Special Issue on Institutional Ethnography: Theory and Practice

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The paper presents an account of the scholarly work of Canadian sociologist, feminist, theorist and activist, Dorothy E. Smith, leading up to her development of institutional ethnography as "a sociology for people." Drawing on selected writings, the author discusses some of the major ideas, debates and practical influences that are part of Smith's scholarly trajectory. The line of thinking that is illustrated is how her feminism was integral to her celebrated critique and re-writing of sociological method.

This article introduces some of the theoretical underpinnings of institutional ethnography, the kind of sociological inquiry that takes as its problematic people's experiences in the everyday world. It may seem simply straightforward and logical that a researcher would be interested in discovering and disclosing how things happen. And for many who do institutional ethnography, it has become exactly that. Yet, that goal for research did not just arise spontaneously. Rather, querying how things happen signals a particular interest for social researchers, a special focus for research that Dorothy E. Smith has been working toward across several decades. This is an entirely different research goal from making an explanation of events through the application of theory. Smith's approach to research draws on diverse antecedents. Learning feminism and practising feminism turned out to be crucial to the critique of sociology that she was making. My goal in this paper is to show some of the influences that have shaped Smith's development of institutional ethnography as a sociology for women and that has become a sociology for people.
How Smith’s scholarly and practical work began to influence each other will be explored by reviewing important ideas from some of her writings. But, the purpose of reviewing the roots of institutional ethnography is not to understand Dorothy Smith as historiography. We can identify in her theory and methodology the results of her contesting of the philosophical and sociological ideas and practices she encountered. Looking back from a position in the 21st century gives us a certain advantage. Now, it is possible to see how things fit together as an approach with the name institutional ethnography. Smith’s references to, and use of, as well as arguments with many other scholars throughout the course of her career help us identify the route along which she travelled. Although not exhaustive of the ideas that have been important to her, I have selected some that seem central to institutional ethnography.

Besides reviewing its beginnings, this paper also looks briefly at how institutional ethnography stands with regard to contemporary intellectual debates in the first decade of the 21st century. Language itself had always held a special interest for Smith and even prior to attending university, as a young clerical worker in London she had read philosophy—for pleasure, she says. Later, she was intrigued by the way that the Oxford philosophers were writing about “ordinary language” philosophy. She liked to see how people used words and how words could be made to “mean.” This made literature—novels and poetry—as well as scholarly commentary on them—influential in Smith’s own thinking and her quest to understand everyday life. Postmodernism and post-structuralism have not passed by unnoticed in Smith’s work and later on I touch briefly on her engagement with some of these debates. But the linguistic turn in scholarship has not overwhelmed Smith’s thinking partly because attention to language use was always important to her project of trying to “write the social” as people live it. Her efforts towards knowing take up Ludwig Wittgenstein’s (1953), whom she quotes as “bring(ing) back words from their metaphysical to their everyday uses” (Smith, 1999, p. 242). It has been her prevailing interest to figure out and teach a method of social analysis that is reflexive to the material contours of people’s lives. Some of Foucault’s (1970,
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1984) interests in discourse and Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) insistence on the discourse's local accomplishment appear in Smith's formulations of how sequences of local action are hooked into a "discourse-driven dialogue" (Smith, 1999:121). She says "truth and knowledge are grounded in the foundational moments in which the social comes into being through language and through the sensory ground that human organisms share" (1999:128).

Feminist Beginnings of a Method of Inquiry

After Smith took her first degree (in social anthropology) at the London School of Economics she enrolled in a Ph.D. program in sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. Here she worked with faculty who were mainly doing and teaching the conventional positivist sociology prominent in the USA in the early 1960s. Her thesis supervisor, Erving Goffman, was a notable exception, Smith says. He made the everyday world visible to sociology; (indeed, the book that first made his work known and notable was called *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*). Goffman invented ways to show what people are doing in their ordinary interactions. Although Smith did not take up his dramaturgical approach, like him she has never been confined by sociological convention.

Reflecting on other influences from her graduate education, she mentions taking a graduate course on George Herbert Mead that enlarged her thinking about language use. She says that Mead offered her new ways of "bringing things from the abstract realm and seeing them more as problems of how people talk about things." She had had discussions with ethnomethodologists while a student at Berkeley, but it wasn't until later when she was teaching sociology at the University of British Columbia beginning in the late 1960s that the real upsurge in non-positivist sociology occurred. This non-positivist literature found its way into her own teaching, where Smith employed it to interrogate such concepts as "deviance" in the social psychology courses that, as a female faculty member, she was expected to teach. Her teaching, like her writing, drew from the thinking of Alfred Schutz and Maurice Merleau-Ponty in phenomenology, George
Herbert Mead in symbolic interactionism, Harold Garfinkel and his students in ethnomethodology, as well as Marx and the other more traditional social theorists.

James Heap, one of her first Ph.D. students at the University of British Columbia, speaks of how he learned from Smith about "interpretive procedures . . . procedures for knowing, and the nature of things known" drawn from her engagement with this set of theorists (Campbell and Manicom, 1995: x). In noting this, Heap was making the point that it is often forgotten that these interpretive influences predated Smith's feminism and laid the basis of her later work. He wants both to be remembered. Yet here, in this article, a different emphasis is developed and a different point is being made—that the feminism at the heart of institutional ethnography is often overlooked or misunderstood.

Smith had always been impressed by the work of Marx (trans. 1954) that she had read in the original while at the LSE. In the 1970s she would go back to Marx and put his writings together with her newer thinking, particularly with her feminist concerns and interests. At first, she was working within a discourse constituted almost entirely by men. She engaged with their ideas and, where necessary to her project, debated them from a standpoint made accessible by the feminism developing in the last half of the 20th century.

Several of Smith's early articles are especially helpful in understanding her own developing thought. These pieces contain ideas that stayed important and are increasingly elaborated in successive lines of inquiry throughout the next decades. Students then (as now) puzzled over her dense writings as newer ones kept appearing on her course reading lists. Engagement with her students' class assignments fuelled Smith's own thinking, as for example in her article "K is Mentally Ill," an early 1970s piece that wasn't published in English until 1990. That paper circled back into continuing discussions with new students throughout the 70s and 80s. Its data came from a class exercise that asked students to find and interview someone who could describe someone else's experience of becoming "mentally ill." From one student's report, Smith saw the opportunity to interrogate facts and how factual knowing occurs. What she saw in the interview text was to be a key element of Smith's thinking, writing and teaching
on into the next decade—the possibility (and practical necessity, especially for women) of interrogating taken for granted practices of knowing. In this early paper she identified the work-up that the interviewee and student were doing to construct the report. She identified how selected pieces of experience are relied on to arrive at a story that anyone could recognize as mental illness. Smith’s argument was that these features of making sense in ordinary ways are noteworthy in themselves. Pushing them out into the open, not leaving them buried and disattended makes visible how people arrive at particular meanings. Of course, as she illustrates in “K is Mentally Ill,” when the work-up is made visible as people’s practices, the authority of the account is unsettled. That move forms a gestalt—with a foreground that shifts to background when a different frame is used. In this case, discovering the construction work inherent in the story made it almost impossible for Smith to revert to her former reading. This analysis was to be massively influential in her developing critique of sociological method and to her insights about the way that texts and textual practices are an essential part of the meanings that they apparently simply carry.

Smith’s paper “Women’s Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology” was similarly ground-breaking and inspirational to her contemporary feminist colleagues. Delivered at a conference in 1972, this paper was passed from hand to hand across North America before it was published in a sociology journal in 1974 and then reprinted in Sandra Harding’s influential *Feminism and Methodology* in 1987. The 1970s was the era when women from various locations in society were identifying conditions in their lives that chafed and stultified them. Women academics were bringing these critiques into the academy and into their intellectual work there. Smith’s analysis in this particular piece showed how the conceptualizing of sociology was a male activity, and that it depended upon certain conditions for its achievement that men, but not women, could take for granted. For instance, women’s domestic work routinely provided the conditions for men to live in the head world, their work lives untrammeled by responsibility for managing their mundane daily needs—for food, clean clothing and a quiet, tidy work space and so on. In contrast, as was the radical direction of Smith’s analysis, women’s standpoint
arose precisely from their bodily connection to knowing. Men's ideas, Smith claimed, carried authority, even though as she was showing, their alienation from a firm grounding in the materiality of everyday life distorted men's understandings. These analytic observations were the starting point for Smith's work toward a different sociology for women.

Her dissatisfaction with sociological orthodoxy was the subject of her article, "The Ideological Practice of Sociology." This paper carries Smith's important critique of sociological (and social science) method, drawing on Marx and Engel's (trans. 1976) critique of German philosophy that he had called "ideology." In this paper Smith explains how she departs from the distinction that conventional sociology would make between ideology and social science, where the notion of ideology is of biased or distorted statements, while social science is considered to be objectively truthful. Smith's analysis of ideological practices in social science focuses on the methodological moves that an intellectual makes to generate objective knowledge. Specifically, she argued that such methodological procedures end up cancelling the subjectivity of the knower so that knowing moves to an abstract conceptual plane. This, she recognized, was how she had been trained as a sociologist to understand the world. But now, she was comparing that approach with Marx's premise that (non-ideological) analysis is an explication of "actual people's activities and the material conditions thereof" (Smith 1990a:36). Reflecting on her own training, Smith has written:

Sociology creates a construct of society that is specifically discontinuous with the world known, lived, experienced and acted in. The practice of sociology in which we were trained as graduate students was one that insisted that the sociologist should never go out without a concept; that to encounter the raw world was to encounter a world of irremediable disorder and confusion; to even begin to speak sociologically of that world required a concept, or concepts, to order, select, assemble, a sociological version of the world on paper." (1990b:2)

From Marx she had learned not to be satisfied with treating the conceptual as a given—rather to view "concepts and categories as expressions of social relations and hence as opening up a universe
for exploration that is 'present’ in them but not explicated” (Smith 1990a:37). She claimed that what she called the ideological practices integral to social science had the effect of confining people who used them to a conceptual level that suppresses the presence and workings of the underlying relations they express. Making this critique demanded of Smith that she find another way of doing sociology, one that would build for all to see an account of how things work and, in particular, how they work against women and other oppressed people.

In the 1970s, besides her specifically intellectual work, Smith was part of a movement of community women who were attempting to understand and change the conditions of their lives. “Feminism and Marxism” a talk given to women activists in 1977 was published as a monograph in the same year. It presented in non-academic language her sense of how to work on behalf of women. She spoke about the distinctiveness of a feminist position, which for her had developed out of Marxism—out of turning to Marx's writings for help in understanding how the relations among and between men and women are organized. Employing a Marxist framework, she said, was the only way to discover “something about how the determinations of your particular space would be seen as arising as aspects of a social and economic process, of social relations outside it” (1977:12). So, for Smith, learning to work against women’s oppression had led her not to a feminist theory, but to taking the standpoint of women in a committed way—a commitment that invoked the notion of sisterhood so important to the women's movement of that time (Smith, 1977:14). Sisterhood, as invoked by Smith, was not a sentimental idea but a way of speaking about the method of working she was developing. This method required relocation of the knower—moving from being an outsider in hearing of women's lives and troubles to “locating yourself on their side and in their position” (Smith, 1977:15). Later, her methodological writings advanced her thinking on how to conduct scholarly research this way.

The 1970s was a busy decade for Smith and her own reflections, written much later, suggest the level of creative activity that she was involved in:
The intensity of those times is hard to capture in retrospect. (A feminist conference presentation) gave me an opportunity to pull together for presentation to other women the thinking I had been doing around a number of topics—the attempt to situate a sociology in a knowledge grounded in women's experience, the nature of the linkages of the university with other bases of power in the society, the peculiarities of the way changes occur around us (on the campus where I worked, one day there would be a grassy lawn, the next there would be hoardings and a hole in the ground), issues of Canadian cultural identity and of an independent Canadian sociology, my rediscovery of Marx, and specific inquiry in sociology.

She continues, explaining how she had benefited from those experiences:

I had learned from the women's movement that I was not bound to observe the conventions laid down by men that constricted the relevances of my thinking. I understood therefore that I could move from what was going on around me to the world of theory and back. This lesson as well as these topics went into the making of "a sociology for women" (Smith, 1987:46).

Reading Smith, especially along side writings by the thinkers whose work she was reading and requiring students to read at the time, one can see how she takes up topics, interests and language from these writers and moves on from them. Like Alfred Schutz before her, she was interested in multiple perspectives, and how they emerge. She uses Schutz's own words in pointing to the significance in sociology of how "we live in a world not of our own making." It was her conviction however that the making of the world(s) that people live in, the social organization of those experiences, had to be accounted for in research and knowledge production to make it useful to women's lives. From the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, Smith learned how to make experiencing, including the knower's own experience, central to research. In her paper "K is Mentally Ill," Smith had used that insight to explore her own reading of the text as a way of discovering how it had been put together. Exploring how people use concepts as if they are self-evident was to remain an important problematic for Smith. It required a dizzying shift in perception, where ordinary habits of thinking had to be replaced. Smith talks
about learning how to think as if she were inside what was happening, not external to it. This is the kind of thinking that for Smith makes the sociological notion of micro and macro analysis of social life obsolete. She recognized that when one knows from “inside” what is happening, there are no such separations. This is the notion of “experience” that she works with.

Ethnomethodology and ethnomethodologists have an important place in Smith’s intellectual development. The ethnomethodological work of Harold Garfinkel, especially as taken up by a group of researchers at Santa Barbara, is reflected in institutional ethnography, (e.g., Smith, 1999:232–3; and 1990b:211). Ethnomethodology’s foundational concerns include “treating facts as social accomplishments” (Garfinkel, 1967) and “studying a member’s knowledge of his ordinary affairs . . . where that knowledge is treated by us as part of the same setting that it also makes orderable (having a recognizable order)” (Garfinkel, 1974:18, in Turner, 1974). Others working in the field talked about ethnomethodology as being interested in practical reasoning. Its practitioners aimed to make descriptions of how people worked at bringing into being those features of ordinary life that tend to be treated as just there or taken for granted. As Turner (1974:11) put it, ethnomethodologists explored and wrote about “suicides, ethnic groups, clear matters of fact and the rest of the furniture of everyday life” but their goal was to show how those occurrences were accomplished competently and were replicable. Such things were not to be understood as naturally occurring or objectively real. While Smith brought these views into institutional ethnography, she lost interest in the direction taken by some other ethnomethodologists. In Roy Turner’s 1974 edited collection Ethnomethodology. Smith was the only woman published with seventeen male ethnomethodologists. She recalls that the men were pursuing the problematic of social order that Talcott Parsons had made central to sociological theory. She, on the other hand, was always on the lookout for “how things work.”

Many ethnomethodologists were not querying the reality constituted by their own practices, just explicating them as members’ methods of accomplishing reality. Smith, on the other hand, insisted that “the sociologist is and must be an active participant in constructing the events she treats as data” (Smith, 1990a:13). It
seems apparent as early as 1974, with her rediscovery of Marx, that Smith was moving in a different direction in her new project of writing a sociology for women. Unlike the ethnomethodological interest in practical reasoning and its empirical investigation in everyday sites, Smith didn’t want to accept the limitations of a technique that separated out for analysis an event, a conversation, or some other practice from its place nested in the lived world of the subject. Doing so would confine understandings artificially, she saw, and was therefore not satisfactory to her purpose.

Smith had already come to the conclusion that sociological analysis should not separate what in the everyday world was already unified. Following the lead given by Marx’s analysis of the economy of his own time, Smith began to see what it would take to connect her puzzles in the everyday world to the sort of dimensions that Marx was talking about. The connections were there, although they are invisible, as long as they remain unanalysed and unanalysable. She began to speak about the local world and extra-local domain or settings. She proposed that both were part of the social relations of any experienced actuality. The strategy for bringing them together was through an analysis that locates the knower (Marx’s actual individuals) whose activities concert what actually happens in time and space. To make sociology politically committed, she had to overcome its practices of knowing that “exclude the presence and experience of particular subjectivities” (1987:2). Smith was putting together a materialist analysis for sociology that would account for the subject’s presence, for her knowing and doing. And for how the subject enacted her everyday life in ways that connected her into relations outside herself and her experiences. This was the procedure that could lead a researcher into the discovery of extra-local relations and thus to see how the local setting worked.

Phenomenology had opened the possibility of a sociology that could address people’s experiences. Ethnomethodology offered the specialized way of seeing people’s activities as integral to any account of what was happening. From Marx came the notion of social relations that makes theoretical sense of Smith’s conviction about the inseparability of micro and macro analysis. Seeing that people work knowledgeably to concert their action with ruling regimes puts the possibility of that material connection into the
analysis. For Smith, the latter is also how the politics of the setting can be dissected and viewed. No setting is an isolated unit, but is part of an organized whole. This underpins a strategy for identifying how power is inserted into (enacted in, actually) the experiential setting, often in silent and mysterious ways.

Feminism and Smith's Sociology for Women

Feminism was a necessary component for Smith's rethinking of the methods of social analysis that were available in the 1970s. In feminist consciousness-raising Smith found inspiration for thinking about knowledge as a practical matter and how it relates to practical experiences. The philosophy of consciousness-raising and its strategies accorded women's voices authority in feminist circles. Smith's own daily pursuits as a worker, wife and mother informed her view that women, although precluded almost entirely from positions of authority, had one trusted source of knowing from which to speak—their everyday experience. Smith recognized the validity of women's anger when nowhere else were they treated as knowledgeable people. That had been a painful lesson Smith herself learned as a woman, mother and academic. Entering the academic world as a graduate research assistant, Smith had identified an uncomfortable rupture between the responsible person she was as a wife and mother and how she was expected to know and be as a scholar. At home, as a mother and wife she engaged in work that related to bodies—for instance, feeding the family, and bathing and clothing small children. Ways of knowing that were relevant there, even essential for giving and supporting life, were not recognized as a legitimate basis for knowing in the other world. Intellectual work was done in the head world, as if bodies didn't exist. There seemed to be a permanent rupture between the two kinds of knowing, not to mention a different valuing. Addressing the tasks associated with each seemed to require her to be two different persons. To be successful in the head world, it was not sufficient or even helpful to know the world in the ways in which women are authoritative speakers (Smith, 1990a:28). Just the opposite was true. Smith "learned" that to conceptualize in the standard scholarly manner was to repudiate experiential knowing. To work in universities
and in scholarship she had to suppress the knowledge from her everyday world, for which, she says, there was at that time no acceptable language.

As she made headway in developing her notions of knowing from the standpoint of women, her critical analysis of the practices of theorizing and knowledge generation converged with her political commitments. To explain what women in the 1970s were recognizing as their subordination, she argued that women’s exclusion from the positions where society and culture were put together accounts for how social life is ordered by knowledge that doesn’t fit women’s realities. In other words, the world is not made for women. Acquiring the political stance of a feminist helped Smith recognize that to make knowledge that would work for women, knowledge practices had to be revamped. In her “Women’s perspective as a radical critique of sociology” she turned upside down the approach to knowing that required living in the head world. In describing the traditional gender regime in which women keep house for men, she pointed out that besides attending to their bodily domestic needs at home, women perform analogous functions in professional and managerial settings, too. Smith wrote that women “mediate for men at work the relationship between the conceptual mode of action and the actual concrete forms” in which their work must get done (1990a:18,19). With women’s help, men are lifted out of the immediate, local and particular place in which they reside in their bodies and are allowed to act as if they are living in their heads. The cost is borne not just by the women who do the background work, but also by the men themselves. Having their knowing mediated to them by other people and through their own objectified methods means that men lose touch with a certain level of reality. Being alienated from themselves as the knowing subject of their experience is consequential for what they can know. Men can make, believe in, and act on objectified accounts of the world that reflect only how it is known from their alienated place in it. This was also what Smith had been calling “ideological” about the standard procedures for doing sociology that she criticized. She saw that “the sociologist (was) an actual person in an actual concrete setting (who) has been cancelled in the procedures that objectify and separate him from his knowledge” (Smith, 1987a:90).
She and other feminists saw that men work as they do because women are there to provide for them. In feminist politics, this insight motivated women to redefine domestic relationships and try to change the division of domestic labour. In Smith's hands, the insight was also important theoretically. She contrasted embodied knowing with abstract conceptual knowledge. Her own theorizing showed how it is possible for men to forget their bodies and live and act in the conceptual mode in which business, academia and government are done. It became apparent that while thinking and working in an ideological manner may have originated with the men who were in the academy, professions and government before women were influential there, women can also learn to operate in the abstract conceptual mode. Indeed to be successful academics, women have had to gain skills in suppressing their experiential knowledge in favour of objectified knowing. For that reason, it hasn't helped women much to have more of them getting ahead in academia. Perhaps the same thing could be said of women in political life and government or in business and elsewhere—that women recently have made inroads into authoritative positions.

Speaking to an audience of women academics in the early 1980s, Smith (1984) made the point that as more and more women enter academia, they adopt conventional male-defined standards of scholarly achievement. The standards and conditions of acceptable scholarship have remained more or less as men defined them through decades of higher learning. In attempting to meet these standards, women take up the tools of the oppressors. Working ideologically, women scholars contribute to the research that determines how the world gets framed (ideologically) for those who live it. Ironically, as authoritative description accumulates on domestic areas such as the family, marriage, child rearing and schooling, the areas in which women have always been central, a contradiction grows. Women's experience of their everyday worlds of action where they have always been knowledgeable is ruptured from how their experience gets written about, and worked up officially. That new knowledge is then used against them authoritatively, to re-order and manage themselves and other women. Smith was coming at the problem of ruling and subordination as a feminist, informed by the emerging feminist
scholarship of the second wave feminists who had discovered a history of violent suppression of women’s knowledge across the centuries.

Smith’s insight about women’s standpoint in experience being a beginning for inquiry was also the key to understanding ruling and domination wherever it occurs. This is how Smith moved from theorizing women’s standpoint to make a radical turn in sociology, providing a method to investigate how certain forms of knowing authoritatively replace and undermine other forms. She had always been interested in documents, documentary realities, and their part in the constitution of authority and power. By the 1980s, she was talking about texts and the technologies of ruling that she argued are specifically knowledge-based. Now she described the ubiquity of text mediated social organization as the technology of ruling in late 20th century capitalist societies (1990b:209–224). In a knowledge-based society, ruling practices, she argued, rely on authorized versions of knowledge (such as routinely generated by sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, organization theorists and more recently, the information management scholars and consultants). If we accept Smith’s view, no longer can we think of ruling being done by powerful others, somewhere out there, entirely separate from ourselves. We all take up ruling concepts and activate them as we go about our daily lives.

Texts, Ruling and Knowing the World from Inside Experience

Knowing in specific ways is integral to many, if not all, forms of organized action in contemporary society. Organization works smoothly when people are able to take up pieces of action and move them along easily and competently. People’s knowledge of how to coordinate their action with others is a required feature of social life. Such knowledge is routinely counted on and usually is available as an unquestioned resource. As Smith continually asserts and illustrates, certain forms of knowing are the basis for ruling—in management, governing, the professions and so on. Text mediated ruling practices, Smith argued, subordinate local knowing, imposing ruling perspectives. Given women’s experiences of being excluded and oppressed, learning how their
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knowledge is undermined and replaced is an important preliminary feature for empowering people. As Smith had discovered, women's standpoint grounded in their everyday experience offers a challenge to ruling perspectives. She saw this from her early work on women's oppression and from analysing women's crucial role in mediating for men their knowledge practices.

In the introduction to her 1990 collection of papers on the conceptual practices of power, Smith identifies the connections that she was beginning to make between women's exclusion as subjects from sociology and questions of women's oppression throughout history. "At the line of fault along which women's experience breaks away from the discourses mediated by texts . . . a critical standpoint emerges" (1990:11). Smith recognized that women's standpoint grounded in everyday experiences was the beginning of different approach to knowing fully and in a trustworthy way. Occasionally in the processes of being ruled or doing ruling, someone involved has an experience of disjuncture, of being out of step. When that person's knowing is being subordinated by the organizational practices, this moment of disjuncture locates a problematic—a latent puzzle. Perhaps the problematic will be only for that person. Women have had this experience of being "out of step" in many situations. Smith's whole scholarly undertaking was inspired from such recognition and her work benefitted from her discovery of a sense of solidarity and sisterhood with other women in this regard. She recognized that knowing differently was the basis for changing the conditions of women's lives. To begin to undermine oppression, one must be able to identify and challenge the prevailing problems in otherwise unquestioned, taken-for-granted, prevailing ways of knowing and acting. That is the sort of inquiry that Smith had wanted to make possible. She imagined that when people begin to see how they participate in their own and others' oppression by using the oppressor's language and tools and taking up actions that are not in their own interests, anti-oppressive work could be advanced.

The contribution of institutional ethnography was in constructing accounts from the standpoint of those with whom or for whom the researcher chooses to work. Beginning from people's experience of being ruled, the practices of ruling could be
explicated in research accounts. This approach to social analysis insists that "we look at any or all aspects of a society from where we are actually located, embodied, in the local historicity and particularities of our lived worlds" (Smith, 1987:8). Researching from a particular location is one of the most important features of Smith's sociology for women. Not, of course, confined to inquiry into women's lives, it assumes a socially organized world where anyone's experience is intimately connected to their work of bringing into being the world as they live it. It assumes, in contrast to knowing ideologically, that what anyone knows experientially is always embodied and a subject always exists in a body that is located in time and space. Smith's materialist method uses this experiential basis for building dependable accounts of how things work. That goal for knowing stands in contrast to constructing ideological knowledge whose foundation is in theory and the discourses of ruling institutions.

The tools of Smith's method, specifically her recognition of the importance of texts, language and discourse in the social organization of people's knowledge of the everyday world, became a matter of some contention during the last decades of the 20th century. The linguistic turn in scholarship unsettled established ways of knowing as scholars in different fields began to recognize and criticize how the social and its representation were often treated as isomorphic. Insights of this sort led to claims that nothing could be known outside of discourse. Smith could not leave this claim unchallenged, as it undermined, she thought, years of feminist struggle to speak from one's experience—to be heard as having something to say. One important product of Smith's engagement with the "developing intellectual debates loosely described as post-structuralism/postmodernism" appears in her (1999) article entitled "Telling the Truth after Postmodernism." Smith begins by noting areas of agreement. Both she and the theorists whose work she analyses reject the claims of established sociology to be producing objective accounts of society. But those theorists derive their critiques from beliefs that differ from Smith's about the nature of social life and its representation in language. Smith's longstanding critique of sociology—was of its procedures for making objective knowledge, that she had argued, objectified what was known. Those objectifying procedures, Smith claimed,
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Seal off new knowledge from the realm of experience and from what people living the experience know. But this was not the issue for the post-structuralists and postmodernists whose work she reviewed. They take a more radical view of the possibility of knowing. She disagreed with their position that she said "den(ies) that categories and concepts can refer to and represent a reality beyond them, indeed, that it is meaningful to speak of a reality which is not in language" (1999:99). Smith claims that for post-structuralists and postmodernists "there can be... no reality posited beyond the text with reference to which meaning can be stabilized among different subjects" (1999:100). Or as Jane Flax writes "Truth for postmodernists is an effect of discourse" (1992, p. 452).

Smith found that in post-structuralist/postmodernist writings, the social—the core of her own theory—had disappeared. The knowing subject whom Smith insists is an actual person, located bodily, in time and space, is not there in those accounts. Agency or causal efficacy, she said, is reassigned by postmodernists to discourse, language, or culture. Smith took seriously the challenge that this practice presented to the very possibility of inquiry. She could not agree with those who suggest that "when we speak and write, the discourse speaks though us" (Smith, 1999:102). In "Telling the Truth after Postmodernism" she argues that people make meaning together and she illustrates this with examples. She relies on a similar dialogic approach in making an account faithful to the world of which it speaks. This kind of "truth-telling" occurs when what is known emerges out of "divergent perspectives coordinated in the social act of referring" (1999:128) to something seen, touched or otherwise discovered. Smith's reliance on dialogue appears again in her metaphor of a map as the project of institutional ethnography. She says that the map (metaphor)

directs us to a form of knowledge of the social that shows relations between various and differentiated local sites of experience without subsuming or displacing them. Such a sociology develops from inquiry and not from theorizing; it aims at discoveries enabling us to locate ourselves in the complex relations with others arising from and determining our lives; its capacity to tell the truth is never contained in the text but arises in the map-reader's dialogic of
finding and recognizing in the world what the text, itself a product of such inquiry, tells her she might look for. (1999:130)

Conclusion

In 2003, Dorothy Smith continues to write, teach and refine her approach to doing a sociology for people. Her four books (Smith, 1987, 1990a and b, and 1999) document her work and explicate its principles and aims. Many students from different backgrounds and part of varying struggles have taken up her method and are adding to it. As the introduction to Campbell and Manicom’s (1995) collection of her students’ work noted, this diversity of interest creates “a kind of laboratory where research problems arise and must be solved, discoveries are made, limitations are confronted, and possibilities explored” (p. 6). The knowledge that results from such exploration, the map of the social relations that constitute it as it is experienced, is there to be acted upon by those who are building a more socially just world. The terrain to be mapped is always in motion. That is the challenge for those who would know it, analytically. And Smith’s theory and methodology are designed to permit this kind of discovery. Institutional ethnographers explore how puzzles they are interested in are brought into being within the always shifting and changing relations of ruling that are specific to a time and place. Explication of how actual people put together the world also shows how it can be acted upon. In Smith’s (1999:95) own words, although “some of the work of inquiry must be technical, as making a map is, its product could be ordinarily accessible and usable, just as a map is.

Notes

1. Although I discussed this project with Dorothy, and she generously commented on a draft, I take responsibility for the interpretation of her work presented here and for its possible errors.
2. One important exception was Jessie Bernard’s important book, Academic Women, published in 1964. She speaks of her debt to her women colleagues in the first Women’s Studies courses taught at UBC in the early 1970s—Helga Jacobson, Meredith Kimball, Annette Kolodny—and to academic friends such as Arlene Kaplan Daniels at Northwestern University, as well as to the women and men who were her students.
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3. She presented it to several audiences of sociologists in 1972 and it appeared in print twice in 1974, in the journal *Catalyst*, and excerpted in a collection of ethnomethodology papers edited by Roy Turner.


References


Turning the Kaleidoscope: Telling Stories in Rhetorical Spaces

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In this essay, I reflect on the work of Lorraine Code on Rhetorical Spaces and the work of Dorothy Smith on Institutional Ethnography to explore how stories are translated and seen as though looking through the different turns of a kaleidoscope. The stories I am referring to here are intake stories in human service agencies. The question is how do the front line human service workers translate the noise of everyday/night life of the “client” into the human service jargon/forms. I also explore the issues of how the front line worker with the intention of being professional, disembodies herself and the self of the client by dissociating from her life story during the translation process. The ultimate purpose of my work is to develop a pedagogy for a human development program.

Introduction

As I write these words, I contemplate my position as a social researcher. I question my ability to use the language of Smith, Code, Lugones and other social theorists. I question my legitimacy, my ability to write in a persuasive manner the many thoughts dwelling in my head, heart and soul. I question my fluency in a language, a scholarly discourse, which is not my first. I wonder if, perhaps only secretly, those who “know,” who have dwelled in this situated territory of sociological discourse, will discover upon reading my work that I am indeed an imposter, an illegal alien in their land. I experience a bifurcation of consciousness, I dissociate from my being, from my roots and experience, I am afraid my real self, the struggling working class, single parenting “other” will appear like the green hulk from an
old television show, filled with rage when I write of my experience and the experience of students who are also learning a second language.

As I anticipate my story telling, I turn and adjust the kaleidoscope, a kaleidoscope of rhetorical spaces, to find the pattern that is most authentic to the telling of this story. The many colored pieces are always there, placed between two plates of glass for all to see. As I turn the kaleidoscope the pieces reconfigure and shift into different patterns, making visible different stories in the same space and time. It is this visibility of the same yet different stories that I want to explore in this essay. As I tell my story in the discourse of sociological theory, I want to be sure the pieces of my self remain, perhaps reconfigured yet at the same time authentic to the meaning and circumstances of my experience. It is through this process that I hope to begin a pedagogy that will enable students, future human service workers, to turn the kaleidoscope of both theirs and their client’s stories. This process will enable them to meet professional standards and at the same time stay embodied in both time and space and true to the authenticity of their real selves.

I will first define and discuss Institutional Ethnography. I will then using a life story define my own standpoint in this research. This is followed by a discussion of Lorraine Code’s work on rhetorical space and a reflection on the theoretical understandings of Code and Smith as it applies to the work of human service agents. As a department, my colleagues and I have made a commitment to introducing a critical, reflective awareness to our students. In addition, we are searching for a vehicle, a window, if you will, through which as human service workers, they can resist the hegemonic ruling relations of our capitalistic society at work in their profession, a hegemony which reduces names, places and stories to numbers, statistics and social problems. My purpose in writing this essay is to inform that pedagogical philosophy and practice.

