SCHOOLING THE WORKING-CLASS SUBJECT:

THE PRODUCTION OF WORKING-CLASS IDENTITIES

THROUGH BOURGEOIS DISCOURSE

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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Abstract

While there has been much attention devoted to examining the working class in the academic literature on schooling, very little attention has been paid to the *practices and politics of representing the working class*. In this thesis, I explore a range of representations of social class. I argue that these representations are central features of the production of class difference and that they are effects and products of ideals and desires embedded in bourgeois discourses of meritocracy, rationalism and objectivity. One of the main goals of the thesis is to pay attention to whose desires are being represented in discourses and representations about the working class and to challenge the assumption that knowledge is a universal truth that applies to everyone in the same way. A key problem that is explored is locating and defining what is "normal" in relations of oppressive power.

The idea of the bourgeois gaze is used to deconstruct the ways in which knowledge has been constructed about the working class through various education discourses. The thesis reviews new discourses of learning that have emerged as part of a general economic restructuring. I draw from a variety of sources, including life history interviews of adult workers in the industrial and service sectors in Ontario, workplace aptitude testing practices, recent workplace training literature, academic studies on social class and difference, as well as my own involvement in workplace training endeavours. I examine how it is that these discourses fail to recognize the worker as "knower" or as a producer of knowledge and I demonstrate how these discourses transfer normative liberal ideals about knowledge onto the working-class subject. I suggest that the very notion of "learning" is a moral discourse that regulates how working-class people are positioned discursively in relation to schooling and to the workplace.

I situate the findings as part of a process of objectification and "othering" and examine their roots in the development of liberal democratic governance. I suggest that the construction of workers as ignorant, or incompetent is rooted in the development of modern capitalist society and in notions of rationality. I conclude that the discursive production of class difference is an important part of bourgeois identity formation and of broader forms of social inequity.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the people who were in the direct line of fire throughout the thesis writing process. Much thanks to Andrew Thornton who was unusually enabling through a difficult thesis-writing process. Appreciation also to Maria Medved for being a good friend before, during, and after (we hope) this project. Thanks to Kari Krogh and Karen Sumbler for being interested and generous with my lip-flapping over the last seven or eight years. Thanks to my family also, who have probably often wondered what in the heck I have been doing over the last ten years, besides "being in school".

Thanks also goes to my thesis supervisor and committee members who provided me with room to move in the writing. Thanks very much to Handel Kashope Wright for agreeing to play the role of external examiner and providing me with valuable insights and encouragement to continue this line of thinking in one way or another.

Contents

Preface

I begin this thesis sitting in a coffee shop somewhere near an industrial park on the outskirts of Toronto. It is late afternoon, and I've just been picked up from the "go train" by a man driving an imposing old black Cadillac. I'm going to interview him for a university project called "Working Class Learning Strategies in Transition: Home and Industry-based Perspectives." We settle down into a booth. He is eager to talk with me about "education" and "work" and has even brought along his own tape recorder in case mine should break down. He's spent his whole life "workin'" and doing all kinds of "dirty jobs," dangerous too. He talks a lot about that. He talks about how working-class people are getting a raw deal these days. "Harris has thrown his ball of wax" into things, and people are getting nervous.[1]

I ask him some questions like "Could you tell me if you've taken part in any education or training programs last year?" and "To what extent have you been able to use your school knowledge on the job?." In wrapping up the interview he gives me some final advice about understanding education and workers. He tells me to go out and take a good look at what's going on in the workplace:

> I'd like you to get yourself some experience. Go out to some of these places
> and just see what I've told you. I guarantee your eyes will go up on top of
> your head just seeing the way some of these places work people.

Then he tells a story about a newspaper reporter who did a little social experiment. She dressed up as an overweight woman, went to apply for a job, and was rejected. When she thinned herself down and fixed herself up, she was hired for a job.

I met with several workers for this project and heard a lot of stories about seeing things. "Seeing" and "being seen" are common experiences in the world of labour. "Seeing" and being "seen" are important effects of the relation between capital and its objects.

Managers need to ignore or not see certain things in order to get their jobs done. Workers need to fine-tune their vision to see through the cracks in stories told about them and to them. Merit and success are constantly held up for examination by the workers that I speak with in this thesis. Seeing is a knife that cuts through fat messages of merit and success.

In this thesis I take the position that there are significant issues around social class that have not been addressed by the academy. The issues of seeing, of perspective, and "being there" are important organizing concepts of the thesis.

