that empowerment contains

elements of the personal and political, individual and collective (e.g. Gilroy, 1990; Gore, 1992; Lather, 1991; Luke & Gore, 1992). Patti Lather (1991) defines the practice of empowerment as people, together, "analyzing ideas about the causes of powerlessness, recognizing systemic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change the conditions of our live" (p. 4). Jennifer Gore recognizes that the language of empowerment can become a regime of truth and she calls for "for greater humility and reflexivity in attempts at empowerment through radical pedagogy" (Luke & Gore, 1992, p. 11).[9]

Paying attention to Jane Lesley's fear concerning inevitable questions about the political nature of her work, what becomes clear is the discipline brought to bear on teachers in the name of this "regime of truth." Kathleen Rockhill (1989) expresses both appreciation for the importance of Freire's work in critical adult education and rage at the way his work and that of his disciples has assumed hegemonic status within the field: "Along with the emphasis upon unity comes a penchant for orthodoxy and the assumed authority of the 'proper' political perspective" (p. 114). When frontline workers cannot meet the ethical demands of abstracted and utopian critical educational theory, perhaps the ethical demands of the theories need to be re-examined. Lather (1991) insists that educators ask themselves, "How do our very efforts to liberate perpetuate relations of dominance?" (p. 5). She

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[9] As Jane Lesley says, she does have to meet the students' needs and expectations: "You want to do eighth grade, you have to know what a prepositional phrase is" (Jane Interview 1). Only when students decide to move on to academic high school courses such as English 10 does content move beyond "what" to "why." "Then," Jane says, "you have the room to bring in the real life" (Interview 1).

identifies Giroux's positioning as invested in "the liberal struggle for equality and identity politics" (p. 48).[10]

With this description, Lather points to an important distinction, one Iris Marion Young (1997) takes up as a "distinction between two meanings of empowerment in service provision, one that remains individualizing and one that develops social solidarity through consciousness raising and the possibility of collective action" (p. 75). Empowerment and an ethic of justice rooted in liberal individualism hide the social and political realities that structure people's lives. But this is true not only of the learners in an adult education setting; it is also true of the workers. To demand of workers that they implement a political agenda, an ethic of social justice and emancipation, without recognizing the structural constraints that limit their ability to do so, is to set them up for a constant sense of personal failure, as Jane Lesley so clearly articulated.[11]

In her work Jane is driven by the ethic of justice that holds sway in the field of critical education, but is painfully aware of her inability to fully enact it within the realities of her own life. Responding to what some see as the blinkered perspective of those who exclaim the rewards of critical education, Suzanne de Castell (1994) insists that the "studied ignorance" of critical

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[10] So too, does Carmen Luke (1992):
> In the discourse of critical pedagogy, the educational politics of emancipatory self- and social empowerment, and of emancipatory rationality and citizenship education, have been articulated in epistemic relation to liberal conceptions of equality and participatory democracy. These, in turn, are located squarely in (male) individualism constitutive of the public sphere. (p. 29)

[11] Commenting on her sense of personal failure in terms of her inability to make her work more political, Jane says:
> It comes from myself. How I deal with my own perceived inadequacies is usually just to take me aside, shake my head, and say, "What can you do? Let's just proceed from here." I try not to, you know, berate myself. ... [But] yeah, I really feel guilty. (Interview 1)

education theorists can only be maintained through a "willful blindness" to the realities of the structural, political and fiscal climates in which frontline workers are expected to carry out theorists' exhortations to emancipatory practices (p. 186). She suggests that educators on the frontlines must refuse to turn their disappointment or anger inward and direct it, instead, outward.

5.9   Resistance and the performativity of ethical practices
Feminist ethics and a postmodern politic of difference

The conflict among theories and practices of an emancipatory adult education and a caring social work can result in dissonance that manifests either internally or externally, individually or structurally. Within a political framework that demands reflexivity, this dissonance requires resolution, a resolution that integrates theory and practice, that puts praxis at the centre of both individual and collective action. Lucy Salt, A Feminist Collective, suggests that the difference between theory and practice, philosophy and politics, is that "politics implies an action and . . . philosophy is the analysis that leads you to develop the path that the action will take" (Interview 1). Patti Lather (1991) supports this view with her definition of a strategic reflexive practice where critical thought can be turned into emancipatory practice (p. 13), where socially relevant theory can be informed by collective action. A "praxis-oriented" politic can thus focus on "critiquing the status quo and building a more just society" (p. 172) from within a framework of care .

Thus justice does not remain an abstracted form of caring and caring, it does not focus solely on distributive justice (Young, 1990a). Instead multiple meanings of empowerment come together through a feminist understanding that care cannot be distinguished from justice, justice cannot be distinguished from care. The personal is political from this perspective, the abstract has to

be grounded in the everyday, and providing service to individual women

must be balanced by an awareness of and, if possible, activism based on the

need for structural change.[12] Understanding that an inclusive feminism

must include women who do not have the time or energy required by

collective action, Zoe Brown, A Feminist Collective, points out that

> there are women out there who have reached the point of, "I'm not a
> feminist but —" . . . The reality for a single mother is that she doesn't
> have the time to become politically active, but she's starting that
> thought process. . . . What's politically active is sitting with a couple of
> neighbors, having coffee and starting to talk about some of this stuff.
> (Dialogue)

That individual change can be political, "but if it isn't the collective action of

people with a political agenda then it doesn't lead to structural change" (Lucy

Salt, Interview 1) and it is only structural changes such as those effected by the

women's movement that make individual change possible.[13]

Linda Briskin (1990) argues that a feminist understanding makes the

connection between the personal and the political, the individual and the

structural, and neutralizes some of the dissonance exacerbated by liberal

individualism:

> Feminism as a world view allows us to make sense of our individual
> experiences; pulls us away from individualism and individual
> instances of discrimination to an understanding of the systemic

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[12] Sarah Hoagland (1988) argues that personal anger is an important first step for every woman. Then it becomes important to move toward collective understandings: "If she begins a process of transformation, especially if she is able to do so collectively with others, she begins to entwine her intellectual knowledge and her feelings, healing the fragmentation of her self" (p. 189).

[13] Susan Smith, Juggling Resources, acknowledges the importance of this collective contribution:

> I think the women's movement has encouraged, pushed, perhaps forced, government to realize they have to be doing a better job when it comes to women's issues. And I think we still have a real long, long, long way to go. But I think we've made some progress. (Interview 1)

character of oppression; moves us from a dependence and reliance on individual solutions (which often result in blaming the victim, who is unable to overcome the limits of her individual life) to collective strategies and social and political solutions. (p. 19)

This tendency to blame the victim, as Zoe points out in Section 5.5, comes not only from a focus on the individual but also from a denial of the political dimensions of frontline work. In a feminist context, Iris Marion Young (1997) suggests, "leaving individuals to wrestle with their bootstraps" (p. 17) cannot be an acceptable response to injustice despite a hegemonic insistence on both individual responsibility and the right to "care for" rather than "care about."[14]

As Susan Okin (1989) emphasizes, just as the distinctions between individual and collective, private and public spheres, rights and responsibilities are simplistic and damaging, so is the distinction between an ethic of justice and ethic of care. What unites them is an approach which recognizes power relations in both spheres and strives to resist them. Thus Arthur Dobrin (1989), writing about the ethical stances of male and female social workers, suggests that "in social work, a rights and justice orientation toward ethics does not conflict with a caring and responsibility approach" (p. 455). Indeed, caring for individuals must be balanced with action designed to diminish injustice if frontline workers are to avoid a death by a thousand small cuts:

If you are just counselling women what I could see happening is you would extend all of yourself to each woman. All of your caring, all of

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[14] Using this distinction, caring "about" the everyday lives of disadvantaged individuals and collectives, inspires us to work with them individually and collectively to improve their situation. We use our privilege to fight for the social changes they define as important. Caring "for" disadvantaged individuals inspires us to work with them individually, to use our privilege to change aspects of their lives in ways that make sense to us.

your support. . . . You are either going to give it away in bits to everyone you see or else you are going to be pro-active and go out to do something in terms of social change. (Lucy Salt, Dialogue)[15]

Those who are capable of taking a "both / and" rather than an "either / or" position with dualisms such as justice and caring open the door to more holistic frontline work. This requires "subverting the politics of caregiving" (Luttrell, 1996, p. 359) and countering "the penchant for orthodoxy" (Rockhill, 1989, p. 114) in the politics of justice discussed in section 5.8. Recognizing that an ethic put into action becomes a politic, bell hooks (1988) suggests that "advocating" feminism through collective action rather than "being" feminist through individual identity allows women to find the strength in numbers required "to move from emphasis on personal lifestyle issues toward creating political paradigms and radical models of social change" (p. 182).[16] For Lucy, the impetus for the movement from the individual to the collective comes out of a feminist philosophy:

> We have clients coming in and over a period we notice a trend of need that our clients have. The Collective then will engage in some kind of advocacy or work for social change to address those needs. Although we may not be able to do anything for Client A, if we keep hearing the same problem or the same story, then we will, as a collective, as a group, go out and work on all those things that we've worked on over the years. . . . That balance, of course, comes out of a feminist philosophy that you don't just work with the individual, you also have to work for social change. (Dialogue)

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[15] Similarly, Janet Finn (1990) insists that,
> Until personal empowerment is integrated with institutional redefinitions of power, we — practitioners, supervisors, and administrators in the human services, as well as researchers and educators — will continue to address burnout in terms of the relief of symptoms, rather than of cure of the system. (p. 62)

[16] Similarly, Linda Briskin (1990) argues for a feminist pedagogy "whose goals are not the utopian propagation of a gender-free or non-sexist environment but rather the development of a strong movement for social change" (p. 23).

The performativity of feminist ethical practices requires both an active and a collective response, it requires that individuals come together to not only name what has become problematic in their everyday lives, but also to act on that naming. As hooks (1988) argues, "Naming the pain or uncovering the pain in a context where it is not linked to strategies for resistance and transformation," can deepen women's alienation, isolation, and despair (p. 32).

Because A Feminist Collective includes both individual advocacy and structural change in their mandate they have chosen a code of feminist ethics that requires them not only to manage individual adjustment to the system but also to make adjustments in the system itself.[17] Working in a largely bureaucratic setting Leah Moody, Carrying Caseloads, has to fit her clients into the categories embedded in official forms; in a more independent community-based setting, Lucy can change the form itself. After being told they could no longer work with women who received social assistance or income insurance, for example, the Collective staff removed the category "source of income" from their client information form, allowing them to go on working with the women who need their services. Simultaneously they organized a campaign with other feminist organizations to fight publicly for the right to maintain services designed specifically for women to counter the "post-feminist" policy decisions that exclude "women" as a subordinated and

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[17] The balance between helping women adjust and helping women change is often difficult to gauge. Nevertheless, a decision to focus on adjustment has significant consequences:

> By and large, women have found that helpers stress adjustment rather than change; individual, not collective or political solutions; personal pathology; weakness rather than strength; the psyche, unrelated to economic and social hazards in women's lives; and the authority of male experts, male management, and male decision makers in and beyond the home. (Levine, 1983a, p. 77)

therefore fiscally targeted group. This kind of community work empowers the frontline workers, renewing the energy they need to keep going and giving them a necessary sense of control over their work. "I think being a feminist and being involved in feminist organizations you can actually make things happen," Lucy says. "You begin to see yourself sort of as a motor in a car" (Interview 1). It allows them, in their collective action, to become the driver rather than the driven.[18]

At the same time that she recognizes that the empowerment of both program workers and program participants that occurs in the context of this combination of individual and collective action, Lucy does not suggest they fight every battle. Over the years, she says, her program has been forced to re-name their workshops to fit the funders' reality rather than the reality of the women — consciousness-raising became assertiveness training which became self esteem. In some programs (particularly those with young women and Black women) self esteem has become anger management or effective communication. From a bureaucratic perspective the group activity provides women with the skills they need to discuss their work with authority figures and workplace peers. From a program perspective, however, the group activity provides women with the space they need to discuss their isolation, anger, and fear with frontline workers and peers who share their everyday lives. As long as the activity continues to give participants what they need, the Collective staff do not contest the name of the activity. It is neither

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[18] As an example of this approach, Lucy talks about ways in which she works to alleviate individual isolation through opportunities for collective involvement:
> One thing that I really try to do is work on the woman's isolation. . . . get women interested and involved in doing something else in the community. Volunteer work, as exploitative as that is, also has many positive side effects. . . . Right now, we're busy handing out IWD information to everyone and anyone. (Interview 1)

efficient nor effective to respond to every instance of bureaucratic "unreality," Lucy suggests. It could become death by a thousand cuts, distracting them from their political work by making their political work reactive rather than proactive.

Refusing to engage in a reactive "us" versus "them" battle, the frontline workers at A Feminist Collective argue that their feminist politics includes a politics of difference, one that understands women's oppression as part of interlocking structures of privilege and subordination. Zora Neale says "my work is political because it is work that is based in the reality of women" (Focus group 1). As a woman she is visible, but she is doubly visible as a Black woman; as a feminist Black woman she becomes triply visible as a political activist. She does not distinguish race, sex, age, religion, source of income, class background, relationship to children as hierarchies: "Because I am Black and because I am a woman, I am political," she says. "I was just born to struggle and in that struggle I was born to grow and develop toward empowerment and toward change" (Focus group 1).

This understanding of political power struggles reflects the definition of feminism suggested by Susan Sherwin (1992), who highlights the complexity of social relations and the requirement for change and empowerment in the fight against injustice. Women engaged in advocating political feminism understand

> that women are in a subordinate position in society, that oppression is a form of injustice and hence is intolerable, that there are further forms of oppression in addition to gender oppression (and that there are women victimized by each of these forms of oppression), that it is possible to change society in ways that could eliminate oppression, and that it is a goal of feminism to pursue the changes necessary to accomplish this. (p. 29)

In her discussion of feminist ethics, Sherwin (1994) argues that "feminists seek to couch their arguments in moral concepts that support their general campaign of overcoming injustice in all its dimensions" (p. 314). This project requires a rejection of what Sarah Hoagland (1988) calls "modern anglo-european ethics," ethics that reinforce patriarchal privilege, de-moralize women, and constrain frontline workers who want to enter into coalition with those who have different agendas and observe different boundaries (p. 285).

With a willingness to reject dualisms and remain open to the experiences of those different from themselves, frontline workers move into a more postmodern position, one that does not require choosing between an ethic of care and justice or an ethic of justice and feminism. As Patti Lather (1991) argues, these dualisms are "inadequate for understanding a world of multiple causes and effects interacting in complex and non-linear ways, all of which are rooted in a limitless array of historical and cultural specificities" (p. 21). bell hooks (1990) uses the evocative noun "yearning" to express the desire shared by many to cross boundaries, to contain often contradictory and always compelling drives toward connection. This yearning is not apolitical, it "wells in the hearts and minds of those whom [master] narratives have silenced . . . [it] is the longing for critical voice" (hooks, 1990, p. 27).

Describing her work as arising from "a postmodern oppositional sensibility," (p. 29) hooks (1990) refuses to accept that a move away from a hierarchical and repressive modernism must result in a move away from an ethical alignment with justice. Accepting a postmodern perspective that difference is an essential component of all collectivities, she argues that adult educators who want "to educate as the practice of freedom," (1994, p. 13) must

"believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; . . . believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students" (p. 13). The growth of "students," however, does not require that they be approached as if they were a unified collective with a single aim. Refusing to accept the efficiencies of single categories educators can effectively enhance students' understandings of complex social relations.

Similarly, if more dispassionately, Roberta Sands and Kathleen Nuccio (1992) argue that a postmodern feminism can teach social workers "that categories can co-exist and overlap" (p. 493) and thus allow for work in coalitions where a focus on praxis means that "everyday considerations" take precedence and thus allow for the distinction between postmodernism and postmodern feminism (p. 492). This postmodern politics of difference argues that "the experience of 'women' is ontologically fractured and complex because we do not all share one single and unseamed material reality" (Stanley & Wise, 1990, p. 22).

In the context of this materiality, this often shifting relationship between individuals and the resources available to them either within or outside of communities, feminist frontline workers maintain an understanding of "oppression" that does not require of women that they be constructed as powerless. It is only by looking at individual and collective everyday lives of women in their programs that they can be understood as more than victims. As becomes clear in Chapter Four, on paper they are defined only in terms of their deficits; there is little room for accounts of successful everyday strategies for survival. The textual content of their lives argues against rather than for their empowerment.

Indeed, feminist frontline workers involved in this research also argue that feminism does not, even should not, become a "content" within their programs. As Lucy points out in Section 5.5, it may be enough to provide women with the opportunity to speak honestly about their experiences both in one-to-one counselling and in group sessions. Advocating feminism in these settings does not involve an ideological process of extracting from women's stories what is illustrative of a theory of women's oppression. Exclaiming that "you would die, depressed, with an ulcer if you didn't have a political agenda," Lucy makes an essential distinction between a content-oriented analytic framework that sustains the frontline worker and a process-oriented experiential framework offered program participants. Though her own political framework allows her to continue doing this work, as a professional she could never force political ideology on program participants:

> I never talk about "feminism" with my clients. I talk with my clients about what they want to talk about. So, when they say, "Men get all the good jobs," then we might talk about sexism and how that affects career opportunities. But, I would never say to a client, "Well, men get all the good jobs." She didn't come here to hear me talk about that! (Interview 1)

Feminist praxis, for Lucy, provides an analytic framework that helps her make sense of the lives of women clients and a commitment to "hearing women into speech" (Lloyd, 1987) as they raise the issues that are problematic in their everyday lives.

To extract from women's lives only those experiences that fit within the categories of a particular ideology is no more acceptable when the categories arise out of feminism than when they arise out of maternalism or

emancipatory justice.[19] The "claims to universal truths" and "assumptions

of a collective experience of oppression" common to liberatory pedagogies —

whether those of feminism or critical education — "do not adequately

address the realities" of frontline educators and counsellors (Weiler, 1991, p.