Institutional Ethnography: Unveiling the Rhetorical Spaces

Dorothy E. Smith describes her beginnings in the women’s movement as a time when women needed to find a place in the
sociological discourse. Until that time, sociology was written for and by men. The profession of sociology has been predicated on a universe grounded in men’s experience and relationship and still largely appropriated by men as their ‘territory’ (Smith, 1990:14). Women’s experiences as well as other oppressed groups were not found in this discourse. Smith recognized a need for a sociology in which people’s everyday/night world would not disappear. This “consciousness raising” was a process of discovering oppression in the everyday world of women. Beginning with the everyday/night experience we can open a window to the social relations “that give our daily lives their particular shape” (Smith, 1990:202). Further, Allison Griffith states, “From this standpoint, we can see and explore the disjuncture between lived experience and the social relations of objectified knowledge” (Griffith, 1998:3). “Thus we look for a method of inquiry where inquiry itself is a critique of socially organized practices of knowing and hence is itself an exploration of method” (Smith, 1990:12).

The question for this method of social inquiry is how do things work? “We’re not after ‘the truth’ but . . . to know more about how things work, how our world is put together, how things happen to us as they do” (Smith: 1990:34). For my research, the questions would be: How are the everyday/night experiences of the women in homeless shelters, the parents in child-protective cases, or the teens in group homes connected to the discourse of social work, the language of social welfare policy, and/or statistics used in the debates of legislators? For example, how does a social worker, after an intake interview, translate the story of the everyday experiences of the women interviewed into the professional language her clinical notes and subsequently into the single DSM IV category needed for insurance and other policy-based purposes? How much of the “clients” life experience is erased in order for the professional to fit that life into the categories defined for her? Who defines the categories in the DSM IV and who benefits from this practice? “People’s lives, difficulties, conflicts, and problems provide raw materials to be inserted into professional frames and theories to produce the case. The transformation of the everyday into the extended discourse of professional social work comprises a taken-for-granted bedrock for social work intervention” (de Montigny, 1995:26).
According to Smith it is "Through such procedures, [that] institutional forms of discourse are made to stand in for the situated practices and reasoning of individuals" 1989:157. The professional discourse "substitutes the regulated tonal symmetries . . . for the noise of daily life" (deMontigy, 1995:28). These professionals may or may not know or understand the rage behind the answers to questions posed to label this woman according to the professional discourse. A silent rage of women disempowered in the human service system. But the eyebrow is raised and the knowing "aah" is sounded when another professional hears the DSM IV category. However, a major portion of that woman's life is erased, her story is not told. Instead it is replaced with a category, a number that entitles the professional to third party payments either from private insurance or the welfare state. An institutional ethnography would include, actually begins with, the woman's story. It would describe her story, her everyday/night world from a standpoint outside of the institutionalized discourse of the social work profession. "The discovery of this excluded standpoint provides a point of departure for investigating how the everyday worlds in which we live and act are shaped by institutional processes (Grahame, 1998:3).

This point of entry could be the story of a "client" or the social worker herself. For indeed it is the social worker who is the translator. It is she who takes the world of the "client" the noise of the client's everyday life, if you will, and translates that into the professional discourse of the social work ideology. It is her participation in the accounting, the report writing through which the "client's" everyday life is erased, substituted for numbers and statistics. It is her standpoint, which can be influenced in the curriculum through the transformational experiences in the classroom.

The Institutional Ethnography does not stop here. "It is not just a life story." The life story is the point of entry. The institutional ethnography is an exploration of how relations of ruling are in fact sustained and re-enforced in the everyday world of social work, education, labor and health care. The aim of research is to understand and disclose how the social relations of ruling are woven into the everyday life of workers and professionals through the use of texts. In the case of social work, the texts are
the case files, the safety assessment forms, the statistical surveys and funding reports. "To do social work is to engage in socially organized practices of power: the power to investigate, to assess, to produce authorized accounts, to present case 'facts' and to intervene in people's lives" (DeMontigny 1995, p. 207). In "The German Ideology," Marx identifies ideology as a kind of practice in thinking about society. Therefore, to "do social work," a person engages in this organized practice of thought. By participating in this practice, the social worker applies the ideology or the thinking of society developed by the professional field of human services. By translating a women's life into the DSM IV code the professional social worker is practicing not only this ideology but also the process of de-storying themselves and others.

Smith singles out three tasks in actually doing institutional ethnography. "The first task centers on ideology and involves addressing the ideological practices which are used to make an institutions' processes accountable. The second task centers on work in a broad sense and involves studying the work activities through which people are themselves involved in producing the world they experience in daily life. The third task centers on social relations and involves discovering the ways in which a localized work organization operates as part of a broader set of social relations which link multiple sites of human activity" (Smith 1987, p. 166). These tasks are begun at a point of entry. For Smith, this entry point is a text.

For example, in Ontario there is a new education bill #160, which standardizes the curriculum. Further, In New York State and Ontario, there is a new assessment form for Child Protective. Likewise in health care, there are new forms, which standardize care. The professional, (teacher, nurse, social worker) who once had autonomy in writing case reports, report cards, etc. now has to use a standardized report. The noise of the everyday/night world of the professionals and their clients are invisible in these reporting forms. The middle class professional feels powerless and in the midst of a powerful standardized machine. These standards are reshaping and reorganizing the everyday/night life of professional workers. Where did this start? Who writes the standards? These are questions being answered through the methodological inquiry of Institutional Ethnography.
"Feminist researchers exploring restructuring note that educational restructuring is embedded in transformations of global capitalism that include a re-instantiation of gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and social class in equalities" (Griffith, 1993, p. 5). As professionals use the standardized forms, curriculum, they are indeed putting into practice in their everyday life the regimes of power. They are unable to deviate from the universal standards. They and their students, clients, patients become "de-storied" in a restructuring of global capitalism.

Gillian Walker in her work with women in Vancouver wanted to "work with the women as women . . . rejecting the traditional professional approaches to 'treating clients' . . . [She] tried to use [her] experience as an activist as a basis for organizing a program" (1990, p. 23). The "tensions and contradictions" in that work resulted in her study of "family violence." Her work on a multi-agency task force aimed at providing information, coordinating services and pressuring government to recognize and respond to the emerging problem of family violence was marginalized as "biased, subjective, naive, in appropriate and sometimes divisive" when it could not be easily accommodated within the knowledge-making circle of scientific inquiry. Eventually the statements of the taskforce were "relegated to the category of 'knowledgeable lay people' with the power to monitor only from the sidelines" (p. 23). It is significant and ironic to note that the taskforce statements were from women who had beaten and abused. These statements were also dismissed as biased and subjective. The "experts" were professionals, academics, who used professional scientifically produced facts and statistics. Anger, outrage, and any other emotion were dismissed. The "facts" were storyless, nameless, accountings of "family violence." The experiences of the women abused and beaten by men become examples of family violence treatable in the criminal justice and human services systems.

Henry Parada in his work on child protective policy and reporting addresses the issues or reporting which Ellen Pence calls institutional technologies which she understands as those work settings, routines and documentary practices that produce or mediate the actual outcomes of an institutional process. Parada's work defines the operations of child protective's "safety assess-
ment" form, which is used to determine if a child should be placed in the care of the state. Specifically, Parada uses Pence's intersection of work and texts, which she calls "processing interchanges." A process interchange is a work setting into which documents are transmitted, to become organizational occasions of action, processed and sent forward into the next stage of the institutional process. At each step in the child welfare process, a social worker receives a case as collection of documents or a computer life, a report or other text, takes some action in relation to it, which adds to the incoming or produces a new documentation and forwards the product on to the next organizational occasion for action.

An entry point: "Who are you, anyway?"
The Story of an Unlicensed Practitioner

There is no better point of entry into a critique or a reflection than one woman's experience—it is not an endpoint but the beginning of an exploration of the relationship between the personal and the social and therefore political.

Bannerji (1995, p. 55)

"Who are you anyway?" The director of a new program I was developing posed the question to me. I was working on the funding proposal for a women's transitional housing facility, placing the numbers in the right categories, attempting to represent the vision I had constructed in my mind with those objective numerical columns of accounting language. "I just never know how to talk to you," she replied. "One minute you sound like an accountant and the next minute a social worker. What is your background? I am a certified social worker, you know, what are you?"

Well, this was just the beginning of my life as an impostor, an uncredentialed worker in the field of professional social work. A world, which required letters after one's name. A world, which had a specific language. A world of professionalized practice, which had an overwhelming impact on people's (or in the professional discourse choice of words—"the client's") everyday lives. A well-defined rhetorical space.

As you probably figured out by now, I did not have those letters after my name and I was not fluent in the language. I had
worked my way up the ladder at a social service agency. With only a high school diploma in my back pocket, I began by typing leases, moved on to developing rental policies and then I began to fill in at the residential facilities when the workers were on leave. I gained a working, practical knowledge of the facilities from the heating equipment to the formal state-mandated policies. I could conduct a physical plant inspection as well as the required audit of the clinical files. I spent many hours listening to people’s stories while playing cards with the persons who lived there, discussing the various problems they encountered in the network of services, which defined their everyday/night lives. Only a paycheck away from being a resident myself, I felt a commonality with the persons who lived in those residences, the persons whose everyday lives and stories were compiled as numbers on charts and service records, who ended up as statistics in policy proposals, and whose names and faces were unknown to the policy makers who had power over their lives. But who was I? Where was I? What rhetorical space was I allowed to speak and be heard in? Lorraine Code’s work on rhetorical spaces helps us understand this.

Rhetorical Spaces: Invisibility of Social/Ruling Relations

...women learn to “translate” when they talk about their own experiences. As they do so, parts of their lives “disappear” because they are not included in the language of the account. In order to “recover” these parts of women’s lives, researchers must develop methods for listening around and beyond words.

(DeVault, 1999, p. 66)

Lorraine Code defines rhetorical spaces as “... fictive but not fanciful or fixed locations, whose territorial imperatives structure and limit the kinds of utterances that can be voiced within them” (1995, p. ix). Rhetorical spaces are located in space and time and are locations where it matters who, where and what you are if you are to be heard or even if you are to speak. DeVault refines translation as “the various ways that women manage to deal with the incongruence of language in their everyday speech. Sometimes, too, translation means trying to develop a more complex meaning, trying to respond more fully to questions
that are not quite appropriate" (1999, p. 67). Language, "talk" therefore is in the lives, social structure and circumstances of the everyday/night world of "agents engaged in deliberations that matter to them" (Code, 1995, p. xi). The task of institutional ethnography is to uncover the different rhetorical spaces in the everyday/night world and make them visible. This is the entry point of understanding the ruling relations of that rhetorical space, "... uncovering the processes of theory and knowledge production and relocating epistemic activity from the 'no one's land' that is has seemed to occupy into human speaking and listening spaces" (Code, 1995, p. 154).

Telling stories locates the space and time within the lives and projects of specifically situated, embodied, gendered knowers. According to Code, these stories are the "... poeisis, [that is, the making] function of stories, where the character (s) are at once artificers and artifacts of 'their' action and experiences" (1995, p. 159). Stories can and must be the entry point for a methodology such as Institutional Ethnography. The ethnographic gaze of institutional ethnography make stories "... audible through the multiplicity of voices of which knowledge and epistemologies are made, challenging assumptions of linear progress toward establishing self-evident necessary and sufficient conditions and contesting the hegemonic claim of the dominant, yet not self-identifying, epistemic voices" (Code, 1995, p. 160).

According to Smith, this is the problematic: that we enter into social relations beyond our control that our own activities bring into being thus our own powers contribute to powers that stand over against us and over power our lives (1999, p. 25). The institutional ethnography is an exploration of how relations of ruling are in fact sustained and re-enforced in the everyday world of ordinary lives. Institutional Ethnography is a method to uncover the different rhetorical spaces in the everyday/night world and make those spaces visible. The entry points of understanding the ruling relations of that space is the talk of everyday life, the stories we tell of our everyday/night lives. Smith refers to this strategy as "an investigation that explores the embeddedness of particular actors in a 'ruling apparatus' or 'regime' that coordinates their activity." It is a process of dismantling the kaleidoscope to examine the pieces of glass that make up all the stories. Institutional
Ethnography as a method of social inquiry can be used to bring into view and unite the fragmented whole. We must hear many stories to get the entire picture. It is not just a life story. The life story is the point of entry.

The discourse of human services practice and ideology is a rhetorical space, where specific ideas and voices are heard, supported and taken seriously... were it matters who is speaking and where and why. Where the question of “who are you?” has a direct relationship to the possibility of knowledge claims and legitimacy. Rhetorical spaces are situated discourses where “cognitive authority is readily granted, or denied and silenced.” The language or rhetorical space of human services is in the lives, social structure and circumstances of the social services system. By mapping the texts and language associated with the knowledge base of human services profession, institutional ethnographers can discern “... whose voices have been audible and who have been muffled, whose experiences count and how epistemic authority is established and withheld” (Code, p. 155).

In the case of this essay, I begin with my own experience in the human services world. I use my experience not as an autobiography but as a point of entry “to begin to pry open the operations of an institutional complex which others can investigate from different starting points and with different emphases” (Grahame, 1998, p. 4). As an outsider in the world of social work, my experience is a point of rupture, a point where we can begin to consolidate a knowledge outside the institutional discourse. I did not know the language; I was not socialized as a professional social worker, which is why the director did not know how to “talk” to me. According to deMontigny, “the professional self is a fractured self, a piece of the self exchanged for a salary and once exchanged it finds itself a participant in production guided and directed by commands, forms of order, relevances and discourses that transcend the sphere of immediate experience” (1995, p. 14). There were many occasions when those with the MSW after their names would tell me I was not acting “professionally,” that I was crossing professional boundaries by giving a “client” a hug, or taking a resident to the local coffee shop. I acted on my intuition, on what I thought was needed at the moment. DeMontigny states clearly that “good social work is not marked by confident
pronouncements, certain decisions, and resolute action, but by an openness to dialogue, self-reflection, self-doubt and humility. Further good social work goes where the client is and in order to have dialogue with others one must first have had a dialogue with self” (1995, p. 56.).

The forms used in this institutional process tell the story of the client. Parada describes the forms used in the child protective process as a report in which cultural markers are erased. The forms usually tell the story of a deviant relationship to middle-class Anglo family norms. All questions on the forms must be filled in with numerical codes. There is no place to put “subjective” material. “The intake social worker is actively converting people’s actual talk into a set of categories or formalized reporting conventions that produce the virtual reality of the case for the organization” (Parada, 1998, p. 2). This text becomes the family reality. This text determines the intervention and services or lack there of which the family receives. The story must be told in the language of the text. It is then passed on to persons who have the power to make decisions about this family/client without ever seeing the family/client face-to-face. The family becomes the text that is passed on as a case file.

Decision-makers are distant from those whose lives are affected by the decisions. The texts are also interpreted along the path of the processing interchange. In an experience I encountered at the women’s residential facility, a file was passed on from intake worker, to a social worker, to a child-protective worker and was in the process of becoming a court document. While I was discussing this matter with the “client,” I mentioned something I had read in the report about her father. The information, which was vital to her case, was incorrect. No one had verified with the client and the client was unable, forbidden, to see her own record-to verify the information contained there in. “Almost all interchanges are structured by the use of computer logs, programs, reports, standards and legislation, which screen, prioritize, shape, and filter the information the social worker uses to produce an account or document to a case” (Parada, 1998, p. 1). I wondered at the time how many times this passing on of incorrect “facts” had influenced decisions regarding people’s lives. I envisioned in my mind the intake worker, the front-line social worker, an entry
level position, perhaps over worked from her many hours with clients, perhaps getting ready to go home, now having to do one more intake. Perhaps she was hurried; perhaps she didn't quite understand the story being told to her, and the story she had to translate into the institutional language. I wondered if she realized the impact that form, her translation of the story was to have on that woman's life. In the case above, I corrected the error. The woman, whose case was going to Family Court, continued her education and is living with her children. If the error was not corrected, her children may have been placed in protective care, she may have given up her education. One does not know.

A Storied Pedagogy: Exploring Rhetorical Spaces in the Classroom

The educational process consists of establishing transformative connections between how people live or act and how they think. The usefulness of the knowledge lies in its ability to give a reliable understanding of the world and to impact or change lives rather than simply to function efficiently. Thus an active education begins from experience. A whole new story has to be told with fragments, with disruptions, and with self-consciousness and critical reflections. Creating seamless narratives.

Bannerji (1995, p. 65)

Many years ago, I had a book on my shelf—Prayers by Michael Quoist. It has since that time been recycled through the Tattered Pages Used Bookstore or the local library. However, in the book was a prayer I think of often about saying “yes.” It was an activist’s prayer about the continued, ongoing commitment once the first step has been taken. The ongoing saying of “yes,” once the awareness has been recognized. A pilgrim I interviewed for another project said, “Once you see . . . once you see the injustice there is no turning back. Everything is different.” This was the theme of that prayer. It is not just one “yes” it is many. And there are consequences to that “yes.” “Seeing” through different lens, turning the kaleidoscope to new rotations, sometimes leads one to desire change in the social systems of our society. And yet, the most difficult problem with saying “yes” is knowing what to do after that small word is spoken. How does one take action
and still make a living? How does one act in a de-storied world without becoming de-storied? How can, in this case, a human service worker stay embodied, stay present with her client and do her job as described by the agency?

This is the problematic in my classroom. My students want a certificate to get a good job, to get a promotion, to further their career development. Many times they do not want to hear about saying “yes” to transforming the system, even when they recognize it needs changing. They are reluctant to say, “yes” because they wonder how they will stay embodied in a system that de-stories themselves and others. It is easier to not be aware, it is easier, as Michael Quoist describes in his prayer, not to say that first “yes.”

As an educator and social activist, I search for ways to empower students to act on their sense of justice and desire to help other people. I suggest that the practice of a methodology such as Institutional Ethnography along with a practice of storytelling is a means to that end. The practice of Institutional Ethnography is based on the assumption that people are experts about their own lives. And that the subject/knower of inquiry is situated in her own life and that life is in relationship to others. Furthermore, it is informed by the idea that what we make an object of investigation is what we ourselves are immersed in. Telling stories locates epistemology within the lives and projects of specifically situated, embodied, gendered knowers. It establishes continuities between the experiences and circumstances that people need to explain, and the theories that purport to explain them. Lives can be understood, revealed and transformed in stories and by the very act of storytelling.

A pedagogy engaged in the methodological inquiry of Institutional Ethnography begins with an entry point of the student’s own story. In my graduate class, The Narrative Study of Lives, we inaugurate this process by exploring life stories. During the first session we construct time lines of our lives on construction paper. “The life story time line is designed to raise the student’s awareness of how her identity has been constructed on both a micro/individual and macro/societal level” (Bronstein, et al, forthcoming) Richard Rorty says:
To fail as a poet, and thus, for Nietzsche, to fail as a human being is to accept somebody else's description of oneself, to execute a previous prepared program, to write, at most, elegant variations on previously written poems. So the only way to trace home the causes of being as one would be to tell a story about one's causes in a new language. (1989, p. 28)

Rorty describes a process of making visible the rhetorical spaces (Code) and the ruling relations (Smith) that define and re-define our locations. The life story time line encourages students to become the authors of their own lives, to legitimize their own stories. Furthermore, in a time of different worlds and different languages, different selves will be called upon to perform the many different deeds expected of people in their different worlds. The life story names these different worlds and explores lives from within people's experience. Through this investigation Smith points out, Institutional Ethnography makes visible how society organizes and shapes the everyday/night world of that experience. This is also true with the life story time line.

The next step is to assist the students to understand how each of their lives becomes a lens in their "seeing" the world. Their subjectivity influences their decisions, their translations, the words they choose to write in the case notes. The next step in my class is called the "listening project" (Bronstein, et al). Students are instructed to choose a story from their life story time line. In dyads the students tell the other that story. But the twist in this assignment is that the listening is the focus. The listener's task is to become aware and examine their location in the listening. Questions such as: What did you feel while listening? What buttons were pushed by emotion of the teller or the topic of the story? When did you feel connected and/or disconnected? It is about staying embodied while listening to the other's story. The final part of the exercise is for the listener to write a reflective essay on their subjective self in relationship to the story teller, revealing "How difficult it can be to hear things said in unfamiliar forms, and how damaging when respondents are not heard. The critical point is that feminist researchers can be conscious of listening as a process, and can work on learning to listen in ways that are personal, disciplined, and sensitive to differences" (DeVault, p. 72).
A paradox exists in this reflective listening project. When the listener becomes aware of her subjectivity, her differences in the story telling, she can then and only then go through that subjectivity to really hear the story of the other. If she is not able to reflect on her standpoint, she will not be able to stay embodied in the process and will then dissociate from the telling. It is here where the “de-storied” process happens. Michel Foucault, in his work on intellectual memoirs as performative acts poses the questions: “What is my present? What is the meaning of this present? And what am I doing when I speak of this present?” (Quoted in Code 1995, p. 2). This is not the “endpoint of the investigation . . . My assumption here is that learning more about how and why we see things as we do will allow us to understand more about the meanings others make of their (and our) lives and to locate ourselves (and others) in more complex and meaningful ways rather than only through simplistic identity categories” (DeVault, p. 210).

Daily life is not a tidy house where china ornaments are arranged in tight rows for display. In daily life, china is shattered, the shelves are knocked down, dirt is tracked across the carpet, and screams shatter the mirror.

de Montigny (1995, p. 223)

de Montigny profoundly defines the everyday/night noise of life. In his book Social Working, he describes the life of a social worker—the journey from a working class life through graduate school to the office. Using his own life as an entry point, deMontigny discloses the difficulties in “. . . producing stories that erase the split between lived realities and organizational categories . . . the textual accounts [that] silence the deep craziness of daily life” (p. 25). His vividly describes the process of forms and case files. “People’s lives become the raw material lifted out of spoken words, carried across the distances between apartment and the office, and reworked under the glare of the florescent light, over the office desk, and onto the officially sanctioned forms. A person’s life, once inserted into a social work story, becomes an individual case of child abuse . . . the person becomes a client who in turn is a child abuser . . . or mental patient. Once the person’s story is shaped by that person’s assignment to the terms of a recognized
category that person becomes a subject to the themes, patterns . . . and interventions best designed to address the problem category” (p. 25). This is the process of “de-storying.” This is a process that most human service workers must participate in. The challenge in my classroom is to teach the students, future human service workers, a method of going through this mandated process without de-storying themselves or their clients.

Recognition of this process as a destroying process is the first step. (One way this can be accomplished is by using deMontigny’s book as required reading.) The next step is the reflective autobiographic process of the life story time line, including the listening project. A final step is to incorporate the methodology of Institutional Ethnography into the research methods courses in all social work and human service programs. Through these steps, educators can develop a storied pedagogy, which incorporates a recognition of rhetorical spaces in the reproduction of ruling relations. Students can gain an understanding of how the professional standards, especially standardized forms, also reproduce the ruling relations of a capitalist system. By using the concepts of institutional processes, students can begin to understand how they can be a part of the institutional story of the client. That is, the student could explore the processing interchanges of a case file/form from intake to intervention and beyond. This would enable the student to understand the working of the institutional processes in human service agencies.

Conclusion

I felt small and bewildered and put up a struggle to keep something of myself from vanishing . . . to maintain a little sense of significance Bannerji, (1995, p. 63)

"Who are you, anyway?" The question is asked time and time again as one dismantles the kaleidoscope. Sometimes the question is even asked by our own selves as we examine each of the colored pieces of glass that make up our story. In truth, we are many "selves" just as there are many colored pieces and even more patterns formed with those pieces in the kaleidoscope. Each rhetorical space,—the classroom, the human service office, the client’s apartment, the human service forms—requires a different
configuration of the colors. But when we have listened with skill to the “other’s” story through informed reflexive subjectivity, we can be true to the storyline and act in resistance to the ruling relations playing out in our lives. We can follow the institutional processing interchange of texts whether it is in the university or a human service agency with the purpose of staying embodied and through the methods of institutional ethnography name and made visible the rhetorical spaces. “Our experiences, our history, our emotions, our very selves bec[o]me material to be entered and worked up inside the frames of an extended professional discourse” (deMontigny, 1995, p. 66). Teaching these methods and skills to future human service workers can and will empower them to resist the reproduction of ruling relations in their every-day/night world.

Bibliography


"Are You Beginning to See A Pattern Here?"
Family and Medical Discourses Shape the Story of Black Infant Mortality

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Postmodern and poststructuralist theorizations of the interrelations of the particular and the universal have identified women's bodies to be the last frontier for scientific discovery leading to and satisfying the modern compulsion to stabilize and control life from birth to death. This institutional ethnography of one city's response to an elevated infant mortality rate among the babies of African American urban, impoverished women explores their discursive transformation from single mothers who cannot begin prenatal care before the second trimester because too few physicians will treat Medicaid patients, into sexually-immoral, illegal-drug-using women who deliberately harm their babies. The study locates an education campaign poster depicting these women as undisciplined, ignorant, irresponsible mothers who use drugs that kill their babies at the intersection of the family discourse of the "good mother/bad mother" dualism and the obstetrics discourse of the frail female body. At this site, the everyday experience of urban minority impoverished women doing the work of mothering is transformed into evidence of their "natural" maternal inadequacy.

In 1986, the Congress of the United States legislated the creation of the National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality. Ranking twenty-third among industrialized nations, the U.S. Congress and the Executive branch responded to the cry, "The nation must make the health and well-being of mothers and babies a top priority" (National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality, 1988, p. 15). Crediting medical science with "dramatic improvements in the health and survival rates of very young
children,” the Commission focused on existing programs and policies promoting the health of “women of child-bearing age and their infants” in order to reduce the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR, deaths per thousand births), an international scandal (National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality, 1988, p. 15). While the US IMR declined during the 1980s and 1990s, the black IMR increased from two to two-and-one-half times that of white babies (Associated Press, 2002, p. 2A). In a country where obstetrical medicine promises to save the lives of all women who receive prenatal care and deliver their babies in the hospital (Murphy-Lawless, 1998), deaths of black babies stand in for the elevated U.S. IMR, a critical indicator of the effectiveness of U.S. obstetric practices.

In the late 1980s, infant mortality among African American babies born in Eastern City was three times that of white infants. In 1987, the black IMR was 30.1 in comparison with the white of 9.3 (County Health Department, 1992). While the county IMR reflected the national average of 10, Eastern City ranked first among 27 cities of comparable size with an IMR of 17.8. The difference was largely attributed to the black IMR (County Executive, 1990). Furthermore, long delays in beginning prenatal care among poor, black mothers, were attributed to a lack and inaccessibility of medical services and “maternal inadequacies”—ignorance of, or refusal to participate in, prenatal care, and use of illegal or harmful drugs (County Executive 1990).

In response to the black IMR, Eastern City inaugurated an education campaign to “reduce ignorance and encourage responsibility” (County Health Department, 1989) with a poster depicting the outcome of maternal drug use during pregnancy (see figure A). Three black and white photographs of models posed as pregnant women using drugs are paired with one of a low-birth-weight baby fighting for life in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Underneath the panel of photographs is printed the question, “Are you beginning to see a pattern here?” followed by a County Health Department telephone contact number. Read from left to right, the horizontal juxtaposition of six photographs tells a simple story: when single poor women get pregnant, they use drugs and kill their babies.
At present, the national African American IMR is two and one-half times that of the national white IMR, mirroring the incidence of low birth weight among black babies.

In 1990, I began an ethnographic study of Eastern City’s response to the black IMR. Through visits with the targeted women, I learned of their daily struggles to safely house and adequately feed their families, find safe spaces for their children to play, access and maintain telephone service, transport their families to health services, and for some, deal with language barriers (Cleeton, 1994). While attending prenatal visits with them and assisting with their daily transportation needs, I saw no evidence that as a group, the target women were drug addicts avoiding prenatal care. Their mothering work (DeVault, 1992) contradicted the government-distributed poster story. This study examines the generalization of a story of drug-induced baby death to the struggles of black women producing family life in violent conditions of poverty (Freire, 1970; Kozol, 1988; Farmer, 1996; Wilson, 1987; Collins, 1999; Rawlings, 1998).

Institutional Ethnography

An Institutional Ethnography (Smith, 1999), the entry point of this project is the mothering work of Eastern City black women
identified by the county as being “at risk” for bearing sick babies. Participant observations and open-ended interviews conducted with pregnant women living in two of the most impoverished Eastern City neighborhoods found the problem of accessing healthcare to be secondary to more basic, pervasive struggles with daily survival (Cleeton, 1994). The goal of the institutional ethnographer is to map the “relations of ruling,” comprised of texts, communicative modes, political organizations, and institutions that rule, manage, and administer society (Smith, 1987, p. 3). By beginning with experience, the institutional ethnographer “takes up a point of view in a marginal location” looking “carefully and relatively unobtrusively, like any fieldworker, but . . . from the margins inward—toward centers of power and administration—searching to explicate the contingencies of ruling that shape local contexts” (DeVault, 1999, p. 48). At this stage of the project, connections between the daily experiences of mothering and the generalizing poster story linking target mothers with illegal drug use are sought.

In a study of the works of late nineteenth-century women photographers, Wexler finds race-based domestic relations under white supremacy “embedded in collateral kinds of cultural production,” including photography (2000, p. 56). She recommends examining photographs as having political functions. Applying Foucault’s genealogical work locating scientific knowledge within local experience/memories, Wexler argues that “ruptural effects of conflict and struggle” which are masked by “functionalist or systematizing thought” (2000, p. 57) can be recovered. Just as the coercive indicators of servitude are masked by genial portraits of white family members flanked by black domestic help, the poster story distracts the viewer from acknowledging the impact of poverty on family and health, directing the viewer’s attention to drugs. As the nineteenth century photographs portray white families as embracing their black servants, the poster portrays individual women as maternal failures.

McCoy (1995) argues that photographs link bodily reality with texts. In this study, the connection between four government IMR studies and the poster is examined in order to identify and describe the social processes which transform poor black women’s mothering work into evidence that all black mothers are
Black Infant Mortality

ignorant and irresponsible. “Texts are the mediators and bases of discourses and ruling relations that regulate and coordinate beyond the particular local setting of their reading or writing” (Smith, 1999, p. 80). “good woman” to protect their interests.

Social relations are present beyond the site, in extra-local sites, suggesting the potential relevance of these findings to other sites. Smith defines discourse as “historically specific, coordinated sets of meanings that are generated in a wide array of social realism; that are expressed through beliefs, habits, vocabularies, representations, and institutional practices; and that, taken together, serve to articulate what will count as knowledge and succeed as power in any given culture” (1999, p. 53).

The poster story blames black women doing the work of mothering in conditions of poverty, for the elevated US IMR. Mapping the ideological character of the relations that support public policies contradicted by the data, “track[s] the macro-institutional policies and practices that organize those local settings” (Smith, 1999, p. 21). “IE researchers aim not for categorical descriptions, but for analyses that trace how the people living in these different circumstances are drawn into a common set of organizational processes” (Smith, 1999, p. 26). The poster visually representing the story of the black IMR and four federal studies of the national black IMR link black infant deaths with discourses of family and medicine.

A Story of Black Mothers, Drugs, and Infant Deaths

Three black-and-white portraits of pregnant, drug-using women in the advanced stage of pregnancy are paired with one of a premature, low-birth-weight baby in the hospital. Eyes bandaged to prevent oxygen-induced blindness, electronic monitor taped to the chest, lines attached to feet and arms, a tube inserted into the mouth, a wrinkly infant lie supine on a white-sheeted crib. A Latina drinks a beer; a baby struggles in the hospital. A pregnant white woman uses cocaine; a baby fights for life in a NICU. A pregnant black woman smokes a cigarette; the photograph of the baby appears a third time. Alone, each pregnant woman looks down as she indulges in one of three drugs. Beneath her gaze lies a
baby—dark-skinned, emaciated, struggling to beat the odds that another black baby, abused by its mother, will die.

The juxtaposition of the three adult portraits in relation to that of the baby in the NICU suggests a popular depiction of the Madonna and Child, at peace and contented (see Figure B). Like the Madonna, who looks down upon the Holy Infant cradled in a manger, hands raised in worship (see figure C), the three women portraying mothers in the poster look down in the direction of the NICU baby. Hands are raised but not in adoration. These women imperil their babies with life threatening drugs. The photographic portraits locate drug use during pregnancy in the context of the maternal ideal, forcing comparison of working-class pregnant women with the Holy Mother, who regards her baby with prayerful hands.

This subtle reference to the Madonna and Child religious icon brings into view the nineteenth-century tenderness doctrine (Smith-Rosenberg, 1985). According to Pratt (1992), this ideal of motherhood functioned at once to retain, or preserve, the distribution of wealth, as well as to control the definition of gender—the bond between mother and child, the continuity of life, and the protection of Christianity. Howard (1985, p. 53) locates the nineteenth-century version of the nuclear family in naturalism. Benevolent sentimentality “coded American domesticity as a benign or even benevolent force, a compromise with or even a flirtation with the mechanics of racialized terror that kept a firm hold throughout the entire course of the nineteenth century” (Wexler, 2001, p. 53). In a study of the idealized virgin mother in the nineteenth-century work of women photographers, Pratt (1992) notes that nineteenth-century photography was a “contact zone . . . in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (p. 208).

In its twentieth-century iteration, the Standard North American Family (SNAF) (Smith, 1999), the wife devotes her energy to her husband, household, and children. Successful mothering work is done behind the scenes, remaining invisible. The husband/father’s work is for-grounded, as he supports, protects, and assures the family’s financial security. Assuming race to be Cau-
As a condition of the work of mothering, SNAF appears to be "natural." Posing the three models with the truly sick baby as Madonna and Child creates a contact zone between middle class and poor women—those who love their babies and those who do not. Their overlapping experiences of carrying the burden for meeting all of the needs of their children are not examined. Middle-class women have healthy babies who grow up to do well in school, graduate and attend college, where they will
Figure C

(Cover illustration)
prepare for a lifetime of professional accomplishment supported by a loving nuclear family. Poor women who bear and raise children alone, threaten the dominance of SNAF. Depicting them as individuals who have made the wrong choices, the poster story averts challenges to obstetrical guarantees of maternal and infant health, accomplished with the support of SNAF.