Introduction to the thesis

The broad purpose of this thesis is to look at some aspects of the production of class difference though bourgeois discourse. I deconstruct a number of different ways of thinking about and how working people are seen, or represented through educational discourses. I consider education systems broadly, as a connected set of practices, values and discourses about learning, individual development, workplace relations, and managerial practices. Education discourses and practices form a core of knowledge that influence the nature and range of things that people are allowed to do, and can do, with their lives. I make the assumption that discourses of schooling, ability, learning etc. are not just about "schooling" "ability" and "learning" but they are socially constructed categories. What I want to show is that these ideas are related, and that there is a coherent set of representations and way of thinking about these things. Furthermore, the way in which concepts are represented have actual effects on how things are organized and experienced in the world.

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[1]Mike Harris was the premier of Ontario at the time of the interview.

The first chapter of the thesis establishes, in a general way, some of the problems involved in representing the working-class subject from within the academy. It is an introductory chapter that highlights some general issues around schooling and social class and why I thought the thesis was worth writing in the first place. I suggest that there is a basic problem of representation and desire going on around class issues in the academy. The refusal of working-class identity in the academy, in particular, is a key starting point for the thesis. The idea that the discursive representation of the working class is an identity politics issue is one of the main contributions of this thesis to conversations about the definition and meaning of class difference and class as a feature of difference. It is what allows me to ask how class is implicated the structures of representation in the academy and to focus on the bourgeois gaze as one way of understanding how the working-class subject is represented through education discourses. The thesis explores various aspects of bourgeois refusal of class difference through schooling discourses.

The remaining chapters of the thesis are devoted to examining specific educational discourses and how they characterize the working-class subject. Chapter two develops the methodological background for the thesis. I use the ideas of "gaze" and "perspective" as analytic tools for understanding how class identity and difference are constructed through bourgeois discourse. Chapter three examines recent educational discourses that produce particular understandings about the abilities and identities of working-class subjects. Meritocracy is identified as a key discourse underlying dominant education systems under capitalism. As a dominant liberal (or bourgeois) discourse of schooling, meritocratic thought and practice provide the basis for a range constructions about the working class, with a particular focus on working-class abilities. I suggest that the very notion of "learning" is a moral discourse that regulates how working-class people are positioned

discursively in relation to schooling and to the workplace. This positioning has implications for how bourgeois subjects are situated in relation to schooling and the workplace as well.

I also review new discourses of learning that have emerged as part of a general economic restructuring, and the knowledge that they produce about adult working-class subjects. I examine how it is that these discourses fail to recognize the adult worker as "knower" or as a producer of knowledge. I demonstrate how these discourses transfer normative liberal ideals about knowledge onto the working-class subject: they situate the working-class subject as "adult learner," as chronically deficient in some way; as perpetually in need to "know." I also examine how these discourses may have in fact assisted in the broad scale economic restructuring which symbolically and in some cases literally, displaces working-class people outside of the existing workforce.

The fourth thesis chapter is a case study of the employment testing practices at a manufacturing plant in Ontario where I was involved as a consultant on testing for a local union. I describe how standardized testing came to have a particular kind of credibility from management that was not shared by members of the workforce being tested for job promotion. I show how testing, although it is supposed to be rooted in a discourse of objectivity, is a highly biased ideological practice. Employment testing, which has increased under economic restructuring, forms part of the conceptual practices of management that create a particular understanding of the working-class subject, which in turn has real effects on people in the workplace.

Testing is a "technology of the social" that assists in the production of particular versions of how working people think and what their abilities appear to be in relation to management. The evaluation methods employed by industry are made possible by the cooperation of scientific discourse, psychological theory, and organizational management.

These methods produce a working-class subject that does not know things, or that needs to learn. This understanding of workers makes it possible to justify coercive forms of monitoring and regulation of the workforce. I suggest that this version of the working-class subject is produced by the very mechanisms that are promoted to rectify the social differences and inequality.

In the final chapter, I take a broader look at processes of objectification and "othering" and examine their roots in the development of liberal democratic governance. I suggest that the construction of workers as ignorant, or incompetent is rooted in the development of modern capitalist society and notions of rationality. I explore how managerial discourses position workers outside of knowledge, and some of the possible meanings involved in this positioning. I conclude that the images of the working-class subject that are produced, reflect the desires and productions of bourgeois subjectivity. They operate to produce images of power, and to maintain the power relations between the working-class and bourgeois subject.

A key problem that is explored in this thesis is locating and defining what is "normal" in relations of oppressive power (an idea that is examined in more detail in Chapter 5 of the thesis). Oppressive power, as well as regulative power, developed out of ideas about what is or is not "normal," and is centrally concerned with setting standards of behavior and expression, in retaining control over meaning and social reality (Brown, 1995b; Corrigan, 1990; Foucault, 1977; Walkerdine, 1990). As clients and purveyors of normative power, researchers are never outside of these relations. In positing a desire to know about the Other, or a desire to understand the power relations involved in social difference, researchers are invariably caught up in webs of their own representations. One of the challenges of this thesis is to pay attention to who is being represented in texts about

the working class. And to challenge the assumption that knowledge is a universal truth that applies to everyone in the same way.