450), particularly when they are imbued with "correct" ideologies.[20]

Coordinating practices that articulate an individual woman's everyday life to

behaviours that are for "her own good" or for "the good of the society"

involve the face of oppression Iris Marion Young (1990) identifies as

powerlessness, the lack of expert authority about one's own life (p. 57). As a

professional educator resisting explorations of borders she has no desire to

cross, Suzanne de Castell (1994) expresses her frustration, her "certain

exhaustion with 'narratives of redemption' in so much educational theory

and research" (p. 185). In the same way that the enthusiasms of emancipatory

education foreclose necessary reflexivity and critique, the enthusiasms of

emancipatory feminism can lead women away from rather than toward a

contextual understanding of their everyday realities.

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[19] Dorothy E. Smith (1987) warns that feminists must watch out for ideological practices within their own discourse:

> As we evolve a discourse among women, it crystallizes the issues and concerns of those of us who got there first and have defined the types of statements, the relevances, the phenomenal universe, and the conventions that give it a social form independent of the particular individuals who are active in it. (p. 221)

[20] Weiler (1991) goes on to point out the contributions feminists have made to liberatory pedagogies. As she says, work by postmodern feminists and women of colour, emphasizes the importance of a politics of difference:

> Feminist pedagogy has raised three areas of concern that are particularly useful in considering the ways in which Freirean and other liberatory pedagogies can be enriched and expanded. The first of these concerns the role and authority of the teacher; the second addresses the epistemological question of the source of the claims for knowledge and truth in personal experience and feeling; the last, emerging from challenges by women of color and postmodernist feminist theorists, raises the question of difference. (p. 459)

Sharon Welch (1991) offers a response to what she sees as the constraints of, on the one hand, a liberalism that assumes commonalty despite difference and, on the other hand, a postmodernism that makes all differences relative. Her alternative perspective involves "a form of ethical practice in which the recognition and understanding of difference is central to ethical and political critique" (p. 86) While she argues that "the foundation for ethical judgments is neither a shared reason nor a common human essence but the practice of communicative ethics" (p. 86) she goes beyond the Habermasian communicative ethics with which much of critical theory engages. Instead of assuming that people of good will are able to discuss their positions until they agree on the best course of action Welch suggests that ethical practice must involve all parties to the conversation working together on concrete activities, activities focusing on substantive change through collective action. This "genuine conversation," she writes, "presupposes prior material interaction—either political conflict or coalition or joint involvement in life-sustaining work" (p. 87).

As Welch emphasizes, ethical practices toward social change cannot occur in isolation; developing new understandings of your everyday reality, and that of other women around you, happens not in isolation or through interacting solely with books and experts. It happens in community. Lucy and Zoe discussed how their community-based activism keeps them on track at work, and their work with women keeps them on track in their community activism:

ZB: You can't be out there just working on issues and not dealing with the clients. I think you need both.
LS: Because if you didn't have the information that was coming to you—

ZB: from the clients—

LS: you wouldn't know what is the thrust of the issues.

ZB: And I think that's something that is happening out there. People are getting stuck and working around issues and they are not talking to the people who are actually affected. Sometimes that means negative repercussions.

The practice of communicative ethics, in the sense Welch means above, becomes the foundation for the feminist ethical practices Zoe and Lucy demonstrate.

The three aspects of feminist ethical practices that have emerged as central in this section are the need for action as well as analysis, the need for collective action as well as individual action, and the need for attending to differences by attending to the realities of women's everyday lives, rather than trampling roughshod over them in the name of an ideology. All of this requires, as Welch points out, "prior material interaction" and "joint involvement." In short it requires community alliances and the kind of community solidarity that can only arise from mutual compassion and respect, as well as political integrity within community.

5.10 Political integrity and the compassion within communities

An ethic of service and community alliances

As part of a political context organized through social relations, programs funded through employability enhancement policies cannot help but be brought into relief against a background of communities both privileged and oppressed by the ruling relations that define individual and collective worth. These communities have been "targeted" as different, as distinguished by their inability to meet the challenges of changing labour markets. The individuals within these communities must be brought into

line with the requirements of global economies, economies that define success through references to disembodied, decontextualized categorical distinctions, distinctions embedded in hegemonic texts that assume both a family ethic and work ethic that can support always increasing efficiencies.

These efficiencies require that individuals let go of family matters and focus on a quantitative rather than qualitative accountability; this accountability must be measured in relation to the activities of labour market realities and state policies, not within a context of care or justice. Sheila Neysmith (1991) argues that the current confusion about how care fits within "assumptions about the private family, a market-based economy, and a non-interventionist government" (p. 283) has left caregivers outside of any discourse that includes compensation for caring.

> The conceptual separation of family life, labour market activity, and state responsibility has resulted in a segmented, fractured discussion of caring. Bits and pieces get addressed by policy-makers, academic disciplines, and service professionals, each using different language and contrasting theoretical frameworks for analysing the issues. (p. 273)

Those who consume "care," who depend on others for everyday survival services, must pay through either private economies or personal dependencies. If they do not have the money to purchase care, they must find "family" or "community" to meet their needs.[21] For those women who care

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[21] Since communities, like care, have been fractured, families must take responsibility for the vulnerable — as if families have not also been fractured. The idealization of a simultaneously nuclear and extended family becomes "familism," "what we think a family should embody" (Neysmith, 1991, p. 285) rather than what families actually can embody. Indeed, the coordinating practices of the state conflate "family" and "community" (Bullock, 1990, p. 68) until there is a single entity, simultaneously private and social, responsible for the care of the vulnerable. Within this ideologically constructed rationale for civil non-intervention, the lack of resources within both families and communities cannot be acknowledged. Neither can there be a recognition that the ultimate responsibility most often falls upon women's shoulders as part of their unwaged work to preserve civility, to somehow resolve personal and public contradictions that are not of their making.

about justice, empowerment, a political integrity that requires not only compassion but collective action, the importance of holding on to their sense of who they are, what they know, and what they do (and for whom) — for these women an ethic of service within complexly defined communities allows them to give what others are forced by circumstances to take.

Peter Jarvis (1985) argues that "the altruism of service can be inverted into the dominance of the professional," (p. 69); the frontline workers in this research, however, argue that their decreasing discretionary powers and material rewards allow them very few opportunities to dominate and many more opportunities to demonstrate that their embodiment of the service ideal entails sacrifice (Lipsky, 1980, p. 202). Betty Parker, Lining Up, says there are "people who serve themselves and people who serve others," and most adult education teachers fall within the latter group: "They're service oriented, they want to help — as opposed to being interested in their own careers, their own advancement" (Interview 2). "You have to see the value of this [work]," her research partner adds. "If I were interested in the salary I'd be gone" (Pat Mercer, Interview 2).[22] Faith Upshaw shares this perspective: "It's obvious that we are not in it for the money. If that was the case, we'd be gone long ago!" (Focus group 1).

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the use of the term "community" by "the state" at the present time to describe women's unpaid work in maintaining dependent people, shows how the "return" of certain forms of care formerly provided by "the state" to "the community" (understood as "family," and in which the labor to produce the care is performed by women at no cost) has been accomplished by the state through its documentary work. (Bullock, 1990, p. 71)

[22] Pat Mercer, Lining Up, also alludes to the assumption of altruism embedded in the hiring priorities of employability enhancement projects: "They definitely look at volunteer work. I think that's probably because it indicates that I will work for nothing — that I'll work damn hard for nothing. I'm not going to leave because of the benefits or the pay" (Interview 1).

"Maybe I'm being idealistic," Zora Neale suggests later, "but to do this kind of work, getting paid [so little] money, you've got to be grassroots! You have to have the same philosophical or ethical approach to life" (Focus group 3).[23] When Zora talks about "grassroots" she is talking about communities, in her case "my women's community, my spiritual community, my Black community" (Focus group 1). It is in community that the five Black women involved in this work feel they have become most employable. A history of community involvement provides Georgia Ross with 80 per cent of her "marketable skills":

> I have been involved with community affairs since an early age. I am indebted to the elders who had the patience and the wisdom to work with me and to equip me with the necessary tools of life. My family, too, had a lot to do with who I am today. (Focus group 1)

Community, then, is not just a site of giving for program workers; being in community gives back to them as well.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) affirms the community support provided by Black extended families, a support that provides them with a firm foundation for political activism, support she suggests White women do not enjoy (p. 212). By cultivating "a more generalized ethic of caring and personal accountability" (p. 129), both Black families and the Black Christian church move Black women beyond maternalism to a place where they "othermother" the children of their whole community. In her description of the ethic of service Collins (1990) highlights the institutional support offered

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[23] As outlined in Chapter Two, and emphasized by the five single Black women who participated in this research, if a frontline worker is a single adult or a single parent it becomes less and less likely that she can sacrifice salary for values. Carol Moffatt indicates she had to take a job within the government bureaucracy to make sufficient money to support her family.

by the Christian church. Indeed, as Irene Jessup says, being brought up by her family in the church she learned the skills required by her work:

> My family, we're all church-going people [that's where I learned] you have to have a love for people in order to help them. You have to really care about not just yourself but helping somebody else. . . . If I can help somebody, then my living would not be in vain. That's the way I look at my job. (Focus group 1)

Her job of employment counselling arises out of an ethic of community service and an ethic of love, something fostered by both her community involvement and the support of her family and church.

In a dialogue with theologian Cornell West, bell hooks (hooks & West, 1991) argues that "service and sacrifice, care and love sit at the center of what it is to be human" (p. 53). Because an ethic of service makes sense only in the context of community, people's increasing dependence on "a bourgeois dream of liberal individualistic success" (p. 15) now jeopardizes personal accountability to community. Without the context of communities of resistance, those who fight for justice become isolated and unable to continue their work, West responds.[24] "In the face of market forces that highlight buying, selling, and profit making . . . . traditions of care and respect have almost completely broken down" (hooks & West, 1991, p. 52).

Yet, as frontline workers both Black and White support a politicized ethic of care, care partnered with justice and the collective action fostered by communities variously formed and in alliance, questions about value arise

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[24] The notion of communities of resistance is not a transparent or unproblematic one, as Jacob Muller points out:

> Those of us involved in the this field want to know whether or not "community" can be used as an oppositional base from which to challenge "the state." If so, we need to know how "community" can be used in ways which do not correspond to and align us with the organizational practices used by the state to manage and rule. (Muller with Walker & Ng, 1990, p. 16)

not only in relation to frontline practices but also in relation to frontline working conditions. Alexa Jones, Moving Over, acknowledges that "some people choose to work in programs like ours, with less money, less status, less stability because of their values and philosophies about what's important in life," (Interview 1). At the same time, she adds, "I'm certainly not putting down making money!" All the women involved in this research talk about the costs of their commitment to community-based programming that relies on frontline workers' ethic of service. As Shauna Butterwick (1992) bluntly concludes in her research, adult educators in non-profit programs are being exploited (p. 203), as are social workers in the same settings. Why, Ben Carniol (1990) asks, should any frontline worker be asked to give up "higher pay, more influence, more prestige, a sense of personal security. . . . the normal goals of other occupations?" (p. 74).

Of course, both adult educators and social workers can move on from the face-to-face caring for bodies and take up the text-to-text administration of accountability. Quality is priceless whereas quantity can be calculated and, in a context of systemic dualisms, those who choose to care rather than mete out distributive justice may be expected to act out of love rather than greed.[25] When confronted with this devaluation of her work and the work of her colleagues, Julia Scott, A Healing Centre, says, "I get really angry" (Dialogue). When frontline workers witness in very concrete ways the devaluation of their caregiving work they are, by extension, participating in the devaluation of those with whom they work. By accepting second-class professional status

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[25] As Joan Cummings (1980) demonstrates in her work, the more masculine male-dominated sphere of management in bureaucracies has always been rewarded at the expense of the more feminine sphere of caregiving in communities, where women predominate.

for themselves, Julia suggests, they accept second-class status for their program participants.

Working out of an ethic that values the sacred in all life, Julia argues for a deep respect that assumes the inherent dignity of all persons, something affirmed through a reciprocal responsibility for both nurturing growth and acknowledging that our society does not consider healing a value-added activity:

> I work 30 to 40 hours a week, all week long and I watch people grow, really grow, and it is so exciting! But I also see some of these people who have grown leave [our program] and I see them later and . . . they are really struggling. It becomes a real internal struggle for these individuals, because they have tasted something different and our society doesn't allow them to have that. (Dialogue)

Julia's frustration with the limits of what she can do personally and what her agency can provide as a supportive environment remains with her all the time. She grieves the loss of community and of coalition, something that had existed in the Metro area before government bureaucracies began to micro-manage service delivery: "The government has split the community. It has pitted agency against agency, so you don't have the agencies coming together to tackle the issues because they're busy fighting over small amounts of monies" (Interview 1). Julia has witnessed what once was a community of frontline activists become focused on program mandates and accountability procedures that consume program workers energies and resources.

Julia's work is rooted in the centrality of community alliances and in an ethic of service grounded in the spiritual. Starhawk (1987) articulates an ethic of immanence that parallels Julia's belief in interconnection, a recognition of the inherent worth and unique nature of each individual as they are body and spirit in social settings.

> Immanent value is literally embodied. We know it in our physical beings. To be free, we must be able to sustain our lives, our culture; the society we create must meet our needs, and we must see it extending into the future. What we value, we tend and preserve. (p. 200)

If frontline workers value themselves and their work and through their work their program participants, they must nurture their own material as well as spiritual needs. "We cannot grow in strength through becoming parasites" Starhawk argues. Neither can we support the growth of others if we allow them to continue being parasitic.

Political integrity confounds parasitism; "power-from-within derives from integrity, from our recognition of the context of every act, from a consistency between what we say, believe, and do" (Starhawk, 1987, p. 136). In order to keep hold of who we are, what we know, what we do and with whom we do it we must understand that integrity requires not only individual care and an understanding of justice but also collective action. "The immanent value of the individual cannot be separated from a concern for social justice," Starhawk (1987) writes. "For that concern to root itself in reality, it must be expressed in action" (p. 136). It is in this context, then, that Julia says "I experience my whole being as political" (Dialogue). For her, enacting political integrity demands collective action within communities, recognizing the inherent value of each person, and insisting on their right to be all that they can be.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that community-based programs have the mandate of mediating "personhood." As becomes clear in Chapter Three, facilitating employability involves facilitating assimilation into an embodied mainstream; as Chapter Four outlines, facilitating employability involves facilitating assimilation into categorical citizenship; as this Chapter argues,

facilitating employablity also involves facilitating assimilation into an ethical framework. By coming out the other side of caring and justice, of collective action and individual empowerment, employable adults who become employed validate the ethical work of frontline workers by entering into a social as well as an economic category. They become "good" community members.

Being a person is a wholly social endeavour (Mead, 1934), as facilitating personhood through employability enhancement both draws on and constructs communities. Susan Sherwin (1994) refers to the concept of social community, a community that provides a context for "personhood," "a relational concept that must be defined in terms of interactions and relationships with others" (p. 320).

> Personhood is a social category, not an isolated state. Persons are members of a community; they develop as concrete, discrete, and specific individuals. To be a morally significant category, personhood must involve personality as well as biological integrity. It is not sufficient to consider persons simply as Kantian atoms of rationality; persons are all embodied, conscious beings with particular social histories. (Sherwin, 1994, p. 319)

In social communities, including the communities of employability enhancement programs, people come together not only as bodies to be groomed or counted, but as bodies that have value because they enter into social relations consciously informed by who they are, where they come from, what they know, what they do, and who they choose to act with in community.

If persons only exist in relation, so social relations are the foundation of community and communities thus become the basis for social action oriented toward change, when justice and care come together in a form of

community-based praxis, community alliance. The recognition of common

commitments and the empathy to form connections are central components

of coalitions, as bell hooks (1990) points out:

> Radical postmodernism calls attention to those shared sensibilities
> which cross the boundaries of class, gender, race, etc., that could be
> fertile ground for the construction of empathy—ties that would
> promote recognition of common commitments, and serve as a base for
> solidarity and coalition. (p. 27)

Radical postmodernism, and its attendant politics of difference, are not

enough on their own, however. The reflexivity and collective action found

in feminist activism allows the politics of difference to move forward. As

Sarah Hoagland (1988) insists,

> our moral agency is encouraged by integrating and so politicizing
> reasoning and emotions within the community, for this is how we get
> back in touch with the energy that moves us, energy which is deadened
> when we separate reasoning and emotions. (p. 167)

An ethic of rational justice integrated with an ethic of emotional caring,

politicized by the integrity of feminist collective action within communities

of difference can spark the energy to move frontline workers toward social

change while also nurturing their own material and spiritual needs.

5.11 Ethical practices and professional postures

A politic of difference when informed by ethics of care and justice

provides a framework for collective action, for personal, professional, and

political commitments to coalition work informed by ethics of services and

community alliance. Wherever there are differences, however, there are also

boundaries that define those differences; in order that these boundaries

contribute to the strengths rather than weaknesses of frontline work, they

must be acknowledged.[26] Program counsellors, instructors, and managers who have been disciplined through social work learn the importance of personal, professional, and political boundaries in theory and through practicum. Unfortunately for those disciplined through adult education, where "instruction" may be too simply distinguished from "counselling," attention to the need for boundary awareness has been less evident. In the context of critical theory, in particular, "differences" may be deleted from "a discourse of solidarity and caring" (Giroux, 1987b, p. 30) because the dream of a radical utopia cannot contain the social relations that inform all professional practices, including the practices of "transformative intellectuals."

In the context of this denial of difference and consequent adoption of us/ them dualisms, Patti Lather (1991) critiques the concept "emancipatory," on which so much of the critical education theory rests. The central problem for teachers and other professionals who identify themselves with a liberatory project, she argues, comes out of the desire for an alliance of "us," those who fight oppression, against "them," those who oppress. Ignoring the many shades of grey that stretch between "us" and "them," Lather argues, becomes in itself an abuse of the privilege displayed by experts from any discipline who feel they can define the boundaries of alliances. We cannot assume that who we are, what we know, and with whom we share that knowledge gives us the right to speak on behalf of others:

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[26] As Kari Delhi (1991) insists, differences are material:
> Our differences are not just discursive or theoretical; they are material, embodied and political, as we struggle against or conform to modes of knowing and being in the world, as we learn to channel our desires in socially prescribed ways, but also as we continue to interrupt, disrupt, subvert, as we fail, run away, get sick, feel stressed, have breakdowns. (p. 63)

> Intellectuals with liberatory intentions [need] to take responsibility for transforming our own practices so that our empirical and pedagogical work can be less toward positioning ourselves as masters of truth and justice and more toward creating a space where those directly involved can act and speak on their own behalf. How to do so without romanticizing the subject and experience-based knowledge is, of course, the dilemma. (pp. 163-164)

Those who refuse to interrogate emancipatory positions, Lather suggests, display their "continued investments in the liberal struggle for equality and identity politics via the mediations of critical pedagogy" (p. 48).