In this story of infant deaths, low-birth-weight babies born to single black mothers are placed in isolation, where medical experts, relying on technology and pharmacology are poised to keep them alive. Lying in supine, hands raised, fingers extended, the poster baby suggests the Christ child lying in a manger (see figure D.) The NICU anticipates ensuing termination of maternal rights resulting from physician-ordered infant drug testing. A woman’s inadequacy as a mother is determined by a toxicology screen (Gomez, 1997).

Evidence that drug use during pregnancy can lead to low birth weight supports the generalizing story that all of the mothers of black babies that died used drugs and avoided prenatal care.

The ‘crack baby’ has become a convenient symbol for an aggressive war on drug users because of the implication that anyone who is selfish enough to irreparably damage an innocent child for the sake of a quick high deserves retribution. This image, promoted by the mass media, makes it easier to advocate a simplistic punitive response than to address the complex causes of drug use (Chavkin, 2001, p. 1627).

While in-utero exposure to cocaine is rare, smoking tobacco during pregnancy explains 40 percent of low birth weight (Gomez, 1997).

The poster reduces the violence of poverty, combined with inaccessibility of medical care, to a simple story—when single black women without husbands have sex, they do drugs, get pregnant, and kill their babies. Fictional differences become real, and real differences disappear from view. Narratives organize events into linear sequences of causally-linked events. The key elements of a compelling story are life and death, conflict, heroism, and emotional intensity (Stacey, 1998). In her cultural-historical study of medical beliefs about body and disease, Stacey (1998) describes medical narrative to include accounts of problems having resolu-
tions supporting the Western grand narrative of progress through science.

This community education program, purported to improve birth outcomes by increasing participation in prenatal care, identifies the behavior of perspective mothers to be determinative of the elevated U.S. infant death rate. The use of a black and white photograph of an actual baby in an NICU (the source of whose
problems is unidentified), transforms this assumption into a factual relationship. The photograph links all poor and working class pregnant women, especially black mothers, with the category of drug user. Babies are sick and dying because their mothers use drugs. Their deaths can be prevented and the US IMR ranking salvaged, only if their mothers fully cooperate with their doctors. Stopping drug abuse is portrayed as the single most important intervention in reducing the US IMR. To achieve this end, prenatal care must begin in the first trimester.

The Promise of Prenatal Care

The key elements of the poster story—poverty and drugs—can be traced to the federal reports defining, assessing, and recommending intervention to reduce the African American IMR. These studies—Institute of Medicine, 1985; National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality, 1988; Congressional Budget Office, 1992; Kotch et al, 1992—identified women whose babies have elevated morbidity and mortality rates to be poor, live with high stress, and use drugs. According to the demographic statistics, the women were single, living in poor neighborhoods. Having quit high school and held basic service jobs, they had no health insurance, or Medicaid. Targeted mothers were younger or older than the “normal” mother, had accidentally become pregnant, and had other children “outside of wedlock.” They abused their children and were abused by their partners. The women used alcohol, cocaine, and/or cigarettes, and ate poorly. According to the Institute of Medicine (1985), these demographic variables are associated with a lack of basic health care. These indicators describe the everyday world of families living in poverty (Cleaton, 1994).

As a group, targeted women start prenatal care later and keep fewer appointments than their white, middle-class counterparts. Study data on compliance with prenatal care appointments found a higher percentage of white women starting care early and keeping most of the appointments than of black women. These studies also claimed that the targeted women did not value prenatal care, being ignorant of its importance, claims for which no evidence
was referenced. Finally, they were "hard-to-reach" women, code for drug addicts.

Differences in prenatal care participation rates may be the result of varying access to health care. Federal reports acknowledged that too few maternity care providers willing to serve high-risk pregnant women (a known shortage of obstetricians willing to treat uninsured women) and insufficient prenatal services in sites where medical care is commonly sought limited target women's access to timely prenatal care. Excess low-birth weight rates among the African American population may reflect the effects of generations of poverty and inadequate health care, and therefore may not decline without long-term improvements in these conditions (Congressional Budget Office, 1992).

Taking for granted the material conditions of the middle class, the medical discourse presupposes basic health, private health insurance, and private transportation. A lower rate of participation in prenatal care among urban, black, single women begins with their failure to marry, presumed to explain the lower participation rates in prenatal care. Moral weakness leads to drug dependency (Baum, 1997). Having fallen short of the maternal ideal—fragile innocence requiring male protection including that of an obstetrician—the SNAF and medicine discourses focus government reports on the 'universal character' (Smith, 1999) of particular childbearing factors. While middle class women marry men having private employment-based health insurance, African American women, regardless of socioeconomic status, who give birth to low-birth weight babies, are accused of using drugs (Cleeton, 1994).

How a woman gets to prenatal care, who watches her children while she is there—these are private, family matters. Late starts, absenteeism, or missing prenatal care completely suggest family dysfunction. Assigning responsibility for childbearing problems to mothers, and childbearing successes to prenatal care, targeted women stereotyped as self seeking, physical, sexually aggressive females (Davis 1981, hooks 1993, West 1994) who do not marry, bear sickly, damaged babies. Comparing birth outcomes among families with health insurance with those of "the not so fortunate," the IOM declares that with health care, "at least half of the deaths are preventable, and many of the disabilities avoidable"
Black Infant Mortality (National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality, 1988). The strong correlation between having private health insurance and being middle class is ignored.  

Family and Science Narratives Shape the Story

Federal documents examining the national IMR blame maternal deviation from the SNAF narrative for low-birth-weight babies and subsequent infant deaths. Single black women bearing babies alone use drugs that harm and kill their babies (Institute of Medicine, 1985; National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality, 1988; Congressional Budget Office, 1992; Kotch et al, 1992). Women living in Eastern City’s most economically troubled neighborhoods, leading lives denied capitalism’s promise of upward mobility, become a public concern when too many of their babies die. Blamed for killing black babies, single, black, poor, urban mothers take the lead role in a story that “fits the data” (Luker, 1991).

The poster story of baby deaths launches the education campaign. “Sequences of referring, finding, and recognizing the objects as the same” (Smith, 1999, p. 123), identify all black mothers whose babies are born underweight and/or prematurely as drug abusers. Focusing on drugs, the story reveals the weakness of poor mothers. Failure to act responsibly is not due to the absence of power, the lack of choice, the daily ravages of poverty (Farmer et al, 1994), but to self-indulgence, youthful irresponsibility, and biological inferiority (Collins 1991, 1999). “Deficiency of character is the chief difficulty, and that to build up character is the objective point in education” (Wexler, 2001, p. 53).

Eastern City’s poor black women raise children in dangerous neighborhoods, having under-funded schools with low rates of academic success, and limited employment in the service and informal economic sectors. These conditions reproduce social inequality (Bourdieu and Passoron, 1990), precluding attainment of the SNAF ideal. To build a “normal” family, one must have access to the financial resources underpinning the SNAF code, conditions promoting a healthy, culturally rich life free of violence. Generalizing the relations of ruling to the daily experience of family life, health and social service documents take
up SNAF as they treat conditions of poverty as indicators of personal pathology. Essential to the medical narrative is a mother who places her body and baby under the authority of an obstetrician. Submitting to a pharmacological regime, electronic fetal and maternal monitoring, and increasingly to surgical delivery, she obediently endures in exchange for the promise that both she and her child will survive (Murphy-Lawless, 1998). Government studies consistently recommend early entry into prenatal care, although a causal link between comprehensive prenatal care and low birth weight has not been established (Doyal, 1985). In spite of this uncertainty, efforts to improve birth outcomes among African American babies are directed at increasing both the demand for, as well as the supply of, prenatal care. Federal reports support the twentieth-century trend to treat birth outcomes primarily from a medical standpoint. SNAF judges local events of daily life by making visible and condemning actions contradicting the narrative, thus explaining that which cannot be erased—the elevated African American IMR questioning the claims of American obstetrics. While a shortage of doctors was substantiated by statistical evidence, no studies establishing the existence of black maternal ignorance of the importance of prenatal care were cited. While prenatal care has not been proven to produce health baby outcomes (Murphy-Lawless, 1998; Oakley, 1992; Lieberman, 1987; Doyal, 1985), nor have black women been demonstrated to misunderstand the importance of prenatal care, the reports recommended increasing black participation in prenatal care through education about its importance. Presuming the material conditions of the middle class nuclear family, the science narrative promises that prenatal care will reduce the risks associated with low birth weight and premature delivery, even though substantial research argues its connection to poverty.

Although use of alcohol and tobacco may be found among SNAF mothers, their drug use is hidden from public view. SNAF mothers rely on their private physicians to write scripts for legal medications—thalidomide in the 1940s, DES in the 1950s, valium in the 1970s, and Prozac in the 1990s. While cocaine use was described to be widespread among urban black single mothers, the federal reports offered no evidence of actual drug use among target mothers.
Linking the demonization of poor mothers of "crack babies" with the Pro-life elevation of the fetus to personhood, Chavkin argues, "This concept of fetal personhood that derives from the abortion debate has led to the depiction of the pregnant woman as one whose selfish negligence or hostility toward the 'innocent' fetus must be constrained" (2001, p. 1627). Portrayed as criminals, black women become targets of intervention ostensibly to reform them and protect their children. Collins (1998) notes,

... images of poor Black women are watched by a public entranced by increasingly powerful media. Being fixed in the public eye via newspaper editorials, popular press, news coverage, documentaries, and talk show appearances means that poor Black women become intensely "raced." Whereas the women as individuals become less visible, poor Black women become icons for Black women as a collectivity. Because working-class and poor Black women are members of an intensely raced group, the domestic violence, sexual promiscuity, strained family relations, and other personal difficulties that they encounter in large part because of their race and economic class position become highly visible. Reinterpreted through an ideological apparatus that initially blames these women for their own poverty and for that of African-Americans as a class, even more amazingly, Black women's poverty becomes associated with American national interests (36).

Their lives reduced to a series of black and white photographs, targeted women are paraded before the public as being irresponsible and ignorant, reminding all who mother that failure to fully comply with SNAF and biomedical expectations will lead to similarly tragic results. The poster, a violent jamming of two images: pregnant women using drugs and a baby in the ER suffering with low birth weight, holds women mothering in poverty accountable for both the conditions and the effects of poverty. The racialized woman smoking crack just as she is about to give birth not only references the stereotype of the crack mother, but does so based on no evidence (Cleeton, 1994). As nineteenth century photography "helped to create the hierarchies of domesticity that, ostensibly, it only recorded" (Wexler, 2000, p. 66). the poster reinforces the good/bad mother dualism.

The inclusion of the modifier "irresponsible" in the description of targeted women reveals the underlying eighteenth cen-
tury gendered and racist assumption of the emerging science of botany, that African women were only partially human (Schiebinger, 1994). The Enlightenment version of Aristotle's levels of citizenship (Spellman, 1988) brings scientific evidence to support treatment of slaves as having extremely limited rationality and no gender. This depiction of the women precludes intervention.

Chavkin (2001) attributes the vilification of mothers using crack to government efforts to reduce illegal drug use.

The war on drugs focused on individual moral failing rather than social circumstance, and comprised several basic approaches: an emphasis on drug law enforcement; and increase in severity of criminal justice penalties, including mandatory minimum sentences; and a comparative de-emphasis on treatment of drug addiction. The escalation of the war occurred during the Reagan Administration, coinciding with the rise of unemployment, homelessness, and urban poverty that fueled the crack epidemic. While cocaine in inhalation form had been a popular drug for the upper middle class in the 1970s, it did not draw the same media or political attention or severity of criminal justice response as did crack smoking by inner-city youth (p. 1626).

Assistance to reduce, if not eliminate, the violence of poverty is unwarranted. As the narratives imply, it would make no difference. Instead, programs emerge to identify, locate, screen, arrest, and where necessary incarcerate targeted women (Baum, 1997; Cleeton, 2000b).

Media coverage of crack epidemic and judicial efforts to imprison, sterilize, and remove the children of women who use crack paralleled the rise of the postmodern family economically situated in a two-adult-income setting, destabilized by now-widespread maternal financial independence. In the era of increasing numbers of women choosing to bear children outside of marriage (Luker, 1996), mothering work outside the boundaries of marriage is depicted as being selfish, self-indulgent, and irresponsible. As the growing service sector of the economy reduced the number of living-wage jobs, worsening the conditions of poverty, poor women with children were expected to go to work, even as middle and upper-class women were urged (by studies) including the most-recent, misrepresented work on linking in-
institutional daycare with aggressive behavior in kindergarten, to leave their careers and devote 100% of their time and energies to their children and husbands (Chase and Rogers, 2001). If little can be done to directly punish middle class women for choosing to raise babies alone, working class and impoverished women can be targeted for surveillance (Luker, 1996; Collins, 1998).

Strands of the SNAF and bio-medical discourses run through the federal documents generalizing the mothering work of impoverished women to the poster story. (Seidman, 1991). Controlling stories of family and medicine (DeVault, 2001) function like the infrared light beams installed in elegant residences and museums and activated in the evening to deter criminal activity. Detecting the presence of trespassers, these security systems stop outsiders before they can harm residents or damage or steal precious possessions. Like the invisible rays, controlling stories are invisible until revealed by violators of the sacred beliefs of the elite. Observing the everyday world of individuals or groups barred from the sacred yet expected to embrace its creed, reveals how narratives transform desire to live and work in the world into pathological behavior.

Striving to embody the stories of SNAF and obstetrics, targeted women's mothering work is detected by invisible light beams of controlling stories. The transformative power of these invisible, yet ever-present narratives is revealed when the everyday experience of those believed to be trespassers onto forbidden territories is studied (Ingraham, 1999). “The intersection of everyday local settings and the abstracted, extra-local ruling relations is mediated by the materiality of printed and electronic texts” (Smith, 1999, p. 73). In combination, these narratives resolve the crisis of poverty-related child harm, including infant deaths, by transforming evidence that limited resources threaten family survival, and challenging obstetrical claims of preventing maternal and child morbidity and mortality, into proof of maternal neglect and abuse. Together, the narratives erase pervasive, undeniable evidence of the failure of capitalism to support full participation of all citizens in the fruits of their labors.
Conclusion

Multiple discourses intersect in the lives of the "targeted" women: gender, race, family, work, medicine, and class. SNAF sustains the biomedical discourse on childbirth (Murphy-Lawless, 1998) focusing government efforts on reforming targeted women's behavior, in lieu of effectively engaging obstetricians in the care of Medicaid patients, and demanding a reduction of poverty. Obscuring the relationship between poverty and sick babies, belief in the biological basis for race is sustained (Guillaumin, 1995).

Forced into comparison with the symbolic tradition in Western art of portraying the mythic maternal body as the Madonna, poor women emerge as bad mothers bearing the penultimate crack-baby, a NICU preemie struggling to survive. Belief in good and bad mothers is preserved and strengthened. Socio-economic variation in resources available to raise children loses its explanatory power. "Natural" differences between poor women and the SNAF maternal ideal are proven by "objective" reports offering decisive evidence of poor black women's betrayal of the sacred trust of motherhood (Swigart, 1999).

The socioeconomic context within which women do the work of mothering is directly or indirectly referenced in each report of the IMR. At the point of the intersection between SNAF and the medicalization of childbirth narratives, comprehensive prenatal care promises healthy birth outcomes to women who marry men with employment-based health insurance before becoming pregnant. However, SNAF and Progress through Science narratives do not take finances into account (Farmer et al, 1996). Instead, they reference race and class categories implying their explanatory power. The conditions in which targeted women do the work of mothering reveal free-market capitalist barriers to upward mobility. However, the poster story attributes the high black IMR not to poverty but to maternal moral terpitude. This is taken up by the federal and local reports extending black, single, marital status in conditions of poverty to include irresponsibility and ignorance, while minimizing the effects of the socio-economic context of poverty.
Applied science continues to be embarrassed by the ever-lagging IMR. While poverty-induced ill-health and inaccessible and racist treatment (Cleeton, 1994) are safely hidden behind presumed sexual promiscuity and associated drug use, black mother’s work of fighting for the needs of her children in the social service “detention campus’ (Gans, 1991) remains invisible. In the shadow of the holy virgin, she is the pathological other (Collins, 1999). Belief that the only “good” mother is a SNAF mother remains unchallenged as neither impoverished nor middle class mothers are permitted to speak of the actualities of child bearing and raising (Swift, 1995), much as the medicalization of childbirth required the silencing of women during pregnancy, labor, and delivery (Murphy-Lawless, 1998; Cleeton, 2000a).

An “empirical investigation of linkages among local settings of everyday life, organizations, and translocal processes of administration and governance” (DeVault and McCoy, 2001, p. 753), Institutional Ethnography makes visible how assumptions of individual pathology can be challenged by taking experiences of doing the work of mothering into account. In this study, national and local government infant mortality documents emerge as mediators of the extra-local coordination of the health care experience of women living in the poorest Eastern City zip code areas, whose babies have the highest IMR. Federal and local documents offer evidence that the ruling relations of SNAF and medicalized childbirth support public policies privileging ideology over evidence. The lines of ruling connecting women’s experience of mothering with an education campaign poster depicting drug use as the cause of the elevated black IMR, are traced through federal reports to family and science discourses. Mapping reveals the social relations generalizing the poster portrait of pregnant women using drugs and bearing dying children to the lives of all women bearing and caring for babies in poverty.

Notes

1. Eastern City is middle-sized, having a population of 170,000 located in a county of 475,000 people. As an old city, it has experienced considerable migration from its center to the suburbs. Having both urban and rural communities, the combined city/county population is representative in ethnic
composition, occupational distribution, and education of cities of comparable size.

2. In their comprehensive review of research on the impact of maternal gestational use of crack cocaine on infant and early childhood development, Frank et al (2001) found no long-term effects. Among children up to six years of age, there is no convincing evidence that prenatal cocaine exposure is associated with any developmental toxicity different in severity, scope, or kind from the sequelae of many other risk factors. Many findings once thought to be specific effects of in-utero cocaine exposure can be explained in whole or in part by other factors, including prenatal exposure to tobacco, marijuana, or alcohol and the quality of the child's environment (Frank et al, pp. 1621-1624).

3. While the poster includes representatives of the three largest ethnic groups in the United States, and the woman smoking crack is European, this "politically correct" representation of bad mothers thinly veils the racist assumption that working-class and impoverished single, African American mothers deliberately harm their babies by using cocaine during pregnancy.

4. Clearly meant for middle and upper-class women, this standard eludes immigrant and African American women forced into low-skilled, dangerous, low-paying factory and domestic labor (Collins, 1991; Davis, 199; hooks, 199). Specific groups used the many representations of the "good woman" to protect their interests.

5. Here it is likely that the reference is to drug-addicted pregnant women. In my study, community health workers seldom recruited women for prenatal care, rather they spent their time assisting women already in the system with managing daily threats to family survival (Cleeton, 1994).

6. In the Lieberman, et al. (1987) study of race and risk for low birth weight associated with preterm birth, the economic-demographic-behavioral factors of welfare, age less than 20, single marital status and less than high school education in combination with the medical factor of a low hematocrit level, which can reflect reduced delivery of oxygen to the fetus and can also serve as a marker for poor nutrition and infection, explain the racial differences. Lieberman, et al also found that late prenatal care alone offers little explanation.

7. All women receiving Medicaid-funded health care must agree to random drug screens throughout prenatal visits, the only possibility for establishing their innocence of this crime. Even with this evidence, the medical and social service systems insist on the primary importance of reducing drug use to reduce the IMR.

8. For a detailed discussion of the concept of risk and its assignment to women doing the work of mothering in poverty, see Oakley's *Motherhood and Social Support*. 
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Black Infant Mortality


"For the Family": Asian Immigrant Women's Triple Day

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This article examines how Asian immigrant women manage the demands of family, job training, and paid work in their new society. Using institutional ethnography, a feminist research strategy developed by Dorothy Smith, the study begins with the women’s experiences to explore the extended social relations which give shape to them. The study argues that among those extended relations are the organization of the labor market in the contemporary period, immigration legislation, and the ideological practices embedded in developing, managing, and administering public policies such as job training. A critical eye is turned to social science discourses on family which penetrate the multiple sites forming the institutional complex organizing and regulating the activities of these women. Thus, for example, the article argues that notions such as the "standard North American family" (Smith, 1993) are implicated in the development of family policies designed to help families manage work and family responsibilities. However, such policies neglect the specific experiences of poor, minority, immigrant women since they rely on and reproduce a conception of family built on the experiences of primarily middle-class white women.

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Introduction

This study examines how Asian immigrant women manage the triple responsibilities of family, job training, and paid work in a new society. The cases discussed here are derived from a larger field study examining Asian immigrant women's entry into the labor market via job training programs. Following a feminist research strategy developed by Dorothy Smith (1987), I look at the women's experiences and the extended social relations which shape their lives. The actual organization of their lives departs from the pervasive formulation in the discourse on "work/family balance" that posits a duality of experience, particularly for women. I argue that this dualism is founded on the experiences of middle-class white women. The dual or separate spheres approach to work/family balance treats women's responsibilities to family (reproductive work) as something separate and usually opposed to work responsibilities (productive work). Thus, it relies on and reproduces an ideological conception of the "Standard North American Family" (Smith, 1993). The dual spheres approach has not only come to dominate most studies on work/family balance but has been the overriding framework in formulation of family policy for addressing the problems identified in these studies. As a result, the "Standard North American Family" operates as an "ideological code" in these different arenas. Though feminist scholars such as Glenn (1996) and Collins (1994) have challenged the idea that work and family spheres have historically been separate for women of color, the present study goes further in mapping the social relations governing the three spheres of engagement for Asian immigrant women in the contemporary period.

Since the large scale movement of middle-class women into the labor force during the 1960s, there has been considerable attention to the ramifications of their paid work for family life. As they continued to move into the labor force in the 1970s and 1980s, the demands that women faced in fulfilling domestic responsibilities and their responsibilities in the paid work sphere came to be a focus of study. In her now classic study of the phenomenon called the "second shift," Hochschild (1989) had found that in dual-earner families women still did the bulk of household work and child care after their paid work day was done. In her more recent
work (Hochschild, 1997) the focus was on the time constraints that families, especially women in them, faced as they struggled to meet their responsibilities in both spheres. In these studies, women's paid work responsibilities are often presented as exerting pressure on their family responsibilities in a way which suggests that there is a necessary split between responsibilities to work and responsibilities to family.

This formulation of dual spheres arises out of a perspective which has allocated responsibility to women for the affective, nurturing sphere of family while allocating responsibility to men for the breadwinning/provider role. For men the responsibility to family is differently constructed than it is for women. As Smith (1993) has shown, this is a formulation which is built on an assumption of a standard middle-class (historically white) family form. Though this assumption is now a widely recognized feature of the social science discourse on family, this standard still shapes thought about families and women's responsibilities to them. Indeed, it influences how public policy discussions about family move forward in U.S. society. Thus for example, the Family and Medical Leave Act may have been a step in the right direction for helping families cope with the dual responsibilities. Even so, the act confers advantages to a middle class family form in which at least one member of such families (mostly women) can take leave to the extent another is available (usually male) to bring home a decent wage. It is more difficult for working class families to do this, since they are often unable to manage on the earnings of a single wage earner—particularly in a restructured economy which has witnessed the shrinking of better paid unionized manufacturing jobs and the rise of contingent, poorly paid work. It is certainly not as readily usable by the significant numbers of single parents who are largely female and disproportionately members of race-ethnic minority groups.

A recent conference provides another illustration of how working class, poor, race-ethnic minority and immigrant families are marginalized in discussions about managing family and work responsibilities. The conference, held in 1998, was entitled "Work and Family: Today's Realities, Tomorrow's Visions." Despite the prominence of many sociologists of family, there was an almost complete absence of consideration of the realities faced by race-ethnic minority families. Over a two day period, of thirty regular
sessions, only two focused on working class and poor families and only one focused on "ethnic diversity." A session on immigrant families was scheduled as one of the last concurrent sessions at the conference. Over the course of the conference, the operative model for debate and discussion was the white middle class dual-earner family. In cases such as this, the standard North American family is used as an ideological code through which race-ethnic minority, immigrant, working class families emerge as a deviation from this norm, and through which immigrant families are marginalized or rendered invisible. While I do not wish to diminish the difficulties faced by women in white middle-class families as they attempt to meet their multiple responsibilities, my research is intended to alert us to the multiple challenges faced by women who are much more marginalized and whose needs are virtually ignored by public policy makers.

The Asian-immigrant women in this study do not view the domains of practices identified by the "dual spheres" approach as distinct and separate; rather their work and their schooling are viewed as extensions of their familial responsibilities. The notion that work and family spheres are separate for women of color has been contested by scholars such as Collins (1994) and Glenn (1996), who have argued that historically such women's paid work was an extension of family responsibilities that ensured the survival of their children. The present study reveals a new challenge in the lives of at least one group of women of color—job training—even though this too is viewed by them as an extension of their responsibilities to family. The study finds that there is a gendered division of household labor in which men resist more involvement with domestic work, even as the women take on responsibility for providing economically for the family.

My aim here is to demonstrate that an understanding the complexities of these women's lives in the United States requires an account of the extended relations in which they are embedded. The analysis provided here utilizes institutional ethnography, a feminist research strategy developed in Dorothy Smith's work (1987). The data are drawn from a larger ethnographic project that examines how employment training programs are involved in organizing Asian immigrant women into the labor market (K. Grahame, 1999). This article argues that the extended insti-
tutional relations shaping the women's experiences of juggling multiple responsibilities include the structure of the labor market, the organization of job-training programs, and ideological practices such as the conceptualization of Asians as a "model minority" in U.S. society. In what follows, I outline the conceptual framework guiding this study and the method used, discuss the social science literature on work/family balance and family policy, explore the women's experiences of managing their spheres of activity, and sketch an analysis that displays the broader social relations governing those experiences.

Conceptual Framework

In her pioneering work in developing a feminist sociology, Dorothy Smith has insisted on beginning inquiry from the standpoint of women. She has proposed a research strategy called institutional ethnography as a method of inquiry for exploring how social processes and practices organize people's experience (DeVault, 1999; P. Grahame, 1998; Smith 1987). This approach guides this study. An outgrowth of her work in the sociology of knowledge, institutional ethnography seeks to explicate how everyday activities in local settings are shaped by institutional practices extending beyond the local. Central to Smith's approach is her insistence that the point of departure for inquiry is with the situated activities of subjects in the everyday world, hence we begin with the standpoint of women. Such a starting point is offered as a break with the standard practice of social science inquiry which begins within academic or "ruling" discourses. In developing her critique of standard sociological practice, Smith has directed attention to how such practices objectify people's experiences, producing a knowledge "of" rather than "for," excluding the standpoint of women while providing the "conceptual currency" of ruling. Her alternative method of inquiry is thus fruitful for studies which focus on marginalized voices and neglected topics, since the challenge in taking up these matters is directly linked to the ruling forms of social organization which include standard discourses (see K. Grahame, 1998a; P. Grahame & K. Grahame, 2001; Ng, 1988). However, inquiry must move beyond the direct experiences of the everyday world of the his-
torically located subject for those experiences are "organized by social relations not fully apparent in it nor contained in it" (Smith, 1987, p. 92).

This study begins with the standpoint of the Asian immigrant women in employment training programs. This is the entry point for exploring and analyzing the complex of relations giving shape to their experiences. Exploration and analysis are oriented to making visible the social relations, conceived as "temporally concerted sequences or courses of action" in and through which the activities of people in different sites, who may or may not be known to one another, are coordinated (Smith 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999).

Whereas in standard sociology "ethnography" demarcates a description of a particular local setting, in institutional ethnography the local setting is a starting point for explicating how the activities within that setting are coordinated in relation to multiple sites and as such accomplish social relations of ruling. Central to these coordinative practices are concepts, ideologies, and beliefs which serve as a form of currency allowing for exchange among the diverse sites of an organizational complex. Here I argue that both "model minority" and the "standard North American family" are part of the ideological currency which bear upon Asian immigrant women's experiences and are operative within this social organizational complex. With its implication of "hard work" and "appropriate family values," the concept of model minority is an example of what Smith refers to as an ideological circle in that it is used to selectively interpret and project immigrant Asian experience and behavior. Aspects of experience and behavior which do not fit the framework are ignored and do not "become part of the textual realities governing decision-making processes" (Smith, 1990a, p. 94). The "standard North American family" has also come to be inscribed ideologically in government policy in that it shapes the development of policy which reinforces that form of family and draws on that form as "ideal."

Ideas incorporated in the concepts of "model minority" and the "standard North American family" arise in the social science discourse on race/ethnicity and family, and penetrate many different sites of governing, managing, administering—that is, of
ruling. The relations of ruling, Smith has forcefully argued, are “textually-mediated.” Texts, in both their “material” and “symbolic aspect,” form the “bridge between the everyday/everynight local actualities of our living and the ruling relations” (1999, p. 7). Texts are broadly defined to include an array of documents, media reports, the discourses of sociology and other social sciences, accounting records, forms of various kinds, and the like. Texts such as these are essential elements in the coordinative practices in and through which ruling is accomplished. As a distinctive research enterprise, institutional ethnography takes up how texts are at work in these coordinative practices of ruling.

Method

This article emerges out of a larger institutional ethnography focusing on how employment training programs produce Asian immigrant women as commodities for the labor market (K. Grahame, 1999). That study was concerned with exploring the relations of ruling (Smith, 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999) through which these women’s lives were managed, shaped, and ruled by focusing on the job training complex which offered training programs. As an institutional ethnography it utilized various methods of collecting data—observation, interviews, and document analysis (see Smith, 1987). Beginning with Asian immigrant women clients taking training programs in two community based organizations, the fieldwork carried out over a two year span involved interviews with the women and workers at all levels of what I came to call the “job-training complex” (community based workers, workers at the local, state and federal levels of government, an array of documents, reports, and the like) as well as observation of intake work at the agencies delivering training. The larger research project demonstrates that the ways in which certain public policies (specifically job training policy) operate produce experiences of marginalization for the group of Asian immigrant women in my study, even as they access these programs in an effort to improve their economic prospects and provide for their families in their new society.

The research reported here draws on the interviews with seven women clients of the programs. In undertaking that re-
search I discovered that the women would sometimes speak of their lives in their home countries and the relationship between home life and work life—for example of the supportive extended family system they had which enabled some to work. At the same time they described their attempts to manage their domestic responsibilities, to attend a full time job training program, and work part time in paid labor as well. Thus, it was clear that these women were juggling three major domains of activities and they were doing so in a context in which they had much fewer social or familial supports than they had had in their countries of origin. In addition, this article draws on interviews with training agency personnel, some of whom were able to provide some insight into such women's lives based on their long experience of working with such women. Moreover, their views of these women as clients and their practices of selecting them into programs are relevant for understanding the women's experiences. The eligibility criteria for participation in the training programs\(^5\) include economic disadvantage—e.g. income below the poverty level as established by the Office of Budget and Management—so the women in this study are women whose family incomes fall at or below the training guidelines' eligibility criteria.

The material presented here is intended to demonstrate some of the ways in which broader institutional structures impinge on and shape the lives of immigrant Asian women. Understanding how it is they came to be in such circumstances requires a focus on the institutional processes giving shape to them. It adds to the growing body of literature that address their experiences. Their talk about managing these diverse roles—the entry point for this analysis—brought into view how we have to continue to challenge the prevailing definitions of what constitutes family and family responsibilities.

**Work, Family and Beyond**

The research on women balancing work and family responsibilities often points out that many married women work in the paid labor force because of the financial necessity for doing so (See Crosby, 1994; Hochschild, 1989; Spain and Bianchi, 1996). For example, Spain and Bianchi state that wives in less
affluent families (where "other income"—i.e., husband’s—was under $40,000) were twice as likely to be in paid labor than wives in families where "other income" was over $40,000 (p. 153). Thus, many families feel that they require a second income to provide for their needs. This need has been intensified in an era of economic restructuring characterized by a loss of better paid manufacturing jobs and the development of service sector work much of which continues to be filled by women (Amott, 1996).

For some married women with children, paid work is sought because they want to work, building careers—this is especially so for college educated women. A large number of Asian families are families in which there are at least two wage earners. Of all race-ethnic groups, Asians have the largest proportion of families with more than 3 earners—20% in 1990 as compared to 12% for white families (Spain & Bianchi, 1996). The tendency for contemporary immigrant Asian families to have multiple earners has been attributed to the low wage levels they earn as individuals in the secondary labor market (see Glenn, 1996). This is the labor market sector that has grown as a result of economic restructuring, and women, especially women of color, have adopted various strategies—including taking on several jobs—to help make ends meet (Amott, 1996).

The problems that have attended dual earner families in balancing work and family commitments seem to also be true for Asian immigrants. Glenn reports that one main difference for Chinese women from Hong Kong is that in their home country many were balancing these as homeworkers. Another difference is that in the U.S. women become co-equal breadwinners with men: women’s earnings form a greater share of the family’s income in the U.S. than they did in Hong Kong because men’s wages decrease when they come to the U.S. and the gender wage differentials are greater in Hong Kong (Glenn, 1996, p. 86). Though in her research on New York’s Chinatown, Zhou (1992) does not formulate women’s contributions as co-equal, she found that the income that women earned in the labor market was necessary to support the family’s economic well-being because of the low-income jobs that were available to both immigrant men (who tended to work in the restaurant trade) and women (largely in garment work). My research found that economic necessity
was the chief reason that Asian immigrant women work or were seeking work or better paying work than they had. However, the circumstances of the women in this study meant that they had—at least for a short period—the task of balancing full-time job training (a form of unpaid work) and domestic labor. For some of the women in the study, a third area of responsibility was working part-time in paid labor to help support their families. The responses from the women in this study suggest that this group of women defined their responsibilities to family to include their economic responsibility—that is they did not make a distinction between provisioning activities and nurturing ones. The job training they went into was put forward as essential for family survival.

For example for Min, a participant in my study, the job training program offered possibilities of a better job which was necessary to support her family. After her lay-off from a job in the garment industry, she came to training because she needed a job to help "take care of my family, that’s important." The importance of the job for the family’s well being was a theme repeated by other women. Five of the seven were married and three of them had children whose ages ranged from a few months to sixteen years. The women themselves ranged in age from their mid-twenties to mid-forties. For two of the women with children the economic well being of their families was uppermost.

Tina, a woman in her early forties, had three children, a baby, a three year old and a sixteen year old. The baby was born within the first year she arrived in the U.S. and had medical problems because she was premature. Explaining her likes and dislikes about the U.S., Tina said:

I don’t like here now—but I don’t hate it. Food is cheaper. Most important is how to support family. In Hong Kong land is higher, food is higher, but salary higher too if you work hard.

Later she explained that her husband is working at Macdonald’s and that his salary is not enough to support her family. I ask if he thinks that, both of them think that, or his coworkers think that.

It’s what everybody says. When you pay rent for one family—two bedroom, one dining room and you have to pay something and then the baby food, bill for electricity, and phone. It’s not enough.
The government is not willing to give the people from Hong Kong. Since we have been three years we can't get any welfare from the government. But actually if we can find the job we don't want the welfare too, no need. If you got a job, you have money to support a family.

Even though her husband had a full time job at MacDonald’s, it was not enough for the family. He earned about $18,000 a year, a salary that was below the poverty level for a family of that size. He had only been earning this salary recently since he had been promoted to manager, a promotion she attributed to his performance and the fact that he had been a hotel manager at the Holiday Inn in Hong Kong.

It was not only the financial boost that the training offered which was attractive; the possibility that the job it would provide would include health care benefits was important. I had learned from several community activists that for many Asian immigrant families, it was often the wife's job (such as Min, whose job included health benefits) which provided such benefits. Thus, since many men worked in the restaurant industry where jobs were usually without such benefits, women with jobs carrying health benefits contributed substantially to the family’s well being. There were times, as in Tina’s case, that it could be a matter of life or death.

Before he was working part time. That time we were very poor because baby had to go to hospital. I had no job. My sister send help. Family couldn't help with hospital bills so I apply to government. The social worker ask to apply for Medicaid. We did because the baby was born here. Now my husband works hard and boss says he is good and his hotel background. So he got the manager job. Good position and high pay but one person can't support the family I think. Now (the baby) has Medicaid but every year we have to sign papers and fill in, have them check it again to see if they'll let us continue or not. That money is not enough and for us we don't have insurance. If we got sick, we would die.

Although her husband’s workplace provided benefits for him, they did not provide health care insurance for the family. For Tina, supporting her family meant that she would, like Min, have to find a job with health care benefits.
Concern about benefits was also expressed by one of the other married women. All of these three women had husbands who worked in the restaurant business—two as cooks—businesses in which salaries were not only low but benefits were non-existent. The importance of immigrant Chinese women’s contributions in terms of job benefits, in particular health insurance benefits, was first brought to my attention by an agency in Chinatown that had been formed to support immigrant women who had lost jobs after the garment industry in Massachusetts shrunk. It was a pattern that I saw being repeated here.

In her analysis of race, class and feminist theorizing about motherhood, Collins (1994) challenges the notion that work and family are separate spheres for women of color. She argues that for Asian American, African American, and Hispanic women motherwork involved work to ensure the physical survival of their children even if, ironically, it meant lack of access to their children (such as work in domestic service). In her earlier work (cited by Collins) on Chinese American families, Glenn (1996) analysess the different forms of family which develop at three different historical periods in U.S. society. She situates these developments in relation to the institutional structures—e.g., legal and political constraints imposed through immigration and citizenship legislation—which give shape to the different forms. She posits these institutional arrangements as an alternative approach to the “cultural approach”—where aspects of Chinese culture are used to explain Chinese family form and experiences—for understanding Chinese family organization. Under each of the three socio-historical periods, she argues, the family strategy is for survival which includes the involvement of women in economic activities.

In the contemporary period, as I argue, survival continues to be primary so that women define their contribution as a significant means to this end. However, meeting economic need was not the only possibility that the program and the potential job at the end of it offered. A concern expressed by several of the women was loneliness and boredom they felt without a job and friends.

Tina: I don’t really like it here. It’s boring because I have no friends, because no job. Only come to school and go home. Have to work
hard. Maybe later on if I get a job and has friend here maybe I would like it. I don’t know.

Meizhu, who had stayed home with her daughter after she had first arrived in the U.S., expressed a desire to go back to China if she could not find a job at the end of the program. “Maybe if I can’t find a job I have to stay home. So my whole life maybe this way. Very Lonely. Lonely. It’s very lonely.” Meizhu was one of two women who had no extended family members in the U.S. But even women with extended families expressed a feeling of isolation. Van, for example, who lived in an extended family, expressed a keen desire to get a job because she “is very sad about being at home.” This feeling of loneliness was intensified since she had previously been working in a day-care setting.

While caring for family members was important for these women, they experienced a social isolation in the confines of family. But though the job training classes provided, and the jobs promised, a social life outside of the family, for all of the women who lived with family members, which six of them did, there was much juggling to do around their family responsibilities, school and the homework it entailed, and for some a part-time job in addition. All of the married women reported having supportive husbands but they mostly all carried the household responsibilities and child care if they had children.

For the women with children much of the childcare responsibility was theirs. As Min pointed out, she would be unable to attend class in the absence of her mother-in-law, who lived not with her but close to her, taking care of the child. No one else was available nor could she afford to pay someone. In addition, when I interviewed her, her husband was away in China so she was also without the little help he might provide. The childcare responsibilities also extended to making some decisions around the child’s schooling. Since our interview was in late August and her child was kindergarten age, some of our discussions centered around the child attending school. She seemed confused about whether her child was eligible for school and we had a little discussion about this. Her responsibilities for housework and child care meant that she spent late nights doing her homework.

When I go home I finish my housework. About nine o’clock I do my homework till eleven o’ clock. I get up at seven o’clock.
I had seen Min with shopping bags on the subway once after I had observed the intake interviews, part of the process through which women were selected for the training programs. She routinely shopped after class on the way home to "get some meat and vegetables and anything else to go home and cook."

Tina's schedule was even more hectic because of her baby. In addition she had two other children. She has found it difficult studying and caring for children, particularly the youngest who was a premature baby:

(I) found it difficult because of the baby. At 6:30 she has to be picked up and then baby goes to bed 9:30 to 10:00 and then I take shower and then got time one or two hours to practice and then when I go to bed she wake up all the night. Some babies sleep all the night but not she so I have to wake up a few times at least. Sometimes every hour she wake up once, other times she will sleep and wake up 20 mins. I'm very tired but I want a good grade. I don't want government to give money for us to study and then I lose chance so I have to study hard. So I always wake up 4:30 every morning and I study to 7:00 and then baby wake up and I have to bring her to sitter. So I work very hard.

Hers was the most rigorous of schedules that I heard from the women. In addition, she had a teenage son who it appeared had had some difficulty adjusting to the change from Hong Kong, the loss of friends, and feeling "ashamed" because he "couldn't understand English at all when he came." This manifested itself at school, a problem she had to sort out with the school:

He is afraid of the school and he is absent 15 days. He says he is absent because "I don't know anything." I talked to the school and they said they like to help him and put him in ESL. Now he can learn English very well. Before he got all Cs.

Her classes and study habits became a point of comparison for their respective progress in school.

My son says "Mommy, you are luckier than me and you are easier because you know English so it's easier for you." But after explaining to him "Look at my book, is anything English? No, right." Then he says harder. He says, "You don't have time to sleep and everyday you wake up to study. That's why you get an A grade." I say, "You have to try hard."
Meizhu has one seven year old daughter who goes to extended care after school is out. Because she sometimes works at night and weekends as a cashier at the supermarket, her husband cares for the child when she is at the job. She finds juggling all of this difficult particularly since she compares what she has to do now with the help she had in China when the child was younger, and she had a live in babysitter and her parents.

Not like now, everything I have to do by myself. It's very hard. I have to come to school, to study. And I have a part time job that is three or two days week-days and week-end and I have to take care of my daughter and do the housework and make dinner and do laundry.

While her husband helps, she finds he is unable to provide the kind of care she does—especially when it comes to the child’s learning:

But he cannot do too many things like me and the man always lose the patience. Especially how to teach my daughter—he always lose patience. . . . Sometimes he really wanted my daughter to do something but my daughter says “No, I don’t want to do” so he says, “Okay, I don’t care. You can do anything you want.” But if I was home I have to let her do mathematics or write some (unclear) or something. . . . You know if I don’t work all night, I spend a lot of time with her. With her reading or writing but my husband doesn’t do that.

As for other household responsibilities, although he helps her, she wishes he would do more.

M: Of course he can help me a little bit. Like every night there’s so many dishes over there. I really so disgusted I didn’t really want to do that so I leave there. But in the next day morning he washed it. . . . And Sunday I always go to work. So he doing the laundry.
K: So he does help you some?
M: A little (laughs). Not a lot.
K: Not a lot. You wish for more?
M: Right. He said, “Oh you’re busy, I’m busy too. You don’t (unclear) just watching TV and thinking.” (She emphasizes the word and laughs at the idea, I think, that one can watch TV and think.)
M: “I’m not really watching, I’m thinking.” (imitating him) I said “Okay . . .”
Meizhu was the only one who expressed a desire for her husband to do more. With others it was simply resigned acceptance that the husband could not or would not help. For example, Min’s husband “helps sometimes. Sometimes it’s very (unclear). Sometimes when he goes to work no time to help me.” Bettie, who is married, works part-time and attends the training program full-time, but has no children, talks about a distinct gendered division of household labor in which he takes care of the outside chores while she does indoor work. “Usually Chinese guy don’t want to—because in the Chinese culture you can’t do the housework ’cause if your friend knew it, they’d be laughing at you. I usually do the vacuuming and laundry, but he cuts the grass and does other outside things. I take care of inside the house.”

Van, a Vietnamese woman who lived with her family members including parents and a brother, also spoke of how her brother does no household work but she has to help her mother cook and clean. She also helps care for a nephew whose mother works.

In contrast to both of these men however, Tina’s son takes a different path from the cultural expectations for men that both Van and Bettie had identified.

(My son) is in high school. He helps me a lot. After school he helps me cook dinner and then I don’t need to allow a lot of time to cook. He’s really good boy and help me to do homework and help me to do cleaning. Husband helps too.

Thus, although some women find help from some family members as they attempt to complete their programs, others find little. Not surprisingly, it is the women with children who had the most challenging job of managing their various demands. Meizhu who with a paid job, school, a child, and no family apart from her husband to help felt most keenly the strain of doing all three. Perhaps too, because of the supports (paid live in sitter and parents) when she lived and worked in China, the demands in the U.S. seemed more acute. Still, going out to a job was envisioned as a relief from the loneliness of the home so much so that she had decided that if she did not get a job at the end of the training, she might return to China.
Discussion and Analysis

From the perspective of the women I interviewed, there was no distinction between provisioning activities and family responsibilities. However, when it came to domestic labor there seemed to be a distinct gendered division of labor. Still, it seemed to be the case that some of the men were beginning to cross boundaries, though in a limited way and perhaps out of necessity in the absence of larger networks of family on whom they might call for help. In my conversations with these women, the equanimity with which they described their household and childcaring responsibilities was striking. With one exception, I heard little in the way of dissatisfaction with the contributions that spouses or other family members made. It was the same sense I got from their talk about the training or schooling and their paid work. They were doing what they had to do for their families. This did not mean that they did not see the circumstances they were in as challenging. This was expressed in their remarks about the organization of their days when they had to be at the training site five days a week from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m, almost mirroring a regular working day, on top of which they had to complete homework daily, household labor, and for some night-time and weekend shifts at a paid job. Despite the challenges posed, there was a sense of hopefulness that at the end of training, their lives would in general be better than it was and most had plans to pursue more education—either at a community college or university on a part-time basis while they held full time post-training jobs. These plans were related to a desire to support their families. Thus even though it might be tempting to consider the managing of at least three roles as a relatively short-lived event, these women were not intending this to be so. My concern here is to consider how it is that these women come to be in these particular circumstances. An understanding of this depends on understanding the institutional arrangements within which their experiences were embedded. That is, there are a broader set of social relations which are operative in producing the experiences these women have.

First, being immigrants who are non-English speakers and of color disadvantages them in the labor market. Thus, although they have prior work experience and a variety of skills, in the
new context they are relegated to jobs in the secondary labor market—e.g. garment factory work, supermarket cashiers. This is true for their spouses and other family members as well. The low wages that are earned and few benefits that are offered mean that two or more (when possible) wages are needed for the family’s survival. Their labor market location, as I argued in the larger research project, is not simply due to the lack of skills but a result of the ways in which immigration legislation has arisen particularly in relation to Asians (K. Grahame, 1999). Changes to immigration legislation in 1965 permitted Asians entry into the U.S. The use of the “family re-unification category” begun under 1952 reforms and continued in 1965 has enabled a significant increase in Asian immigration. Female immigrants are more likely to be “sponsored immigrants” via “family reunification.” As immigrants, even prior to the recent welfare reform laws, they were denied access to, or had only limited access to, a host of income support programs. For sponsored immigrants (which all of the women were) there were “deeming provisions”—i.e. sponsor’s income is regarded (deemed) as available for the sponsored immigrant when determining her eligibility for means-tested public benefits—for public support programs (see Espenshade & Huber, 1999). This essentially meant that if the other family members were not able to provide sufficient income, the women had to work too. When they were able to, they worked where English was not required (garment industry work, ethnic enclave sales, or restaurant work) and then as they learned a little English, they were able to begin working in jobs in the mainstream economy although still in low level jobs in the service sector (such as the non-enclave supermarket cashier’s job). Their location in the labor market thus also has been governed by changes in the broader economy. For example, in the north eastern city where this study was based, the manufacturing industry has been in decline throughout the last decades of the 20th Century. Asian immigrant women who had once been able to find jobs in the garment industry had begun losing them as those industries closed and relocated either to the southern U.S. and overseas—for example, Min’s experience described in this study and the group of Asian dislocated workers described earlier.
The job training program was viewed as a means to a better job than either garment factory or supermarket work. Though the program was a day long commitment over six to seven months (the last an unpaid internship at a private sector employer), there were no institutional supports for child care for these women. Training agency workers made it clear that if child care was going to be an issue for the women then they would have to wait for training when it was no longer a problem. Thus, the women screened into the program were ones who could provide evidence that their child care needs were being adequately met. Ironically, to the extent that the women with children relied on extended family members to help with child care, the current immigration legislation allowing for "family re-unification" produced a benefit in the form of cost free child care. The exception was Meizhu who had no extended family members in the U.S., whose school aged daughter went to extended day care, much less costly than full day care, and whose husband was available to care for her child when she worked weekends and nights at a supermarket. Institutional practices, such as immigration legislation, job training policies limiting services available, and the training organization’s screening practices, thus converged to produce conditions under which they had little choice to combine work, training and reliance on extended family members. Yet, workers in the training organization attributed the presence of Asian women in the program to the "family centered values that Asians had," essentially adopting the "cultural approach" to understanding Asian family experience that Glenn criticized. This is a stunning example of what Smith calls text-mediated relations of ruling wherein aspects of social science discourse shapes how the actualities of people’s lives are represented. The conceptual schema of "family centered Asian values," which is part of the broader notion of Asians as a "model minority," dispersed as it has been from earlier social science writings to popular discourse, enters into and shapes how the Asian presence in these programs is understood. As Glenn pointed out, the cultural approach blinds us to the institutionally produced constraints that Chinese families faced. Indeed, in the case reported here, "family centered values of Asians" becomes critical in the selection process, enabling the conditions under
which such families can succeed, through the women’s jobs, thus reproducing Asians as a “model minority”—thus the ideological circle is complete.

Though I share the concerns about a reliance on cultural approaches for understanding the experiences of these families, I do not wish to altogether discard the importance of culture. At least some of the women expressed the view that there was a cultural basis for the ways in which household work was divided. That is, the gendered division of household labor was due to the expectation that men would do only certain kinds of work (for example outside yard work but not vacuuming inside). Still there was evidence of some shifts that were going on as some of the men took on childcaring and other household activities when their spouses were unavailable to do so.

The larger story here is not so much one of internal household struggle over the division of household labor as it is one of families trying to patch together lives in the face of a number of constraints in their new society. Beyond the organization of the labor market and the policies towards immigrants which bear on those experiences is the organization of health care in U.S. society. Access to health care is dependent for most families on a job which provides health care insurance (see Diamond, 1992). The jobs the women were training for were likely to provide health care benefits which was an attractive feature for women such as these whose husbands tended to not have jobs with such benefits. Such jobs were also attractive for women like Van who, as a single adult would require a job with health benefits to get coverage. The potential for health care insurance was an added incentive for juggling the three spheres of activities.

These women’s experiences highlight the inadequacies of a dual spheres approach to work/family balance. Their experiences are shaped by a labor market which affords them and other family members low wages and poor benefits. This and an inadequate health care system propel them into a job training system which, though falling short of their needs, promises a better future for their families. The policies advocated and passed to alleviate the problem of work/family balance are built upon a standard form of family in which one earner can take time to meet family needs. So long as Asian immigrant women and their families
can only labor at jobs which provide meager wages, they would have little use for family leave polices which offer no pay or benefits. Public policy purportedly to help families manage work and family commitments leave lower income families such as these immigrants out in the cold. Even so it seems that every election cycle brings calls for more family friendly policies. The families that are implied in these discussions are the standard North American family (two recent examples include eliminating the marriage penalty in the taxation system, and calls for tax credits for families in which a parent stays at home to care for children). No more telling evidence exists of how the standard North American family has insinuated itself into public policy than the welfare reform Act of 1996. In its very title, “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act,” this legislation implied that the families targeted (poor, mostly single parent and disproportionately race-ethnic minority) by these reforms were irresponsible. Further, in its preambles to the specific provisions, the act upholds the standard North American family as ideal: “Marriage is the foundation of a successful society. Promotion of responsible fatherhood and motherhood is integral to successful child rearing and the well-being of children.” Through and through, the document is laced with material suggesting the defectiveness of specifically single parent family forms. In its insistence on paid work for single mothers, it creates a double standard for such women and women in the standard form at the same time that it fails to provide appropriate long term supports for building economically improved family life. Indeed, selectively weeded out of the discussion of welfare reform were the stories of lost jobs because of economic re-structuring and of a crisis in health care not only for workers who had lost jobs but also for “working families” whose jobs provided no health benefits.

The latest (2002) public policy proposal regarding welfare reform advocated by the Bush administration has as its centerpiece “marriage promotion.” The administration views marriage—not jobs that pay well and provide benefits—as an essential tool in alleviating poverty. The companion to the 1996 welfare reform Act, the “Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act,” also created further constraints for legal immigrants in their attempts to build better family lives. Re-iterating “national
policy with respect to welfare and immigration," the legislation restated "self-sufficiency" as the principle guiding immigration legislation, and claimed that increasing numbers of immigrants were applying for government benefits and that therefore it was in the government's interest to ensure that "aliens be self-reliant" by making new rules for eligibility to immigrate and for sponsors of immigrants. These new rules included deporting an immigrant if she or he became a public charge by accessing welfare, food stamps, Medicaid, housing programs etc., within seven years of arrival. Given these developments, it seems that for the near future, immigrant women who seek better jobs to provide for their families will have to continue to knit together available resources to do so, even when it means an enormous outlay of time and energy in meeting their multiple responsibilities.

Conclusion

Over the last two decades, a standard story about work/family balance has emerged. As told in both the social science discourse and the popular press, the continued entry of women into the paid workforce has resulted in time crunches for families. The more progressive elements of that discourse have drawn attention to the "double burden" that women face in managing the demands of work and family. Conservative elements of that discourse took a different tack, linking women's paid work with a decline in "family values" and the source of myriad societal ills, including increased divorce rates, out-of-wedlock births, irresponsible fatherhood and the increase in single welfare mothers. During the 1990s, a separate story about immigrants emerged which claimed that immigrants (legal and illegal) were a drain on the resources of the society. Reforms in immigration and welfare legislation were called for in an effort to reduce what was represented as these populations' illegitimate dependency on the state. The state's answer to these problems was to enact reforms which required women on welfare to work, denied illegal immigrants access to a range of social welfare programs, and held immigrant sponsors liable for the immigrants they sponsored. These measures were supposed to return or enforce "personal responsibility" to segments of the population which were por-
trayed as never having developed or ignored the "values" which such responsibility implied. As I have argued, the reforms were developed within a framework that upheld the nuclear family as ideal and selectively drew on the social science research linking "single parenthood" to poverty. In this way, the actualities of the everyday lives of poor women (including immigrants) as they struggled to carve out a life for their families were ignored. While policies such as the Family and Medical Leave Act was a step in the right direction for many families, it did nothing for poor families who could ill afford time off.

In contrast to the oversimplified view promoted by these standard representations, my study reveals a more complex reality in the lives of a group of women immigrants. It does so by beginning with their stories and their experiences. As I have shown, for many of these women meeting their family needs required that they engage simultaneously in several spheres of activities, including job training. Further, my work suggests that these complexities have been produced by the organization of the labor market, immigration legislation, and the ideological practices embedded in developing, managing, and administering public policies such as job training and family leave. These, I have argued, converged to form the extended social relations that shape and direct these women's experiences. In contrast to the standard representations that dominate contemporary discourses of family and immigration, the alternative realities about these women's lives disclosed by institutional ethnography suggest that the task of investigations which begin in the actualities of people’s lives is the ongoing project of making visible the ways in which our lives are managed, shaped, and ruled.

Notes

1. Smith identifies "ideological code" as a "schema which replicates its organization in multiple and various sites... It is a constant generator of procedures for selecting syntax, categories, and vocabulary in the writing of texts and the production of talk and for interpreting sentences, written or spoken, ordered by it" (1993: 51). In divergent sites of writing and talk such as social scientific, legislative and popular media, an ideological code thus creates the same order. She identifies the standard North American family—a legally married couple sharing a household with adult employed male as primary
provider and female whose primary responsibility is to care for household, children and husband—as such an ideological code. Though in recent times, the woman may also earn a wage, her primary responsibilities remain. I would add that in the U.S. context, the latter point is so for primarily middle-class white women. As several scholars have now noted, in earlier periods significant proportions of race-ethnic minority women and working class women were engaged in paid labor (see for example, Amott and Matthaei 1991).

2. Lamphere’s and Zavella’s study *Sunbelt Working Mothers* (1993) describes the development of Anglo and Hispano working class families in which increasing numbers of women perform co-provider roles in the context of the shifting labor markets because of economic restructuring in Albuquerque in the early 80s.

3. In her formulation of relations of ruling, Smith specifies that ruling refers to a broad array of activities by which societies such as ours are managed, ruled, and administered. The focus is on organized practices of ruling co-coordinated across an array of sites and mediated by various forms of texts (these include professional discourses including those of sociology).

4. These were open-ended, in the form of conversations (see Lofland and Lofland, 1995).

5. The programs were office skills programs. Note that all of the women had been employed in their countries of origin, some in professional capacities such as managerial kinds of work, others in either their own businesses or family run businesses and still others in office work.

6. The specific skills training program she was in was “medical office skills” so that much of the terminology they were learning were Latin words. All of the women in this program commented on the challenge of learning both English and Latin.

7. The curricula of these programs include teaching promptness and acclimatizing students to the regularities of a job.

8. All of the women had completed high school and three had university training—two had completed their degrees and one had not. Also noteworthy is that other Asian women in the training programs also had held professional jobs in their countries of origin—e.g. teachers and nurses.

References


Chronic Illness and Academic Accommodation: Meeting Disabled Students’ “unique needs” and Preserving the Institutional Order of the University

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People with disabilities are just one of the groups designated for special attention in relation to equity in postsecondary education. This paper explores the way in which policies that provide academic accommodation for students disabled by chronic illness unfold in practice. As part of the administrative regime of the university, these policies are typically designed to reconcile the interests and relevances of the law with the interests and relevances of the academy. When a disabled student “activates” the policy, regardless of whether or not services and assistance are provided or are useful, the student becomes situated within social relations that make disabled students’ “needs” manageable in the organizational context. As applicants for the institution’s privileges and services, students actively participate in the accomplishment of the institutional order of the university, i.e., they fulfil the university’s legal obligation not to discriminate against students with disabilities. This, I will argue, constitutes an exercise of power and preserves the existing social organization of the university, although it is normally understood as the university acting “in the interests of students with disabilities.” Specifically, I show how the individualization of accommodation—ostensibly to meet each student’s unique needs—shifts the obligation for change to individual students and instructors and forecloses opportunities for the university to become more genuinely accessible and inclusive.

People with disabilities are just one of the designated groups that have been targeted for special attention in relation to educational equity (Fortin, 1987). At academic institutions across
Canada this has entailed the creation of a social "disabilities apparatus" organized around the concepts of accessibility and accommodation. In postsecondary education, accessibility refers to the institution's legal obligation to create genuine opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in all aspects of university life. The duty to accommodate, as one aspect of the duty not to discriminate, requires the institution to take an active part in modifying those practices, facilities, or services that prevent the inclusion and participation of otherwise qualified students who are disabled (BCEADS, 1996).

Improving accessibility includes making changes in the built environment and providing specialized adaptive equipment to disabled students. Accommodation usually involves procedural changes and modifications in teaching and academic evaluation practices that are individualized according to each disabled student's unique needs. Exactly what constitutes an accommodation is a matter of law: courts have the ultimate authority in Canada to define the meaning of the term and the extent of the responsibility of the institution to provide it (BCEADS, 1996). In this paper, I use an institutional ethnographic approach (Smith, 1987, 1999) to explore the more difficult procedures entailed by providing academic accommodation, especially in relation to students disabled by chronic illness.

While chronic illness does not fit the more taken for granted understanding of disability—usually because it is less visible, or "invisible"—it still complies with the criteria set out by the United Nations definition of disability (Allbrecht, 1992; Wendell, 1996; Williams, 1998). In fact, people with chronic illnesses constitute a significant proportion of people with disabilities (Russell, 1989; Zola, 1994). And although many are reluctant to identify themselves as "disabled" (Charmaz, 1999; Gadacz, 1994; Gordon and Feldman, 1998; Linton, 1998; Russell, 1989; Wendell, 1996), most students with chronic illnesses depend on disability policies in order to take advantage of postsecondary educational opportunities. In this paper, I challenge the assertion that academic accommodation fulfils the university's moral and legal obligation to ensure the full inclusion of students disabled by chronic illness. As a compromise between the interests of the law and the interests and relevances of the academy, I argue that
accommodation preserves the existing social organization of the academy and can even undermine the participation of chronically ill students.

In the discussion that follows, I introduce the two main theoretical approaches to the problem of disability and I describe the methodological approach taken. I also provide an overview of the emergence of accessibility as a concern in post secondary education and I outline the form of the social “disabilities apparatus” at most Canadian universities. I then take up the problem of accommodation, in particular the “individualization” of accommodation, and show how it effectively shifts the obligation for change from the university, as an institution, to individual students and individual faculty members.

The Biomedical and Social Models of Disability

Disability rights activists have argued, since at least the 1960's, that the biomedical model (which works in the interests of the medical system, healthcare professionals, social welfare workers, charitable fundraising organizations, and so on) is a necessarily limited way of understanding and managing disability. In fact, the biomedical model, in and of itself, they argue, has become intertwined with and part of the discrimination and oppression experienced by disabled individuals (Lane, 1998; Linton, 1998; Lupton, 1997; Oliver, 1992; Williams, 1998).

Instead, people with disabilities have argued for a more social model of disability: one which shifts the obligation for change from the body and activities of the person with a disability to the built environment and social arrangements which are organized around norms of “able-bodiedness” (Barnes, 1998; Davis, 1998; Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare, 1998; Swain et. al., 1993). If the organization of the social actually generates the barriers and problems associated with disability, then the negative economic, social and personal consequences following from disability are neither natural nor inevitable. From the perspective of the social model of disability, exclusion and marginalization are not consequences of an individual’s impairment. Rather, they are the consequences of social discrimination (Barnes, 1998; Davis, 1998; Finkelstein, 1998; Morris, 1992; Oliver, 1992, 1996). Likewise, disability does
not refer to bodily impairments and limitations, it is the naming of the experience of oppression (Linton, 1998).

This paper begins from the success of the disability rights movement in having the demand for a social, rather than biomedical, model of disability constitute the basis for "anti-discrimination" policies within the legal, educational, healthcare, economic, and other social systems in Canada. For example, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1981) affords all Canadians the same protection from discrimination and the British Columbia Human Rights Act (Section 3) 1992 amendment) provides equitable access for people with disabilities in all the systems and core services in which other members of Canadian society are entitled to participate.

In principle, people with disabilities should have equal access to, and be able to participate fully in all of the services and institutions which other Canadians enjoy, including in being able to access and participate in post-secondary education.

Methodology

In keeping with the spirit of the disability studies commitment, I use an institutional ethnographic approach to shed light on the institutional processes and the complex of relations within which people with disabilities are embedded. The social organization of knowledge (Smith, 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999) and disability studies are analytically and theoretically similar: both share similar origins and insights. For example, Smith's approach originates in the women's movement's discovery that, as women, they had been consciously and deliberately excluded from participating in the formation of the intellectual, cultural and political worlds that they were living in (Smith, 1987). Disability studies, likewise, is both an area of political activity and an academic field of inquiry: contesting the oppression and exclusion of disabled people from the mainstream of social life including academia, and working to assemble a body of knowledge that reflects their own experiences, interests, and ways of knowing (see Davis, 1998; Linton, 1998; Morris, 1992; Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare, 1998; Swain et al., 1993).

Smith's distinctive social ontology and investigative approach, however, provide what I believe is a unique advantage: "a social
ontology not of meaning but of a concerting of activities that actually happens” (Smith, 1999, p. 97). By always referring back to actual practices and experiences that are anchored in definite material conditions “in time and in actual local sites of people’s bodily existence” (Smith, 1999, p. 97), the social organization of knowledge provides a way to “close the gap” between the everyday routine experiences of chronically ill students and the systemic inequities that disability can be seen to produce. For this reason, an expanded notion of “work” is of particular importance in that it directs the researchers attention to practices of reasoning and work processes that might not ordinarily be observable or reportable as work.

Institutional ethnography also requires a focus on the concepts and categories through which institutional processes are mediated. Both students and faculty acquire these ideologies as methods of analysing their own work and experience in order to make them recognizable within the institutional order. Ideological concepts and categories, however, also obscure some of the work processes of actual individuals, depriving them “of their necessary anchorage in an economy of material conditions, time and effort” (1987, 163).

Finally, institutional ethnography depends on an exploration of the social relations within which particular phenomena are embedded. The notion of social relations is used in “a practical manner” as a method of looking at how individuals organize themselves vis-à-vis one another (Smith 1995). Social relations do not refer to relations of an interpersonal variety. Neither do they ascribe causal agency to social structures or social institutions. Social phenomena and circumstances do not “just happen”; they must be actively brought into being through the concerted and coordinated activities of actual individuals in their different local settings.

In this study, I work through textual analysis as well as both in-depth interviews and informal discussions with students, faculty and administrative staff in order to examine how chronically ill women themselves know and account for their experience of requesting and obtaining accommodation, and how a “disjuncture” between the stated intentions of the policy and the actual experience of its implementation arises.
The Research Participants

Although it is not my intention to scrutinize chronically ill students as a group, it is useful to sketch in, very briefly, the background conditions of their lives and the varieties of their social situations. Of the six students interviewed, three were graduate students, two had completed undergraduate degrees, and one was working her way towards her first degree.

All but one of the students I interviewed applied for admission to university during or after the onset of illness. All but one returned as "mature" students; in their mid to late twenties, thirties and forties: times when most individuals expect to be independent and established. The onset and course of illness, for all of the students interviewed, disrupted their participation in the paid labor force: none of the research informants was engaged in regular, full-time, paid work. All of the research informants, however, performed modified work of some kind. Because alternate forms of labor-force participation do not lead to financial self-sufficiency, all the research informants relied on supplemental or alternate sources of income, i.e., from disability pension benefits (set at the social minimum), student loans, spousal and parental support, scholarships based on academic achievement, and grants from vocational rehabilitation programs for expenses such as tuition, books and equipment. For all of these students the experience of chronic illness either occasioned their return to university and/or influenced their chosen course of study.