Yet, as professionals, frontline workers find themselves caught in an overarching discourse of liberal individualism where, Iris Marion Young (1997) suggests, the impulse to ignore difference often appears to be the most ethical response.

> According to liberal individualism, categorizing people in groups by race, gender, religion, and sexuality, and acting as though ascriptions say something significant about the person and his or her experience, capacities, and possibilities, is invidious and oppressive. The only liberatory approach is to think of people and treat them as individuals, variable and unique. (p. 17)

For example, Pat Mercer of Lining Up articulates her work to a humanist ethic that requires her to go beyond difference. It isn't that she can't see the differences that define collective identities, she says, it's that she doesn't see them as relevant:

> When [students] come in here I see Black and I see White, I see any other colour they are, and I'm quite aware that they are a different colour and a different culture. But, when I say "individualism in the classroom," it's looking at each of their backgrounds . . . and they are all different. . . . It's — life's too short for getting bogged down in the obvious. (Interview 1)

However, Young responds, not seeing difference as more than individual allows frontline workers to dismiss systemic oppressions as salient aspects of

their work, including the institutional processes within their own programs that structure the work of instructors, counsellors, and managers.

Working out of a liberal individualism that privileges the unique nature of each program participant provides humanist frontline workers with a professional framework that ensures equality of opportunity. This orientation also provides a framework for those who espouse a radical critique of humanism, treating each individual as equally able to access an emancipatory education. The latter assumes that group membership makes no structural difference and alliances can be based solely on theoretical and ethical orientations. Thus, many frontline workers who feel uncomfortable with the social relations defining professional/ client interactions refute their professional identity, particularly if they have come out of situations similar to those of their clients. Identifying with "the oppressed" allows them to deny their own connection with professions that are in some ways complicit with oppression.

Lucy Salt recognizes this impulse to deny potential complicity but does not support it. "I think that a lot of people might not want to say 'We're professionals' . . . because they don't want to acknowledge the power differential between themselves and the client," she responds. "They say, 'We're all just one. We are all here working together to help one another,' which I think does the client a disservice" (Dialogues). The client has come to receive help, not to give it, and to deny that reality is to shirk professional responsibilities. It also, Wendy Luttrell argues, allows staff to shirk political responsibilities:

> Frustrated by state or local administrative efforts to rationalize and control their work, many instructors denied the "professionalism" of their work because they associated professionalism with lack of

personal involvement with students. The same instructors also denied the political or socially transformative potential of their work. (p. 356)

By denying the politically transformative potential, they also deny the ethical potential. For Lucy, her work in A Feminist Collective combines a professional and a political ethic, indeed there can be no separation of the two: "my work inside a feminist ethic says I am a professional" (Dialogue).

For other frontline workers, however, to be political is to be non-professional since they believe taking an overtly political position involves taking sides thus denying the professional requirement of disinterested objectivity. While they may agree that advocating for individual clients verges on the political, in their view only partisan politics are identified as truly political. Maintaining a stance of professionalism allows them to ignore the inherently political potential of their work:

> The emphasis of traditional social work on the individual — both worker and client — has made it easy for workers to ignore questions of overall social change and difficult for them to step outside their normal "professional" role. . . . If workers push for a different way of thinking and acting in relation to clients, they are classified as "radical" and set apart from the norm. (Carniol, 1990, p. 114)

In contrast to social work, adult education has more openly promoted political work and client advocacy as part of the ethical expectations of practitioners. As mentioned above, however, the ethical boundaries expected in the professional posturing of adult educators are less explicit.

Many of the women in this research distinguish between adult education and social work training, and enter into an ethical critique of different professional postures. During their dialogues women both facetiously and seriously constructed a series of dualisms that included instructors and counsellors. They suggest, for example, that instructors see

the cup half empty and counsellors see it half full; instructors teach hard content and counsellors model soft process; instructors can judge right and wrong and counsellors must provide unconditional support; instructors work with often time-limited discrete outcomes and counsellors rarely see the consequences of their work. Though sometimes posed in fun, the distinctions point to important differences in the professional ethical stances promoted and adopted by members of the two professions.

These categories, however, depend on particular experiences and perspectives; not all research participants believe in them. In contrast to the above dualisms, for example, Pat Mercer says "in the classroom I tend to concentrate on the positive, what the person can do, whereas I would think a counsellor deals more with the negative, what has to be done, what's being done wrong" (Dialogue). Betty Phillips, her research partner, counters with her concern that

> very often what I feel when I talk to counsellors is that I'm some hard-hearted bitch for taking some hard line when [they say] "Don't you understand, this is a problem and this is a problem and this is a problem?" And then I'm going, "Yes, but don't you understand that, as an employer, I don't care." And I have to take that frame of reference — as an employer, that isn't my problem. I'm not a hard-hearted bitch in the end. I do understand all those problems and I do feel the pulls of all those problems, but it is my goal not to have to deal with them. (Dialogue)

In the end, both Pat and Betty agree that counsellors and instructors need to learn from each other, need to recognize and work with differences among individual philosophies as well as the differences among disciplines and job descriptions.[27]

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[27] Paulo Freire's work with both educators and social workers points to some of the possibilities for joint action, and like-minded professional stances (Freire & Moch, 1990). While "the educator plays with knowledge, theory, and politics" social workers engage in

At the program level of everyday work, however, within the constraints of embodied and coordinating practices, some counsellors feel obliged to confront ethical dimensions of disciplinary differences. The lack of a professional code of ethics for adult education and the lack of training in the importance of boundaries can present untenable tensions. To some extent these tensions can be illustrated by counsellors' concern that instructors often appear to "blame the victim," something social workers are forced to confront during their undergraduate education at the Maritime School of Social Work (MSSW).

For adult educators involved in adult literacy, basic education, and academic upgrading, the importance of counselling skills has become imperative. In particular, community-based programs that facilitate students' understanding not only of reading and writing and math, but also of past and current trauma have recognized that "how to learn" becomes as important as "what to learn." As Jane Lesley highlights there are students who want and need certification and there are those who have to find a way to live within systemic inequities of race, class, dis/abilities, gender, and poverty. Many instructors teach "within the sociocultural and psychosocial contexts of poverty, underemployment or unemployment, physical and emotional abuse, dysfunctional families, and severe health problems," (Dirkx, Fonfara & Flaska, 1993, p. 54) and within those contexts the need for clear and appropriate boundaries is as important as the need for curriculum.

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casework, group work, and community organization that is also "inherently and substantively educational — pedagogical" (p.5). There are possibilities for coalition work when practitioners from both disciplines act out of the common political dream of "a society without injustice" (p. 5), a participatory democracy.

To balance caring, justice, activism, compassion, and an ethic of service, write educators John Dirkx, Tedda Fonfara and Kay Flaska (1993), every frontline worker has to have a firm sense of professional boundaries: "If these boundaries are unclear, practitioners may respond to their learners by either over-identifying with them or by demonstrating an unwillingness to attend to these complex psychosocial issues" (p. 54). While schools of education have yet to meet the needs of most adult educators in this regard (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992) there are signs that feminists, in particular, have begun to look at the consequences of "teaching" in contexts where "counselling" may be required (e.g. Lloyd with Ennis & Atkinson, 1994).

Leah Moody, Carrying Caseloads, believes that all professional frontline workers hold a position of power in the lives of their program participants. While it may be important not to overemphasize that power, she says, it is essential to recognize that the consequences of not being professional in professional contexts can be devastating to both the workers and their clients.

> We have to be accountable to them and to ourselves and that means . . . being dependable, being reliable, being consistent. . . . To put people in positions of power who aren't professional is really to set them up, and [set] the clients up, for disaster. (Dialogue)

The ethical component of professionalism requires that counsellors and instructors acknowledge the social relations of their work without exploiting them. The risks of emotional exploitation, in particular, require an active reflexivity that make use of frameworks provided through professional education. It is particularly important, Leah says, that practitioners take care of their own needs separate from their work in their programs — something that will help frontline workers construct the boundaries needed during "the

moments when people, when individuals, touch us personally and make us vulnerable" (Dialogue).

Mary Campbell, of Supporting Women, believes that frontline workers must combine "natural style with formal training" (Interview 1) in order to recognize the limits of appropriate care. Ethically bound to be an effective counsellor, she believes she must tread a fine line between identifying with women empathetically and detaching herself sufficiently to remain non-judgmental.

> I have had personal life experiences, but my experiences are mine. These experiences may be similar to someone else, but every situation is unique. I don't understand how someone else feels even though the situations may be similar. Everyone is entitled to their own feelings and values. Just because a certain way worked for me doesn't mean it will work for someone else. (Interview 1)

Her professional training, particularly regarding the importance of professional boundaries, enables her to connect with her clients, without identifying with them in terms of common experiences. This, she says, is the ethical posture she takes up as a professional.

> Someone can have the life experiences but unless they have the education or the formal training to work with it then I think it can do someone more harm than good. . . . If someone doesn't have the training, it's easy to get caught up in "Because it worked for me, it's going to work for you." It [must be] client self-determination. I can't impose my values, my beliefs, my judgments on anyone. (Interview 1)

Professionalism, then, is simultaneously a stance of connection and a stance of detachment. Rather than sympathy (experiencing the feelings of another and being affected) it is rooted in empathy (experiencing the feelings and understanding without taking the position of another) (Hepworth & Larsen, 1990, p. 87).

Not only does the retention of separateness allow practitioners to retain a vital perspective, and the ability to be helpful but also it avoids the imposition of relations rooted in privilege and oppression — almost inevitable when attempting to take the position of another across socially structured differences (Young, 1997, p. 45). It is, argues Iris Marion Young (1997) ontologically impossible to take another's perspective: "Who we are is constituted to a considerable extent by the relations in which we stand to others" (p. 47).

Lucy Salt, A Feminist Collective, argues that frontline workers must have a healthy understanding of what belongs to the program participants, both individually and as a group, and what belongs to the professional instructor, counsellor, or manager. "Self care is the boundary that I keep between myself and the client's experience," she says. That allows her to keep a distance between her reality and the reality of others, "that allows me to distance myself enough from their experience so that I don't become overwhelmed by their experience" (Dialogue). Coming from a very different ethical and political position than Mary Campbell, Lucy agrees that workers must not be encouraged to move beyond empathy to identification. Understanding professionalism as "a way to superimpose a persona on the personal" (Final meeting), she declares that the process is part of developing essential boundaries, boundaries that make the difference between being able to stay in a program for 13 years or leaving disenchanted and exhausted after one or two or three years of trying to cope with feelings of guilt and blame.

Lucy's position appears to be in conflict with the social work discipline's arguments concerning "authenticity." Dean Hepworth and Jo Ann Larsen (1990) enjoin social workers to "avoid hiding behind a mask of

professionalism" (p. 110), to ensure that their "vocalizations are . . . congruent

with their actual feelings and thoughts," that they "relate as real persons,

expressing their feelings and assuming responsibility for them" (p. 109).

Feminist social worker Janet Finn (1990) recognizes, however, that "the

human service worker is the mediator in the struggle between social control

and social support" because they have the "dual role of bureaucrat and

helping professional" (p. 59). To deny this dual role is to disavow the

embodied and coordinating aspects of their positions, to remove a means of

resolving some of "the dissonance in the system by creating barriers between

themselves and their clients in the name of sound professional practice" (p.

60).

Lucy points out that "you don't do this [frontline work] for 13 years if

you don't have strong boundaries around your professional role," (Interview

1). Without such boundaries the easy out of "blaming the victim," becomes

much more likely:

> When I'm feeling burnt out, I begin to get angry at the clients. That's
> when I come out of a counseling session thinking "There is something
> wrong with her. Why doesn't she pull herself together?" When I see
> myself think that, that's when I know that I'm getting closer to the
> edge, that I have to do some self evaluation to let go of that anger,
> those anxieties, and put it in a more appropriate place. I don't think I
> have ever directed it towards the clients, but I feel it in my head like
> the little voice talking. (Dialogue)

Lucy has no illusions about the dangers of frontline work in her field. She

has seen many women burn out and leave; what is sometimes worse, she

says, is when women burn out and stay — "they are really counterproductive,

bitter and cynical" (Dialogue). Admittedly, "the need is a bottomless pit," Lucy

says, "and as a professional who's trying to work at a job and stay sane, I try to

not get too close to the edge of a pit. If I fall in, I will die, I will burn out, I will

be depressed" (Interview 1). Part of her ethical commitment to herself includes taking care of herself and ensuring that her colleagues do the best they can to take care of themselves.[28] Yet, even she feels some of the guilt that almost all frontline workers grapple with. While reading the transcript of our first interview she suggests that, "I've been very successful at not taking my work home, not getting emotionally involved with my clients." Lucy writes beside this, "I see this as perhaps a selfish attitude!"

Lucy's co-worker Zora Neale talks about both the professional code of ethics she follows as social worker and the equally stringent ethical perspective she calls upon to keep herself whole personally and politically as well as professionally. Living in a White supremacist society, she says, she has to ensure that in her spirit, as well as in her mind and her body, she remains healthy.

> How do I keep healthy? That means always going inside myself and saying, "You're sane. You're sane. You're sane. They're all screwed up out there. You're sane." I'm making those distinctions to make myself realize that sexism, racism, classism, and all the other "isms" are constantly affecting my life. (Focus group 1)

Asserting that she "can't be anything but political and tired at times," Zora demonstrates what bell hooks (1993) invokes as "a firm grounding in self and identity (knowledge of who we are and where we have come from), choosing 'wellness' is an act of political resistance" (p. 14). Part of that resistance

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[28] Lucy tells one story about the responsibility the Collective members take in helping social work practicum students learn the importance of appropriate boundaries:
> We had one young counsellor who was out grocery shopping with an immigrant woman because the immigrant woman didn't understand shopping. Which is all very nice and I can see where it's coming from a point of concern, but that's hardly our role. Our role, of course, would be to get the woman connected with an immigrant support group that is there for that purpose. (Interview 1)

includes a refusal to be confused by conflicting demands from funders, co-workers and community.

> I just say these are my limitations and I can't extend myself beyond that. I'm sorry, but I won't. And that to me is about boundary issues. I just say, "I have to let go." And sometimes I just say, "I'm sorry" .... It's about honesty, directness, knowing what it is, and letting go. (Focus group 3)

Supported in her work by her Black community colleagues, Zora continues, brings her work "home." "We are involved in the whole process of empowering ourselves and working collectively," aware of the fact that "most of the time you are always outside of yourself. . . . out with somebody else's reality and struggling to survive" (Focus group 3). It is only through her politics of difference and professional feminist ethics that Zora finds she can do the caring she needs to do in the name of social justice among her community and in alliance with those who, like her co-workers, are willing to move toward coalition.

5.12   Discussion: Ethical Practices

When women define their frontline work from within an ethic of care, justice, and feminist collective action they argue that program counsellors, instructors and managers work not only as a means of supporting themselves and their families but also as a means of building and supporting communities. Variously described as communities of women, of individuals disadvantaged and marginalized through bad luck and bad management, of individuals defined by and oppressed through race and class distinctions, age, disabilities, neglect — the individuals that make up these communities evidence neither an embodied nor a categorical unity.

Embodied practices work toward assimilation of differences evidenced in individuals' self-location in space and time, in relation to norms of self-presentation. Coordinating practices require the labeling of social assistance recipients as embodying deficits that make them actionable within the context of state-funded program mandates. Ethical practices require the empowerment of individuals whose life circumstances or group memberships make them both objects and subjects of care, of justice, of feminist collective action.

The ethical practices of frontline workers arise from their need to negotiate conflicting expectations and inevitable tensions in the context of highly politicized social relations. The demands of state bureaucracies for greater and greater efficiencies pit employability enhancement counsellors, instructors and managers against the professed orientations and social organization of their disciplines. Required to tidy the messy lives and realities of their program participants, through both embodied and coordinating practices, program workers confront the question of ethics in their everyday choices, practices, and decisions. Ethical practices go beyond simple adherence to formal professional codes of ethics — though clearly those ethical guidelines also provide important boundaries, as we saw in Section 5.11. Ethical practices provide the context for frontline work, grounding daily work in socio-historically constructed humanist ethics of care, emancipatory ethics of justice, feminist ethics of collective action and service-based ethics of community alliance.

The ethical practices detailed in this chapter centre around the notion of care. The ethic of care that has been a touchstone for social work and other helping professions emerges from a liberal humanist tradition that is imbued

with the limitations of that tradition. In particular it lends itself to a patronizing maternalism, due to its assumptions of individual equality of opportunity. The adult education-based ethic of emancipatory justice confronts the individualism of the ethic of care, by focusing on the need for structural social change and the liberation of subordinated social groups. Its difficulty, as was explicated in this chapter, is transforming this liberatory impetus into a less masterful approach, a more complex pedagogy that can incorporate the realities of women contract literacy instructors working with single mothers on income assistance. The difficulty lies in not imposing notions of oppression and liberation on those the ethic of justice seeks to emancipate.

Feminist ethics can escape that trap when they remain centred in the need for collective action. This moves emancipatory aims into the everyday lives of both workers and program participants. Perhaps more importantly, however, feminist ethics escape the potential for imposing "narratives of redemption" through incorporating a politics of difference. This stance demands reflexivity and self-critique, and grounds itself in the need to begin from the realities of women's lives, in all of their differences. It starts from the assumption that membership in social groups does make a difference; that equality is not reached by denying group membership in the name of liberal individualism but by naming, understanding and valuing social differences.

The collective action attendant upon a feminist ethic can only be successfully enacted through community alliances — to do anything else is to impose ready-made analyses and solutions on "the oppressed." While an ethic of community service is rooted in caring, the caring moves beyond

altruism and feminine maternalism to a mutuality of respect, understanding, rights and responsibilities. Community becomes a place of support and alliance, as well as a site of giving. The service and sacrifice at the foundation of an ethic of community service subvert liberal individualism by insisting on the personal and political accountability of both the giver and the given-to. While there is potential for exploitation in an ethic of community service, the potential for alliance in community work makes possible the reciprocity of respect, knowing and compassion that can forge links beyond boundaries of difference, to support and maintain personhood in the context of community. Collective action within the context of communities can nurture social change while continuing to care for both program participants and frontline workers in employability enhancement.

Caring for self is a central component of the professional boundaries adopted by social workers. Although adult education is less explicit in its professional posturing regarding ethical boundaries there is substantial cross-over as both counsellors and instructors work to help single mothers receiving income assistance assimilate to the work ethics and family ethics outlined in the previous chapter. Frontline workers from both adult education and social work backgrounds agree that there are inevitable tensions in their work as women with women, mediating the tensions between claims to care and claims to justice, claims to community action and claims to individual progress, claims to categorical accountability and claims to personal achievements. The next chapter shall examine in more detail the conceptual practices that surround, pervade and underlie the embodied, coordinating and ethical practices through which employability enhancement frontline workers achieve this mediation.

Chapter Six: Conceptual practices and reflexive critique

6.1 Introduction: Conceptual practices and reflexive critique

In Chapter One, an overview of Canadian welfare state history and current media discourses concerning family and work ethics illustrate how pervasive understandings of poverty, prosperity, and social policy reform weave their way through time and across disparate locations. In subsequent chapters we see how these pervasive ideas affect the everyday social relations that shape the field of employability enhancement. Hegemonic notions of work-appropriate appearance, including middle-class (White) feminine grooming practices, permeate the embodied practices of frontline workers (Chapter 3). Hegemonic notions of work ethic and family ethic compete for attention as frontline workers engage in the coordinating practices that articulate their work to the relevances of the state (Chapter 4). Similarly, diverse understandings of care, justice, collective action, and community shape the ethical practices detailed in the previous chapter (Chapter 5).

This chapter traces the underpinnings of these hegemonic ideas, providing a "thread through the maze" (Smith, 1987, p. 54) of frontline employability enhancement practices, tracing particular ideological practices and their attendant concepts. Beginning with a discussion of how conceptual practices are implicated in ruling relations (6.2), the chapter explicates the social organization of "citizenship" as a conceptual practice of power. This conceptual practice constructs a dualistic framework, one that opposes family and work, caring and justice, first-class and second-class citizenship (6.3). In the next section, we see how the frontline workers in this research approach

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this framework as they express their understanding of citizenship rights and responsibilities (6.4).

In this process, it becomes clear that many program instructors, counsellors, and managers challenge hegemonic discourses. During the research process, we can see how they engage in reflexive critique — how they investigate the boundaries between conceptual practices and their everyday experience — as they respond to the ruling relations that structure their work (6.5). Following this, the argument concerning the need to educate all frontline workers for reflexive critique becomes clear. Postsecondary educators, in particular, have a responsibility to explore with students the conceptual and discursive practices that put them in the position of mediating social relations between program participants and the state (6.6).

The importance of this postsecondary work becomes particularly acute when program counsellors, instructors, and managers work everyday with intractable policy controversies such as those that surround the employability of single mothers receiving social assistance (6.7). Again, the argument is made that postsecondary educators must take the lead in preparing frontline workers for the particular tensions that arise when they are expected to mediate among those with conflicting frameworks (6.8).

The Conclusion for this thesis suggests the theoretical framework developed through this research can be used to understand all frontline work, most centrally those involved in social welfare programming but also, by extension, employment in the service sector, resource-based industries, manufacturing, public service, and professional fields (6.9). The conclusions focus on frontline workers' postsecondary education and professional development, especially that which focuses on their ability to engage in

reflexive critique in the context of intractable policy controversies. They argue for the importance of supporting or participating in collective action guided by community alliances, arguing that reflexive practitioners can and must contribute their distinctive perspectives to the broader community of frontline workers, to program participants, members of advocacy organizations, community-based and academic researchers, postsecondary faculty, social welfare policy makers, and policy analysts. The thesis closes with suggestions for future research.

6.2   Conceptual practices and ruling relations

As discussed in Chapter Two, authoritative accounts use concepts to interpret and communicate texts developed by those accustomed to ruling. Authoritative accounts, informed by contiguous conceptual frameworks, articulate concepts common to different domains of experience. They enable an intricate network of professionals, corporate managers, academics, and bureaucrats to mediate relations not only among themselves, but also between themselves and those whose behaviour is defined and governed by the texts they produce. Conceptual practices organize what happens within the account and connect those happenings to happenings constructed through other accounts, providing a textual coherence. They become part of a process that not only conveys particular kinds of information but also coordinates particular kinds of activities (Smith, 1990b, pp. 69-79).

When a woman is conceptualized as a "single mother receiving social assistance," or as "employable," or "a [bad] mother," or "a [good] citizen," certain facts about her life are combined with other facts until she fits within particular categories. As outlined in Chapter Four, these categorizations make

the individual woman actionable, both subject and object of state policies, bureaucratic agencies, community-based programs, and professional practices. Concepts also work to make discrete everyday work activities actionable in the public realm of bureaucracies, professions, and communities; they produce a common set of relevances, a synchronized perspective that articulates one worker to another, one institution to another.

Concepts have a socio-political history and through that history they draw on centuries of lived and textual reality (Manicom, 1988). Thus, when politicians signed the first federal-provincial employability enhancement agreement in Saskatchewan in 1985, their work shared a genealogy with the work of politicians who authorized the English Poor Laws of 1601. The contemporary concepts of employable/ unemployable are informed by the historical concepts of deserving/ undeserving.

These concepts, embedded in government policies as meanings and values (Brooks, 1988, p. 16), then inform the regulations through which single mothers receiving social assistance qualify as participants in programs established by policy agreements. Having been re-classified from "unemployable" to "employable" and, by historical association, from "deserving" to "undeserving," the dignity and survival of single mothers and the survival and dignity of their children becomes jeopardized. Their access to the benefits of the social welfare system become a privilege rather than a right and thus their claims to citizenship in a liberal democratic welfare state become contingent (Riches, 1990a, 1990b). The program instructors, counsellors, and managers given the mandate to "fix" these single mothers work within this socio-historical context; it provides the

framework within which they accomplish their everyday practices of employability enhancement.

Should any individual "case" of a single mother receiving social assistance come up before the bureaucracy, the woman may be further conceptualized and categorized. The outcomes of this activity affect her treatment by the state and by those professionals attached to the state. The single mothers themselves have little or no access to the resources required to construct counter-acting authoritative accounts. They can do little to effect change in others' knowledge of them as "functional illiterates" and "battered women," whose ex-husbands may be "drug-dependent" and "of no fixed address," whose children may be "hyperactive" and "street-involved," whose lives might be "marginal" and "under surveillance." Yet, these conceptual practices continue to have a direct effect on the everyday lives of single mothers, including their ability to change their circumstances, to become more employable. Conceptual practices are practices of power, of ruling; they can become a form of conceptual imperialism. Frontline workers must accomplish their work using the dominant conceptual practices of their particular time and place. They have no choice but to learn how to maintain their integrity within this context.

6.3   Citizenship and conceptual practices of power

The concept of citizenship organizes the embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices of employability enhancement work. It provides a unifying thread which pulls together the diverse ways in which frontline workers mediate the everyday citizenship of single mothers receiving social assistance. Indeed, this construct — "single mothers receiving social

assistance" — can be subsumed under the more generalized organizing concept of citizenship, a concept that confers both individual and collective status. Following this thread leads us to a central duality in ongoing debates about social welfare programming: Do women who are single mothers receiving social assistance have a citizenship right to expect support from the state so they can "mother" and thus reproduce citizens or do they have a citizenship responsibility to take waged work of any kind so they can become citizens in their own right?

> At its simplest, entitlement to social assistance can be viewed as either an absolute unqualified right, contingent only upon satisfactory demonstration of need, or a conditional or qualified right, subject to some behavioural, attitudinal, or other condition not related to need. (Lightman, 1990, p. 92)

In the debates that define welfare policy, an individual's civil, political, and social rights may be balanced against a "duties discourse," a notion of community and political obligations (Lister, 1997).

Indeed, as Thomas Courchene (1987) writes, policy analysts often argue a direct link between notions of citizenship and social policy development: "One's perspective on social policy, of necessity, will reflect one's view of the appropriate balance between the role of the citizen and that of the state, between equity and efficiency, and between centralization and decentralization" (p. xviii). Few dispute that both rights and responsibilities enter into citizenship; the key question becomes the balance between the two and the ways in which social relations enter into this balance. Feminists, in particular, highlight the function of the concept "care" as it organizes notions of citizenship responsibilities (Lister, 1997). As Iris Marion Young (1990a) argues, "the exclusion of dependent persons from equal citizenship rights is

only barely hidden beneath the surface" (p. 54) and, in our society, dependency implies "a sufficient warrant to suspend basic rights to privacy, respect and individual choice" (p. 54).

Women who are single mothers do not exist solely as individuals, they also exist as mothers — whether employable or unemployable. As individual members of the category "employable" they must demonstrate a work ethic, an ethic required "to promote autonomy, self-reliance, and independence." As individual members of the category "mother" they must demonstrate a family ethic, an ethic required to support those members of the family dependent on them for care . Thus, "social-welfare programs provide more than material aid; they also provide clients and the public at large with a tacit but powerful interpretive map of normative, differentially valued gender roles and gendered needs" (Fraser, 1989, p. 9).

The question of citizenship, therefore, must be linked not only to the concepts of rights and responsibilities, empowerment and efficiency; it must be connected both implicitly and explicitly to concepts integral to discussions concerning the relationship of women to the state. Concepts such as independence, dependence, public, private, reason, emotion, justice, and care all shape the public conversations concerning social welfare programs that have as their organizing concepts both the work ethic and the family ethic (Dietz, 1989; Doern & Phidd, 1988; Fraser, 1989; Giroux, 1987b; Pateman, 1989; Turner, 1990; Wilson, 1979; Young, 1990a, 1990b, 1997).

It is in terms of these concepts that "citizenship" enters into the work of women in employability enhancement programs. As Canadians, women who are single mothers receiving social assistance are citizens because they live in a liberal democratic state. They have basic political and civil rights that

go beyond the right to vote, that include freedom of speech, freedom from certain kinds of formal discrimination, as well as the right to material subsistence. In these terms, single mothers receiving social assistance may be understood as "equal" citizens.

Citizenship, however, entails not only a status but also a set of practices (Lister, 1997). The status of Canadian citizen entitles single mothers to citizenship rights. The practices of Canadian citizenship, however, include competing ethical practices, and single mothers receiving social assistance do not fully meet these requirements of citizenship since they conform to neither the work ethic nor the family ethic. Thus, although they may have the status of citizen they do not successfully fulfill the practices of good citizenship, they do not meet the requirements of either the state or of fellow citizens who finance the state through their taxes (Abramovitz, 1988; Bennett, 1991; Donald, 1991; Gee, 1991; Wilson, 1979).

As outlined in Chapter Three, frontline workers in employability enhancement programs are required not only to train single mothers to work, but also to provide single mothers with the skills required to constrain their bodies and manage their family and home life apart from their work life. Through their embodied practices they must help program participants gain (self) respect, (self) confidence, (self) control, (self) awareness, (self) nurturing skills. They must help participants embody citizenship, both through the discipline of their own bodies and those of their children and other dependents. This discipline has distinct historical roots, roots that provide the nourishment for current frontline practices. Beginning with the Greek city state, the articulation of citizenship to ruling relations can be traced throughout socio-historically defined conceptual practices (Turner, 1990). In

the city state, citizenship was power, conceptualized; rational, property-owning men qualified as citizens, free, independent, and politically equal in relation to each other . Later, in German civil society, a citizen was a man who leaves his family in order to enter the institution of economic competition or to work within the state, the institution of reason. To enter either of these non-domestic spheres, you had to be "a product of the city who, through training and education, achieved a civilized mastery of emotions" (Turner, 1990, p. 204).

"Civilized mastery of emotions" becomes a crucial phrase in feminist considerations of traditional ideas concerning citizenship. As Sandra Harding (1991) and other feminist theorists demonstrate, "women's perspective comes from mediating ideological dualisms [beginning with] natures versus culture" (p. 130). The opposition between civilization and those who have not mastered their emotions can be entered into a coordination of dualisms that recognize embodied practices as outside the realm of public or private citizenship:

A first set of categories	
Culture	Nature
Civilization	**Wilderness**
Rational	Emotional
Impartial	Interested
State	Family
Men	Women
Working	Caring
Citizens	**Mothers**

This construction of complementary or oppositional "others" brings into being rational and impartial citizens as statesmen and emotional and interested beings as family members, particularly mothers. It also provides the ground for the frontline work of enhancing the employability of single

mothers receiving social assistance. Coordinating practices inform the list on the left, embodied practices inform the list on the right and it is the task of frontline workers to engage in the ethical practices that bridge the two.

This is not an easy task! Ethical judgments are embedded in dominant dualisms and arise in public conversations and professional training as "understood." Taken to their logical end, Carole Pateman (1989) argues, they lead to "the conviction that women lack, and cannot develop, a sense of justice" (p. 17) because they will not remain impartial in the presence of affection and familial ties. Thus two more crucial sets of organizing categories:

A second set of categories

Justice	Love
Universal	Particular

By opposing justice and love, the universal and the particular, these dualities construct women as mired in affections and thus unable to be just. Unable to transcend their particularity, they remain rooted in their own interests and limited by their embodied capacity for caring. It is this capacity that makes them unfit for citizenship since they cannot be trusted to remain impartial when adjudicating matters of state, matters that affect the whole rather than the individual or the family (Lister, 1997; Okin, 1989; Pateman, 1989; Young, 1990a, 1990b, 1997).

A further set of categories constructs the citizenship status of women who are single mothers receiving social assistance. As Pateman (1989) demonstrates the central requirement for citizenship in western liberal democracies is independence and the key to independence is paid employment. The current categorization of single mothers as "employable" means they must participate in paid work to achieve citizenship status.

Women who remain economically dependent on the state, leave themselves open to second-class citizenship, a citizenship of status but not of practices (Young, 1990a, p. 54; Lister, 1997). Thus we have a further set of categories:

A third set of categories

Independent	Dependent
Employable	Employable
First-class citizen	**Second-class citizen**

By articulating these categories to the first and second, above, the contradictory state of women's citizenship within traditional theory becomes clear. What makes women "women" according to this series of dualistic categories also makes them dependent. If they are employable and thus potentially independent this constructs them as "not-women."

Women may take on "masculinity" in the public sphere as independent workers, or they may take on "femininity" in the private sphere as wives and mothers — or they may do both. This third choice has always been the only option for poor and working class women but, over the last 30 years, it has increasingly become a necessity for middle class women and women made poor through divorce. Also increasingly, women find they cannot meet the demands of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity, they cannot find their selves reflected back to them in either place. Iris Marion Young, in her critique of liberalism's universal citizenship, suggests "self annihilation is an unreasonable and unjust requirement of citizenship" (p. 179). Yet, most obviously through their embodied practices, but also through their coordinating and ethical practices, frontline workers must confront daily their mandate to produce generic workers, workers who are not-women, not-men.

Feminist political and social theorists assert that single mothers receiving social assistance require a radical democratic politics to help heal the split that comes with trying to be both good-enough mother and good-enough worker. They refuse to enter into a dualistic bind that constrains women to a "feminine" framework of care or a "masculine" framework of justice (e.g., Abramovitz, 1988; Code, 1991; Collins, 1990; Dietz, 1989; Fraser, 1989; Gordon, 1990b; Lister, 1997; Mink, 1990; Okin, 1989; Pateman, 1989; Wilson, 1979; Young, 1990a, 1990b, 1997). The corresponding framework of dependence and autonomy becomes reconstructed as interdependence. Neither men nor women, therefore, have to make the choice between heart and head, caring and justice:

> Democratic citizens are both autonomous and interdependent; they are autonomous in that each enjoys the means to be an active citizen, but they are interdependent in that the welfare of each is the collective responsibility of all citizens. (Pateman, 1989, p. 203).

The obligation of citizens in a participatory democracy belongs not to the state and its representatives, but to fellow citizens.

This feminist configuration of democracy calls for "a more complex understanding of identity and citizenship" (Lather, 1991, p. 42) than that constructed through an ideal of generic citizens engaged in "a shared discourse of democratic public life" (Giroux, 1991, p. 6). It requires a recognition of the materiality of "difference," arguing that "the aims of equality and respect are met by highlighting differences, not by transcending them or looking beneath them for a common foundation" (Welch, 1991, p. 83).

In the end, frontline workers mandated to enhance the employability of single mothers receiving social assistance must mediate the categorical

citizenship of these women. They must find their own conceptual framework, their own way of understanding how program participants have come to a place where they can be categorized as unemployable/ employable, worthy/ unworthy, rights-deserving/ responsibility-deficient citizens. Grounded in the embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices through which they accomplish their work, these instructors, counsellors, and managers have variously uncovered their own means of making sense of their work in the context of Canada's liberal democracy.

6.4   Citizenship and the conceptual practices of frontline workers

Frontline workers in employability enhancement programs have no choice but to participate in conceptual practices of power. Articulated to the relations of ruling that construct single mothers receiving social assistance as unemployed employables, program counsellors, instructors, and managers document the ways in which their program participants try on and buy into the embodied practices that facilitate their assimilation into the mainstream. They abstract from the everyday narratives of individual women those particulars that make them categorically actionable. To do this, they must occlude differences of age and education, race and class backgrounds, sexual experiences, work experiences, relationships with children and extended family, with communities and community agencies. As an integral part of this process, they develop implicit and explicit ethical frameworks to support their everyday work practices; they use a conceptual shorthand appropriate to the discourses and disciplines within which they variously make sense of their work.