Every informant provided multiple examples of the experience of requesting and obtaining accommodation; some good and some bad, some through formal channels and others through more informal ones. Indeed, one had never submitted to the formal institutional process for receiving accommodation; another had only identified as disabled occasionally and informally when assistance or accommodation was deemed absolutely necessary. While each informant had her own particular understanding of the aims and uses of the disability policy, and while each had experienced accommodation in completely different ways, they nonetheless all depended on some form of accommodation to remain engaged in their studies and they all referenced the university's policies and procedures in their ordinary talk about their
experiences at the university. Academic accommodation, for these interview informants, included extensions of time to complete assignments and exams, alternate media for assignments, attending full-time programs on a part-time basis, taking leaves of absence from programs of study, and so on.

The Social Relations of Accessibility and Accommodation

As stated in the introduction, students with disabilities are just one of the designated groups that have been targeted for special attention in relation to educational equity. In part, it is the result of a focus on growth and accessibility that fuelled the extraordinary expansion of Canada’s system of post-secondary education starting in the 1960’s (Bellamy & Guppy, 1991; Fortin, 1987). This expansion was based on a convergence of economic and social policy which proceeded on three different levels: first, the evidence in the economic and sociological literature suggesting that economic growth and greater social and political equality are dependent on higher levels of schooling and the democratization of access; second, the willingness of the federal and provincial governments, like governments of other western nations, to make education a priority; and third, the increase in the demand for higher education and public support for extensive spending in the educational sector (Fortin, 1987).

Federally, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, enacted in the 1980’s, enshrined the notion of “equitable access” and “right to accommodation” for specific groups of people, including those with disabilities. The Employment Equity Act of 1986, and the subsequent development of a framework by the Government of Canada to ensure the equitable management of human resources for institutions under its jurisdiction further encouraged universities to implement employment and educational equity programs (Jongbloed & Crichton, 1990). The legacy of the expansion of Canada’s post-secondary education system can be seen in the enactment of more flexible admissions policies and the development of short-term programmes, night courses, satellite campuses, and distance education facilities.

While the efforts to increase post-secondary opportunities have been, in the main, successful, there have also been some
limitations. As early as 1982, in a speech to a conference organized by the Council of Ministers of Education, the Honourable Bette Stephensen (then Ontario's Minister of Colleges and Universities) pointed out that "while we have dramatically increased the number of students attending post-secondary institutions, access to post-secondary education remains far from equal across all social and economic groups in Canada. . . . Accessibility can also be further improved for native peoples, part-time students, the handicapped, women and those who live a long distance from any post-secondary institution" (quoted in Fortin 1987, p. 4).

The context within which postsecondary education is delivered has also changed: the climate of "economic crisis" has meant reductions in government spending as well as new social and economic priorities (Bellamy & Guppy, 1991). These new "economic realities"—where resources and budgets for postsecondary education are more restricted—set perceived limits to the ideals of openness and accessibility. In the face of shrinking resources and the restructuring of education along the lines of the market system, productivity and accountability have more weight than openness and accessibility. In the current economic reality, the legal obligation to promote equitable access is seen as inherently incompatible with maintaining a quality of education that emphasizes such ideals as excellence, competition, and selection (Fortin, 1987). Organized in relation to the merit principle, these ideals are achieved through the application of increasingly stringent academic entrance criteria, higher standards of evaluation, and the imposition of quotas which, for the most part, fail to recognize any concomitant responsibilities to disadvantaged people (Hanen, 1991).

Universities, as with all other post-secondary education institutes across Canada, must still be able to demonstrate compliance with both the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and provincial legislation. However, as universities are required to implement disability policies, and as instructors are required to provide reasonable accommodation on the pain of creating legal liability for the university, there is a concomitant rise in resistance to the changes that such initiatives entail (Breslauer, 1991; Tancred, 1991). While the abstract criteria of social justice may be embraced, there are contradictions and difficulties that arise wherever such ideals must be implemented as a coherent set of tasks and prac-
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Making education more accessible and including previously excluded groups in higher education is sometimes perceived as disruptive to the existing institutional order of the university. In many instances the resistance to improving accessibility and inclusiveness is connected to what feminist and anti-racist critiques call the backlash discourse that seeks to protect the status quo and the social organization of the academy.

There are a variety of ways in which this backlash discourse or resistance to inclusiveness and diversity can be framed. For example, the changes and initiatives entailed by policies on providing academic accommodation can be seen as the encroachment of political and administrative concerns into a domain usually reserved for academics (Blackburn, 1991); in other words, diminishing faculty's previous autonomy and control over the content of curricula and methods of evaluation in their various disciplines. Epithets such as "politically correct" are often used to disparage the active implementation of particular initiatives, and arguments about the problem of censorship and the freedom to teach as one sees fit may be used to resist legislated or judicially imposed remedies (Blackburn, 1991; Hanen, 1991; Tancred, 1991). Questions about "standards" in canons of scholarship may be raised (Blackburn, 1991; Hanen, 1991; Tancred, 1991), reflecting the assumption that procedural changes required to accommodate disabled students may inadvertently confer particular "unfair advantages" for them. Increasingly fierce competition amongst students for limited funding and enrolment restrictions in particular courses of study, give weight to the argument that unethical students may claim to be "disabled" in order to gain "unfair advantages" over fellow students.

The resistance of faculty to the inclusion of previously excluded groups itself increases the disadvantages associated with disability. As with other affirmative remedies that seek to correct and compensate for past failures, disability policies that provide accessible and accommodating education usually only succeed in calling attention to and supporting group differentiation (Fraser, 1997). That is, they mark a particular disadvantaged group "as inherently deficient and insatiable," as "recipients of special treatment and undeserved largesse" (Fraser, 1997, p. 25). While policies and procedures that provide services, assistance and ac-
commodation for people with disabilities aim at correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements, the process of accommodation itself—i.e., repeated reallocations of "scarce" resources and providing special "exceptions" to the ordinary rules—also singles out disabled people as targets of resentment. Where many students generally struggle financially, academically and physically to complete their programs of study, procedural changes and "exceptions" to the ordinary rules for one group of students may be interpreted as unfair to those students who do not have similar recourse.

This means that for students who are chronically ill and who are pursuing an education, material disadvantage will be experienced in combination with social stigma based on the perception that disabled students are inherently different from "ordinary" students: that they pose an unnecessary burden on scarce educational resources and are intrinsically needy and flawed. It is within this climate that the measures adopted by universities, to ensure the fair and consistent treatment of people with disabilities, must be understood.

Disability Policies—Rules and Procedures

Since the 1980's and 1990's, most universities have put in place services, resources, policies, procedures and systems of appeal that are designed to ensure the fair and consistent treatment of people with disabilities, enabling their participation in all aspects of university life. While the obligations of the university are situated within a legal framework (provided by The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 15 (1)), local policies have considerable flexibility in spelling out a more informal system of mutual obligations, responsibilities and procedures (for both the "university" and the student) designed to provide "otherwise qualified" disabled students with "reasonable" opportunities to access and participate as members of the university community, at the same time that they protect the university from unreasonable expense or "undue hardship" and from compromising or lowering academic standards.

Just as legislation provides the framework for disability policies and policies on accommodation, the definitions of "otherwise
qualified student," "disability," "undue hardship" and "reasonable accommodation" are similarly derived from the meanings and uses of these terms in juridical contexts. Academic accommodation, which consists in "reasonable measures," is usually defined as a modification or extension of university resources, or of teaching or evaluation procedures, which are designed to accommodate the particular needs of an otherwise qualified student with a disability. Accommodations themselves can be accomplished through activities of adapting, modifying, substituting, or deleting components of a particular course, assignment or examination that would otherwise be discriminatory on the basis of disability, only as long as the student meets established institutional standards in accordance with course requirements. Alternately the university may provide access to material resources of equipment (i.e., computer software, tape recorders, etc.) or extra time in order to compensate disabled students for the difficulties and limitations that their disabilities entail. In all situations, regardless of the type or degree of disability, accommodations are intended to conform to academic principles without causing the university "undue hardship."

Both the concepts of "undue hardship" and "reasonableness" are intended to preserve essential course requirements, maintain academic standards, and limit accommodation to those activities which do not fundamentally diminish the operations of a program or pose a financial burden sufficient to seriously undermine the existence of a program or service. Undue hardship is always defined from the institutional point of view and it constitutes the technical means—i.e., evidence or proof of the "undue" effort or cost prohibiting the provision of accommodation—by which the university protects itself from legal liability for failure to accommodate: the university is legally obligated to accommodate the disabled student up to, but not beyond, the point of undue hardship.

While the systems of appeal and requirements may vary, most policies are in agreement that (1) students must identify themselves as disabled, (2) they must supply medical documentation where appropriate, and (3) they must individually arrange the accommodation with each instructor in each individual course.

Each of these three procedures is fundamental to any type
of accommodation, regardless of whether or not it proceeds as part of the formal organizational process as outlined in an official university policy or as an informal arrangement between the student and instructor. The first procedure, self-identifying as disabled, sets the disability policy in motion. The next procedure, supplying appropriate documentation, provides the means by which the university ensures that only properly eligible students with medically verifiable disabilities be accommodated or provided with assistance and/or other services. The third and final procedure, negotiating and arranging the actual accommodation with each individual instructor, allows the student and the faculty member to "individualize" the accommodation to suit the student's unique or distinct needs, in a manner that is consistent with academic principles. The responsibility of disabled students to actively arrange and negotiate accommodation intersects with the university's responsibility to maintain academic standards, preserve essential course requirements and limit accommodation within the available resources of the university to provide them. In other words, the student provides suggestions and alternatives for accommodation which may be modified to the extent that they contravene academic principles.

Taken together, the university's policies, procedures and resources constitute an administrative disabilities apparatus that manages the "needs" and "problems" encountered by students with disabilities, usually by providing some form of service or accommodation. The services and accommodations provided through the disabilities apparatus are intended to foster the full inclusion and equal participation of students with disabilities in all aspects of university life, in accordance with human rights legislation. The rules and procedures of disability policies are also designed to ensure that academic standards are upheld, that the competitive conditions for academic achievement are preserved, and that the operations of the academy are not undermined. In other words, disability policies lay out a set of procedures—i.e., self-identification of disability, supplying appropriate documentation, and negotiating accommodations with individual instructors—which are intended to reconcile the interests and relevances of the law with the interests and relevances of the academy.
Academic standards—which are organized around practices of competition amongst students for hierarchically ranked grades, positions in programs with limited enrolment or scarce funding, and which are crucial in the credentialing of labour power—require students to demonstrate mastery of the same body of knowledge under the same kinds of conditions. At best, modifications to established practices of evaluation or conditions of testing are perceived as a lowering of academic standards; at worst, they are perceived as unfair. For chronically ill students, therefore, ongoing participation in postsecondary education hinges on practices incompatible with standards of excellence, selection and competition in the academy.

For the university, accommodation is comprised of an objective and definite set of institutional practices that link up with and are designed to actively accomplish the legal duty to accommodate as it is contained within human rights legislation. From even a cursory description of chronically ill students' experiences, the process of accommodation is not confined within the boundaries of the officially sanctioned organizational process: accommodation, as it is understood and spoken by them has a much more contingent, uncertain, informal and personal character than is stipulated by disability policies.

The Individualization of Accommodation

The problem for chronically ill students arises as their “needs” and wants are seen to differ from the institutional items and privileges that can be routinely offered. Unlike students whose disabilities can be accommodated through a one-time expenditure of funds (i.e., students who simply need access to a building, or who require a piece of specialized adaptive equipment), chronically ill students require accommodations that must always be negotiated, adapted and arranged with each individual instructor. This is the process that is referred to as the individualization of accommodation.

RI#4: “I did have to request accommodation, and it’s interesting how each teacher was so individual... one of the things that I found was that if there was someone who was disabled in the class before you,
then your teacher automatically assumed that you required the same accommodations that the other person did. So, sometimes that would work very, very well, but no two people with arthritis are the same, just as no two people are the same with MS. And if you had a teacher who really couldn't process that you weren't the same as that person, then you ran into conflict, you ran into this big barrier because you had to try and educate as you were going along and also trying to be seen as an individual and not this other person who might have been brighter, or more creative (laughs), or a talker, or whatever, but not you . . .”

RI#5: “So with some instructors I've found that I can do assignments in different media, and I could videotape with a classmate one of my assignments. With another class I audiotaped them. Those are really new composition strategies for me, and they do take time and they do take patience. I’ve had some instructors say—no way, there's no negotiation here, it's against policy, we don't know how to mark it, because it doesn't follow the typical university strategies and policies. And they were not helpful at all.”

RI#2: “What really struck me as odd is the fact that other people must have the same problem with finding the right kind of accommodation. You know, where it works for the student and doesn't mess things up with the professor. I know other people must have the same problem and yet there's no communicating it. It’s like everyone keeps to themselves with that knowledge.”

RI#1: “I usually came up with a plan myself, not expecting people to come and cater to my needs, and they were very accommodating.”

RI#3: “I've learned, you know, I wouldn't have gone in as a part-time student, I'd get in and then deal with it. I'd get in as a full-time student and then I'd deal with it. Now, I've become quite politically savvy in terms of, you know, manoeuvring myself around all this bureaucratic crap . . . And I must say, they've been genuinely accommodating to me, personally, on the basis of my disability. They've made it easier for me to just concentrate on what's the most important thing, which is getting into my studies”

Although each informant provides a different explanation for the experience, all refer to a similar exchange between the
individual and the institution: where the student, as an applicant, presents her wants or "needs" for the items and privileges of the university's services. Typically, the individual is disaggregated into program terms as a set of referrals to be made or equipment to be provided. The simple precept that similar cases be treated similarly, however, stops being simple at the point of institutional action. As the excerpts above show, the routine implementation of the rules and procedures of accommodation have different material outcomes for different students: some are rewarded, others are penalized.

For the informant in the first excerpt, the "individuality" of each instructor appears as the cause of the unending struggle to find an acceptable accommodation. For the second, the problem consists in the instructor's lack of familiarity with evaluating course work in an alternate medium. The third student assumes that she has not yet discovered the correct or proper kind of accommodation. The fourth attributes her success to her own competency in "coming up with a plan." Finally, the fifth informant has become "organizationally literate": she is able to use her knowledge of how the university works to present her own "needs" and wants in a way that conforms to the interests and agendas of the university. Although they are not ordinarily considered to be observable or reportable as "work" in the organizational context, in each instance, chronically ill students are engaged in actual work processes, i.e., of educating their instructors, learning to work in alternate media, seeking better types of accommodation, "coming up with a plan" for accommodation, and "manoeuvring through the bureaucracy." These work processes are understood by the university as the "individualization" of accommodation to suit each disabled student's "unique needs."

The success of the institutional encounter does not hinge solely on the personal characteristics or skills of the applicant. Rather, it depends on the social position of the applicant, the viable alternatives available to the applicant, and the degree of complementarity between the "needs" of the individual and the services and privileges offered by the institution. Those individuals whose interests and agendas most closely coincide with those of the institution are accommodated successfully. Alternately, those individuals who have other resources, or who are able to
adapt their own skills and capacities, will also eventually reach agreement on accommodation.

As "work," the negotiation of an accommodation is anchored in definite material conditions, it takes place in 'real time.' Student's resource conditions are especially consequential for the success of the institutional encounter. Those students whose resources were limited tended to be less successful than those with abundant resources. Indeed, during times when the disease process was exacerbated, informants supported by spouses or parents were able to re-take courses, take terms off, forego grants, or drop out of their studies mid-term without experiencing serious financial consequences. Informants dependent on student loans or fixed incomes were not so fortunate.

It is important to remember that public policy, of any kind, represents the commitment of important resources, not as a single "moment of decision" but, in a continuing pattern or network of distributions and allocations that must be sustained over time (Schaffer and Lamb 1981, 8). The limits of organizational resources to provide services and accommodation are already anticipated in the concept of "undue hardship." The decision to accommodate proceeds mainly on the basis of precedence where the university is familiar with, or has already encountered, the numbers and kinds of accommodations that students with disabilities might request. As they negotiate and arrange accommodation with individual instructors in their particular courses, the actual requirements and "needs" of chronically ill students are subordinated to the kinds of accommodations and services to which the institution or the instructor is already habituated. As such, disability policies and the practices of accommodation are intended to be responsive to the "needs" and requirements of disabled students, but only insofar as the resources and established practices of the university allow.

Depending on the differences between students, and the way in which each individual instructor takes up and uses the institutionally organized concepts and categories, disability policies are activated and accommodation unfolds with varying degrees of success or usefulness. The lack of "fit" between chronic illness and the organizational framing of disability gives rise to the extra "work" that is needed to negotiate and arrange reasonable or
acceptable accommodation in every course and with each instructor. These work processes are understood by the university as the "individualization" of accommodation to suit each disabled student's "unique needs." In practice, however, this individualization appears more as means of shifting the responsibility for change from the university to the student.

Foucault writes that "individualization appears as the ultimate aim of a precisely adapted code" (1977, p. 99). Indeed, the individualization of accommodation effectively compartmentalizes decisions about academic accommodation to particular situations and specific students and instructors. Therefore, the more difficult procedural changes entailed by academic accommodation are never "shared" amongst the disabled student population in the way that physical changes to the landscape, or the acquisition of specialized adaptive equipment can be used by many disabled students.

The individualization of accommodation also forecloses the setting of general institutional rules of precedence. Compartmentalized to specific students or situations, general procedural changes and modifications to teaching and evaluation practices are unlikely to become widely accepted or taken for granted as ordinary everyday practices. In other words, individualization omits academic accommodation from the established institutional agenda. Without general familiarity as to what "counts" as reasonable or acceptable, both students and faculty embark on an institutional encounter that is novel and uncertain. This is why, in the excerpts above, students talk about being denied accommodations previously deemed acceptable and vice versa.

Because institutional decision-making tends to proceed on the basis of rules of precedence and established institutional agendas, individualization is also a means of preventing "loopholes" and avoiding the unnecessary expenditure of institutional resources. By performing the "work" of putting forward suggestions for accommodation, providing alternatives, and actively negotiating the accommodation students are required to continually adapt themselves to the institutional items and services. Likewise, faculty also perform the "work" of engaging with the students, considering the student's suggestions, and perhaps even modifying or changing their own teaching and evaluation practices.
Together, the coordination of the work of students and faculty protect the university, as an institution, from the "critical impact of the wear and tear" of continual adjustment and readjustment (Schaffer & Lamb, 1981, p. 8). Where students must adapt themselves to the institutional items and services, the existing social organization of the university is preserved and maintained.

At the same time that individualization of accommodation requires students to "work"—i.e., the work of petitioning the instructor, negotiating and securing an acceptable and reasonable accommodation, providing education on issues relating to illness, and enduring the heightened visibility of their bodies or course work—it also reinforces and brings into being the institutional order, in compliance with the university's legal obligation to accommodate students with disabilities. By simply requesting accommodation, regardless of whether or not the accommodation is useful, or whether the individual subsequently drops the request, or develops ways or "games" for handling them, the chronically ill student is always participating in the realization of an institutional course of action that "counts" on behalf of the university's public display of good citizenship.

**Conclusion**

Smith's approach provides a unique way to investigate what she calls "the relations of ruling." University disability policies are a good example of textually mediated ruling relations that organize, regulate and coordinate the activities of students and faculty. Designed to reconcile the relevances of human rights legislation with the interests and relevances of the academy, the policy can be seen to produce an institutional order out of the conflicts, disagreements and resistances that characterize the process of providing accommodation.

This is not to say that accommodation never operates in the interests of disabled students. Students depend crucially on some form of accommodation to access and participate in postsecondary education. Yet in spite of the good intentions of policy-makers, faculty and administrative staff, accommodation depends on objective administrative—or ideological—practices that only selectively attend to disabled students requests and
demands. The same procedures that are integral to accountable administration and organizational decision-making, also operate to subordinate and cancel the needs and requirements of disabled students.

Accommodation, as it is spoken and experienced by chronically ill students, is not a standardized institutional "item" provided to disabled students; it is an institutional category under which a complex organization of work processes take place. These work processes, which proceed under the guise of individualizing the accommodation to suit each disabled student's "needs" can actually be seen to constitute an unfair, onerous, and even discriminatory process that undermines the full inclusion and equal participation of chronically ill students in their postsecondary educational studies.

The argument that disadvantage and discrimination may be consequences of institutional measures designed to produce fairness for particular disadvantaged groups, contradicts the taken for granted assumptions that lofty ideals can be legislated and that good rules will always have good effects. Yet the abstract criterion of social justice must always be understood as a set of coherent tasks and goals that are enacted in the actual local settings and circumstances of people's everyday lives. Even though they are organized and implemented in the interest of producing fairness for excluded and disadvantaged groups, equity policies and disability policies are necessarily bound up in relations of ruling. By interrogating the inadequacies of these policies, and showing how apparently beneficial practices may turn out to have negative or unintended consequences, researchers provide a place to begin to engage in oppositional work. They allow professionals, and those who are ordinarily objects of other's professional practices, to choose what kind of stance to take, and what course of action to follow, and thus disorganize the "ruling project as originally conceived" (Cambell & Manicom, 1995, p. 11).

Works Cited

Chronic Illness and Academic Accommodation


This article originates from a research study that explores 'what happened' to a 10-year-old child with Rett syndrome, who died from "severe malnutrition" according to a Coroners Service inquest jury. The inquest evidence analyzed, using institutional ethnography, shows that approximately one week prior to this child's death three health care providers (an emergency physician, a hospice volunteer and a home care nurse) conducted individual assessments of the child. Child protection workers were also involved. Textual analysis of the health care providers' records shows how the child was officially and textually constructed as 'dying from a terminal illness' in contrast to the subsequent Coroners Service finding. The authors argue that although professional and organizational texts are a routinely 'taken for granted' component of professional practice, they need to be understood as active in the relations of care or service provision. The article supports this argument by demonstrating how the home care nurse's response to the child was textually coordinated with the other two health care providers' actions and how this coordination resulted in the 'proper' enactment of a Do Not Resuscitate order, leading to courses of action or inaction resulting in the child's death. The lesson offered highlights the problems that can arise when textual realities routinely are given authoritative status and displace other forms of knowing in health care.
Introduction

Several years ago, a ten-year-old child with a disability—Rett Syndrome—died at the home of a family friend. At the conclusion of a seven week inquest, a Coroners Service jury determined that the child’s death resulted from “severe malnutrition as a result of inadequate nutritional intake over a period of time caused directly or indirectly by the actions of other persons” (Coroners Service Jury Recommendations, 1997, p. 1). In the weeks prior to her death, this child (whom we call “Nina”) had become the focus of a child protection investigation for possible parental neglect, which had led to her contact with three health care providers—an emergency physician, a hospice volunteer and a home care nurse—approximately two weeks before she died. While these three health care providers and approximately 17 other professional service providers knew about Nina during those two weeks, Nina died without any service intervention directed at responding to her malnourished condition. As a result, the circumstances related to Nina’s death garnered much attention from the professional communities involved together with the general public. One of the authors of this article, Nancy Bell, conducted research into ‘what happened’ to Nina for her Masters of Arts degree thesis. In drawing from her work, this article addresses the topic of the routine use of health care records, or ‘texts,’ in the provision of medical services and the possible implications for patients.

During the weeks prior to her eventual death, Nina lost a considerable amount of weight. In retrospect, it appears this weight loss may have been related to her childcare worker’s absence over a six-week period. The childcare worker had become ill and unable to continue with her daily responsibilities, which included feeding, dressing and transporting Nina to the school Nina attended as a full time student in Grade 3. At the school, the childcare worker was also employed as Nina’s teacher’s aid, assisting with the implementation of Nina’s independent educational plan. On the day the childcare worker returned to care for Nina and took her to school after both person’s four week absence, a concerned community citizen phoned provincial child protection social workers to report Nina’s emaciated condition. This contact resulted in health care provider and social worker
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involvement. Approximately two weeks later, Nina died at the home of her mother’s friend who lived in a nearby community. In response to the circumstances related to Nina’s death, a number of official investigations ensued. Rather than addressing those investigations, what was found or what went wrong, however, our article queries what can be learned about ‘what happened’ from the health care providers’ records generated immediately prior to Nina’s death.

Our article is premised on the notion that health care provider records are central to professional work processes, including therapeutic interactions, to the extent that the practitioner may completely overlook, or underestimate, their impact. These records may be designed to support professional practice, for example, by jogging the practitioner’s memories about the essential elements of an assessment. Besides their clinical uses, records and record-keeping involves the practitioner in multiple and layered organizational actions (Campbell, 1994; 2001). For instance, the categories of an organizational record, common to structured ‘forms,’ may refer to features of a patient’s story that allow the practitioner to establish eligibility for a particular treatment or service. Moreover, an organizational form may become part of a process of accounting for agency activities and their costs, laying the groundwork for efficient handling of this patient’s circumstances. Information from one organizational form may be aggregated with others, offering the possibility of more general, statistical description of patients like her that is useful for a large number of organizational decisions (Rankin, 2001). The development of information systems of this kind is a special field of competence. But in any health or social service agency, after a system is implemented it is up to the practitioner to incorporate the use of these forms and records into her work processes. Just how that happens, and with what results, we believe is a matter for inquiry. Institutional ethnography is a useful methodology for such inquiry.

Our article takes up how the three health care providers who saw Nina approximately two weeks before her death (each person conducted one assessment) came to know and respond to her as a child dying from a terminal illness, in sharp contrast to the Coroner's Service jury’s retroactive finding that Nina’s death resulted from
“severe malnutrition.” Institutional ethnography allows us to display how the texts generated by the health care providers as they recorded involvement with Nina (and her mother) brought the health care providers, all of whom had no or brief telephone contact, into relation with each other. In our analysis, we show how the health care providers and, in particular, the home care nurse, incorporated those texts into their practices and how Nina’s relationship with them altered as she became known to them as ‘dying from a terminal illness.’ As this article will demonstrate, Nina disappeared from the attention of the health care providers, whose work processes centred upon the ‘proper’ use of texts in compliance with related policies and practices.

Our analysis also demonstrates how an enacted Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order—a culminating and highly significant text—provided an authorized view of Nina as ‘dying from a terminal illness’ and guided the remaining course of professional intervention, redirecting the medical and child protection investigation focus from concern about neglect and Nina’s malnourished condition to the provision of palliative care. In arguing that texts objectify people, suppressing their subjectivity, we illustrate how Nina did not receive medical treatment for her malnourished condition that she urgently required but how, instead, she became the objectified focus of a palliative care intervention.

Theoretical/Methodological Framework

A conventional understanding of the reading and writing of health care and other professional/organizational texts is that people write in them simply to record what happens or what they observe. Other people read them to find out ‘what really has happened’ and what has been observed. That is, the traditional sense of such texts is that they convey factual information, professional judgements, and so on, from here to there, reporting and communicating among people who have some authorized need to know. A text’s status as factual is often not questioned unless it is somehow improperly completed. Often, health care providers omit noting the relational aspects of texts.

One of the central themes in institutional ethnography is the “phenomenon of textually mediated communication, action, and
social relations" (Smith, 1990b, p. 209) and the way in which texts, as objectified forms of socially organized knowledge, permeate every aspect of our daily lives, including professional practice. Elaborating on this notion, Smith contends that texts should be understood as "speakers in a conversation" that readers enter when they engage with a particular text. Smith claims that knowledge, and the use of knowledge in textual form, coordinates activities among professionals and within organizations. Rather than assuming that words and ideas arranged in textual form can stand alone, the notion of a conversation implies a relation that is being enacted among writers and readers in which the text, too, is consequential and, as Smith suggests, active. Institutional ethnography makes use of Smith's theory of the social organization of knowledge (1990a and b, 1999) to query the factual reading of such texts. Methodological interest in the social relations of texts creates a capacity to learn new lessons from studying their everyday use.

Institutional ethnography also provides a particular method of interrogating the objectivity of such taken for granted use of texts and of textual information. Smith has written that "the artifice of the text detaches it from the local historicity of living and activity, or it seems so" (1999, p. 135). Institutional ethnographers, on the other hand, understand texts to be socially organized, products of actual people, and situated in time and space. The making of any text is "work done in actual settings by one or more people and as part of a course of action, whether of an individual, a group, an organization of some kind, or of an extended social relation concerting the activities of many" (Smith, 1999, p. 135). The people who enact texts, and their particular uses of the texts and the multiple purposes to which a text is put are all material for the analysis. This insight also offers the ground for an inquiry into the text as a social product—contributing to the social relations of a setting or settings.

We have already alluded to texts as part of conversations among those people who complete and refer to them. One of the features of textual conversations is that they standardize the almost limitlessly various understandings of readers; that is, they bring a similar understanding of what is read about to all those professionals who read the same text. This is, of course, one
of the key benefits of categorizing information that information systems make use of. Our article takes up this insight. As we shall see, the part of the health care providers' conversation in which Nina was constructed as 'dying from a terminal illness' standardizes how she was understood, just as Smith has suggested, "across multiple conversations in different local settings and at different times" (1999, 128). Whereas the routine reading of professional/organizational texts takes the objectivity of the text for granted, in treating the text as a substitute for the person described, we problematize this reading. We argue that as Nina became a textual object and her subjectivity suppressed, the texts of her care were substituted for the actual child living her life in the way she was. And, as the health care provider texts came into existence, creating an authorized view and identifying the 'proper' intervention, any alternative accounts and action were suppressed.

Analysis

The child protection social workers responsible for investigating Nina’s possible neglect required Nina’s mother to have her examined by a physician. Because Nina did not have a regular family physician, her mother took her to the local hospital's emergency department on May 16, two days subsequent to the child protection report. Following the emergency physician's examination and Nina’s mother’s request to not hospitalize Nina, the emergency physician recommended that Nina’s mother provide Nina with a nutritional supplement and return five days later for weighing. On May 18, Nina’s mother contacted a volunteer at the local hospice society to report (according to the hospice society records) that the emergency physician had described Nina’s condition as a "terminal illness" and to request family services. Following this conversation, on May 20, the hospice volunteer contacted a community home care nurse to make a referral on Nina’s behalf. While there is conflicting evidence about the mother’s initial representation of Nina’s circumstances to the hospice volunteer, the emergency physician did not contradict the mother’s representation a few days later, on May 22, when he signed the DNR order. The piece of the analysis that we present in
this section, therefore, sketches the health care providers’ textual conversations briefly and illustrates the pivotal role in the textual construction of Nina as ‘dying from a terminal illness.’ We show how the home care nurse, in particular, drew from information recorded in other texts and communicated to her to constitute Nina’s situation as one in which, by following her organizational policy, she would properly enact as “preparing for a death in the home” (Coroners Service Inquest Exhibit 25).

We draw attention to the hospice volunteer’s initial work that inscribes language from the palliative care discourse into the textual conversation. The hospice volunteer made handwritten notes of her visit to Nina’s home on May 18, two days after Nina’s discharge from the hospital’s emergency department. These handwritten notes, located in the hospice society records on page 1 near the top of the page, state (with the date May 14 incorrectly referenced):

Dr. [H]: Saw [N] @ emerg. on Tues. May 14th. He has said her condition is terminal. He has asked to see her again on Tues. 21st.

(Coroners Service Inquest Exhibit 22)

On the last page of this four page record, the words “terminal illness” appear. Here is how the word “terminal” enters the textual conversation. It appears in the hospice society records (purportedly originating with the emergency physician) and introduces the palliative care discourse into the hospice volunteer’s subsequent telephone conversation with the home care nurse when she called to make a referral. The home care nurse referenced the telephone conversation, dated May 20, in the home care nursing records as “T/c from hospice worker [SP] [phone number] regarding HNC referral for [Nina]” (Coroners Service Inquest Exhibit 23). This telephone conversation, recorded in home care nursing records prior to the home care nurse’s home visit on May 21, guided her work. Her notes refer to Nina as “dying,” for instance. The home care nurse’s choice of what to record can be traced to the health care record’s categories originating from the provincial and local health care policies that established the criteria for palliative care. Those particular palliative care policies provided the ‘lens’ through which the home care nurse conducted her assessment.
Ten year old girl—who is dying from Rett syndrome apparently was diagnosed [with] disease at 18 month states mother needing support re: care of child—child apparently not eating only taking sips of [water]— + sleeping for hours at a time—Hospice worker states mother needing to have [Nina] weighted tomorrow and was hoping that Rn could visit + do weight—otherwise was having to take child to hospital to be weighed—child apparently unable to stand and weighs approx 22 lbs

(Coroners Service Inquest Exhibit 23)

Note the word "disease" written on the second line. This word fits within the provincial health care policy criteria, for example, that establishes certain signs and symptoms or conditions, including the commodious category “other end-stage diseases,” that indicate when palliative care is appropriate. To ‘see’ Nina’s condition as a disease and link it with other information such as “dying from Rett syndrome,” “not eating,” “only taking sips of water,” “sleeping for hours at a time,” “unable to stand,” and “weighs approx 22 lbs” supported the construction of a child who was “dying.” This textual construction affirming Nina’s supposed need for palliative care happened very quickly despite the vagueness of the phrase “dying from Rett syndrome”—her disability since she was 18 months old—which did not explain what aspect of Rett Syndrome appeared responsible for Nina’s condition. Also notable in its absence is any reference to the “possible neglect” of Nina, despite the information provided by Nina’s mother to the home care nurse that child protection workers had contacted her.