Research partners Leah Moody, Carrying Caseloads, and Alexa Jones, Moving Over, for example, use concepts from political economy and full employment policy to frame their argument that citizenship in a capitalist state cannot be contingent upon paid employment. Jane Lesley, Contract Work, draws on concepts from emancipatory adult literacy discourses to suggest that "empowerment" has become education for citizenship, a way of helping single mothers reduce their dependence on the state by teaching them basic employment skills. For research partners Margaret Lindsay, Building Bridges, and Mary Campbell, Supporting Women, "empowerment" suggests counselling for citizenship, a way to help single mothers organize their lives and thus reduce the likelihood that their everyday embodied lives — past, current, or future — will interfere with their paid employment.

Barbara Cox and Jennifer Tannen, Getting In, organize their dialogue around "care" as both a professional practice and a citizenship right. Betty Phillips and Pat Mercer, Lining Up, organize their discussion around "justice" as both a professional practice and citizenship right. For these women, there is a reciprocal relationship between citizenship rights and citizenship responsibilities; Canadian citizens, whether single mothers or frontline workers, must accept responsibility for the economic independence of their families. Susan Smith, Juggling Resources, moderates that position by arguing that, as Canadian citizens, single mothers receiving social assistance should not be expected to place responsibilities before rights any more than the state should be expected to place rights before responsibilities.

Nevertheless, Zoe Brown, Zora Neale, and Lucy Salt, A Feminist Collective, argue that politicians and policy makers currently require an active demonstration of citizenship responsibilities before granting basic

citizenship rights such as secure housing and sufficient food. Those frontline workers mandated to inculcate a work ethic are expected do so by convincing women that they best meet the needs of their families by engaging in waged labour that makes them, if not autonomous, at least less dependent on the state. The three collective members argue that individual counselling must be balanced by collective action based on a feminist analysis of social relations. Without hope for social as well as individual change, Lucy suggests, they become complicit in the process of categorization that puts some women outside the definition of full citizenship and thus full humanity.

Ella Sparks captures the dehumanization of both program participants and program workers that occurs through this brokering of rights and responsibilities: "I don't think there is anything social about the relationships between women and the state. I think it's a parasitic relationship" (Focus group 2) which allows the state to use as political fodder the lives of single mothers receiving social assistance, especially Black single mothers. Through systemic ignorance — where those with authority either do not know about the everyday reality of being poor or know and do not care — an oppressive state marginalizes all those who cannot account for themselves. This situation of being outside right relationship can be captured by Julia Scott, A Healing Centre, and her expression of pain that "we are just so far away, as a society, from having a just world. I feel overwhelmed about how far away we are" (Final meeting).

The impact of the organizing concept of citizenship becomes evident in the frontline workers' resistance to dehumanizing conceptual practices. Early in the research, Betty Phillips expresses her anger that many years ago in a philosophy of education course she had been expected to participate in a

discussion of what it means to be fully human. From her perspective, she says, "it was indescribable." She could not imagine what might be meant by the notion that anyone could be less than fully human:

> What does it mean to be fully human? I just couldn't grasp what the sense of that was. What does it mean to be less human than fully human? Who is that? Have you got any examples sitting around? (Interview 1).

Indeed, philosopher Iris Marion Young (1990b) argues, "the appropriation of a universal subject position by socially privileged groups forces those they define as different outside the definition of full humanity and citizenship" (p. 169).

Betty says it is the everyday acceptance of such concepts as "fully human" that result in "ordinary" people's fear of her program participants, those who have been denied full citizenship and thus may be constructed as less than fully human. "[People] look at them and make them 'other'" she says, "and they're not. They're humanity just like us" (Interview 2). If you don't believe in "the common threads that run through us all," she asks, what can you believe in?[1]

6.5 Frontline workers and reflexive critique

Frontline workers develop their various perspectives on concepts such as "citizenship" through public conversations organized by mainstream media and through postsecondary education that articulates their work to the disciplines and codes of ethics of social work and adult education. They

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[1] See Sharon Welch (1991): "It is essential that we examine the ways in which excluded groups are not seen as fully human, the exclusion itself is not seen and the pain of exclusion not recognized" (p. 96).

understand this education as credentialism, part of coordinating practices that make them actionable within their profession. Certified as social workers and educators, life skills trainers and criminologists, they have been subject to the conceptual practices of power as directed by their disciplines. While their ethical practices may be influenced by their disciplinary training, however, they also arise out of their experiences and the experiences of those in their extended families and communities.

The frontline workers in this research — some more than others — use that experience to engage in reflexive critique of their work practices as they break away from the language and concepts they gained through postsecondary education. Dorothy Smith (1990b) advocates "reflexive critique" as an effective way to subvert conceptual practices of power:

> At the line of fault along which women's experience breaks away from the discourses mediated by texts that are integral to the relations of ruling in contemporary society, a critical standpoint emerges. We make a new language that gives us speech, ways of knowing, ways of working politically. At the moment of separation from established discourses, the objectified forms of knowledge they embody become critically visible. (p. 11, emphasis added)

Frontline workers' reflexive critique, as evidenced in this research, emerges not only from education but also from the "line of fault" between conceptual discourses and the integrity they display from within their embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices. For some of the women, recognizing this line of fault and finding a language that describes it, provides them with the foundation for a critical standpoint. Using that critical standpoint, they make important decisions concerning their everyday work with colleagues and program participants, their work in coalition with others, and their stance in relation to policy and politics.

When frontline workers demonstrate their ontological integrity, keeping hold of who they are (Chapter Three), when they demonstrate epistemological integrity, keeping hold of what they know (Chapter Four), and when they demonstrate ethical, if not political, integrity, keeping hold of what they do and with whom they ally themselves (Chapter Five), they demonstrate effective forms of resistance to conceptual practices of power. Some frontline workers also demonstrate their ability to engage in reflexive critique, a critique that not only allows them to work effectively with program participants and colleagues but also allows them to provide leadership for collective action and community coalition.

The integrity that arises out of embodied and ethical practices can be captured in individual communicative moments that may or may not be understood by particular program workers as "political," that may or may not move them toward the collective action that can effect structural change. These communicative moments are mediated by an instructor's desk covered with graded papers, the counsellor's phone transmitting interrogatory messages, the manager's files containing ideological accounts of individual narratives. Textually analyzed these moments may demonstrate distance — even disrespect — among those involved. Nevertheless, as evidenced in this research, the everyday embodied and ethical practices of individual frontline workers most often communicate caring, a caring that leaves no official record and thus may be discounted. Yet that communicative caring does matter; it may not bring about structural change, it may not alter the coordinating practices of the frontline work, but it makes a significant difference in the everyday lives of program workers and program

participants, lives that touch other lives that touch other lives that touch other lives, that bring hope and a mutual recognition of simple humanity.

Developing an analysis based on that humanity, those lives, requires an engagement with reflexive critique; it requires frontline worker to identify and hold on to what they know, to maintain their consciousness of everyday reality when they leave their schools and enter their workplaces. When the Maritime School of Social Work sends practicum students to <u>A Feminist Collective</u>, Zoe Brown reminds them that they must not rely on what they learned in class and through their textbooks, they must hold on to their life experiences and beliefs as well as the concepts and theories they have learned. "Start from a point where you are," she advises, "then start working through a theory that's okay for you, rather than trying to mould yourself into something else" (Interview 1). In this orientation session, Zoe recognizes that most undergraduate students will not be able to engage in reflexive critique unless they have the concrete experience against which abstract conceptualization can be measured.

Lucy Stone, Zoe's research partner, articulates the benefits as well as the costs of theories that help explain as well as obscure experience. She read her first undergraduate sociology text in 1972 and, she says since those days, "my feminist analysis of power has been shaped by my academic studies in tandem with my own life experience. It's made sense of my life" (Interview 1). While acknowledging that women do not need to attend university to develop a feminist analysis of power, she does believe that program counsellors, instructors, and managers have a professional responsibility to develop a framework for understanding how they are positioned in relation to the state and to the single mothers who participate in their programs.

"There is a way of organizing one's thoughts that comes from an academic discipline," Lucy says, and while that organization is not without its dangers, it may also provide the tools for reflexive critique, for standing back and analyzing how conceptual practices influence the structure of both their frontline work and the public conversations concerning that work.

Leah Moody, Carrying Caseloads, also believes that frontline workers need to develop a conceptual framework that makes sense of their work. "You've got to know or have aligned yourself with some kind of bigger picture," she says, "because you can't do this kind of work unless you can see what else is going on . . . . You have to know what to sift and sort" (Interview 1). Part of the sifting and sorting includes "an understanding that we don't have a full employment policy . . . ; that there aren't enough jobs for all the people that want to work; that the definition of work needs to change" (Interview 1). Like Lucy, she believes professional social workers and adult educators must develop a structural analysis in order to understand the social organization of their work.

Also like Lucy, Leah believes that building an effective framework for understanding can come through graduate level courses that build on experience. "The social policy course gave me a language to pull things together," Leah says, it allowed her to continue "because when I get lost, it helps me to stand back and understand it from [a political] framework" (Interview 2). For some women, the absence of "a language" brings frustration. After reading some theoretical excerpts circulated with an initial interpretation of this research, Margaret Lindsay, Building Bridges, expressed a particular interest in Wendy Luttrell's (1989) work with Black and White adult basic education students. "Seeing it in print," she says, made an

impression on her, an impression she found difficult to communicate: "I know what I want to say," she exclaims, "but it's hard to say it!" (Interview 2).

For Carol Moffatt, the difficulty is not access to the literature but the opportunity to apply what she reads. Talking about her goals in terms of future growth, Carol hopes to explore a political understanding of her work. "Even though I have read different books," she says, "I would like to find out why I didn't use them more" (Final meeting). Suggesting that a stronger "framework of understanding" might help her deal with the kinds of ongoing stress that she experiences in her work, Carol identifies the conflict that arises between theory, especially feminist theory, and practice: "I feel like you can think about issues theoretically, but then there's the reality of the workplace" (Final meeting). When there is no room for change, no possibility of shifting co-workers' positions, the consequences of raising difficult issues appear counter-productive — "You can just create upset and then there's no resolution" (Final meeting). The "gap" Carol experiences between things she has read and their application in her own life reflects the "line of fault" (Smith, 1990b, p. 11), the moment of recognition that gives rise to reflexive critique, to a comprehension of how the everyday finds its place in the "larger picture."

In the initial interpretation of this research, I suggested to the research participants that they had identified three dimensions of frontline work: the personal, the professional and the political.[2] In discussing this interpretation at the final meeting, Julia Scott from A Healing Place argues that counsellors,

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[2] See also Patricia Hill Collins (1990): "People experience and resist oppression on three levels: the level of personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions" (p. 227), in this case the personal, political, and professional.

instructors, and managers need to integrate these three dimensions in order

to avoid feeling overwhelmed, unconnected, and distanced from their work.

> If you come from personal experience, you get overwhelmed. If you come from professional experience without the personal, you become hollow, unconnected. And if it becomes only a political experience, then that's another way of distancing. When you come from all three together, your work becomes one motion. (Final meeting)

Similarly, Alexa Jones of Moving Over argues that, "if you have those three

streams in balance you are a more effective worker, more satisfied, and able to

cope with the work that you do — and better able to stand state pressure"

(Final meeting).

Integrating disparate dimensions of frontline work can result from

reflexive critique — in particular the ongoing everyday movement back and

forth between localized experience and extralocal determinants of that

experience. Localized experience can be understood as the basis for the

subjective effect of direct experience "produced not by external ideas, values,

or material causes, but by one's personal, subjective engagement in the

practices, discourses, and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning,

and affect) to the events of the world" (de Lauretis, 1984, p. 159).

. Professionalizing that experience involves formal expression and

rationalization which, Iris Marion Young (1990a) argues "abstracts from the

engaged practice of the activity, and splits off the abstracted formal elements

from the material embodied elements" (p. 221).

Politicizing that experience, according to bell hooks (1988), combines

the naming of your experience "with critical understanding of the concrete

material reality that lays the groundwork for that personal experience" (p.

108). Politicization of experience requires an active awareness of concrete

materiality and the ability to abstract from the local, to take into account "one another's interests and perspectives," as well as to consider "the collective social processes and relationships that lie between us and which we have come to know together by discussing the world" (Young, 1997, p. 59). Reflexive critique, then, involves frontline workers in a constant process of movement from personal material reality; through reflection, categorization, abstraction and analysis; to critical understanding of their own social positioning in relation to others.

6.6   Educating frontline workers for reflexive critique

Frontline workers' reflexive critique emerges primarily from their everyday awareness of the "line of fault" between their own experience and the public conversations that attempt to define that experience for them. Nevertheless, many of the women involved in this research have engaged in postsecondary education to find both theoretical frameworks and languages to augment that awareness. As shown above, both Lucy Stone, A Feminist Collective, and Leah Moody, Carrying Caseloads, eloquently articulate the ways in which their formal education provided them with theoretical frameworks that support them in their work. These theoretical frameworks guide their understanding of how their work at the program level has been structured by conceptual practices of power that trickle down through political rhetoric to policy development and then from policy to programming authorized and financed through state interventions.

As outlined in Chapter Four, however, the contributions of formal education can be complex. Zora Neale says "my professional education certainly has prepared me in some ways [for this work] and in other ways, it

hasn't" (Focus group 3). Crediting her grandmother with teaching her how to confront the everyday and institutional racism that restricts her access to mainstream privileges, she says her life experience has borne out her grandmother's wisdom. At the same time, however, Zora argues that her postsecondary social work education "has given me the tools to conceptualize how racism is not necessarily felt but the whole power dynamics behind it" (Focus group 3). Being able to conceptualize "racism" within a critical feminist framework has provided her with an academic foundation from which she can work in community alliances where "school smarts" complement the "street smarts" she learned early on in her life (Luttrell, 1989, 1996).

Building on the experiences of women who have met the challenge of everyday and systemic discrimination — discrimination based on race and sex, formal education and abilities, class and source of income, sexual orientation and family structure — educators and academics must recognize the arrogant imperialism that may take place when those who have accomplished various degrees of formal education attempt to educate those they consider to be "epistemically disadvantaged":

> It is tempting to believe that epistemically 'disadvantaged' women should be given the opportunity to benefit from the cognitive training and resources of the privileged. The point would be to obliterate their differences from us (where 'us' means 'those of us who do theory', represented as a unity for the sake of the argument). . . . it denigrates the knowledge and skills that economically oppressed women have had to acquire just to survive. (Code, 1991, p. 288)

At the same time, those of us with an academic background cannot simply privilege everyday experience over the understanding and security developed through learning about theories that illuminate practice. Indeed, as Sandra

Bartky (1977) argues, "Understanding things makes it possible to change them. Coming to see things differently, we are able to make out possibilities for liberating collective action as well as for unprecedented personal growth" (p. 33).

For many frontline workers, understanding the social organization of knowledge may be used to ground further education. "Making knowledge is a political act" (Addelson, 1993, p. 267), an act that brings together being, knowing, and doing, an act that calls out for ontological, epistemological, and ethical integrity. The coordinating practices of textually-mediated discourse conglomerate individual experiences in an attempt to capture authority through demonstrated coherence. The messiness of experience, its disparate nature variously located can be pulled together in what Dorothy Smith (1993) calls "skeins of social relations, mediated and organized textually, connecting and coordinating the activities of actual individuals whose local historical sites of reading/ hearing/ viewing may be geographically and temporally dispersed and institutionally various" (p. 51).

Dorothy Smith (1987; 1990b; 1993) looks at the ways in which actual people accomplishing actual work "enter into and participate in [social] relations in ordinary and unthinking ways" (1993, p. 51). Kathy Ferguson (1984) points out what might appear to be obvious when she writes that "bureaucratic discourse does not, of course, produce poor people" but, as was demonstrated in Chapter Four, bureaucratic discourse "does produce clients" (p. 136). By beginning to unpack the socially organized practices through which frontline workers produce clients, program counsellors, instructors, and managers can begin to distinguish the ways in which their work furthers the success of their program participants, their colleagues, and the state.

Exploring how discursive practices theoretically homogenize the concrete experience of frontline practice, they can learn to explicate the ruling relations through which not only their coordinating practices but also their embodied and ethical practices become functional for state institutions (Walker, 1990). They can make the connection between conceptual practices of power and the relevances of those who have the authority to frame both their compliance with and resistance to ruling relations. While making the connections cannot change social relations in a contemporary capitalist state, it can make the resistance of activists more effective by, for example, intervening in public conversations to counter hegemonic understandings of how work and family ethics construct citizenship as dependent on independence and autonomy.

Informed discussion about the social organization of knowledge allows frontline workers to see themselves as engaged in embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices that have at their root hegemonic understandings of what it means to care for family and about work, to ask for care and justice in return, to advocate for collective action based on a politics of difference and community alliances. Since hegemonic understandings "reinforce and legitimate the social order" (Nes & Iadicola, 1989, p. 20), frontline workers must learn how to build the kinds of arguments that will support individual and collective responses to ruling-class relations. At the same time that formal education can become mired in ideological practices that "take for granted the conditions of ruling-class experience," (Smith, 1987, p. 57), it may also open up for interrogation those abstract conceptualizations that ignore concrete experience.

bell hooks (1990) writes about the consequences of ignoring experience when engaged in discursive practices. Not only does this process make invisible the actual individuals whose lives have been mined to produce texts but it also erases from those lives the emotions that could become the impetus for change:

> I say remember the pain because I believe true resistance begins with people confronting pain, whether it's theirs or somebody else's, and wanting to do something to change it. And it's this pain that so much makes its mark in daily life. (p. 215)

We all use socially organized experiences to construct individual subjectivity, a subjectivity made up not only of emotions, but also of body and those material surroundings through which bodies move as they accomplish the work required to keep body, spirit, heart, and mind whole (de Lauretis, 1984, p. 159; Scott, 1992, p. 26).

Experience may be used to stand in for knowledge with those frontline workers unwilling or unable to engage in the kinds of postsecondary education that might explicate the social relations involved in the construction of subjectivity. This displacement, however, this privileging of experience over knowledge, is no less partial a process than privileging knowledge over experience. The dualisms of theory and practice, objectivity and subjectivity assume that action can be separated out from understanding, that a frontline worker can only "know" experientially, outside of discourse or that a bureaucrat can only "know" discursively, outside of experience.

As Magda Lewis (1993) argues, theoretical frames may serve to buttress the ruling apparatus, but they are still "crucially important to how we assign meanings to the specificities of personal experience across all of the disjunctures that divide us" (p. 54). Educating for critical consciousness,

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) writes, means educating for "both the changed consciousness of individuals and the social transformation of political and economic institutions and both dimensions require new knowledge" (p. 221). That new knowledge must take into account a more complex configuration of "women's ways of knowing," one that shifts boundaries, that allows us to explore

> more theoretical discussions about women as knowers and more
> empirically grounded discussions about how social differences make a
> difference in women's knowing and, in so doing, to revitalize
> discussion about how to improve women's education. (Luttrell, 1993,
> p. 506)

To improve women's education and the education of all frontline workers Wendy Luttrell (1993) suggests that both students and instructors need to be able to move comfortably between theory and practice, they need to practice praxis.

This impetus toward praxis requires postsecondary faculty and students preparing for the professions of adult education and social work to acknowledge the social organization of their embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices. While this does not require that they adopt a specifically political perspective — one that carries such labels as "feminist," "emancipatory," "maternalist," "humanist" — it does require all participants in the conversation "to identify the lenses through which they view social issues and begin to scrutinize accepted theoretical frameworks and modes of practice for their potential biases and often concealed assumptions of social reality" (Krane, 1991, p. 62). Most important, perhaps, this reflexive process requires everyone to step back from their positions and open up to a generosity that bell hooks (1994a) describes as an ethic of love, one that allows

us to accept "the interlocking interdependent nature of systems of domination and recognize specific ways each system is maintained" (p. 244). We must pay attention to the connections among all those engaged in employability enhancement if we want to prepare ourselves for the consequences of our own actions and the actions of others.

Revisiting Dorothy Smith's (1990b) argument for reflexive critique, those who engage in this process must "explore practices of knowing," practices in which not only those "others" but also our selves engage. We may recognize the critical standpoint found "at the point of rupture" as our own, but it may also belong to those with whom we feel little alliance. A community constructed of those who work within particular fields or disciplines can be likened to the community we enter through our birth: we may not want to "be" from there, but ontological integrity requires us to own who we are; we may not want to "know" those things that we learned in the past, but epistemological integrity requires us to identify where our knowledge comes from; we may not want to "do" those things that we accomplish in spite of our desires to do otherwise, but ethical integrity requires us to look not only at the actions we choose to do, but also at those that appear unavoidable.

Clearly this will not be easy! Nevertheless, we cannot avoid the complex nature of who we are, what we know, and what we do in the face of the intractable policy question posed by the categorization of single mothers receiving social assistance as "employable" and, therefore, deserving of public support only if they agree to enhance their employability, a process that requires an interrogation of their status as effective mothers and efficient workers.

6.7 Frontline workers and intractable policy questions

Unfortunately, Ben Carniol (1990) writes, the postsecondary education of frontline workers in employability enhancement — primarily in adult education and social work — "is often used to paper over the cracks . . . in the walls of an unjust society" (p. 13), dealing with symptoms rather than the major sources of social problems. In particular, he writes, social work and adult education appear to be "stymied" by the unabated persistence of poverty in Canada. Ongoing poverty and unemployment, particularly the poverty and unemployment of single mothers receiving social assistance, have become what Donald Schon and Marin Rein (1994) call "intractable policy questions."

Intractable policy questions are different than what Schon and Rein (1994) call "policy disagreements." Policy disagreements can be resolved by rational and respectful debate, by "examining the facts of the situation" (p. 3). Opposing parties in policy controversies such as abortion, poverty, or unemployment, however, frame issues so divergently that what counts as "fact" comes into dispute and, as a consequence, the controversies become "institutionalized political contention, leading either to stalemate or to pendulum swings from one extreme position to another, as one side or another comes to political power" (p. 8).

The employability of single mothers receiving social assistance is just such an intractable policy controversy embodying a moral problem made into a public policy issue and framed by opposing parties in ways that defy resolution. As we have seen, traditional understandings of citizenship rest upon a double foundation: a work ethic that assumes the possibility of

independence, self-discipline, and individual responsibility; a family ethic that assumes the possibility of interdependence, discipline of others, and mutual caregiving. Single mothers confound both; as Iris Marion Young (1997) argues, they defy both the work ethic and the family ethic, defying coordinating practices that require their reliance on independent others (husbands) in order to support dependent others (children):

> The proper law-abiding citizen is not needy, works hard and is independent, has relations with others through contracts of mutual exchange, and exhibits temperance and self-control. Those who do not conform to this model — who are needy, irrational, dependent, unwilling or unable to work, who do not exercise self-control, or for whom there are no benefits in the legitimate market exchange game — are deviant and deserve punishment. (p. 81)

Not only does the employability of single mothers confound the usual understandings of citizenship, it also raises an unquestioned yet impossible expectation that all citizens will be employed in an economy where there simply are too few jobs, leaving unemployed people "scapegoats for a world economy less and less able to use them" (Young, 1997, p. 10).[3]

Challenging accepted notions of the rights and responsibilities that underlie citizenship, Lucy Salt, A Feminist Collective, asks. "What is individual responsibility? Where does that start, where does that stop? How do you build it? Or is the concept ludicrous within the context of a racist, sexist society?" (Final meeting). Reflecting on recent shifts in social policy, Lucy suggests a tacit agreement that the state will give less and less and expect less and less — single mothers receiving social assistance will not have rights

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[3] Derek Portwood (1992) argues, because education and training cannot compete with economic policies that reject full employment "social meanings of work and work ethic have to be reconsidered and in that reconsideration it may become apparent that training those categorized as employable will simply increase their frustration since there are no jobs" (p. 175).

and they will not have responsibilities. In this catch-22 they lose citizenship status because they cannot exercise citizenship practices. Lucy interprets this lose/ lose situation as rhetorically constructed:

> I think it's not about single parents being able to work, it's about the state wanting to wash their hands of any responsibility and to get the population to agree. That is quite a radical change; that is a major change. (Final meeting)

Frontline workers such as Lucy are sufficiently reflexive about their own work to see that the structures that surround them allow single mothers to be neither good-enough workers, nor good-enough mothers, denying them an acceptable basis for citizenship entitlements. They thus identify an intractable policy controversy.

Schon and Rein (1994) identify the most difficult aspect of an intractable policy controversy: contending parties employ widely divergent frameworks and cannot enter into dialogue with one another because there is no way to even frame discussions in terms that have common ground.

> We see policy positions as resting on underlying structures of belief, perception, and appreciation, which we call "frames." We see policy controversies as disputes in which the contending parties hold conflicting frames. Such disputes are resistant to resolution by appeal to facts or reasoned argumentation because the parties' conflicting frames determine what counts as a fact and what arguments are taken to be relevant and compelling. Moreover, the frames that shape policy positions and underlie controversy are usually tacit, which means that they are exempt from conscious attention and reasoning. (p. 23)

These differing frames, or "generative metaphors" are based in differing systems of belief and lead to differing prescriptions for action (p. xviii). Choosing a frame-neutral or objective position is not an option because there can be no middle ground when people cannot see past their own frames to identify possible others. To "pose the problem of choice among frames, we

must already have stepped far enough outside our frame to see that our position is not self-evident and that other ways of framing the issue are possible" (p. 44).

Thus the suggestion that all those involved in the policy question of employability enhancement for single mothers receiving social assistance can enter into a dialogue that may lead to resolution elides the inherent incompatibility of contending positions. Julia Scott, A Healing Place, argues that if communication among clients, state representatives and frontline workers could occur in such a way that "the frontline worker had some strength in that, then maybe the bullshit that happens — like the desire to get women off family benefits without providing childcare — would be challenged more" (Final meeting). She goes on to note, however, that those who have the authority to develop childcare policies have a vested interest in maintaining economic policies that include the necessity of unemployment. These interests do not want to encourage new ways of looking at things, therefore "the state has an agenda not to make frontline workers stronger" (Final meeting). In this context, differing views about policy development for single mothers will not resolve easily, or perhaps at all.

Nevertheless, Schon and Rein (1994) offer some ideas about how to approach such inherently difficult policy issues. Providing several examples, they argue that change can occur when one or more parties to the controversy engage in a reframing of the issue; a "situated frame reflection" can integrate conflicting frames to "unblock" a policy stalemate (p. xx). Building on Schon's (1987) earlier work, they advocate reflexivity,

> a frame-reflective approach to policy practice, which would recognize
> the ability of practitioners to reflect on the frames that shape their
> conflicting positions and thereby foster a normative approach to public

discourse within which policy controversies are more likely to be resolved through reflective inquiry. (p. 57)

They stress that "competent practitioners can reflect on the meaning of the policy-making game from a position within it" (p. 165), but equally importantly such reflection and reframing cannot happen in the abstract — rather it demands the situatedness of actual practitioners.

The kind of reflection Schon and Rein (1994) recommend requires individuals to "put themselves in the shoes of other actors," and to "consider how their own action frames may contribute to the problematic situations in which they find themselves" (p. 187). This kind of reflexive critique demands that people enter into the multiple frameworks of contending parties, something they find difficult to imagine in an actual policy context: "Crisis, pressure, and sheer busyness militate against reflective inquiry, and the level of antagonism that frequently exists among actors in the policy drama works against cooperative policy designing" (p. 189). Consequently it is most likely to happen in the academy, outside the context of both policy and frontline practice and thus outside the realm in which it might make a difference.

6.8   Preparing frontline workers for intractable policy questions

Despite the difficulties involved in developing individual and collective responses to intractable policy questions from inside the academy, postsecondary educators can take on the task of preparing frontline workers for intractable policy questions, including not only the reflexivity required to work within that context but also an awareness that "good" frontline workers cannot necessarily effect change on an individual, program, or community level. Schon and Rein argue that building a "reflective practicum" into

professional education can provide frontline workers with the skills they need to begin understanding the complex nature of their work: "a practicum aimed at helping students who have frontline experience acquire the kinds of artistry essential to competence in the indeterminate zones of practice" (Schon, 1987, p. 19).

Those with five or more years' experience in the field of employability enhancement, for example, can become appropriate mentors for people moving into frontline practice. Given their decision to continue working in the field after a period of experiencing the tensions inherent in employability enhancement, they have somehow come to terms with work that, whatever their ethical and political orientation, includes a recognition of social relations. If their work is more than a job, if it gives meaning to their life, then they learned how to work with dissonance, the stress created by everyday lines of fault they must choose to explore, ignore, or simply accept as part of the human condition.

The everyday and the abstract, the subjective and objective, the generalized and the particular present themselves with every individual who comes in through their door. Because they work with individuals from within the institution of employability enhancement, because they apply policies to persons — and because public conversations construct both the people and the policies as contestatory — they must recognize, if not engage with, the personal, professional, and political boundaries against which they inevitably bump. What may give them a modicum of stability within the contradictory and constantly shifting program world of employability enhancement is most often denied — the straightforward need to talk among themselves — might be addressed in a supervised mentoring situation.

As the women in this research suggested during their dialogues, focus groups, and final meetings, the resolution of complex issues requires time and space for discussion among colleagues. It becomes impossible, driven underground, when professional development or even collegiality has not become a priority either within particular workplaces or among professionals. During the time of this research Betty Phillips moved from being a skills instructor at Lining Up to being the program manager. More than ever aware of the pressures placed on frontline workers, pressures that can escape through a build-up of tension among co-workers, Betty talked with her research partner, Pat Mercer, about the difficulty of entering into meaningful discussion:

> The bottom line is there's no time to sit around talking to each other like we're doing now because we're not getting paid for this. We go home at the end of the day and we're tired and so are the counsellors and so is everybody. . . . We never have the time to just sit and go, "This is what I think your role is," or . . . "This is what I think my role is." . . . The place for that [discussion] is staff development days — but we don't have time for staff development days. (Dialogue)

Dialogue with one another allows participants in a particular set of social relations to construct an account of those social relations that surround them and within which they act. No one participant alone can provide a vantage point from which this collective social reality can be known or understood. The mapping of the social world is, of necessity, a collective endeavour, one that must begin within professional postsecondary education.

Building on Schon's work, educator Robert Tremmel (1993) suggests a central goal of professional education should be to help students develop the tools for inquiry.

> Encouraging students to reflect does not mean just leading them to change their minds in the sense of changing perspective; it means, rather, trying to help them change the way their minds work so that they are prepared for reflection. (p. 8)

Tremmel notes that reflective practice requires mindfulness, paying attention to processes. It requires reflective learners to "move into the center of the learning situation, into the center of their own doubts" (p. 5), a risk some learners, educators, and practitioners may be unprepared to take. Bringing about structural change demands that individuals insert themselves into the structure, which means coming to understand where everyone else stands, why they stand there, and at what cost and benefit. It requires that they enter into a reflexive critique that includes the self with others and others with the self in an ongoing attempt to discover how things happen as they do, and why.

An example of this process can be found in the shifts Alexa Jones, Moving Over, makes as she considers a central research question, "Do you consider your work political?" In her first interview, she suggests that the work of employability enhancement is political only at the level of individual advocacy. Through her dialogue with Leah Moody, Carrying Caseloads, she begins to revise her position and, during the final meeting, she indicates that her perspective has changed and she understands her work as political on two levels. First, as manager of a diverse staff with diverse perspectives, she needs to mediate their "understanding of the world . . . by managing their differences" (Final meeting). Second, she must manage differences not only inside her program but also outside her program, keeping current her understanding of how extralocal relations of ruling construct the local work of her program. Nevertheless, when she begins

to reflect on her increasing role in policy development, Alexa argues that it should not change her "political analysis of the world and how it works" (Final meeting). Despite her understanding of difference, she appears unwilling to accept that what she knows may change as she moves from the frontlines further into the bureaucracy. Admitting that "you would probably be in more of a potential conflict with yourself because you 'know' so many different sides," she steadfastly asserts her ability to maintain a bifurcation of consciousness — an awareness of social relations from the position of both authority and subordination.

As Alexa and other experienced and qualified frontline workers move into positions of authority, however, they must be able to reflexively critique their ability to hold onto their sense of who they are, what they can know, and with whom they can build alliances as they act on that knowing. The importance of understanding what happens on a local level by putting it into the extralocal context cannot be discounted; those who learn to develop a reflexive critique of their work and the work of others become invaluable in their ability to build bridges between those who "know" from one perspective, and those who "know" from another. Once they move out of frontline practice, however, the more their knowing becomes based on textual relations rather than face-to-face relations.

Maintaining that mediation, therefore, requires ongoing professional development that challenges frontline workers who move into decision-making positions to acknowledge the everyday realities of working within the ruling apparatus. There can be no escape from social relations; individuals cannot decide to simply hold on to what they "know" as they move within hierarchically-constructed institutions. It is not the case that

there are simply "good" and "bad" bureaucrats, rather the nature of work within ruling relations imposes an institutional order of communication.

This research has shown how frontline workers occupy a mediating position in this order, how they become conduits for the communication that takes place between those "above" them and those "below" them. When frontline workers move into the dominant positions, they may be able to hold on to their orientations toward caring and justice but they cannot completely hold on to their ability to act out of the everyday local knowing that fosters collective action and community alliances. As they accomplish their work within everyday extra-local settings, they must begin to orient themselves to a more authoritative frame of reference. Unless maintaining an awareness of their work as occurring in the context of intractable policy questions becomes a central organizing feature of the way they work, however, they will not be able to continue effectively mediating between subordinate and dominant positions.

6.9   Conclusions

A contribution of this research has been the uncovering of everyday work practices through which one group of frontline workers accomplish their work; this explication happened in the first part of Chapters Three, Four, and Five. In the second part of these chapters and in Chapter Six both primary and secondary sources provide opportunities to understand these local practices in the context of existing discourses concerned with elements of embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices.

As has been shown the employability enhancement of single mothers receiving social assistance engages frontline workers in extraordinarily

complex practices. This complexity arises as counsellors, instructors, and managers work to mediate social relationships between their clients and the state, articulating the needs of the women to the state and the needs of the state to the women. Simultaneously mediating the citizenship of single mothers receiving social assistance, frontline workers' embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices apply and reconfigure the citizenship categories through which program participants can access their citizenship rights and fulfill their citizenship responsibilities. As has been shown, single mothers, considered neither good-enough mothers nor good-enough workers, violate accepted categories of deserving citizens. The inherent embeddedness of employability enhancement work within notions of citizenship invests this work with powerful meaning and significance.

The difficulties inherent in this work cannot be easily resolved. The question of making single mothers more employable and therefore deserving of non-categorical citizenship constitutes an intractable policy controversy. It will not be resolved by good-enough dialogue or good-enough facts — and frontline workers must be given the opportunity to acknowledge and explore this aspect of their work. Women like Jane Lesley, Contract Work, cannot continue to believe that they have failed because they cannot engage in practices that will lead to the emancipation of single mothers receiving social assistance! The inability to resolve intractable policy controversies cannot be considered a matter of personal failure.

Intractable policy questions by definition cannot be resolved through rational and respectful dialogue. They can only be addressed through reframing the issues in ways that make sense to the everyday experiences of those engaged in frontline work. The media discourses outlined in Chapter

One are steeped in socio-historically derived dualisms such as good citizen/bad citizen, deserving/undeserving, family ethic/work ethic. Frontline workers, advocacy workers, academics, policy analysts, policy makers, and politicians all have important roles to play in reframing these public conversations about citizenship and marginalized populations. The hegemonic status of concepts such as "work ethic" and "family ethic" must be destabilized to open up space for reconceptualizing and reframing the social policies that lead to the creation of programs and determine frontline practices. As Schon and Rein have pointed out, such reframing efforts are the only effective way to approach intractable policy controversies.