On May 22, when the home care nurse arrived at Nina’s home to conduct her initial assessment, she produced a DNR order form for signing by Nina’s mother as an initial step in the authorizing process. After viewing Nina and obtaining information from Nina’s mother, the home care nurse began to ‘fill in’ the categories in the organizational home care nursing records. The home care nurse’s competence in working in words and text allowed her to construct Nina as a member of the class or category “palliative care.” It is this work that objectified Nina. In the home care nursing record section “Assessment Data,” for example, she recorded words and phrases such as: “recent weight loss of 10 lbs over 2 months,” “gone from 32 lb to 21 lb,” “drinking liquids and taking
very small amount of solids,” “lying in fetal position,” “no verbal response,” and “grinding teeth.” In the section “other relevant data,” the first several categories direct the home care nurse to focus on Nina’s physical symptoms connected to her “illness;” these categories include the words and phrases: “medication;” “wound/skin;” “pain;” “signs & symptoms;” “medical supervision/follow up;” “elimination;” and “mobility” (Coroners Service Exhibit 23). While the home care nurse’s recording in the “pain” category states “mother feels [Nina] has no pain” (Coroners Service Exhibit 23), there is no additional information to indicate whether the home care nurse consulted Nina directly. Also absent from the record are words and phrases constituting categories that would require the home care nurse to record contextual information about Nina. These categories might include words and phrases such as: significant caregivers and others; school contacts; interests; medical and therapeutic contacts; and other professional involvement (ie child protection workers). Nina—the child who had attended school on a full time basis up to four weeks prior to the home care nurse’s assessment—disappeared as a subjective figure. Instead, Nina became textualized, a textual object.

Following the “Assessment Data” section in the home care nursing records is a form directing the actions required to manage a death and linking those requirements to the palliative care policies. This form contains various categories related to anticipated action such as “planning for death” and “who to phone if death occurs at home.” On that form, the following categories appear:

Aware of Diagnosis; Expectations—resuscitation;—death at home;—care expectations;—of physicians;—of home nursing; Options Discussed; Planning for Death; Who to Phone if Death Occurs at Home 1) Doctor will make house call or pt to hospital to be pronounced 2) Funeral Home notified 3) Others to call—eg. Minister, friend or volunteer to stay with family.

(Coroners Service Inquest Exhibit 23)

In ‘doing her work,’ the home care nurse completed this form and inserted information advising the reader that planning for Nina’s inevitable death had occurred. This planning occurred five days subsequent to Nina’s first contact with a physician about
her emaciated condition and prior to any 'ruling out' of possible neglect.

**The Do Not Resuscitate Order**

As it will become apparent, the DNR order was a central and key organizing text in the construction of Nina as a child 'dying from a terminal illness.' The authorizing process began when the hospice volunteer referred to Nina as “terminal” (in accordance with what Nina’s mother had reported about the emergency physician’s determination) and as a “ten year old girl who is dying from Rett Syndrome” (Coroners Service Exhibit 23). This process continued when the home care nurse went to Nina’s home on May 21 to conduct her assessment. While there is no information in the home care nursing records to demonstrate that the hospice volunteer had asked the home care nurse to initiate the enactment of a DNR order, those same records show home care nurse arrived at Nina’s home on May 21 with the DNR order form. The home care nurse ‘saw’ Nina as ‘dying’ and advanced this view in her own recordings beginning May 20. This advancement occurred despite the home care nurse’s recording made on that date that Nina’s “weight requires monitoring—as so little is known about Rett Syndrome unsure if wt loss is associated [with] progression of disease” (Coroners Service Inquest Exhibit 23). The home care nurse also made recordings that state “no doctors orders at present” and “[Nina] didn’t have a fam Dr . . .” (Coroners Service Inquest Exhibit 23). Despite this information, the home care nurse proceeded with arranging to have Nina’s mother sign the DNR order form on the same day the home care nurse conducted her initial assessment. This signing constituted the first step required in the order’s enactment.

The home care nursing records, with their form structure and predefined categories, guided the home care nurse in her professional work. In the Assessment Data section, for example, there is a category with the heading “projected treatment goals,” which contains a box with the words “palliative care.” The home care nurse imposed a handwritten mark in the box. On the next page, in a category entitled “Planning for death,” the date May 21 appears with the recording “DNR form started mother signed—given to Dr. [H] for signatures.”
Client 10 years old unsure what she understands. Mother, sister, brothers aware Rett Synd. Mother wanted [Nina] to die at home—wants no medical intervention (ie) tube feeds. Hospice worker involved. DNR form started. Mother signed—give to Dr. H. for signatures.

(Coroners Service Inquest Exhibit 23)

It appears that the home care nurse’s work on May 21 substituted for the emergency physician’s further involvement with Nina; an involvement that might have entailed a more extensive and thorough medical examination, hospitalization to employ an aggressive feeding strategy, and/or consultation with a medical specialist. These actions represented options left open at the emergency physician’s earlier assessment on May 16.

On May 22, however, the home care nurse assumed responsibility for weighing Nina and Nina did not return to hospital as the emergency physician had suggested. The home care nursing record for May 22 indicates that the home care nurse had a telephone conversation with the emergency physician, Dr. H., after she had placed a copy of the DNR order (signed by Nina’s mother) in his hospital box:

states he signed DNR = will return to HNC box at hospital—wanting RN to weigh [Nina] each visit (Tues–Thurs–Sat) to see what her wt. is doing and to provide support to mother.

(Coroners Service Inquest Exhibit 23)

Also on this date, the recording shows that the home care nurse notified the ambulance and coroner by telephone of Nina’s impending death (in accordance with organizational policy and practices, textually established). All participants in the conversation about the DNR order text appeared to treat the DNR order as the dominant interpretation. Again, Nina is not textually represented as a participant in the conversation and there is no textual reference showing that the home care nurse contacted the child protection workers to determine the status of the ongoing child protection investigation.

By May 22, six days after Nina’s visit to the hospital emergency room, Nina’s mother and two physicians had signed the DNR order. The DNR order was enacted and accomplished as an authoritative cap upon the construction of Nina as ‘dying from
a terminal illness.' We have seen how the hospice worker and the home care nurse took up courses of action that elaborated Nina's condition in ways that fulfilled the policy of palliative care. Having done so, a predetermined course of action was available and was followed, preparing for a "death in the home." This medicalized and textualized version of Nina subordinated other possible courses of action that might have addressed the problems with her weight loss. Her weight loss became associated with the diagnosis of Rett Syndrome, a disability she'd had since 18 months of age and the textual construction of Nina as a child 'dying from a terminal illness' undermined any interest in an alternative explanation for her malnourished condition.

According to what is recorded in the home care nursing records, the home care nurse did not see Nina after May 21 and the medical and child protection responsibility for investigating Nina's possible neglect was sidelined. The home care nurse received a telephone call from the Ministry of Social Services social worker on May 28, the day that Nina died. The home care nurse's recording suggests that the "fact" that Nina was dying and an enacted DNR order existed had already been conveyed to the social worker:

T.C. from [social worker] at Social Services—wanting to know if [Nina] is eating and concerned that competent person feeding her—made aware that [Nina] no longer eating/drinking—social services had been in contact [with][Dr. H] and aware DNR in place and [Nina] is dying—aware HNC will visit and support mother with dying process.

(Coroners Service Jury Inquest Exhibit 23)

While the home care nurse's words "will visit and support the mother" shows how attention had shifted to the mother and away from Nina as the palliative care patient, it also confirms that the home care nurse had not visited Nina's home prior to May 28 despite her several recorded attempts to arrange such a visit. The textual construction of Nina as a child 'dying from a terminal illness,' entrenched as an official and authoritative view, led the home care nurse to put various plans in place, such as phoning the coroner and ambulance, to support Nina's 'inevitable dying process' rather than ensuring her malnourished condition
was properly diagnosed, treated and monitored by a medical professional. The home care nurse's actions were mandated as proper fulfillment of the policy. 'Neglect,' the central concern of the child protection report, became officially disconnected from and invisible to the health care providers' agenda.

The DNR order form contains the typewritten statement "the above identified patient has been diagnosed as having a terminal illness, or is considered to be near the natural end of their life" (Coroners Service Exhibit 10). Indeed, the home care nurse's last recording states what will happen when Nina dies: "Emergency then will contact pathologist who will prepare for autopsy + will take brain sample for Rett research" (Coroners Service Exhibit 23). This DNR order affirmed and established the 'official view' of Nina as a child dying from a terminal illness, resulting in Nina's disappearance as a subjective child and replacing her with the objectified notion of a potential researchable condition upon her death.

Conclusion

We began by querying what could be learned about 'what happened' to Nina, a 10-year-old child who died from "severe malnutrition, through an analysis of health care provider texts generated approximately two weeks prior to her death. We have shown how the health care providers were brought into relation with each other as they activated texts common to their work processes and how Nina, as object, was brought into a textually mediated conversation in which she was constructed as a child 'dying from a terminal illness.' We displayed how Nina, who was extremely emaciated, was overlooked in this conversation and how Nina, as a subverted subject, was replaced by a constructed view, a category, an authoritative account that articulated her to the palliative care discourse.

We have learned how the provision of health care services can be seen as being 'properly' conducted and yet not result in the best possible outcome for a child such as Nina. Indeed, the health care providers generated an accountable paper trail from policy to practice, through organizational documents. But Nina did not receive the response she needed to address her malnourished
condition and her life was not saved. Constructed as ‘dying from a terminal illness,’ palliative care was ‘properly’ offered, subverting a child protection investigation and further medical investigation into the possible causes of her malnourished condition.

By using institutional ethnography as a method of inquiry, we were able to draw attention in our analysis to the power of texts and of professional practice that is text-mediated. We particularly note the inherent danger of objective knowledge, constructed within texts for managing and organizing health care services, having the capacity to subordinate and subvert a wide scope professional interest in a person requiring health care services. These are the lessons that our analysis of the health care providers’ texts offers to all service providers.

References


Antiracism Discourse: The Ideological Circle in a Child World

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Antiracism is a dominant discourse in contemporary societies. The understanding of antiracism, however, varies. Government, through its own textually mediated organization of apparatus, tends to homogenize the discourse. This paper is to demonstrate, by employing institutional ethnography, how a child’s act can ignite the socially organized textual engine to include the children’s world in the ideological circle of antiracism discourse dominated by the government. Institutional ethnography, as demonstrated in this paper, is a useful tool for social workers to deconstruct the textual condition in which social work practice is embedded. The ideological circle is a powerful concept to help social workers to understand our social location in the ruling relations of the society.

Introduction

Antiracism is a dominant social discourse in contemporary societies. The state with its control apparatus, a powerful player, tends to homogenize this discourse by containing the politicization of social discontentment rising from racism within a social administration paradigm. The intention is to maintain the existing power balance among different racial groups (Steinberg, 1997). However, as many scholars have pointed out, the understanding of race, racism and antiracism is far from homogenous (e.g. Bulmer & Solomos, 1999; Gilroy, 1999). In fact, different understandings of antiracism are always in competition. For instance, Payne (1997) notices that the pluralists’ and radical structuralists’ understanding of social work anti-racist practice conflict. Therefore, Gilroy (1999) contends that strategies against racism need not be homogenized either.
This paper will not discuss the actual meaning of antiracism nor will it address which strategies are more useful. Instead, the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the governmental discourse of antiracism trickles down as a bureaucratic response to a racist incident in the children’s world through a textually mediating process, and ultimately how governmental discourse homogenizes the social understanding of antiracism within its administrative parameter.

The analytic approach of this paper is based on institutional ethnography developed by Dorothy Smith, a Canadian feminist sociologist. O’Neill (1998) has demonstrated how institutional ethnography can be useful in understanding social work. In O’Neill’s (1998) article, he discusses a few major concepts of institutional ethnography, such as texts, ideology, social relations and discourse. Yet the concept of an ideological circle, which is the major analytic tool to be employed in this study, has not been fully explored. Ideological circle is largely a textually coordinated circular process, through which governmental ideology is filtered down to all levels of the society. Social service practitioners, who are a part of the ensemble of the governmentality of the state, i.e., means of control (Johnson, 1993; Popple, 1992), inevitably become actors who (very often unintentionally) help complete the ideological circle. Indeed, the social control function of social service practitioners is always intertwined with the ideological circle embedded in governmental policies.

The Case Study

The ideological circle of antiracism to be studied in this paper was triggered by an incident in the childcare center (the Center) of a multi-service community agency (the Agency) in a city of southern Ontario, Canada. One day, a girl about eleven to twelve years old came to the center to visit her stepbrother. The girl was black-white bi-racially mixed. A black child about four years old went to her and said, “I don’t like your face.” The incident was seen by a childcare worker who thought it childish behavior and ignored it. However, the girl shared the remark with her stepmother at home, who felt that it was a racist incident. She came to the childcare center and talked to the workers there. The
alarm bell was rung. The center found themselves caught in a situation that they did not know how to deal with.

Our society always has an ambivalent but generous attitude towards children’s wrongdoing. Some of the assumptive attitudes of children’s wrongdoing can be summarized as they are a.) so ignorant that they do not know what they are doing; b.) in a learning process so everything they do wrong is a result of the inadequacy of their significant others and of the socialization process; and c.) deserve more education rather than punishment. Under such assumptions, wrongdoing in the children’s world is forgivable and can be ignored if it is interpreted as meaningless. Racist behavior is one of those debatable acts of children, despite the fact that children can also be racist. When children call each other names, which may be negatively inferred to issues of color and culture, adults’ responses vary, depending on how they understand the children’s world. They may see it as childish and ignorant behavior and just ignore it, or they may treat it as a serious mistake and take action to stop it. Generally, concern with children’s inappropriate behaviors is normally treated as an educational issue.

In this case, racism is a major complaint that may politically be detrimental to the Center’s reputation. Also, the Center must react responsibly to a formal complaint from a parent; therefore, instead of taking the issue back to the children’s world, the Center is required to resolve it in a formal way. Nonetheless, the Center has no policy for appropriate reactions to this incident because the Agency’s policy on anti-racist behaviors is only set to govern the behaviors of adults, that is, staff and parents. However, as an organizational response, the Center decided to develop a set of policies, procedure and forms to deal with racial incidents among children. These texts were closely related to a set of criteria imposed by the municipal Children Service Division and used as a guideline for funding assessment.

Two key players, the childcare center service director (the Director) of the Agency and the consultant (the Consultant) from the Children Service Division, were interviewed. The analysis of this case study is based on these two interviews and all relevant textual materials, including: the center’s own policy, procedure and forms, the funding criteria, and a set of guidelines developed.
by the municipal government in responding to racial incidents in childcare service.

Theoretical Concerns: The Ideological Circle of Antiracism

As Smith observes, "discourse itself is a textually mediated social organization" (Smith, 1984, p. 65). As O'Neill (1998) points out in institutional ethnography, texts means "not only documents such as legislation, organizational policies, and procedures, but also the social relations which flow from such documents" (p. 132). The state is one of the major actors of this social organization because government, through its apparatus in different levels, is expected to exercise its power to not only endorse anti-racist policies but also monitor their actual practice. To actualize such practice, a set of procedures and methods of thinking and reasoning about social relations and processes in relation to antiracism is needed.

The institutionalized social discourse becomes a type of ideology as understood in a Marxist framework (Smith, 1990, p. 35). To govern appropriateness in social relations and processes, the state has to exercise its monopolized and exclusive power to put its favorable ideology in practice through legislation. A discursive practice is formed through the creation of various documents, such as acts, policies, and reports. Very often this discursive practice not only reifies but also maintains an ideology of the group in power. In Canada, the anti-racist ideology of the state is expressed in the passage of a series of policies and legislation which consolidate a discursive practice of antiracism, such as: Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Human Rights Act, Multiculturalism Act and many provincial human rights codes.

The inter-relation between these documents creates an encompassing effect on social relation regarding antiracism. Social relation, instead of just a set of social relationships, is a step toward understanding how people in different sites are organized which can be used as a tool to do the investigation (Smith, 1995). The reason why social relation can function as a tool for investigation is that, as Smith (1999) suggests, the organization of social relation is regulated by texts. The coherence of each of these texts depends not only on its compatibility with its local context, but
also its consistence with other texts used in different sites for the same ideological purposes. In a hierarchical social relation, texts formulated at superior levels often have a governing effect on texts written in the subordinate level.

This process can be coercive. In anti-racist discourse, many governmental policies and acts have been "trickled down" to the lower level of non-governmental social organizations such as social service agencies, which rely on government funding. This can be done through various channels, such as: mandatory inclusion of the anti-racist (or equity) spirit in organizational policy, funding policies such as direct funding or purchase of services from governments, and workshops and training programs to acculturate the anti-racist mentality. However, the humanistic nature of social service agencies itself always favors antiracism as well, obscuring the coercive nature of government policies and making the inclusion of antiracism policy a must-do of all these organizations. In turn, the hidden political implications of governmental discourse of antiracism may not be questioned.

To put policy into practice is problematic. The nature of many governmental policies and legislation may not be directly applicable in a real work/service setting due to their standardized focus and legal rhetoric. Each level of the organizational hierarchy may have its own interpretation of the social policy set in the legislation (Yan, 1998). Lower level organizations have to elaborate these formal documents into their own operational guidelines or organizational policies and procedures intended to regulate the activities of their members—staff, volunteers and service recipients. The actualities in which members of these organizations are living will be framed by these policies and procedures. However, lived actualities are so complex that not all details need to be documented. Forms and guidelines are developed to record/report only those that are relevant.

By applying these forms and standard recording documentation, people's real life become textual material for various purposes, one of which is to sustain the original ideological discourse embedded in these texts. In turn, an inter-textual relation among governmental and organizational policies, procedures and other documents is constructed as an ideological circle (Smith, 1990). A full ideological circle has two phases (Smith,
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1990): “an interpretive phase where events are analyzed as documenting an underlying pattern originating in a textual discourse” and “where the underlying pattern operates as part of the procedures for selecting, assembling and ordering these ‘facts’” (Smith, 1995, p. 173). In an organizational context, these two phases represent two simultaneous processes of the ideological circle (see Diagram 1).

Specification of Ideological Discourse in Context

The first phase indicates the process of Specification of Ideological Discourse in Context. In this process, the social ideological and political debate is trickled down as policy documents organizationally from government legislature to governmental departments. By employing their funding discretion or licensing power, bureaucrats filter the policy into documents that govern the acts of community agencies, which rely on government funding. Community agencies have to interpret the documents in accordance with their operational context and mission when they develop their own policy for their own service’s operation, regulating the acts of the frontline staff as well as the service users. Each of these organizational levels has to interpret the policy documents within a context that fits their operation as well as the ideology embedded in their service contracts with the government.

The Agency has already had a set of antiracism policies and procedures; however, they are never written to guard against the behavior of children. Hence, alternative resolution is needed to deal with children’s racist behaviors. Any alternative must comply with several requirements other than the laws of the society-at-large, which are always controversial concerning the treatment of children. In this case, both the provincial and municipal governments regulate the operation of childcare centers. For instance, to obtain a license of operation from the provincial government, centers have to comply with the Day Nursery Act, which contains no direct anti-racist clause. Since childcare centers are funded by the municipal government, they must follow a set of operational criteria (the Criteria), which have just been revised. According to the Consultant, two major revisions were included in the new Criteria.
Antiracism Discourse

Diagram One: Ideological Circle

Specification of Ideological Discourse in Context

Work-shops and training & Onsite monitor (contingent, regular one to two times a year) and Phone monitor

Public & Political Debates

Human Rights Code and Acts etc

Bureaucracy
- Provincial: Day Nursery Act
- Municipal: The Criteria The Guideline

Non-profit organization
- Procedure for Dealing with Racism Involving Children in the Child Care Centre
- Racial Incident Intake Form
- Checklist for Dealing with Racial Incident Form

Elaboration & Interpretation

Public & Political Debates

Human Rights Code and Acts etc

Bureaucracy
- Provincial: Day Nursery Act
- Municipal: The Criteria The Guideline

Non-profit organization
- Procedure for Dealing with Racism Involving Children in the Child Care Centre
- Racial Incident Intake Form
- Checklist for Dealing with Racial Incident Form

Elaboration & Interpretation

Departmental Reports

Interpretation & Summarization

Verbal report

Intake Form and Checklist

Diminishing of Actualities

Actual Behaviors and Interactions
First, a new five-level scale measurement of childcare center performance is established as one of the reference to consider the subsidy status. The third level is the minimum requirement. Although it is a five-level scale, the Consultant clarifies that there is no intention to push up centers’ performance in accordance with this scale. Instead, it is a tool to help centers to set goals and develop policy to go further. However, the Consultant claims that “I would be concerned if they (centers) didn’t want to go to the next step, but they certainly don’t have to.” This view is also shared by the Director who said, “If you are really committed to providing quality, then you are interested in doing it, right? You get serious about it. If you don’t care, then it becomes one of those where you check out the number three because that is what you need to have minimally. Some centers don’t care so they would do it that way. We really care.” Apparently, the scale unintentionally performs as a hidden incentive for centers to improve their quality of services. In this case, the Director sees the new policies and procedures as an effort in proving the excellence of the childcare center service of the Agency.

Second, with the prevalence of Antiracism ideology, four new articles related to Antiracism were added to the Criteria. In the meantime, to promote anti-discrimination in daycare centers, a guideline for daycare service (the Guideline) was developed by the Access and Equity Branch of the municipality, which is the watchdog of Antiracism in the municipal government. The Criteria and the Guideline are seen as supplementary to each other. The Criteria only offers general principles, while the Guideline provides extensive suggestions of actual anti-racist practice in daycare centers. According to the consultant, both the Criteria and the Guideline have major input from the Access and Equity Branch, which also organized most of the antiracist workshops for childcare center personnel.

In Canada, antiracism is an ideology embraced by all levels of government, despite the fact that people constantly criticize governments as not being committed to antiracism. Understandably, the Guideline endorse all anti-racist legislation and policies of the federal, provincial and municipal governments. Although the municipality does not have a bylaw on antiracism, the Guideline states clearly that “the City’s commitment to combating racism
and ensuring ethno-racial equity is outlined in the City’s Strategic Plan, the Social Development Strategy, the Employment Equity Policy and the Ethno-Racial Access to Municipal Services Policy.” Recently, the city has also incorporated a “Declaration of a Non-Discrimination Policy” in the contract for any organizations who supply goods and services to the city.

To formulate an alternative policy on children’s racist behaviors, the Agency decided to develop a new set of policies and procedures, which also includes a “Racial Incident Intake Form” and a “Checklist for Dealing with Racial Incident Form.” As the Director explained, this new set of policies, procedures and forms is based on the Guideline and the Criteria of the city. Centers are required to report any racial incident to the municipal Children Services Division within 24 hours. To report an incident requires a reporting structure because it is the Director who reports to the Children Service Division, but the Director is not always on the scene when the incident happens, and therefore a standard reporting format is needed for accuracy and future reference. The reporting system should fit well with the organizational structure, as well as be consistent to what the Criteria and Guideline propose. It can be systematically linked to the municipal’s internal reporting system. Consequently, standard texts, which can be used in different sites, are needed. The Racial Incident Intake Form provides the workers a replicable text to record incidents that have occurred in the lived actualities of the children in different childcare centers. This Form can be used in every site of the agency by every staff for every racial incident.

The Criteria also requires that “centers must have a posted written procedure in place to handle reports of racist incidents.” A written procedure should be specific to ensure a proper handling of the incident. To ensure minimum deviation, a checklist of steps to be taken is needed. As the Director said, “we can make sure all the steps are being followed because with racist incident, it can be so broad. What you do—and not to say those things are wrong—but you could forget to do something, because you don’t think of it. So it just makes sure that everybody knows these are all the steps.” When asked, the Consultant was also positive to the existence of the Checklist because it serves the purpose of leading the process in a correct direction. To follow the proper steps
of handling the incident is as important as the documentation. However, this step is not isolated from the incident report because it is part of the construction of the incident that will be reported to the consultant by the director. More importantly, to develop a standard step is part of the conformity to the Criteria, which expects centers to “have an established antiracism protocol.”

**Diminishing of Actualities**

The second process is the process of Diminishing of Actualities. The notion of public accountability demands a reporting system from the subordinate level to the superior level within an organizational hierarchy, i.e., between the government and community agencies, between levels of operation within a community agency, and between levels of operation within the bureaucracy. Each level has a different contact with the service users' lived actualities, which are used as the primary narrative for future interpretation (Smith, 1990, p. 159). The primary narrative seldom goes directly to all levels of the organization. Due to the social and organizational division of labor, each level has to rely on some standardized measure to report activities and observations of service users' actualities to the immediate superior level. The contextual and positional demands imposed on each level of actors in this process inevitably lead to a simplification of information as the primary narratives pass from bottom up. However, the simplification (or summarization) cannot fall out of the originated ideological discourse. Therefore, the whole textual system, including policy and procedures and forms, is framed as the ideological discourse defines it. Standardization of texts for reporting is crucial for collection of data from one level to the other, particularly when data collection involves multiple sites.

Consequently, the data and information generated from this reporting system simplify incidents that actually happened while sustain the ideological framework that is used for this simplification. The ideological circle is self-fulfilling, when the lived actualities, particularly those of everyday activities in the lower strata of the social organization, are being encoded into explanatory accounts forming the interpretative schema. The circle is completed when the interpretative schema is applied back to the system as
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the frame for actors in the process to extract the actualities back to the interpretation process (Smith, 1990). In turn, a taken-for-granted documentation system is established which reflects an "ordered world" of organizations, and even the ordered world of the society-at-large (Zimmerman, 1969).

These two processes not only complete the ideological circle but also put the unmanaged into a manageable format. With all the activities of different actors operating together, but mostly, in different sites at different times, standard texts are essential for coordinating, concerting and ordering their relationships. An inter-textual coordination becomes possible. Each stratum develops its own textual environment according to both the prevalent ideological discourse and the contextual concern. The inter-textual relation of different texts used to regulate actors from different sites makes ruling relations possible. The ruling relations are defined as "relations that rule, and people rule and are ruled through them" (Smith, 1999, p. 82). "The ruling relations form a complex field of coordinating activities" and "they are activities in and in relation to texts, and texts coordinate them as relations" (Smith, 1999, p. 79).

People develop texts to regulate others; the texts in turn regulate all people including those who develop the texts. Through the texts, the ruling relations hiding behind the texts exercise the will of the powerful in terms of pursuing an ideological discourse. Most inter-textual ruling relations do not start merely as a form of voluntary participation of participants at different levels of this organization process, but very often through engineering the reward and sanction mechanism by the state, which is in most cases funding. The textually mediated ruling relations actualize the embedded ideological discourse in people's real life. To achieve an effective inter-textual coordination, all texts that are developed and used in different levels have to fulfill two functions. First texts need to provide information for the immediate superior's own reporting function; and second, they need to maintain a coherence between the actualities and the ideological discourse. The first function is particularly important to satisfy the accountability of the actors in that particular level, while the second is used to help completing the ideological circle.

Interpretation is inevitable. People modify the policy when
they interpret the policy (Yan, 1998). Here, the meaning of interpretation is problematic. Different interpretations are possible in the process but two are particularly important. Firstly, interpretations framed within the ideological discourse initiate and then maintain the development of this process. The texts developed and used in the process are measures to ensure compliance of all interpretations with the ideology. Secondly, interpretations are positional-situated. People in different positions have different responsibilities, which demand a certain kind of perspective of seeing things. Also, the use of information is also different. As a result, people in different positions may see things differently, however slightly it may be. Nevertheless, the positional differences are manageable because of the commonalities of the ideology they share. This is particularly important in the investigation of organization of knowledge. The position that people take gives meaning to the action of the people in the inter-textual process and also confines but not necessarily determines the interpretation that people can make. Situating in different positions and levels, people encounter different actualities, the results of which may affect the specification and summarization processes. All actualities will eventually become part of the process of the ideological circle.

The incident and the follow-up activities are all about the lived actualities of people. However, it is difficult and unnecessary for the Agency to report the whole incident to the Consultant in full detail. Only part of the information will be selected for reporting. This information serves not only for the sake of reporting but also other purposes, such as to justify: a.) the compliance of the center with the Criteria requirement; b.) the actualization of the antiracism policy upheld by the municipal government; and c.) the quality of service that the agency is pursuing. The three texts developed by the agency are interrelated. The Intake Form tells what happened and who have been involved, which in turn, defines who should be followed up. As one of the questions of the form, the worker is to recall, “to your knowledge, has the child who received the mistreatment been subjected to similar mistreatment before? By the same children?” This kind of question also brings up historical facts that may be related to this incident. It
coordinates not only the activities of the current event, but also any past events.

According to the Checklist, the Director will call the program consultant (duty officer) taking serious occurrence report in the Children Service Division who takes down all information and disseminates it to the responsible Consultant. The preliminary report is always verbal. The incident will be classified into a type of incident and will be punched into the database of the Division. A brief report will be written. The Consultant, upon receiving the information, will contact the agency to further understand the incident. In the meantime, the preliminary report from the duty officer will be sent to responsible consultant and unit director for comments. Through this process, the living incident that took place in the center has already been simplified firstly by the worker who wrote the incident report; secondly, by the director who verbally reported to the intake officer; lastly, by the duty officer who wrote the preliminary report. However, no matter how simply they wrote, the story must be in line with the antiracist theme. Otherwise, the incident will never get to the top of the command and be recorded statistically.

The incident will be classified as a type of activity and a numeric meaning will be given for statistic purposes. It is not the nature of the incident but the number of incidents that matter in a governmental bureaucracy. Once a certain type of incident is shown numerically significant enough, action will be taken. However, action normally is mild. The Consultant emphasizes her role as an advisor rather than a sanction/reward giver. She also mentions that in previous history, the Division always took a supportive role to deal with this type of incident that is statistically significant. Workshops will be given to enhance the capability of agencies and staff in handling these incidents. Her responsibility is to help centers resolve the incident that they report and to upgrade their administrative capability for future incidents. The Consultant feels reluctant to imagine any negative sanction such as funding cuts.

Supposedly, the Consultant will be informed if any racist incident happens. However, the report to the Consultant should be selective. There is a hierarchy of incidents. Although the Consultant would like to be made aware of all incidents at the centre, only
issues involving adults will actually be reported. The incidents reported are ones that may be seen as social issues that need to be dealt with in a social domain. An incident involving only children may be treated as local issue and therefore, dealt with in a local context. The children's world and the adult world are never separate but, unlike children, adults have more roles to play in the social world, for instance, in this case, by bringing a "children's incident" to the public domain. The stepmother took the incident to the Center and might therefore generate a broader political debate from the local community to society-at-large if the incident was not handled well and brought to the attention of other community advocacy organizations. The consequence can embarrass both the Agency and the government and the impact can be disastrous to them.

However, it is exactly through the adults' involvement of bringing these issues to the social domain that the ideological circle of antiracism is reinforced. For instance, to this particular Agency, this incident not only demonstrates their commitment but also strengthens its mandate and stand on antiracism. As a result, the Agency tightens its own control on racist behaviors among its staff and service users. The same logic can be applied to the government engine. In order to protect the interest of the agencies and the governments, documentation is required in a format consistent with ideological discourse and organizational demands. The ideological circle is a form of self-protection for social organizations, from community agencies to the state. In turn, the inter-textual organization not only creates but also sustains a ruling relation of a particular ideology.

Although standardization has been promoted and institutionally built in, how to interpret racist behaviors can be problematic because no definition of racial incident can be absolute. According to the Criteria, a racial incident is defined as "prejudice or discrimination against people of different races and cultures manifested in the following ways: banter, racist jokes, name-calling, discourteous treatment, graffiti, threats, insults or physical violence. Racist attitudes can be subtle, covert, overt, and sometimes even unconscious." With all the policies and procedures and definitions, both the Consultant and the Director agreed that the interpretation of racist incident is difficult.
The Director relies on the frontline staff to scrutinize the actualities of the incidents and make a professional judgement on the nature of the incident. From the incident, we learn that such professional judgement is not easy. Any racist act depends not only on the manifested act but also on how people who involve in it perceive the incident. However, perception is not only positional but also personal. It is difficult to predict where personal perception will lead to the development of the event. With the policies and procedures in place as in this case, we may be sure that once someone, for instance a parent, activates the organizational process, all actors have to react correspondingly to their own organizational position. In turn, the textual engine of the social organization of antiracism will be ignited and run on its own course.

Discussion and Conclusion

To apply antiracism discourse to the children’s world is not a moral issue of good or bad. The need to uphold antiracism is unquestionable in contemporary society; yet, the understanding of antiracism can be varied. Apparently, the state tends to dominate the discourse and frames it within its administrative parameter. Through the intertextual process, the incident becomes not only a childish racial incident but also a social incident. The “racist” behaviors of children are dealt with no longer as a business of the children but of the adults, who then control, monitor and respond to children’s behaviors. Ultimately, through the textually mediated process, the ruling relation that governs antiracism in the adult world is diffused to all members of the society, including the children. The ideological discourse of antiracism is realized in the children’s world through the connective power of these texts. Through the new policies and guidelines, the children’s behaviors can no longer be ignored or forgiven without a systematic scrutiny by the adults who are responsible to take actions intervening in the children’s world. Each of the actors in this case, i.e., the parent, the worker, the Director, the Consultant and some other adults, activates this textual process with an intention of stopping some evils (in this case racism) from happening. Consequently, the children’s world becomes problematic in view of the ideological
discourse of antiracism. The actualities of children’s interaction become a subject of surveillance under the gaze of the state’s antiracist lens.