Such reconceptualizing and reframing is central to reflexive critique. If frontline workers have the opportunity to engage in reflexive critique they can identify and potentially resist the conceptual practices of power made visible through analyzing the relationship between single mothers receiving social assistance and the liberal democratic state. Instructors, counsellors, and managers already identify the line of fault between theoretical understandings of their work and their own embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices. While they cannot simply resolve the consequent personal, professional, and political tensions they can learn to work with them rather than against them.

Using the context of their particular field of work they must be given the opportunity, first, to recognize and then explore the personal, embodied, and material practices that provide a subtext for the intimate nature of frontline work; second, to investigate and then reflect on the professional, coordinating, and textual practices that organize the everyday activities of frontline work; third, to acknowledge and then interrogate the political,

ethical, and social practices that provide a context for the ruling relations in which frontline work is embedded.

Identifying and exploring the extra-local determinants of their everyday local workplace experiences must be a first step in preparing frontline workers to meet the conflicting demands made of them. Early in their professional education, for example, they need to engage in a critical review of welfare state history and current social policies. If they can identify the ideological codes that have appeared and reappeared throughout this history then they can begin to understand how it is that their work has been constructed in particular ways at particular times. They can also begin to recognize that, although any one of these ideological codes may be hegemonic at certain socio-historical moments, there has always been resistance to these codes not only by those directly affected by social policies but also by the frontline workers mandated to turn those policies into programming and frontline practice.

In order to recognize this resistance, frontline workers need to understand that neither theory nor practice alone provides the ground and framework for their own everyday practices. Moving beyond more text-based understandings of coordinating practices, for example, may allow frontline workers to investigate how embodied and ethical practices also organize their work and their response to their work. By interrogating professional practices as embodied as well as ethical and coordinating, for example, frontline workers can begin to see how the historical development of their professional organizations has contributed to and constrained their ability to meet their own needs as workers. It allows them to become more conscious of the personal, professional, and political costs and benefits of engaging in

particular kinds of frontline work and to better understand the consequences of their choices and their own practices.

In this research, for example, there are frontline workers who identify their ethical stance as various combinations of care, liberal humanism, social justice, feminist collective action, and community alliance. None of these positions can be considered "best"; each ethical stance has its own integrity and validity. What can be concluded from this research is that frontline workers must be able to make conscious choices concerning their ethical stances and the consequence of those stances on the work and non-work lives of others. They must also be able to identify the ethical stances of others and how those stances have an impact on their own work and non-work lives. This may help them build alliances across or within organizations engaged in work based on similar or different ethical perspectives.

Because understanding things makes it possible to change them, frontline workers can make informed choices about the extent to which they will use the understanding that arises out of reflexive critique to undertake collective action that will lead to social change. That doesn't mean that they must each, individually, undertake this work. It does, however, underline the need to see beyond particular program participants, co-workers, and colleagues and to understand program participants and frontline workers as members of social groups. This provides the foundation for understanding why some frontline workers and their allies undertake collective action to ameliorate or at least bring to public awareness the structural and ideological constraints on their work. It also provides the foundation for understanding why some interventions may improve the situation of one individual while others may facilitate broader social change.

Because education in the skills of reflexive critique can, and to some extent does, take place through formal education, this education must provide opportunities for students to develop the skills to move reflection and analysis from abstract conceptualization to critical interrogation. Education in the art of reflexive critique should not be limited to formal education settings, however. As Schon and Rein (1994) argue, intractable policy controversies must be re-framed by situated practitioners, people in the field. Time, energy, and resources must be set aside for professional development within programs and within professions at the municipal, provincial, national, and international level.

Frontline workers who engage on a daily basis with complex processes of mediating between the needs of their program participants and the needs of the state both want and deserve the opportunity to gather together and begin the process of building a collective map of the social relations that structure their work. They need the time and resources required to meet and various individuals and organizations can work to initiate or otherwise support these gatherings. Labour unions have a role to play, as do professional associations, academic researchers, and community-based coalitions.

There will always be more individuals in need of care and justice than can possibly be served; there will always be more frontline workers can do to increase their accountability. Nevertheless, time must be taken to allow for learning, for affirmation, for creative play, and for more mundane methods of soliciting support and educating others. While face-to-face meetings may not always be possible technologies such as internet web pages, listserv discussion groups, virtual conferences and courses can lead to meaningful

connection and ongoing support for direct action and longer term activism. They can facilitate communication among frontline workers otherwise isolated because of geographic distance, professional (or lack of professional) affiliations, social group membership, and so on.

Again, members of labour unions, professional associations, advocacy organizations, program boards, advisory groups, and so on must lobby on behalf of frontline workers in this regard. Concerns about meeting the everyday needs of program participants cannot be used to resist ongoing professional development. This professional development works toward maintaining the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health of frontline workers cannot be sacrificed by calls for increased productivity based only on quantitative measures; more complex understandings of efficiency and effectiveness must be developed drawing on current frontline experiences.

Although frontline workers need to become aware of extra-local determinants of their everyday practices they also need to communicate to others the local conditions under which they work. After all, their local practices contribute to the extra-local determinants under which others accomplish their work! Therefore, frontline workers must take their everyday work experiences seriously. They must encourage each other to insert themselves into activities that would benefit from their perspective. An investigation into their place in ruling relations will help them communicate their own pivotal perspective on this process.

Frontline workers need to understand what it means to intervene in public conversations that establish and maintain the hegemonic conceptual practices that structure their work. They need to learn how to explicate and

understand the social relations through which their embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices become both functional for state institutions and fodder for increasingly sensational media reports. They need to support colleagues who agree to participate in public conversations through the media as well as through public consultations.

Thus professional development must not be limited to the improvement of skills needed to engage in effective and efficient embodied, coordinating, and ethical practices. Frontline workers can contribute an extraordinarily complex perspective on social welfare policies and programming; individuals and organizations involved in advocacy for program participants, labour union organizing, academic research and postsecondary education, social welfare policy development and analysis can all benefit from taking this perspective into account.

As evident in the research undertaken for this thesis, frontline workers have much to offer. Nevertheless, they are rarely invited to share not only their experience but also their analysis of how relations of ruling influence the ways in which policies become programming that will be evaluated based on the delivery of frontline services. With the contributions of frontline workers, policy outcomes could be predicted with more accuracy; not only the coordinating but also the embodied and ethical consequences could be explored before, rather than after, the programming that arises from policy becomes entrenched in bureaucratic systems.

The implications of this research apply more broadly to other kinds of frontline work. The theoretical model developed here provides a framework for understanding frontline work undertaken in a context of intractable policy questions. Applying this model in different contexts will allow for

increasingly complex understandings of how frontline work is implicated in policy development and analysis as well as social justice advocacy work. It provides a framework for introducing incremental changes in working conditions, outreach activities, community alliances, and collective action.

The frontline settings most often used to develop theoretical frameworks include significant instances of intervention or coercion (e.g. Barndt, 1991; de Montigny, 1995; Foucault, 1979; Goffman, 1961; Polakow, 1993; Smith, 1995; Walker, 1990a). While we can learn from models of frontline work developed from within prisons, psychiatric institutions, child protection agencies, and sexual assault services, most frontline work actually takes place in the context of less dramatic, less potentially traumatic settings (Campbell, 1995; Manicom, 1995; Ng, 1991; Smith, 1993). The work of employability enhancement at the socio-historical moment before the work shifted from working with voluntary clients to mandated clients provides examples of the everyday compromise involved in the everyday mediation of social relations between the state and those social groups targetted for social welfare interventions.

The research process used in this study can be used to develop further research studies. For example, it would be very interesting to discover what happens to the theoretical model when a similar research process involves frontline workers in other social welfare settings. (e.g. immigration and refugee services, community policing, public health services for individuals living with AIDS, public schooling, community care for seniors, outpatient psychiatric services, youth detention). What happens when the research process and theoretical model form the basis for undergraduate education of

students preparing for frontline work and for professional development of frontline workers with significant experience in their field?

What happens to service provision in community-based and in institutional programs as a result of the increasing emphasis placed on quantitative accountability? How has the education of frontline workers shifted given this increased emphasis on accountability? What have been the consequences of the move toward coordinating practices — especially surveillance and compliance work — for frontline workers who have entered their field because of their interest in embodied and ethical practices? To what extent has frontline work become focussed on text-based communication rather than face-to-face communication and to what effect?

More generally, it would be interesting to ask research questions that focus on some of the broader issues. For example, what can we discover from a more in-depth look at the public conversations occurring in the media during the time that the ideological code of fiscal restraint and deficit reduction became predominant? How can the influence of different public commissions of inquiry be traced through incremental and more substantive policy changes? How has the categorical citizenship of disadvantaged groups been negotiated across time and place and what has been the consequence for frontline work? What can we discover from a text-based analysis of social welfare program mandates, job descriptions, intake forms, reporting procedures, and so forth, when political parties shift at the provincial and the federal level. The possibilities for further study are clearly endless!

Appendix I   Information Letter for First Meetings with Informants

In this research, I want to discover how women who work in adult academic upgrading and training programs understand the ways in which their work mediates social relations between the contemporary Canadian welfare state and women who are single mothers receiving social assistance. I am particularly interested in women who work in programs funded through federal/provincial employability enhancement agreements — agreements that have been in place for five years as part of current labour force development policies.

I am planning to undertake the research in three ways:

1)   a discourse analysis of texts, including political statements, federal and provincial policy documents, expert opinion as expressed through commissions and policy institutes, corporate commentaries, professional and academic publications, media reports, writings of program workers, social assistance recipients and their advocates;

2)   structured interviews, guided dialogues, and unstructured discussions involving two groups of women: Group A includes those who work in programs funded, at least in part, through employability enhancement agreements and Group B includes those who do both practical and theoretical work in the disciplines of social work, counselling, and adult literacy, training and education;

3)   background discussions with people who are involved with employability enhancement and related social welfare fields as politicians, civil servants, academics, program workers and members of advocacy organizations such as the National Anti-Poverty Organization.

In each of these activities, I will be looking for key concepts that organize the ways in which people understand the work of women who provide program services. In interviews, dialogues and discussions with those who use the concepts, I want to discover how the women who are workers negotiate their own relationship to the state and to the women who participate in their programs. I understand these relations as social, as embodying power. I also understand them as conceptual, as a process of abstraction that finds in women's lives certain attributes, then isolates them and enters them into discursive practices through which women become "actionable" for others.

I want to analyze — both through the women workers' understanding of their work and the ways in which others view that work — how the workers both support and resist these conceptual practices of power. Through this analysis, I will outline professional, political and personal experiences that might better prepare adult educators and counsellors to mediate between the state and women who are single mothers receiving social assistance.

In the discourse analysis of texts — the first stream of the research — only public domain documents will be used. Any documents received that are not in the public domain will be accompanied by a release form from the individual or organization involved.

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In the background discussions with people who are involved with employability enhancement and related social welfare fields — the third stream of the research — everyone involved will be informed that the researcher is involved in graduate work at Dalhousie University. The discussions will not be taped. Anything an individual says will remain confidential. Anything the researcher refers to in later conversation or writing will be generalized. She will not use the names, locations or job titles of the individuals involved. Should the researcher decide to do a more in-depth investigation of any individual's experience, she will go through the same consent procedure used for subjects in the second stream.

In the structured interviews, guided dialogues, and unstructured discussions — the second stream of the research — the women involved will be considered "research subjects" in the fullest sense. Each one will each be paired with a colleague of their choice. The final selection of 16 to 20 women will be based on expressed interest, personal, political and professional experience, regional representation, representation of program structures and student/client populations, and our ability to find a colleague with whom each woman can work. The researcher will participate as a research subject.

Two structured interviews with the researcher will take place, one at the beginning and one at the end of the research period. Two guided dialogues between colleagues will focus perceptions and understandings of the work of women involved as counsellors and instructors in employability enhancement programs. Midpoint through the 12 month period, the researcher will write a paper that organizes and analyzes both the content and process of what has been recorded and transcribed. Each woman will participate in an unstructured discussion of this paper with the researcher, focussing on the their own response. All of these will be tape recorded and transcribed.

Women will be asked to provide two kinds of documentation: that produced before the research that provides background and that produced during the research that particularly applies to the interviews, dialogues and discussion. Any documentation not in the public domain will be accompanied by a release form from the program and/or worker involved. Unpublished material by or about students/clients will not be included in the research

Informed consent: All the women who participate as research subjects will be given information about the researcher's conceptual framework and the anticipated effect of the research. The techniques for data collection and analysis will be reviewed in detail.

Confidentiality: They will be ensured confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms for themselves, their programs and communities. Where they or their programs might be identified, details of the interviews, dialogues or discussions will be changed.

Control over taping/transcription/participation: Women will be informed that they have the right to stop the tape recorder, to ask that specific material not be transcribed, to negotiate their involvement in the research, or to withdraw from the research if no mutually agreed upon resolution is reached.

Feedback process: Women will receive a feedback paper and a draft copy of the section of the dissertation that contains the analysis of this stream of the research.

Appendix II   Consent Form for Interviews, Dialogues, Final Meetings

I understand that Betty-Ann Lloyd is conducting research for her Ph.D. at Dalhousie University in Halifax. Her field is adult literacy and academic upgrading, labour force development policy, the changing nature of the Canadian social welfare state and participatory action research. In the research for her thesis, she is focussing on programs that receive some of their funding through the employability enhancement components of labour force development policies. Within those programs, she is particularly interested in women who work as instructors and counsellors:

How do these women understand their work as mediating social relations between
      women and the state — particularly women who are single mothers receiving
      social assistance?
How does this understanding fit into what they have learned in their professional,
      political and personal experiences about the needs of women and the needs of
      the state?
Where do contradictions and tensions arise within and between these experiences?
How do we work with these contradictions and tensions in order to improve our
      practice, our politics and our policies?

Between February 1993 and February 1994, I agree to participate in (if appropriate)
• two interviews with Betty-Ann Lloyd, each one 60 to 90 minutes long
• two dialogues with my "pair", each one 60 to 90 minutes long
• reading a 15 page feedback paper written by Betty-Ann Lloyd
• a 30 to 45 minute discussion with Betty-Ann Lloyd about the feedback paper
• collecting documentation produced by and about my work and/or my program or the
organization for which I work

I understand that any documentation not in the public domain would be accompanied by a release form from the program and/or worker involved. Unpublished material by or about students will not be included in the research.

I understand that the interviews, dialogues and discussion would all be tape recorded and transcribed either by Betty-Ann Lloyd or a transcriber who will not know my identity. The tapes will be labelled with my pseudonym and kept at Betty-Ann Lloyd's home until the dissertation is completed. They will then be erased. No one else will have access to them. Everything I say will remain confidential. Anything that might identify me, my program or organization will be changed or omitted. Myself and my pair will agree on the confidentiality of our dialogues with each other.

I understand that I can ask that the tape recorder be turned off or that my words not be transcribed at any point. I can negotiate my continued involvement in or withdraw from the research at any point.

I will also have the option of reading the transcripts of my interviews, dialogues and discussions and the draft section of the thesis that deals with this part of the research. Any discussion I have or comments I make will become part of the data to be used in the final analysis.

Appendix III   Consent Form for Focus Groups, Final Meetings

I understand that Betty-Ann Lloyd is conducting research for her Ph.D. at Dalhousie University in Halifax. Her field is adult literacy and academic upgrading, labour force development policy, the changing nature of the Canadian social welfare state, and participatory action research.

In the research for her thesis, she is focussing on programs that receive some of their funding through the employability enhancement components of labour force development policies. Within those programs, she is particularly interested in women who work as instructors and counsellors:

> How do these women understand their work as
> mediating social relations between women and the state —
> particularly women who are single mothers receiving social assistance?

> How does this understanding fit into what they have learned
> in their professional, political and personal experiences
> about the needs of women and the needs of the state?

> Where do contradictions and tensions arise within these experiences?
> How do we work with these contradictions and tensions
> in order to improve our practice, our politics and our policies?

I agree to participate in three Focus Group sessions. I understand that most of these sessions will be tape recorded and transcribed either by Betty-Ann Lloyd or a transcriber who will not know my identity. The tapes will be kept at Betty-Ann Lloyd's home until the dissertation is completed. They will then be erased. No one else will have access to them.

Everything I say will remain confidential. Anything that might identify me, my program or organization will be changed or omitted.

I understand that I can ask that the tape recorder be turned off or that my words not be transcribed at any point. I can negotiate my continued involvement in or withdraw from the meeting at any point.

I will also have the option of reading the transcripts of the sessions and the draft section of the thesis that deals with this part of the research. My opinions and comments will be included in the final thesis.

Appendix IV   Research Subject Information Form

Name	
Partner	
Pseudonym	
Consent form	
Workplace title	
Workplace	
wp Address	
wp phone and fax	
h Address	
h phone and fax	
Birth date	
Birth place	
Race/culture	
Relationship status	
Children	
Formal education	
Informal education	
First job	
Other jobs	
Current job	
Years in workplace	
Years in profession	
Salary	
Next job	

Appendix V   Program Information Form

Name subject	
Manager	
Supervisor	
Supervisees	
Community served	
Affiliations?	
Funding source(s)	
Current mandate	
Measure of success	
% academic upgrading	
% life skills (eg.....)	
% job search	
% skill training	
% work placement	
How long running	
Original mandate	
Workplace structure	
Number of staff	
sex/age/educ/race etc	
Number of participants	
sex/age/educ/race etc	
Reports/eval/proposals	
Job ads/job description	

Appendix VI   Interview 1 Framework

What is your job title? What is your job description?
What do you do on an average day?
How does this change through the week/month/year?
Does anyone else do this kind of work at your workplace?

What is the job title of your supervisor? What does your supervisor do?
What are the job titles of the staff with whom you work most closely?
What do they do? How do your jobs overlap?

What education, training and experience did your program want for this job?
What education and training do you have?
How do you think this education and training prepared you for this job?

What kind of work have you done before?
How do you think this work experience prepared you for this job?

What kind of political/community activity have you been involved in?
How do you think this political/community activity prepared you for this job?
Do you think your workplace was interested in your political/ community experience?
        Why? Why not? How could you tell?

How do you feel about your work at this job?
Do you think you are doing what you are supposed to?
        Why? Why not? How can you tell?