Three implications of this study emerge. First, it is easy to problematize the children’s world and impose a social control on it. The way to see the children’s world can always be problematic if we see it through the adults’ ideological lens. However, to decide what is to be problematized, we cannot ignore the fact that children may have a different world that needs to be respected. It is, therefore, important to engage the children in the process; their motive and understanding of racist acts should be understood from their own perspective. Education is the key for preventing racist behaviors and attitude.

Second, social workers and other social service practitioners all intend to do good, especially in relationship to our clients. As a profession with a mandate of social justice, it will be inconceivable for any social work practitioners to object to our role in combating racism. Nonetheless, if there is no homogenous understanding of antiracism, it is essential that we critically question the political implications of government policies that we are bounded by and implementing. The hegemonic nature of the state-controlled discourse of antiracism requires a critical mind to detect. The “liberal retreat” nature of the governmental discourse of antiracism is problematic (Gilroy, 1999; Steinberg, 1997). It ignores the power imbalance status quo and tends to conflate multiculturalism and antiracism. As Margolin (1997) reminds us, under the cover of kindness, with our inherent controlling nature, social work may turn good will into the opposite.

Third, to deconstruct has become a powerful analytic paradigm in postmodern welfare (Leonard, 1997). There are many ways to deconstruct the taken-for-granted conditions in which social work is practiced. Institutional ethnography offers a sociological tool for us to deconstruct one of the major unquestioned conditions of social work practice, i.e., textually mediated social organization. Policies, procedures, forms, and recordings are important to social work practice particularly in an era that so emphasizes legal accountability. To be accountable, it is important for social workers to follow policies and guidelines and to document our work. Zimmerman (1969), in his classic study,
however, demonstrates how social workers reinforce a stigmatization process embedded in the intake process through documentation. Therefore, while being accountable, social workers need to beware of their institutional role in the formulation of governmental ideological circle, which is tightly knit into the textual process. To break the circle, we need to understand it. As demonstrated in this study, with its emphasis on understanding textually mediated social relations, institutional ethnography is an effective tool for social workers to understand, evaluate and emancipate from the web of ideological control. As Yan (1998) argues, as autonomous professionals, social workers always have institutional space in the social policy process to modify policies to benefit our clients. Such optimistic view is possible only if social workers can critically understand where they are located in the ideological circle dominated by governmental discourse.

Reference


"Active Living": Transforming the Organization of Retirement and Housing in the U.S.

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We examine the transformation of the social institutions of retirement and housing in the US in the latter part of the 20th century. Using institutional ethnography we explicate a woman's experience relocating to an age segregated community. Her relocation is predicated upon ideological practices that reconceptualize retirement as "active living" and the construction of a setting in which retirees engage in this new lifestyle. We demonstrate the textual mediation of this ideological and organizational reformation through an examination of an advertising campaign undertaken by the Del Webb Development Corporation in the marketing of Sun City, Arizona. The advertising texts provide an ideological code to manage and reorganize at multiple sites the social relations of one segment of the housing industry under late capitalism.

In this paper we examine how texts enter into social processes to articulate and redefine the social organization of housing and retirement practices in the latter part of the 20th century in the US. We explicate one woman's experience of moving from Youngstown, Ohio, to Sun City, Arizona, in 1978, and in doing so, show how her activities are embedded in actual spheres of changing social relations which are textually mediated through advertising. The method we use is that of institutional ethnography. As institutional ethnographers we begin with an experience of a particular subject and the subject's experience becomes a point of departure. From there we seek to explicate that experience by discovering its social determinants. The subject's account of her experience leads us to a consideration of specific texts. (For a description of institutional ethnography see Campbell, 1998; Grahame, 1998; Smith, 1987. For works examining texts and social

We interviewed Ursula Roberts on several occasions about her experiences in housing herself and family over her life.1 We introduce her to you through a brief biography, and then we present her account of a specific period of her life when she moved to Arizona with her husband, Al, and took up residence in Sun City. The account is in the form of a reconstructed narrative that we compiled from her words. In the account she spoke of seeing advertisements about Sun City in the Youngstown, Ohio, newspaper. That led us to the Sun City Area Historical Society to recover some of the advertisements that she might have seen in the early 1970’s. We also examined earlier ads and present some of them in this paper. We read these ads as textual practices in the exercise of power that reconceptualize housing and retirement under advanced capitalism (Walker, 1995). We begin with the biography.

Ursula Roberts was born in 1917, the oldest of two daughters, and reared in a small town in Pennsylvania. During her childhood her mother was a housewife and her father was a sales manager for an automobile dealership. After graduating from high school, she attended college briefly and then began working for J.C. Penney. In 1938 she married Al Roberts, who began working for Ursula’s father. Ursula ended her employment when Al began working for J.C. Penney also, and within a few years they had two children.

During WWII Al worked in a defense-related industry, and after the war he sold groceries wholesale. In 1952 Al entered the insurance business as a general agent. He was quite successful and soon was running offices for a national company, Washington National Life Insurance. Since Al was frequently called upon to rectify troubled agencies, the family moved from city to city quite often. From 1952 until Al’s retirement in 1977, many of Ursula’s activities revolved around caring for her two children and her husband who had his first massive heart attack when he was 45. She was very active in country clubs wherever she lived, and
golfed whenever she could. She also maintained their households where they liked to have friends over for bridge, dancing, and dinners. Al had another heart attack in 1977 in Youngstown. We begin with Ursula’s own narrative at this point.

And the company told him to walk out and close the door and never walk back in again. He said he couldn’t afford to do it and they said, “Yes you can.” So they made all the arrangements and that was it. So anyhow Washington was very, very good to us and got us all settled back so we could have a nice retirement, and that was it.

Well he was on disability for a while, but not for too long. He went on disability when he was 50 because he wasn’t able to work and he couldn’t collect social security. And he had disability insurance, so he got a good disability pension, money every month.

We lived there in Youngstown for five years, and then we came out here after he retired. He was probably retired for a year before we moved out here. I know he was. Before he became ill the last time, I wanted to come out to Sun City. They were advertising Sun City a lot then in the papers. I didn’t want to live in Youngstown for the rest of my life ‘cause I didn’t like Youngstown, period.

Now Al’s working just before his whole episode, before he had to retire, and we were going to go to New Orleans to a convention; and I said, “Well, why don’t you take three weeks off, and we can drive out to Sun City,” ’cause it was advertised in the paper, “and I would like to see it, and maybe it will give us an idea, as to maybe we would like to retire out there when you become 65.” And he said, well, he said he couldn’t take the time off. He just couldn’t take three weeks and he said, “I don’t think it’s worth our time going out there unless we could take three weeks because, you know, it’s a long trip out and then go down to New Orleans, be there a week or so.” So he said no. So I said, “Well, okay.” Well then in the meantime, he had his heart attack and gets sick. And once he got well he wasn’t going back to work; and I said to him, “Well, why don’t we take the time now and go out and take a look?” So he said, yes. So we drove out here; and we still went the convention in New Orleans. ‘Cause this happened so fast that it was unbelievable, from the time he said no to, you know, he got sick so we still were able to go to that convention in New Orleans. So that’s what we did. We drove out here then we went to New Orleans.

We came out here and saw a house and we talked about buying it and, you know, this was the same time as Youngstown Sheet and
Tubes was going down the drain. And that place closed up, you know. See Youngstown was a sheet, a steel town and they just closed up real fast. And we had a lot of friends that worked for Youngstown Sheet and Tube. You know, they were executives and they all lost their jobs just like that. But anyhow it went down the drain and we knew when we came out here so we were afraid to buy a house out here for fear we have to sit on that house for goodness knows how long. And we had made up our minds we were not going to move out until we'd sold our house. We put it on the market. And we sold our house in three weeks time.

So we got on a plane and then we flew out and the house we'd liked was sold. And so this street was brand new, wasn't even completely in yet. And, the man that had this house, he decided that he wanted to move to Florida. He didn't want this place. He was living here in Sun City and he went to Florida. So we came out here and bought the house from this man. We didn't finance this house. We paid cash for it, and so that was end of that.

This section up here, this area up here was just finished in 1978. When we moved into this house the streets weren't quite finished yet. So it was all brand new up here. The country club was brand new. They had just finished the clubhouse when we moved in. So everything was brand new when we moved here, you know. We had a nice life here. It was very enjoyable.

Ursula Roberts' narrative above tells us how she enters and connects with relations which are not the site of her everyday world, but which coordinate her activities and courses of action with regard to housing translocally. In other words, Ursula Roberts reads, talks about, and acts upon the printed advertisements about Sun City in her local Ohio newspaper.

The Del Webb Development Company (DEVCO), which began construction of Sun City as a suburban housing development in the desert outside of Phoenix, Arizona, in 1959, heavily marketed this project. The grand opening of Sun City occurred over the weekend of the 1960 New Year and an estimated 100,000 people attended the three-day event. Beginning in January DEVCO, in conjunction with a locally based advertising firm, Garland Agency, conducted an extensive advertising campaign by producing thematic layouts in local area newspapers and in other newspapers, newsletters, and national magazines. Some of the newspapers included *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*,
the Los Angeles Times, and such Ohio newspapers as the Columbus Dispatch, the Cleveland Plain Dealer, the Akron Beacon Journal, and the Youngstown Vindicator. National magazines included National Review, Time, Newsweek, McCall's, Ladies Home Journal, Look, Life, Holiday, Sunset, Readers Digest, and Today's Health; numerous sports and recreational periodicals such as Golf Digest, Sporting News, Retirement Life, American Bowler, and Field and Stream; and organizational magazines and newsletters like Rotarian, Kiwanians, Lions, American Legion, Retired Officer, Army, Navy and Air Force Journal, and Sheet Workers Union (Del Webb Corporation, 1959–80). Similar images were reproduced over and over again at different sites from 1959 through the 1980's.

The advertisements in Figures 1 and 2, or very similar ones, are samples of notices reproduced in 1975 which Ursula Roberts would have likely read in the Youngstown paper. DEVCO encourages readers to write for information about Sun City and plan for their retirement by sightseeing and vacationing in "the world's most famous resort-retirement community." The ads enter into the actualities of Ursula Roberts' life as textually mediated discourse and as a socially organized activity. The ad tells her who to contact, where to find housing, and how to begin retirement planning by vacationing with Del Webb. Further, these ads are not just an ensemble of meaning. Think about the activities Ursula mentions in the narrative. After reading the ad she initiates a discussion with Al about her desire to take a look at Sun City as a place to retire. After Al's heart attack, she reintroduces the topic with the idea of extending his convention trip to include a vacation in Arizona to visit Sun City. The Roberts visit Sun City, look at houses, and pick out one they like. They return to Ohio and put their house on the market, sell the house, fly to Sun City and buy a new house. These activities are done in conjunction with Al's employer helping to arrange for a financially secure retirement at age 60.

The advertisements are part of a course of action, a course which is organized by the text. They are designed to produce a visit to Sun City. They invite readers to come and look and make an association between visiting Sun City and deciding to stay and live there. The advertising texts do the work of getting prospective homeowners to visit Sun City, where the textual
Enjoy an Arizona Vacation in a Lovely Apartment at Beautiful Sun City

NOW $99 Only $99
For 2 People
For One Week
Through May 31, 1975*

Treat yourself to a fabulous week of fun and sample resort living at its finest!

Injoy an Arizona Vacation in a Lovely Apartment at Beautiful Sun City

Your own air-conditioned, furnished apartment.
Relax under Arizona's sunny skies.
Sun City is a golfer's paradise—nine courses
You're invited to enjoy Sun City's social life.

Play Two Golf Games Free! Sun Citizens enjoy golf year-round on nine beautiful 18-hole courses. Two free games are included in your vacation week—one per person. Sun Citizens have the advantage, though—they enjoy remarkably low annual golf rates and they can own their golf carts, too!

Discover Scenic Arizona! Sun City is in the Valley of the Sun, 13 miles from Phoenix. And it's an easy drive to Grand Canyon, Mexico, Tombstone, Tucson and all of Arizona's fabulous tourist attractions.

Act Now and Avoid Disappointment! Reservations are filled on a "first come, first served" basis. Send coupon today! Enclose deposit ($59) for one week* or send for reservation application and full color brochure. Offer limited to availabilities. No reservations confirmed without deposit in full—prompt refund if no space.

* $125 for 2 people for 2 weeks
June 1, through October 15, 1975

Mail this Coupon Today!

Here's my check for $99 (or for $125). Reserve a vacation apt. for the week (or 2 weeks) starting

FREE

Del E. Webb Development Co., Dept. KG-25
P.O. Box 686, Sun City, Arizona 85351

Here's my check for $99 (or for $125). Reserve a vacation apt. for the week (or 2 weeks) starting

Send complete information about Sun City

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY STATE ZIP

Figure 1
Photograph of advertisement proof for magazine distribution, 1975, by DEVCO. Sun Cities Area Historical Society.
arizona
double
feature

Tour Arizona and visit
Sun City via two beautiful
16 mm movies.
Available on loan
FREE

THE STORY OF
ARIZONA
and
SUN CITY

(Told by)
Barry Goldwater

Explore the incredible diversity of the Grand Canyon State. Take a ride on the Arizona Story
from the invasion of the
Cowboys to the
rise of Sun City.

Sun City
America's Most Famous
Retirement Community
A profile of the community that changed
the concept of retirement, and created a place
that was exactly what people wanted
from a place to live.

The Arizona Double Feature is ideal for retirement
planning groups, service clubs, church
groups, etc. From why Sun City would be the
perfect place for your retirement to the
recent activity of the community.

Mail this coupon to reserve films:
Gold, Noonan, and Goldwater
P.O. Box 666, Sun City, Arizona

NAME                        

ADDRESS                     

CITY                        

STATE                       

ZIP                         

Number of copies

Date of show

Reservations subject to film availability

The Ad Hoc Committee in Defense of Life
P.O. Box 574 Murray Hill Station New York, N.Y. 10016
Yes, I want to know more about the real issues involved in the Great Abortion Debate. Please send me copies at $1.00 each of How to argue about abortion. I enclose $__________

NAME                        

ADDRESS                     

CITY                        

STATE                       

ZIP                         

(Bulk prices on request)

August 2, 1974

Figure 2
Photograph of advertisement, National Review, 1974, by DEVCO. Sun Cities Area Historical Society.
sequence continues in the form of sales pitches and brochures further describing the place.

The fixed physical property of texts gives them the appearance of having achieved stasis. When we look at the ads, we do not see the process by which they were created. We do not even know who wrote the words or took the pictures or how they came to appear in the newspapers or magazines. The ads appear to exist in what Dorothy Smith calls "textual time," i.e., they exist as if they are stable or fixed on the basis of their physicality. They can be picked up, put down, picked up again, and nothing has changed; however, that appearance is deceitful. When a text is taken up, a text-reader relation develops and the often-understood notion of reading as passivity can now be understood as activity. We see this as Ursula Roberts takes up the text and begins her work—her work of relocating—work which is regulated textually. While nothing changes in the text, as Smith says, "[E]ach iteration is the actual local practice of a particular individual, reading just where she is, for just the what-comes-next that her reading initiates" (Smith, 1999, p. 75).

However, the Roberts' relocation to an age segregated community is predicated upon significant changes in the institutions of retirement and housing that began around 1960 in the United States. In fact, DEVCO was instrumental in the construction of these new forms of housing and the articulation of a new definition of retirement. Through their advertising DEVCO reconceptualized notions of retirement at a time when more and more Americans were retiring and the traditional definition of retirement was largely negative.

Studies of later life that were undertaken before the 1960's revealed a great deal of dissatisfaction with mandatory retirement, along with difficulty with adjusting to retirement, especially for "the old, the poor, and those who like their work..." (Graebner, 1980, p. 220). Graebner noted that in 1956 Eleanor Roosevelt wrote that, instead of being forced to retire, she would "'rather die in the atomic war in a few seconds than live in a world that was constantly becoming more Communist, than making me live in a narrower and narrower area'." She added, "'Instead of letting them go quickly, you make them die more slowly' " (1980, p. 227). While disengagement theory, promoted in
the 1960’s by sociologists and gerontologists, gave elderly people permission to withdraw from the workforce and the social roles associated with work, other social commentators struggled with the consequences of separating work from leisure. Businessman Henry B. Higgins suggested that since people would not know what to do with themselves in retirement, they would need to be educated about leisure. Lynn White Jr., president of Mills College, suggested that it would become necessary to “glamorize leisure as we have not.” Sociologist David Riesman noted that retirement was an unattractive frontier: “frontier behavior is awkward; people have not yet learned to behave comfortably in the new surroundings. There is a formlessness which takes the shape of lawlessness on the frontier of production and of aimlessness on the frontier of consumption” (Graebner, 1980, p. 228). Graebner commented, “The problem of leisure, as Riesman defines it, lay not in leisure itself but in twentieth-century man’s [sic] awkward responses to it” (p. 228–229). Finally, others worried that dissolving the rhythms of work and leisure would lead to devaluing work and relegating leisure as an unpleasant experience. Friedmann and Havighurst saw this dilemma as a temporary one, however. They argued that future generations of Americans, raised in an era of economic abundance, consumption, and leisure, would know how to play in old age (Graebner, 1980, p. 229–230).

In advertising a new definition of retirement, DEVCO referenced this discourse by teaching people how to play. Furthermore, it provided a much more radical solution to the problems of retirement than discussed by ordinary people, politicians, businessmen, bankers, college presidents, and social scientists. DEVCO not only created a textual form of a lifestyle that promoted a complete separation of work and leisure, but also recast leisure as purposeful recreational activity; and this was done in the process of building housing and community. Thus, in its organization the text broke the historical link between work and leisure and reorganized leisure in relation to housing. More importantly, however, DEVCO skillfully articulated this discourse to the commercial processes of home building and retirement living through both textual forms and by building the physical facilities—the organizational site for the distribution and consumption of leisure.
Despite the fact that DEVCO was selling housing, housing images made up a small part of the content of the advertisements. Remarkably, what they promoted instead was an alternative form of both retirement and community. The ads contained slogans about a new type of retirement and community; thematic images playing off the seasons of the year; various special activities sponsored by Del Webb (fashion, car, music, and art shows); photographs of the physical site under development, community buildings, and facilities; artistic renditions of senior citizens engaged in recreation and sports activities; and sketches of model homes.

One early ad (see Figure 3) from January 24, 1960, claims, “It’s the town the whole nation’s talking about where the definition of ‘retirement’ has been changed to mean ACTIVE LIVING for America’s Senior Citizens who have been adopting its wonderful way-of-life in record numbers!” The ad also lists the “endless” recreational facilities: “Champion Golf Course, Olympic Size Swimming Pool, Completely Equipped Community Center Club House, Shuffleboard, Croquet, Horseshoes, Lawn Bowling, Archery, Creative Activity Center, Agricultural Project.”

DEVCO’s encyclopedic inventory of facilities and activities to match retiree’s desires was emphasized in the text: “Everything You Could Want is just a step from your door in Sun City... including the facilities for recreational and creative activities... AND a complete commercial center and the [advance] ‘edition’ of Del Webb’s HiwayHouse Motor Hotel.” A later ad (see Figure 4) invoked readers to “tell the folks back home” and pictured the community center, swimming pool, and creative activity workshop. “Creative ACTIVITY,” an “Important Part of The New Way-of-Life” was illustrated by metal modeling, leather work, mosaics, wood turning, ceramics and potter’s wheel, jewelry making, enameling, and lapidary work in the ad in Figure 5.

A February 28, 1960, ad (see Figure 6) captured the popularity of this new phenomenon by declaring that it was “Arizona’s Fastest Growing City” with a population of 1350 in less than two months. This ad drew our attention to both the theme of retirement as active living and the houses surrounded by golf fairways.
Figure 3
Figure 4
By April 3, 1960, DEVCO presented the alternative definition of retirement as an accomplished and growing practice (see Figure 7):

and in just three months they have brought the population to about 2000 in this remarkable Community for ACTIVE Retirement. They wanted its fun-filled new Way-of-Life to make the best years of their lives completely happy, filled with interesting, satisfying activity and the company of people who share their love of living. Come see what they saw . . . Come see where they'll be living and all the
The First Unit
Introduced on
January 1st was
Completely Filled
in less than Two Months...
Bringing the Population to Over 1850!

NOW ... ANOTHER SECTION IS OPEN IN
THIS REMARKABLE COMMUNITY FOR
NEW ACTIVE RETIREMENT

*The Name of Fairway-Borderline Lots L, Of Course, Unit 2

Drive Out Today
For the GRAND OPENING OF UNIT NO. 2

Del Webb’s
Sun City

Del E. Webb Development Co.

Figure 6
They came to **LOOK**

...and stayed to **LIVE**

...and in just three months have become the population to almost 2000 in the remarkable Community for **ACTIVE** Retirement. They wanted to find a place where they could make the best years of their lives as completely happy, filled with interesting, enjoyable activity and the company of people who share their love of living.

Come see what we offer... Come see a place you'll want to live in, in all the wonderful things they'll enjoy, all you can. Come see the new possibilities that waiting for you, too. For your information there is a beautiful one-story home, a completely furnished community center, the sloping, central, comfort bathrooms, many new home building. There is a completely equipped Arts & Crafts Center...and an Agriculture Center.

For your convenience there is a complete grocery Center and 24 hr. Market. The water heated with
Cafeteria open and convenient.

For more living there are beautiful, spa-style homes with a beautiful
of 2 floor plans and 1 floor plans... priced from just $6,700,

**RIST 12 MILES N.E. OF PHOENIX ON GRAND AVE.**

**DEVCO MANAGEMENT CO.**

**APRIL 3 & 10, 1960.**

Figure 7

wonderful things they’ll be enjoying . . . Come see the new Way-of-Living that’s waiting for you too.

On April 17, 1960, Del Webb’s Sun City declared “A JOYOUS EASTER” without mentioning that there are homes for sale (see Figure 8).

A meaningful retirement was again elaborated on May 8, 1960, by DEVCO declaring that “SCIENCE adds years to LIFE . . . Del Webb’s Sun City ADDS LIFE TO YEARS” (see Figure 9). As in other tear sheets, this ad illustrated the same activities of a meaningful life for retirees. Artists’ renditions of “BEAUTIFUL HOMES” were secondary to the pictures of the activities.

This remarkable community has completely changed the meaning of Retirement . . . to ACTIVE LIVING. Sun City has been designed and equipped to give you the most out of every treasured minute of those golden years of freedom. There is something doing . . . and something to do at all hours of the day plus the company of those who share your interest and your love of an active life. What’s your favorite sport, your favorite creative outlet, your favorite social activity? It’s waiting for you in Sun City.

DEVCO directly addressed the new definition of retirement on May 22, 1960, in Figure 10: “active RETIREMENT” may be a paradox according to Webster . . . but not to Webb! It’s an interesting, satisfying, Fun-filled, Way-of-Life, created by Del E. Webb for America’s Senior Citizens who want every day of their golden years of freedom to be spent in purposeful activity . . . it’s SUN CITY!” The purposeful activities that were illustrated are croquet, ceramics, golf, gardening and swimming. The image (see Figure 11) from August 14, 1960, further articulates the distinction between the old retirement (“Withdrawn, Secluded, and Inactive”) and the new retirement (“Active, Creative, and Interesting”) by placing the meaning of retirement on trial. Exhibits A through F refute Webster’s standard and authoritative definition and present DEVCO’s definition as an accomplished act. In doing so, the concerns of Friedmann, Havighurst, Riessman and others are put to rest.

Through their extensive, nationwide advertising campaign, Webb and his associates were engaged in constructing more than housing. A key feature of these texts is the evolving and explicit
Figure 8
Figure 9
construction of a new definition of retirement called "active living." What is active living? It is obvious from these ads that it is a time of life which is valuable, i.e., "golden," "treasured," for people to enjoy "freedom" from paid employment and for those who are willing and able to commit themselves to a life filled with low impact sports, artistic and other leisure activities. In addition, active living is defined in relationship to the facilities constructed by the Del Webb Corporation and is made available to those who actually buy a house in the community. In other words, although housing is coincidental in the advertising, in order to partake in this new "Way-of-Life," one must purchase a house in Sun City. Quite evident in the images of the tear sheets, but also evident in the placement of these advertisements in certain periodicals, Webb was constructing a certain category of "America's Senior Citizen"—they were able-bodied, heterosexual, white, middle income, Christian couples unencumbered by children. Indeed, DEVCO's own marketing department specifically examined US Census data and consulted other social science experts on aging identifying the social background characteristics of those 55 and over as the first generation of retirees having disposable income in the form of Social Security and private pension funds. Additionally new retirees had assets derived from homeownership. DEVCO appropriated the characteristics of this age cohort and targeted this population in their advertising campaign during the 1960's (Sturgeon, 1992).

Furthermore, in constructing the text mediated discourse of "active retirement as a way-of-life" through the language of typification (you, they, American, senior citizen) and the atemporal present, DEVCO deployed what Smith (1999) calls "ideological codes." This discourse, ordered by idealizations about active living in retirement as purposeful activity, provides a schema which allows its organization in text and concerting discourse to be replicated in multiple sites regardless of historicity across divergent sites and audiences, and links "... the active and creative subject with the market and the productive organization of capital. This discourse locates the social relations of a 'symbolic' terrain and material practices which bring it into being and sustain it" (Smith, 1993, p. 161-163).
Textual forms (photographic, written, etc.) enter into social processes as people take them up at their sites of action. Smith says that some texts are important because they, "... as the normative structure of the everyday" (1993, p. 202), are standardized, and they organize local social relations. What our investigation led
us to, however, is something a bit different. We found discursive practices dedicated to the reformulation of the institutional spheres of housing and retirement. We take the ads to be a web of texts redefining retirement. They string together and coordinate the multiple local and particular sites of people with market processes within the housing industry.
Active retirement also involves the work Ursula Roberts does of producing herself to realize the textual image of “active living.” The discourse creates the motivational structures which return purchasers again and again—buying leisure in the form of housing, greens fees, community assessments, vacation packages, maintenance fees, etc. The Roberts both enter practices ordered by the text and are active participants in its relations. Ursula says:

We didn’t know a soul in Arizona. I can’t honestly and truthfully say that Al ever liked it here. He was used to working with younger people. And it didn’t bother me; course I will have to admit that when we joined the country club we were the kids, you know, in the country club.

I never had any problems making friends anywhere. And I think too because I play bridge and I play golf, it was easy for me too. And fortunately we had enough money to join a country club everywhere we went. So it’s easy if you can join a country club and if you’re a good golfer to go in. I’ve been chairman of the golf association, every golf association I ever belong to, you know. And I was the second chairman up here at the country club. And I have always been very active in everything I get into, you know.

I had a terrible time right when Al passed away. The biggest adjustment I’ve had to make is socially by myself. I don’t like going places by myself, socially. Where there’s other husbands and wives. Now I don’t mind going, if another man will go and he can be with me, that’s fine. But I don’t like to go by myself. And I’ve been very fortunate and usually have someone to go with.

I had a knee replacement two years ago. No problem at all. I used the walker for one day, after I got home. Oh you can’t play golf for about—I had it done the last day of May and I was out playing golf in the middle of August—so that wasn’t too bad, you know.

Ursula and Al, as Sun City residents, practice active living separated from “work roles” as an able-bodied, white, middle-income couple. They work actively to retire by taking up golf, bridge, and vacationing. They coordinate their activities with others and experience features of that organizational form which present problems or contradictions in their everyday world, such as Al’s dissatisfaction with interacting solely with older people and Ursula’s challenge of living as a widow in a coupled community.
We have demonstrated how texts enter into social processes to reorganize social relations and transform the institution of housing during the latter part of 20th century capitalism. Our method takes up retirement and housing from within, exploring social relations organizing the particular local historical sites of people’s experience as multiple and sometimes contradictory relations. The subject’s, Ursula’s, account of her experience led us to a consideration of specific texts. The conceptual dimensions of active retirement elaborated by DEVCO are “‘organizers’ packaged in texts that transmit ‘organization’ invented in one site of ruling to multiple sites regulating the local activities of particular people” (Smith, 1999, p. 93). DEVCO’S Sun City, particularly its formality, its designed and organized character, depends heavily on textual practices. These texts, unfamiliar in the retirement and housing discourse in the early part of 20th century, are fundamental to understanding how housing and retirement are practiced by ordinary people, such as the Roberts, in the latter part of the century.

Note

1. This paper is part of a larger research project on the changes in the social institution of housing in the 20th century in the U.S. Beginning from the standpoint of women we worked together with five women to generate oral housing histories. We contacted the women, who lived in the Phoenix metropolitan area at the time of the interviews, through acquaintances and former students. All of the women were at least 60 years of age and had “lived alone” for at least six months. After an initial contact we interviewed the women in their homes on at least four occasions for approximately two hours in 1992–93. We tape recorded and transcribed approximately 10 to 12 hours of conversation with each woman. We rewrote the transcripts as first person narratives. We changed some information and provided pseudonyms to assure anonymity.

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Authors' Note

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We would like to thank the Sun Cities Area Historical Society for sharing its resources and archives, "Ursula Roberts" for her gracious participation in our research, and Eric Mykhalovskiy for his comments on an earlier version of this paper.

Authors' names are listed in alphabetical order. The contents of this article represent a cooperative effort.

The question of how to achieve sustainable economic growth is one of the most interesting questions of our time. In this book, Bai Gao offers a very clear-cut set of explanation of the case of Japan. It stresses the importance of the institutional factors that contributed to the past success as well as the current problems facing its economy, which today is the world’s third largest, after the United States and China. Gao discusses the reversion of the Japanese economy from prosperity to stagnation by examining institutional factors that have an effect on economic performance. Although his account relies on an explanation of historical trends, he does not rely exclusively on a purely historical method that highlights both the positive and negative aspects of Japan’s growth. Instead, the author sets out to explain the absence of growth-impeding institutional rigidities in the high growth period and, thereafter, the structural, institutional dilemma that has caused subsequent stagnation in the Japanese economy. In this way, Gao avoids using different variables to explain different stages of economic development. In so doing, he arrives at an interesting and incisive explanation for the causal determinants of the current economic growth dilemma in Japan. He argues that the very institutions that helped Japan to achieve its economic growth ‘miracle’ were responsible for the subsequent stagnation of the economy.

After giving a vivid introduction to the problems facing Japan in the first chapter of the book, Gao discusses three major propositions in the next chapter. These propositions are first, whereas the Japanese economy could rely on the Bretton Woods system of fixed currency exchange rates and increased trade volumes among GATT member states before 1971, it subsequently had to deal with the negative consequences of the liberalization of international financial markets and America’s objection to continued massive trade deficits with Japan. This created a new and challenging situation. Second, the same expansionary monetary
policy that in combination with a deflationary fiscal policy safeguarded economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s, led to over-lending by Japanese banks and financial speculations that fuelled the economic bubble of the 1980s. Third, the Japanese approach of guaranteeing total employment in the postwar period (which was the outcome of industrial protection) inhibited, over time, the vitality of economic restructuring and upgrading, and prevented the strengthening and maintenance of the international comparative advantages of the Japanese economy. This employment strategy enabled the government to avoid increased levels of welfare state expenditures; in other words, it avoided expansionary fiscal policy but had a negative economic impact.

The main body of the book is divided into six chapters. Chapter 3 follows the conceptual approach outlined in Chapter 2 by describing the period between the Great Depression and World War II, in which the foundations for a new set of postwar institutions and mechanisms of the Japanese economy were laid. The two guiding principles that emerged out of this period were coordination and stability. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with postwar economic development and the influence of these new fundamental policy principles on the government. The following two chapters analyze the shift from the expansion of trade and production to the expansion of the finance and monetary sectors as well as the shift from protective economic policies (including the total employment policy) to the release of market forces between the early 1970s and the late 1980s. Chapter 8 reveals that after the country’s economic bubble burst, the persistence of the demand for stability in the first half of the 1990s and the sudden reversion of the institutional logic of coordination in 1996, contributed to a short-term liquidity trap and the development of economic conditions that can only bring about long-term economic stagnation.

The reader of this book will profit from the author’s vast knowledge and his in-depth analysis of the Japanese economy. He also makes good use of the Japanese literature. The explanations given are valuable for students of economic growth in Asia and the world alike, since they enhance the findings of the static neoclassical approach in economics that is largely based on input-output tables and a smooth time logic, which cannot adequately represent reality to understand the workings that either generate
or hamper economic growth. With the exception of only a few streams in economic theory, economists ignore the importance of institutions and political processes. However, Gao provides a convincing explanation of the problems of economic growth.

However, it should be noted that Gao fails to discuss the relevance of mainstream economic growth theories (such as those of Simon Kuznets and Nicholas Kaldor) to the Japanese case. A more general discussion on the applicability of neoclassical economic thought to Japan would also have been beneficial. Nevertheless, this is an excellent book that deserves attention from economists, sociologists and social policy experts alike. Its account of the structural and institutional explanations for economic growth and stagnation are highly relevant to the world situation today.

Christian Aspalter
University of Hong Kong


This book is a product of fifteen years of Ann Dill's various encounters—scholarly and personal—with case management. She carefully describes, analyzes, theorizes, synthesizes, and provides historical, institutional, and organizational contexts to case management. Dill, a sociology professor at Brown University, has been greatly influenced by sociologists Elinson, Colombotos, and Mechanic, each of whom have made significant contributions to our understanding of social services. This book provides a sociological and historical context for case management that is seldom considered or understood in case management practice books.

Dill demonstrates how case management began as a reform movement to improve coordination of care and better access to services. Over time, as a conservative ideology became more prominent, case management has become a tool to regulate costs, maximize efficiencies, rationalize service delivery, and ration service resources.

Dill is highly critical of case management practice, particularly as it has "come to absorb and reflect the organizational
flaws of the very service systems it was intended to reform” (p. x). In chapter one she presents the many definitions of case management, reviews its organizational and institutional history, and identifies three theoretically grounded views of case management; as a boundary spanning position; as an institutionalized practice; and as a concept within a system of symbolic relations. In subsequent chapters she examines case management: 1) in long-term care for the elderly, 2) for people with chronic mental illness, and 3) in “social welfare” with an emphasis on income transfer programs. In each of these chapters Professor Dill presents a case management historical and sociological context of which every “helping profession” practitioner and student should be familiar. She demonstrates how case management in all its many forms and for many different reasons, continues to be popular despite a lack of evidence that it is effective. In Chapter 5, she answers some questions and asks others. She argues that case management’s past, present, and future are linked to its role as a bureaucratic tool and its link to the social structure of our society.

According to Dill, case management has been successful for three significant reasons. First, case management programs have been part of much broader policy movements, secondly, in each service sector there has been a constituency promoting case management and at least one funding it, and, finally, its arrival coincided with high turbulence in the environments surrounding human service organizations. She documents the complexity of case management and its relationship to its many environments. To fully understand case management is to understand issues of design, culture, organizations, efficacy, and efficiency. Case management is implemented with multiple purposes that cut across program and sector boundaries. Over time it has continued to be the product of conflicting objectives. Dill identifies the following additional trends: 1) designed as a mechanism to bypass the categorical limitations of service bureaucracies, case management has itself become bureaucratized, 2) in the movement from goals for clients to goals for service systems it has increasingly lowered worker educational qualifications, 3) the authority of case managers has narrowed, 4) the ultimate irony for case management itself is to reinforce social class inequities through its differential
use as a result of privatization and its increasing use in private practice.

Dill concludes that it may not be possible to keep case management programs from reflecting the broader class system. However, she argues that case management has an under realized potential for advocacy to "empower clients and class advocacy to regress problems and deficiencies in service programs and systems."

This book reads well, has an exceptional logical integrity, is full of delightful insights, and is grounded in a theoretical and historical framework. Dill is a master at weaving together history, culture, organizational theory (particularly bureaucratization), the role of professions, and the analysis of multiple objectives and paradoxes, with a value system that is committed to "a fabric of care that could sustain us all" (vii).

Charles D. Cowger
University of Missouri, Columbia


This is a landmark book in the history of the relationship of social work research, as science, and social work practice. The authors, highly respected social work scholars who have made many contributions to debates about and practices in social work research, succinctly describe and analyze major movements in the past half century to integrate social work research and practice: scientifically based practice; computer assisted social work practice; classification systems of client problems; research-based practice (evidence-based practice); models for the design, development and testing of social work interventions; and research dissemination and utilization. Rather than examining major scientific influences from a broad interdisciplinary perspective such as principles of uncertainty, information theories, non-linear models or quantum mechanics, the authors focus on the social work literature with respect to scientific models for conducting practice and the use of scientific knowledge to inform practice.
Their historical overviews, descriptions, and analyses are accurate, insightful, and thought provoking. This, in my view, is the best book available on the topic of the incorporation of research perspectives, methods, and knowledge in social work practice. This should be required reading for social work scholars, educators and researchers, and for doctoral students. There is a wealth of ideas and references that can stimulate further study.

These are examples of some of the many suggestions and observations that are made by Professors Kirk and Reid: scientifically based practice should be seen as a perspective rather than simply as a group of methods; the conception of practice accountability should be extended to include ideas of appropriate practice; research utilization is typically a mixture of conceptual, persuasive and instrumental utilization; social work has produced knowledge, but it is difficult to describe and cumulate; to survive as a profession, social work must develop theories of practice and effective interventions.

An excellent chapter on computer-assisted social work practice by Stuart Kirk, William Reid, and Carrie Petrucci is included. The authors present succinct but descriptive analyses of the uses, promises, and failures of various innovations such as management information systems and expert systems. Their analyses are sobering and insightful.

Throughout the book Kirk and Reid present balanced and thoughtful analyses of major movements. For example, they show how research and development models have the potential to produce effective intervention, but have not been too productive to date due to many obstacles: expense, time, lack of adequate funding, and the academic pressures on young scholars to engage in time-limited research. Moreover, they present relevant issues regarding the uses of evidence-based (research-based) practice: biases of the investigator, lack of accepted criteria for determining the generalizability of interventions, the rigor of research, and the issue of the dissemination and utilization of practice guidelines.

Major issues in social work research not systematically covered are the extent to which social work researchers are involved in interdisciplinary research, the relationship between social science methodologies and social work research, and the contributions that social work researchers make to other disciplines. Does
the interdisciplinary nature of research teams blur some of the distinctions made about social work researchers? Are the methodologies of social work research derivative of methodologies from other fields: qualitative research, survey design and analysis, time-series analyses and mathematical modeling? Do social work researchers contribute to other fields of knowledge? Schools of social work such as those at the University of Michigan promote combined doctoral work in social science and social work, and it is not surprising to note that three of the five highest rated schools of social work in terms of publication in peer-reviewed journals publish more of their scholarly activities in non-social work journals than in social work journals (Green, Baskind & Bellin, 2002). Hence, one might ask whether or not it is too insular to look primarily at the relationship of social work research to social work practice within social work literature, or should the inquiry be expanded to systematically look at the relationship of other scientific fields to social work practice as well as social work research? Notwithstanding these questions, this book with its primary focus on social work literature provides an enormous contribution to social work history and future debates about the relationship between social work research and social work practice. And, I highly recommend it to students of the social sciences and the philosophy of science, as well as to social work students and scholars.

Tony Tripodi
The Ohio State University

Reference


Scholarly inquiry into the social welfare systems of different countries has become increasingly sophisticated in recent
decades. When social policy scholars first began to engage systematically in comparative social welfare inquiry about half a century ago, much of the research was descriptive, and numerous country case studies focusing mainly on the Western industrial nations were published. Usually, the welfare systems of Britain, the United States, Sweden and other European countries were described and attempts were made to draw comparisons between them. Efforts were also made to formulate methodologically rigorous rules for comparison. Occasionally, 'outlier' countries would be included in these studies and, in time, the focus expanded to include regions beyond the usual North America-European axis, such as Latin America.

While the country case study format has remained central to comparative social welfare research, another approach, which was less descriptive, also emerged. This approach drew on illustrative examples from different countries and regions to illuminate particular issues, arguments and propositions. While this approach became popular, it drew criticism from the purists who argued that serious comparative inquiry should not be based on the haphazard use of comparative material. Nor, they claimed, should international evidence be used to bolster particular points of view. They insist that it is only through detailed descriptive accounts that rigorous comparisons and valid generalizations can be formulated. This point of view was countered by the argument that descriptive country case studies were atheoretical, frequently out of date, and frankly boring. Some believed that country case studies were becoming obsolete and that they would soon be abandoned.

However, as the two books reviewed here reveal, the country case study format has not been abandoned. Indeed, the literature on the welfare systems of different countries has grown rapidly and today, much more is known about the way social welfare policies and programs are implemented in the world's different nations. Similarly, country case studies can transcend description by applying theoretical constructs in a more interesting way to frame and interpret domestic realities. Indeed, the two books reviewed here make extensive use of theory to frame their accounts. Their use of theory offers fascinating insights into the way comparative social welfare inquiry is today emphasizing the
role of culture, traditions and institutions in analyzing the factors responsible for the origins, historical development and current features of welfare systems.

Arthur Gould focuses on Sweden, a country he has previously included in a major comparative study of Europe and Japan. Gould is extremely knowledgeable about the Swedish welfare system and his book is of particular value because it provides an update of recent changes arising from growing pressures for retrenchment. Although the issue of welfare retrenchment in Sweden has already been discussed extensively in the comparative literature, accounts of developments in Sweden emanating from Britain and North America have tended to focus on electoral factors, the growing pressures for economic competitiveness and taxpayer fatigue. Gould's account is much more sophisticated suggesting that the pressures for change are inextricably linked to wider postmodernist forces which are challenging the country's highly structured, modernist welfare system. The result is a more fragmented, ambiguous and decentralized welfare system in which pluralism and self-determination is celebrated. Faced with these forces, the Swedish welfare system has experienced significant pressures to reduce costs, retrench services and modify long standing commitments.

However, Gould argues that the Swedes have resisted and, despite the changes which have taken place, the Swedish welfare system remains intact. It also continues to serve as an exemplar of an ideal-typical modernist welfare state. But contrary to popular wisdom, Gould does not attribute the survival of the Swedish welfare state to the persistence of social democracy or class struggle, but rather to Swedish culture which deeply values order, structure, rationality and other modernist values. Drawing on the culture of personality theories which were popular in academic circles in the mid-20th century, and particularly on Ruth Benedict's Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy, Gould contends that the Apollonian features of Swedish life are so institutionalized that they will continue to ensure the long term survival of the Swedish welfare state, which it is itself a cultural artifact of this culture. Gould does not entirely approve of the continuation of these Apollonian tendencies which reveal an obsession with control and a paternalistic need to order people's lives. Echoing Lyotard's
condemnation of modernity, he points out that Swedish govern-
ments in the past engaged in dubious practices resulting from a
misguided but culturally determined paternalism.

Michel Peillon’s book on social welfare in Ireland also makes
explicit use of the role of cultural institutions to explain the
evolution and features of the country’s welfare system. However,
Peillon employs the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, and particularly
his notion of a social field, to frame his analysis. He adapts
Bourdieu’s argument that the amount of cultural and other forms
of capital the actors in the field control, is primarily responsible
for determining outcomes. He contends that an understanding
of welfare in Ireland requires an analysis of the way different
actors in the ‘welfare field’ struggle to dominate and shape the
welfare system for their own purposes. The major actors in the
Irish welfare field are the state, the Catholic Church, the trade
unions, the business community, voluntary organizations and the
feminist movement. Peillon discusses their roles and activities in
some depth, and shows how the nation’s complex mix of welfare
policies and programs have emerged from these struggles. While
Peillon focuses primarily on the role of domestic forces in the
welfare field, he is also mindful the British colonial legacy, the
country’s membership of the European community and its con-
tinued relationship with the United Kingdom. He suggests that
Ireland may be viewed as a peripheral European country which
has experienced a dependent pattern of economic development.
This is another important factor in understanding the country’s
welfare system.

Both books show how far comparative scholarship based on
the country case study format has come. They have not only
transcended the bland descriptive approach which characterized
earlier research, but offer a refreshing departure from the typo-
logical obsession which now dominates international social wel-
fare. While much comparative scholarship is today preoccupied
with classifying national welfare systems, these books provide far
more useful insights into the dynamics of welfare systems. Both
offer a richer and more nuanced interpretation of how social wel-
fare institutions operate in the context of culture, traditions and
beliefs. They may be limited in their geographic coverage, and
may criticized for being excessively concerned with the details
of particular national policies and programs, but they show the importance of referencing cultural factors when seeking to understand and interpret welfare. Gould’s emphasis on national cultural preferences in Sweden, and Peillon’s account of the Irish welfare field, reveal an innovative and impressive application of theory. Peillon’s analysis role of the Catholic Church in influencing social welfare policy in Ireland is particularly interesting at a time that religious involvement in social welfare is again being recognized and appreciated. Both books should be essential reading for anyone engaged in international and comparative social welfare today.

James Midgley
University of California, Berkeley


Forte’s *Theories for Practice* is a sprawling and comprehensive overview of the intellectual spheres touched by symbolic interactionist thinkers. These include many of the intellectual watersheds of the past 100 or so years: psychoanalytic theory, Marxism, and evolutionary psychology, to name only a few. The names associated with early symbolic interactionism, including George Herbert Mead and John Dewey, are certainly major intellectual figures if not superstars like Marx, Freud or Darwin. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that humans invest the world with meaning, meanings that evolve through interaction and are continuously interpreted and reinterpreted. This framework has inspired much social science research and is resonant with qualitative, interpretive inquiry. As the title suggests, this book examines theories from economics, psychology and political science and translates them into the sociological symbolic interactionist perspective.

Social work, psychology, and sociology have a long history of mutual influence, and social work has been poised between sociology and psychology for much of its history. In several chapters Forte traces the history of sociology and social work, and points
out the often unrecognized contribution of social work to sociology. Part of the vision of social work is understanding the social determinants of individual lives, and working sensitively with social conditions to assist our clients to live more full, meaningful lives. A symbolic interactionist analysis is particularly helpful for aiding social workers to see our clients and ourselves in the context of larger sociopolitical systems and their related complexes of meanings.

The book is clearly a product of devoted and thorough scholarship with the typical chapter having 3–5 pages of citations. With the exception of introductory and concluding sections, the book is structured around 10 chapters that each focus on a theoretical domain. Each chapter traces the history of a specific theoretical strand, the relationship with symbolic interactionist thought, and how this theory informs or translates to practice.

The social psychologist Kurt Lewin said: “Nothing is as practical as a good theory.” Forte’s book raises the question: how practical for social work are sociological theories? These theories do not generally provide specific, clear statements of how intervention should proceed, making them useful more to analyze social situations but not to guide intervention. This is reflected in Forte’s sections in each chapter that focus on translating theory to practice. Many of these sections report on sociological analyses that have practice implications; very few describe specific interventions designed around these theoretical analyses. It could be argued that the failure of applied or clinical sociology reflects the low utility of sociological theory by itself for direct practice.

As a contrast, consider the Empirically Supported Treatment (EST) movement in psychology. ESTs are manualized therapies with demonstrated efficacy through randomized clinical trials. Many of the therapies with adequate research support to be considered “Well established” or “probably efficacious” are cognitive-behavioral, but the lists also include brief psychodynamic therapy, and a narrative reminiscence therapy for elders. Not only are there specific guidelines on how to conduct the treatment, but these interventions have been shown to work. These are more clearly practical theories.

As suggested earlier, the strength of symbolic interactionist thinking is in understanding the context of social work practice, in
understanding the rich narratives that play out between workers and clients. These narratives contain all the motifs of our culture: gender, class, race, and so on. Perhaps a better title for this book would be "theories about practice," as the symbolic interactionist perspective renders a worker who is more reflective, more aware of the multiple influences and meanings that construct the worker-client interchange. However, this same worker also has to know what to do, has to have guidance from experience and research about what helps a client in a major depression, or what contributes to bonding between a parent and a child.

Clearly social work practitioners need theories about practice, as well as theories for practice. It is important, though, for the field to maintain clarity about the strengths and limits of different theory groups. This reviewer was not convinced that symbolic interactionism provides a useful root language for understanding the multiplicity of practice theories. The comprehensive survey of symbolic interactionist thought that Forte provides would be very useful in a doctoral course in a sociology program, or in a joint sociology and social work program. In its breadth of scope, and careful delineation of different intellectual movements, this book would be a useful reference for doctoral students and other scholars. Most MSW students and MSW practitioners, however, would stumble over the density of theoretical material and would be skeptical of the practical utility of the theoretical material.

Daniel Coleman
Boston University


Since Carol Gilligan first put forth an alternative theory of the moral development of women and girls in 1977, the field of feminist ethics has mushroomed. Indeed, as a result of the groundbreaking work of Gilligan and educator/philosopher Nel Noddings, the concept of a relationally-based ethic of care today stands in juxtaposition to traditional theories of moral philosophy focused on rights and justice. Thanks to Gilligan, Noddings and many others, developmental theory has had to make room for
theories of moral development that value interconnectedness, responsibility and caring for others, as well as individual autonomy. Nevertheless, feminists and feminist theorists do not all speak with one voice, and it is into this arena that Nel Noddings has stepped once more with Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy. One of Nodding’s goals in this book is to answer those who have criticized care theory as “a fine ‘domestic’ theory” (p. 1), but one that is largely irrelevant when discussing large-scale (macro) issues and the policies necessary to address these issues. She succeeds overall toward this end, but not without triggering debate along the way.

Noddings has chosen to come at the question of care theory’s relevance beyond the domestic arena in a way which, as she notes, “reverses a long philosophical tradition” (p. 1). Instead of beginning with a description of what an ideal society would look like and then arguing for particular changes in existing institutions in order to create this ideal, Noddings instead argues that we have much to learn by “starting at home.” Indeed, Noddings’ main thesis is that the origins of care, both “caring for” and “caring about,” have their roots in the domestic arena and in the parent-child relationship. Her hypothesis, that all humans have a need to be cared for, establishes the importance of this experience if one is to learn to care for and about others. According to Noddings, it is this ability to care about others that fosters the ability to take a global view and to develop a sense of social justice. Therefore, argues Noddings, if we are to put forth truly effective social policies, we must acknowledge the central role of an ethic of care and turn to the domestic arena in order to learn how to effectuate workable solutions to some of our most challenging social problems.

Noddings builds her argument carefully and deliberately, rooting it in and expanding upon the work of moral philosophers such as Simone Weil and Emmanuel Levinas, while at the same time, challenging the primacy of the Kantian ideal of an ethic of justice. She argues that current social and political theories, especially liberalism, have not provided a satisfactory theoretical base from which to formulate effective social policies. Noddings then presents her concept of “self,” arguing against the usefulness of the concept of an autonomous self and positing instead the idea
of a relational self. Next, Noddings moves from the theoretical to the developmental, devoting the middle portion of the book to a detailed discussion of the development of the relational self in the context of the home environment. From here, Noddings moves into the arena of public policy and, drawing on the principles of an ethic of care, demonstrates how social policies can be developed that respond to both the expressed and inferred needs of those seeking assistance.

There is much to like about this book. It is literate, intellectually stimulating and well-argued, drawing from sources as diverse as Kant, Rawls, Dewey and Orwell. Its scope is extremely broad-ranging, covering everything from the emphasis of Enlightenment philosophers on rights and justice, the philosophical underpinnings of care theory and developmental theory to the formulation of social policy. In addition, Noddings's writing is direct, and she does not dodge difficult or controversial issues. For example, Noddings takes on squarely the issues of abortion, euthanasia, infanticide and capital punishment and demonstrates how an ethic of care allows the debate to move out of the realm of rights and into a place where the needs of all those included in the web of care can be considered. Hers is not a position likely to please those on either end of the spectrum. Her discussion of women who have been victimized is likewise provocative. She argues that part of interdependence is being able to share responsibility for injuries inflicted upon us, including battering and sexual abuse. While Noddings states clearly that she is not arguing that women have responsibility for bringing these events on themselves, still this is a very tricky argument to make, in a society where the prevalence of sexual and physical abuse, as well as domestic violence provides evidence of a climate condoning violence against women.

Noddings has successfully made the link between applying the lessons of the ideal home to existing social problems, and she challenges us to think "outside of the box" in order to create policies and solutions which effectively meet the needs of those designed to be helped by these policies. As such, this book makes a strong teaching tool for those in all the helping professions. Yet, Noddings does not take her analysis to the next level, that is, questioning the political economic system which has given
rise to these social problems, as well as legitimating policies which are clearly deficient in addressing the most basic needs of human beings. Expanding her analysis would necessitate a discussion of needs versus interests, as well as a discussion of the role of conflicting interests in obviating efforts to inject caring as the standard for successful social policy promulgation. Such an addition could only strengthen her argument for policies based upon an ethic of care.

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Book Notes


Sociological analysis has long focused on those institutions that create and enhance social participation and solidarity. This was the central theme in Emile Durkheim’s pioneering work and it has been restated many times, particularly in the United States where the importance of community groups has been recognized ever since Alexis de Tocqueville praised the country’s pervasive and effective networks of associations. In addition to praising America’s commitment to civic life, sociologists have also lamented the decline of civic engagement. The latest example of an alarm call, sounding the decline of civic participation in the United States, is Robert Putnam’s work. His writings have captured the public imagination and facilitated an intense discussion among public intellectuals. The role of community associations as bridging the family and the state in all domains of life continues to be a critical issue in current discourse today.

In this engaging book, Rossi stresses the importance of community associations but argues that formal organizational memberships and contributions to these organizations are not the only measures of civic participation. When other measures are considered, widespread evidence of civic involvement is uncovered challenging the widely accepted view that there has been a serious erosion of civic participation in the United States. The author presents a more comprehensive treatment of civic participation by linking it to social responsibility in general. She argues that social responsibility is a multifaceted concept that is more inclusive than membership of formal associations or volunteerism related to formal organizations. It includes normative obligations and provisions of social support, care giving and financial assistance to family members and community organizations as well.

Using survey research and ethnographic interviews, the author shows that the subjective notions of social responsibility in the domains of work, family and community are interrelated and that patterns exist related to demographic characteristics.
Differences in altruistic behavior are found on the bases of education, sex and age. Individuals who are more socially embedded volunteer more than their less embedded counterparts. Individuals with different demographic characteristics also engage in different types of volunteer activities, at different times.

Much of the data used in this study comes from the National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS). The research methods are sound and fully discussed in the appendix. The editor's introduction is useful because it places the research into historical context by providing a substantial overview of social trends over the last century and how they relate to current ideas about civic participation. This sets the stage for a thought provoking, holistic account of civic participation which will not only inform but challenge widely held views about the alleged decline of people's involvement in social life. Its conceptualization of what civic participation involves and its thorough analysis of empirical data make an important contribution to the literature.


Over the last twenty years, comparative social policy scholarship has become very interested in the question of whether the welfare state has been retrenched, dismantled or reconstructed and if so, to what extent and with what consequences. This debate has generated a number of very different answers which range from an optimistic assessment that the policy changes introduced since the Reagan years have not made much difference, to a pessimistic assessment that the 'Golden Era' of the welfare state is over. Neil Gilbert's new book takes up this question and offers a definitive answer. Reviewing a mind boggling amount of information, he concludes that the welfare state has indeed been transformed. The era of institutional welfare based on notions of social rights and entitlements and is over and has been replaced by what he calls an enabling state which seeks to integrate the poor and needy into the market economy and to provide social services through market mechanisms. In an era of triumphant market capitalism, social policy has been reshaped to conform and compliment the logic and ethic of the market.
In the core of the book, Gilbert explores various dimensions of this new, market conforming social welfare system in more depth. He shows, first, that the social protection approach of the traditional welfare state has been replaced by an emphasis on social inclusion which, in effect, means that needy people are now expected to work if they are to receive social benefits. Second, he points out that, rather than provide services through public agencies, governments now make extensive use of the market to deliver these services. He shows, third, that this trend has been accompanied by a far greater use of selective social services and targeted income benefits than before. Finally, he suggests that there has been a noticeable trend away from notions of welfare as citizenship to the communitarian idea that people are members of communities and that social welfare should be more directly linked to the idea of community.

Gilbert's account of the way social policy has changed as a result of the emergence of the enabling state is masterful, but it will be contested by those who believe that he exaggerates the extent to which state welfare provisions have been modified. It will also be contested by those who believe that governments are still far too excessively involved in social welfare. They will argue that the notion of the enabling state still smacks of welfare paternalism and interference. Despite Gilbert's careful analysis, his own normative assessment of the enabling state and its reliance on the market is ambivalent. On the one hand, he derides those who oppose privatization but on the other hand, he regrets the loss of collective responsibility and caring. Unfortunately, he does not devote much space to this issue using only one chapter of the book to discuss the way welfare capitalism has harmed rather than helped those in need. Although Gilbert alludes to the benefits of a communitarian solution, this deserve more discussion and explication.

This is a book of great interest and profound scholarship from one of the country's leading thinkers on social welfare issues. It makes a major contribution to the social policy literature and deserves not only to be widely read but widely discussed. Hopefully, it will provoke an extensive debate on how an enabling state can transcend a commitment to promote market solutions to human ills and be worthy of the term's connotation. Perhaps,
in the future, governments will adopt policies that will truly enable human beings, families and communities to attain the high standards of living the market has provided for some but not for others.


The growing interest in evidence based practice in social work is being accompanied by a similar interest in using substantive research evidence to inform social policy making. Although social workers have for many years emphasized the role of professional opinion, values and emotional responses in social work practice, many now believe that decisions effecting clients should be based on scientific research findings. As proponents of evidence based practice point out, this is increasingly the case in medicine and other professional fields. Although this proposition would not appear to be particularly original or contentious, advocates of the evidence based approach contend that much professional practice is still based on opinion, beliefs, tradition and anecdote. This is certainly the case in social policy where policy making has long been shaped by ideological predispositions. Indeed, because of its ideological character, it is almost inevitably that the many complex decisions policy makers reach on issues affecting human welfare should reflect their values and beliefs and those of their constituents.

However, as this interesting and informative book reveal, scientific evidence can be used to inform social policy decisions and, in this way, make social service programs more effective. The book is compiled by three British academics and its chapters deal with diverse aspects of public policy in Britain. Nevertheless, its central argument is relevant to policy makers in other countries as well and the examples and case studies provided in the different chapters should be of wider interest. The book begins with a general overview of the meaning and history of evidence based policy making and successive chapters focus on the application of these ideas in different policy fields such as health care, education, social welfare, housing and urban development. Another five chapters are concerned with methodological issues showing how
research methods and planning technologies can be employed to generate the evidence on which sound policy making can be based. The book concludes with an assessment of how evidence based policy making will evolve in the future and hopefully play a more significant role in decision making.

This is a useful book which should be widely read and prescribed in social policy classes. Students will appreciate the book's jargon free approach and explication of a straightforward message. Although the message is a positive one, this does not mean that the editors and authors are sanguine about the prospects that research evidence will now actually determine policy decisions. They point out that despite the Blair government's pragmatic insistence that "what matters is what works," Labour Party leaders still fall back on ideological preferences when making social policy decisions. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties involved, the current emphasis on evidence based policy making is an important one which may reinvigorate previous efforts to transcend ideology, personal preference and tradition in formulating and implementing policies designed to enhance human welfare.

Linda Trinh Vo and Rick Bonus (Eds.), Contemporary Asian Communities: Intersections and Divergences. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002. $69.00 hardcover, $22.95 papercover.

Much of the social science literature focusing on ethnic minorities in the United States has been concerned with the cultural dimensions of ethnic life suggesting that unique cultural characteristics can be associated with different groups. The purpose of much of this literature has been to document and describe the attitudes, beliefs, values and other cultural characteristics of these different groups and to examine the social problems and challenges they face. This is particularly true of introductory textbooks in social work which have sought to expose students to the cultures of different ethnic groups in the hope that they may be more sensitive to culture realities when they encounter members of these groups in practice settings.

The editors of this interesting and readable volume contend that this approach is of limited value in seeking to understand the complex realities of culture in contemporary American society. Based on the papers presented at a conference held in California in 1998, the book provides a far more nuanced account of the many
interwoven and intricate dimensions of the cultural experiences of Asian American communities living in the United States today. The book’s editors also points out that it is not only a matter of providing a deeper understanding of the complexities of the cultural experiences of Asian Americans, but of normatively transcending the ghettoization of cultural images. There is, they point out, no empirical basis for identifying a unique or unitary Asian American culture. There are major differences in beliefs, attitudes, languages among different Asian communities. Differences of this kind are to be found within ethnic groups from different countries and regions. Clearly, a far more sophisticated account of culture is needed.

The book delivers on its promise to demonstrate the diversity of Asian American culture by offering a veritable fest of material dealing with many aspects of the cultural experiences of Asian Americans. Its fifteen chapters range over topics as diverse as South East Asian youth gangs in Oakland, California; Gay Asian Americans in Los Angeles; internet discussions among immigrant Filipinos; participation in Japanese American beauty pageants; entrepreneurial Asian American children; domestic violence in the South Asian community and much more. The individual preferences and interests of readers will no doubt decide which of these contributions are the most interesting an informative but, as a collection, the book takes debates about culture well beyond traditional concerns. Its arguments about how popular stereotypes obscure complex realities apply equally to accounts of cultural and ethnic groups. The book’s final chapter which deals with the intersection of public policy and the subjective experience of cultural life is particularly important. Although this is not a textbook for entry level undergraduates, its engaging style and range of interesting material should appeal to many readers interested in understanding the complex issues attending people’s experiences and expressions of culture today.


Social scientists have long been aware that the incidence of income poverty is susceptible to economic trends, rising when
economic conditions deteriorate and falling when the economy experiences sustained growth. It was not surprising, therefore, that the boom years of the 1990s witnessed a fall in the poverty rate in the United States. In some parts of the country, labor shortages became chronic and, as wages rose, the incidence of poverty declined. These trends seem to vindicate the belief that a vibrant capitalist economic is the answer to the poverty problem. With talk of a New Economy based on high tech and high productivity, and a belief that permanent prosperity now characterized American society, some even argued that poverty was a thing of the past.

In the last two years, these optimistic beliefs have been countered not only by the collapse of the dot-com industry and numerous corporate scandals, but by more careful research into poverty trends in the 1990s which suggest that while the overall poverty rate did indeed decline, a sizable number of very poor people were left behind. This research also revealed that many middle income workers did not experience significant improvements in their incomes and standards of living. The idea that the economic boom of the 1990s solved the poverty problem now seems a hollow one.

It is in this context that Danziger and Haveman's book should be recognized for making a major contribution to social science research into poverty. In seeking to understand poverty, the book shows how different factors interact in complex ways to perpetuate poverty at times when wider economic conditions would suggest that poverty should be significantly reduced. Although the book is not specifically intended to address the issue of poverty in the context of the economic prosperity of the 1990s, its numerous contributors deal with aspects of the problem that have direct bearing on the question of why poverty and deprivation persist in wealthy societies such as the United States where the values of material success and prosperity are deeply institutionalized.

This weighty tome consists of no less than 15 chapters and amounts to about 500 pages. It begins with an overview of the issues by the editors both of whom are among the most prolific and important scholars in the field today. The first part of the book deals with the extent of income poverty in the United States and its relation to family structure and mobility. It also contains a
useful chapter which situates poverty in the United States in the international context. The second part of the book is concerned with anti-poverty policies ranging over topics such as income support programs, welfare reform, health and human capital investments. Part III focuses on the spatial dimension paying attention to community based interventions and housing programs for low income people. The final part of the book addresses issues of race, and the current state of research into poverty.

Despite its size, this is an extremely useful book which should be consulted by students, researchers and general readers alike. It is easy to read and summarizes a huge amount of important information in a systematic way. Although some will be critical of its atheoretical approach, this is not a major limitation. Even though theory is neglected, the book finds an appropriate balance between descriptive and policy approaches and, in this way, offers a succinct overview of what governments, communities and non-profit agencies can do to address the poverty problem. The book offers an excellent overview of the field and will be a widely used resource for many years to come.


Social science scholarship has shown that there are many different ways of conceptualizing real world events and phenomena. Different investigators often use different perspectives to approach their subject matter and accordingly, their analyses and conclusions will differ from those who use other perspectives. This is equally true of the study of income support programs. Although much research in the field is based on an atheoretical, empiricist approach, more theoretically grounded approaches that rely on the insights of functionalism, Marxism, pluralism, gender and other perspectives are now common. However, it is only recently that scholars engaged in the analysis of welfare have explicitly sought to understand welfare from a perspective based on an understanding of race and the way racist attitudes and practices are infused into social policy. The pioneering work of scholars such as Jill Quadagno and Robert Lieberman has
been extended and reformulated by numerous other accounts including the one reviewed here.

However, the authors of this engaging book insist that previous accounts of race and welfare failed to transcend the limitations of conventional class and state centered analyses. Previous research, they argue, did not adequately emphasize the racist character of American society. It is not that racial discrimination rears its ugly head, finding expression in social welfare policies and programs from time to time, but rather that these policies and programs are totally shaped and determined by the institutionalization of racism in American culture. Institutionalized racism is, in turn, a function of the way white people have appropriated wealth, prestige and power unto themselves. To properly understand the American welfare system, scholars must, therefore, begin with an understanding of the way racism permeates American society.

The book offers many informative historical examples of how the policy making process has been saturated with racist considerations. From the time of the Progressive Era, through the New Deal to the Johnson War on Poverty and more recently the welfare 'reform' initiatives of the Clinton administration, the authors contend that race has been at the very center of welfare. By using a race-centered perspective, they show that the nation's welfare system is, in fact, a welfare racist system designed to oppress and exploit African Americans and other people of color. Specifically, the authors seek to demonstrate in several chapters that welfare racism is designed to enhance the prestige of the white population, extend their political power and increase their economic power by exploiting the poor. It is also intended to punish people for color for resisting white oppression and to control their reproduction.

The authors succeed in dramatizing extent to which race continues to pervade public attitudes as well as social policy debates on welfare. However, they often overstate the case. They also fail to demonstrate convincingly that the conspiratorial efforts of racists to use welfare for the ulterior motives outlined in the book's chapters, comprise a solid block of white racism. Indeed, they seem to downplay the efforts of many white 'progressives' to challenge and oppose racist activities. The final chapter, which
calls for a coalition of non-racial progressives that can counteract the insidious effects of welfare racism, fails to appreciate the extent to which people of many different backgrounds have already committed themselves to this task. The authors are also ambivalent about the contribution white feminists have made and, despite their efforts to integrate feminist critiques into their race centered perspective, feminist insights remain marginalized. Nevertheless, this is an important book which deserves to be widely read and discussed. It certainly succeeds in drawing attention to the on-going role of race in welfare policy. It also effectively challenges the conventional color-blind approach which characterizes so much of the social policy literature.
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