What do you think about the work your co-workers are expected to do?
How well do you think they are doing it? How can you tell?
Do your bosses do what you think they should be doing?
        Why? Why not? How can you tell?

What about the women who participate in the program —
Why do you think they get involved?
What do you think they expect when they first come in?
.What do you think they want?   What do you think they need?
Are these three things — expectations, wants, needs — different?
        Why? Why not? How can you tell?

Why do you think the government wants these women to get involved?
What do you think it expects from these women?
How does this compare with what the women expect?
How does this compare with what you expect?

What do you think the government believes that the women need?
How does this compare to how the women talk about what they need?
How does this compare to how you would talk about what they need?

Do you consider your work political?
Follow this thread and any others that have arisen during the interview . . . .

Appendix VII Focus Group 1 Framework

Where do you work?
What is the program's mandate?
What is your job title?
What is your job description?

What does this mean you are supposed to do?
Is this what you actually do?

Who else works in your program? What do they do?

What can you tell me about your program participants?

What kind of background did your workplace want for this job?
  Education and training....
  Work experience....
  Political/ Community activity....
  Personal experience....

How have these four areas of experience prepared you for your work?
What was the most useful preparation for your job?

What do your participants expect you to do?
What do your colleagues expect you to do?
What do you think the program's funders expect you to do?

Do you consider your work political?

Continue discussion from here. . . .

Appendix VIII   Instructions and Framework for the Dialogue

Here you are — ready to tape a dialogue with your partner in this research.

I have given you eight sheets of paper, other than this one.
There are eight possible frameworks for your dialogue.

I have also given you a 90 minute blank tape and a second tape
in case you go slightly over the time.

I would like you to begin with Page 1.
All the women involved in this research will start with this page.
You might want to outline a few thoughts about the situation before you tape.

Then, I would like each of you to choose a second page, a second framework.
You might take some time before the taping to think about your choice.
That gives you two more frameworks — one you choose and one your partner chooses.

I would like you to complete at least these three dialogues —

Page 1

Page ___ chosen by Woman I.

Page ___ chosen by Woman II.

This means you will have to watch the clock!
Each dialogue will have 30 minutes or less total time —

If you do have time left, please decide on further topics.
You can talk about something that I have not included in the sheets.
You can also keep choosing different sheets until your time is up.

It is important that the tape record well enough for me to transcribe it!
Please test the equipment first by setting it up and talking as you normally do.
Then, play it back to check out how it sounds.
If it is not working well, it is important to try to find a way it will work better.
Or, you might need to wait until you have better equipment.

Please remind each other to speak loud enough and clear enough.

I have drawn a picture of the best way to set up the tape recorder.
It is important to talk towards the microphone without covering your mouth.

Thank you for your time and energy on this.
I am really looking forward to the tapes!

<u>PAGE 1</u> — All the women in the research will complete this dialogue.

When I think of programs that the government funds
in order to increase the "employability" of the participants
including women who are single mothers receiving social assistance
I imagine the program workers as being pulled in different directions.

<div align="center">

Here is the program worker
expecting herself to do
certain things.

</div>

Here are the funders
expecting her to do
certain things.

Here is the client/student
expecting her to do
certain things.

Here is X
expecting her to do
certain things

Please explain to your partner how you experience these different pulls
and what kinds of things you do to avoid feeling pulled apart.

How do you think the fact that you are a woman, working with women,
makes a difference in how you experience these different pulls?

Do you think there is someone/something else in position X
expecting you to do certain things?

Who or what is this? What do they expect from you?

<u>PAGE 2</u>

During the first interview, some women talked about the differences
they experience between program workers who "counsel" and
program workers who "teach."

Sometimes this is because women have been trained as educators or as social workers.
Sometimes this is because their job titles include the words "instructor" or "counsellor".

How have you experienced differences in the way that program workers do their work?

What do you think "instructors" could learn from "counsellors"?
What do you think "counsellors" could learn from "instructors"?

How do you think the training for "instructors" and "counsellors" should be different?
In what ways do you think the training should be the same?

PAGE 3

Woman I: Please imagine that you are a policy maker in an agency
or government department that funds you.

Woman II: Please be yourself. Tell your partner, the policy maker, what you
think she needs to know about the kinds of programs and services required by women
who are single mothers receiving social assistance.

These women would like to get the education and training they need in order to support
themselves through paid work. What should the policy makers be doing?

Woman I: Please respond as the policy maker, telling your partner
what some of the problems are facing the government or agency.

NOW, SWITCH ROLES.

Woman II: You are now the policy maker.
Woman I: You are now yourself.

PAGE 4

Woman I: Please imagine that you are a 28 year-old woman who is a single
mother receiving social assistance. You finished grade 8 before you dropped out of
school. Now you would like to get some training and education so that you will be able
to get a job that will support your family.

Woman II: Please be yourself.

Woman I: Please tell this program worker what you expect her to do
in order to help you get the training and education you need.
She is being paid to make you more "employable". Tell her what she needs to do for you
to feel like you are getting what you need.

Woman II: Please tell the woman who wants education and training what
you think you can realistically do in terms of meeting her expectations. Tell her what
might stop you from helping her get what she wants or needs. Tell her how you feel
about this.

**I know most of you would not tell a client how you feel about what you can do for her
— but please do it in this role play!**

NOW, SWITCH ROLES.

Woman II: You are now the woman who is a single mother receiving social
assistance.
Woman I: You are now yourself.

PAGE 5

In the first interview, many women talked about "professionalism" — the way in which program workers are, or are not, "professional."

Please explain to each other how you understand "professionalism" within the context of your work with women who are single mothers receiving social assistance.

What do you mean by "professional"?
Should workers in your position be "professional"?
Why, or why not?

What are some of the benefits of being "professional"?
What are some of the costs of being "professional"?

Why do you think some workers might be "professional"?
Why do you think some workers might not be "professional"?

PAGE 6

In the first interview, some women talked about the ways they feel they are the same as the women in their programs who are single mothers receiving social assistance. They also talked about ways in which they feel different from the women in their programs.

Please take turns completing the following sentence.

When I stand back and look at myself and look at the women in my program (or community) who are single mothers receiving social assistance, I feel . . . .

Now, discuss your responses.

PAGE 7

Take a moment to imagine yourself in a class
that you have to pass in order to become qualified
for your work with women who are single mothers
receiving social assistance.

What focus do you think the class should have?

What kind of class assignments should you be expected to do?

What topic would you choose for a presentation to the class?

PAGE 8

In the first interview, some women said they consider their work with women who are single mothers receiving social assistance to be very political work. Some said they do not consider their work to be at all political. Some said they have never thought about it. Several women also expressed surprise that I asked that question.

What do you think I mean by "political"?

Why do you think I asked if you consider your work political?

Why were you surprised OR why were you not surprised
when I asked that question?

Why do you think some women answered differently than you did?

Have you thought any more about that question since I asked it?
If yes, what have you been thinking?

Appendix IX   Focus Group 2 Framework

During Focus Group 2 women continued some of the discussion from Focus Group 1, identified some of their own concerns about their work, and discussed the research questions contained in the Consent Form:

This thesis focuses on programs that receive some of their funding through the employability enhancement components of labour force development policies. Within those programs, she is particularly interested in women who work as instructors and counsellors:

> How do these women understand their work as
> mediating social relations between women and the state —
> particularly women who are single mothers receiving social assistance?

> How does this understanding fit into what they have learned
> in their professional, political and personal experiences
> about the needs of women and the needs of the state?

> Where do contradictions and tensions arise within these experiences?
> How do we work with these contradictions and tensions
> in order to improve our practice, our politics and our policies?

Appendix X   Focus Group 3 Framework

When I think of programs that the government funds
in order to increase the "employability" of the participants
including women who are single mothers receiving social assistance

I imagine program workers are pulled in different directions.

> Here is the program worker
> expecting herself to do
> certain things.

Here are the funders   Here is the client/student
expecting her to do   expecting her to do
certain things.   certain things.

> Here is X
> expecting her to do
> certain things

• How you experience these different pulls and what kinds of things you do to avoid feeling pulled apart.

• Do you think there is someone/something else in position X expecting you to do certain things? Who or what is this? What do they expect from you?

• How do you think the fact that you are a woman staff, working with women clients, makes a difference in how you experience these different pulls?

Here are some other topics that you could choose from.

Topic 2:

In other interviews and dialogues in this research women have talked about the pros and cons of being "professional."

What does "professional" mean to you?

What happens if you areprofessional?

What happens if you aren't?

Topic 3:

There is a lot of discussion in social theory and policy about the rights and responsibilities of different citizens in a country.

What do you think should be the rights of women who are sole support mothers?

What do you think should be the responsibilities of women who are sole support mothers?

What do you think your role should be in helping your clients get these rights and fulfill these responsibilities?

Topic 4:

Many of the women program workers (educators, counsellors, administrators) say that their formal education did not really prepare them to deal with many of the issues they face every day.

If you had the opportunity to set up the ideal course for your work, what kind of course would it be?

Where would it be held? How long would it be?

What would it cover? Who would teach it?

Do different women need different kinds of courses?

Appendix XI   Feedback Letter after each component

Hello women —

    Here is the transcript of your _____ as part of my Ph.D. research. They have averaged _____ pages each — and every one of them has given me a great deal to think about.

    I had first planned to work with your interviews and dialogues as part of a "key words" analysis. By looking at the words you use to describe your experience, I would discover the links between your experience and the ways that others — politicians, policy-makers, academics, media, advocates for women and for the poor — talk about programs that work to increase the employability of participants.

    However, I have decided that would be too simplistic, too linear. So, now I am making web charts out of each interview, then each dialogue. I can compare how women developed their ideas both with me and with their partners. This means, however, that I am taking more time to develop an analysis paper.

    I hope this change in my timetable does not cause you any concerns about continuing your participation. I will give you a call over the next month or so to let you know where I am with your pieces and we can discuss any questions you may have.

    In the meantime, you have a chance to review your transcript. Please feel free to make any comments or changes as you did with the first interview/focus group. Also, I have included a feedback sheet and hope that you will send it along with your comments in the envelope that is enclosed. I feel very curious about anything you might think or talk with your partner about after reading the transcript. If you could make a few notes about your reflections or conversations, I would appreciate it.

    Thank you again for your time, your energy, and your commitment to your work.

Appendix XII   **Follow-Up Letter for Research Subjects Who Participated**

in a Dialogue or Focus Group

Hello, women —

It seems like a long time since I have talked with some of you. As you can tell
from the enclosed information sheet I have been very busy writing and editing three
books that came out of my research with CCLOW. Although that work interrupted my
Ph.D. for a while, it gave me a chance to think about the interviews, dialogues, and
focus group meetings that you have done with me.

I have read, re-read, and re-read again all the transcripts of the taped
conversations — over 500 pages. I feel like the way you understand your work — and
the way you express that understanding — has given me the support I need to make my
arguments for a more holistic education and support of front-line workers.

Over the next two months I would like to talk with you about what I have
learned from you and get your responses to my interpretations. I would also like to give
you a chance to hear about some of the theories that I use as a framework for my
analysis. And, finally, I would like to meet with each of you on your own to ask a
couple more questions. This can be a very short meeting and I will come to wherever is
most convenient for you — your home, workplace, or another location. If necessary, I
could do it in a phone call.

I have already arranged a meeting for women who want to know how I am using
what you have said to make my thesis argument.. I will put this together as a workshop
where I do some presentations and then you have a chance to talk with each other about
what I have said. I will also talk about the theoretical basis for my work.

That meeting will take place at   **Veith House, Halifax**

I have included a list of some of the books I will bring and talk about.
I will make sure there is supper for 5:30!
Please leave a message at 455-0185 if you plan on coming.

For women who live outside Halifax and for women who are on holiday or who
don't have the choice or the desire to come to this kind of workshop, I would like to
arrange another convenient time to get together. We can do this one-to-one, in a small
group, or with your research partner(s). It can be any day — morning, afternoon, or
evening — you can tell I want to be able to talk with you at least once more!

By the time you get this letter, I will have reached many of you on the phone.
(Some of you are easier to reach that way than others!) If I haven't, I hope to get in touch
with you soon, if only to say thank you. I will be leaving Halifax for Vancouver at the
end of August and want to make sure I can remain in contact with you as I continue to
develop a dissertation based on this research.

Appendix XIII   Follow-Up Letter for Research Subjects Who Did Not

Participate in a Dialogue

Hello _____

        It seems like a long time since I have talked with you. I _don't_ want you to feel hassled about this research and, at the same time, I do want to keep you informed about what is happening. I learned a lot from our interview and want to thank you for that participation.

        Many (not all) women did complete a dialogue with their pair. I also worked with a focus group of Black women. Now, I would like to complete the process with one more meeting. I would be very happy to come to _____ to talk with you. If that isn't possible for you, I could phone. And, if you really don't want to be bothered, I will leave you alone!

        I do want to tell you that there will be a group meeting in Halifax. If you were able to somehow find the time for this, I would love to have you there. I would pay your gas costs and any other expenses you had. I think you would add a lot to the discussions and you might find it fun!

That workshop will take place at   Veith House, 3115 Veith Street, Halifax
                                             Wednesday, July 13 from 3:30 to 7:30.

I have included a list of some of the books I will bring and talk about.
I will make sure there is supper for 5:30!

        If you _can_ come to this event, just leave a message on my phone and I will count you in. If you can't make that meeting, but could meet with me in _____, please give me a call and we can arrange a time. I am free pretty much until August 20 when I am moving to Vancouver. Feel free to fax or to call collect.

Appendix XIV   Agenda for the Final Meeting

When I think about the time from 3:30 to 7:30 on July 13, I imagine that we will want to spend some time saying "hello" to each other and introducing where we work.

I want to let you know how I am using what you have said in your interviews, dialogues, and group meetings. I will talk about the visual image of BRAIDS that I discovered as I searched for a way to talk about the theory I am developing. My thesis supervisor has approved my "argument" — the way that I use your words to support the BRAID image and the way that I use other people's writing as a foundation. I will outline that argument

I am interested in your feedback about the image, the theory, and the argument, and will give you a chance to talk about how it fits with what you know about your work.

Following this might be a good time to have supper!

Then, I would like to talk a bit about the different books and theories that I have used to develop my understanding of women's front-line work and how this work is connected both to the Canadian welfare state and to women who are single mothers receiving social assistance.

For example, Iris Marion Young writes about five faces of oppression. She defines "oppression" as systematic and institutional ways of treating people so that some are never able to learn or to use skills that will benefit themselves and society.

She then suggests that there are at least five different ways that people experience oppression — a useful way to understand similarities / differences among women.

The five faces of oppression include:

Exploitation: when you don't get the value of your work because someone else takes the profits (eg. store owners profits from the labour of minimum wage clerks)

Marginalization: when people are not allowed to participate in the democratic or any other process. Basically, they are denied citizenship because no one listens.

Powerlessness: when people have to do what they are told because the person giving the orders or advice have more authority, status, and self-confidence.

Cultural imperialism: when the experience and culture of the dominant group in society is "normal" and everything else is considered deviant.

Violence: when people live with the knowledge that their person or property may be attacked for no other reason than to damage or humiliate or destroy them.

Books I'll bring to the workshop —

I won't go into great detail with these — I promise! But I do want to highlight some information and let you discuss/ask questions about whatever interests you. Again, I will talk a bit and then give you a chance to talk about particular issues in small groups and the large group.

•   All of us have a theory of the state that we use in our lives — even if we don't know how to label it! This book has given me a very solid understanding of state theory. It helps me understand the way different women approach optimism/pessimism, difference/oppression, humanism/feminism, individualism/collective struggle.

Knuttila, Kenneth Murray. (1992). State theories: From liberalism to the challenge of feminism (2nd edition). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

•   I use these books for a historical as well as theoretical perspective on women and the state. Some of them are particularly good on the relationship between race/ racism/ welfare and others have excellent analyses of how dominant ideas about"work ethic" and "family ethic" determine how single mothers receiving social assistance are "bad" and how workers that advocate for single mothers are "unprofessional" or "immoral."

Abramovitz, Mimi. (1988). Regulating the lives of women: Social welfare policy from colonial times to the present. Boston: South End Press.

Gordon, Linda. (Ed.). (1990). Women, the state, and welfare. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Ismael, Jacqueline S. (Ed.). (1987). The Canadian welfare state: Evolution and transition. Calgary: University of Alberta Press.

Moscovitch, Allan, & Drover, Glenn. (Eds). (1987). The "benevolent" state: The growth of welfare in Canada. Toronto: Garamond.

Success in the works: A labour force development strategy for Canada. (1989). Ottawa: Supplies and Services Canada.

Williams, Fiona. (1989). Social policy: A critical introduction—Issues of race, gender and class. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Wilson, Elizabeth. (1979). Women & the welfare state. London: Tavistock Publications.

•   Different articles in this book help me understand what happens when community-based programs and agencies receive government funding. They also show how government policies can't help but influence how front-line workers do their work.

Ng, Roxana, Walker, Gillian, Muller, Jacob. (Eds.). (1990). Community organization and the Canadian State. Toronto: Garamond Press.

•   These books help me think about the similar and different ways we understand what happens when we work as teachers and counsellors. They also talk about the ways that some women are personally and politically empowered through education and others simply learn more about discrimination.

Briskin, Linda. (1990). Feminist pedagogy: Teaching and learning liberation. Toronto: CRIAW.

Carniol, Ben. (1990). Case critical: Challenging social work in Canada (2nd edition). Toronto: Between the Lines.

hooks, bell. (1988). Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Luke, Carmen & Gore, Jennifer. (Eds.). (1992). Feminisms and critical pedagogy. New York: Routledge.

Luttrell, Wendy. (1989). Working-class women's ways of knowing: Effects of gender, race and class. Sociology of Education, 62, 33-46.

- I use the following books for ways to think about and analyze what you have said about how women workers have to take care of themselves as well as their clients, about politics and power, and about who decides what programs and women "need." They also provide a lot of thoughtful information about how we develop beliefs about family, faith, success, and where/how we stand in relation to our own families and communities, our own programs and profession, our Canadian society and its capitalist welfare state. If we are different from those who make the rules in any of those places, then we have to do our work as "outsiders."

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