CHAPTER I:

SOCIAL CLASS AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

If the `Other' of Western civilisation is the colonised subject: so the colonised `Other' of education must surely be the working class. It is the one about whom the most has been said but who never speaks back (Lynch & O'Neill, 1994: 310).

Introduction

The relationship between working-class research subjects and middle-class academics is a deeply troubling one. It is a relationship based on significantly different social identities that are rooted in competing economic interests and distinct cultural identities, among other things. The main purpose of this chapter is to look at some of the issues regarding where the "working class" stands in relation to academic debates about "the working class." I introduce a range of issues concerning the representation of the working class as a social category. The general argument is that representations of working-class voice and experience in the academic literature are middle-class constructs or representations that have consequences for how class differences are to be understood in the academy.

One of the main concerns here is the "writing out" or erasure of the possibility of class difference within the academic space itself. I explore the idea that there is a declining belief in the efficacy of the category of "working class" as a cultural phenomenon and political force. I suggest that academic representations of class difference are suppressed in the battles over social identity and difference. There is a tendency for academic researchers to reference social class as a key indicator of social identity and difference, but at the same

time to remain silent about actual class processes, particularly in relation to academic knowledge production.

I suggest that the division of mental and manual labour is a product of classed discourses and has ramifications for how class relations are understood and represented in research practice. Here a number of complexities arise around class identity, and the role of education in maintaining control over class identity in the academy. The languages of schooling and academic discourses reject knowledges and ways of being that do not conform to rational-logical models of knowing. I do not start from the position that this rejection or exclusion is a major problem in class relations that needs to be rectified. That is, I do not start from the position that working-class people accept these representations of themselves, or that this positioning necessarily makes any difference to them. I am interested in how the inclusion of a politics of class difference in the academy relates to existing structures of academic discourse and practice, and to the production of knowledge *about* the working class. I am also interested in what it means to include the idea of class difference in the academy when the academy facilitates class mobility for working people.

Some orienting literature

One point of entry into the conversation about the representation of class in the academy is the body of research developed in the sociology of education, in particular critical studies in the sociology of education. This research literature is important to me personally because it is where I began to think more carefully about social stratification and schooling, a process which led me to some of the problems and issues that I raise in this thesis. The sociology of education has been predominantly concerned with the reproduction of social class in capitalist society, and the school as a facilitating institution in the

reproduction of social class (Erwin & MacLennan, 1994). This perspective has been understood by critical educational theorists (e.g., neo-marxist, some feminist, and cultural studies theorists) as being too "structural" or deterministic in its approach to power relations in society. That is, structural approaches tended to minimize the active participation of individuals in the structures of power that dominate their lives.

One of the central concerns of critical research in the sociology of education (and other social research interested in power and oppressive social relations) is the absence of the perspectives, or "voices" of marginalized groups in academic research. The idea that there is room for individual agency in shaping social structures has led to a research approach that takes an interest in, or "allows," different voices and perspectives into the academic space. Since the early 1970s there have been a number of critical ethnographic studies on schooling that have focused on the lived experience of social relations, and specifically on the power relations involved in the reproduction of social difference (e.g., Anyon, 1981; McLaren, 1982; McRobbie, 1978; Walker, 1988; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Willis, 1977; Weis, 1990; Wexler, 1992).

Drawing on neo-marxist and feminist theories of class relations, ethnographic studies of schooling have offered some insights into how working-class people live and grapple with representations of their experience made available to them through formal schooling. These studies have sought to understand the political significance of such movements. In general, ethnographies that focus on working-class students' relationship to dominant forms of schooling shed light on how working-class students contest or accommodate to hegemonic forms of education. Much of this literature has focused on how working-class youth rework the opportunities and identities that are offered to them through formal schooling, and how gendered and classed identities develop within that

context (McLaren, 1982; McRobbie, 1978; Walker, 1988; Willis, 1977; Weis, 1990). Similar research on working-class adult learning has mainly focused on adult education, such as Rockhill's (1991) work on women's contradictory relationships within literacy education settings and Luttrell's (1992) work on white and black working-class women's views on schooling and knowledge.

The concepts of desire for, and resistance to, formal schooling are central elements of these ethnographies. For example, personal resistance to schooling as a kind of disorganized political strategy is the focus of Paul Willis's analysis of the anti-school culture of working-class boys in Britain. Theories of accommodation, resistance, refusal, and "willful non-recognition" of dominant knowledges that are developed in these studies have been useful for understanding power as involving more than simple victimization, or simple responses to structural authority. These studies recognize the working-class subject as having certain forms of power within unequal relations of power, even as s/he is actively positioned outside its centres. Recognizing the subject as having agency also helps to think about people's experiences as more than just knee-jerk reactions to authority, or simple compliance. Some studies have suggested that working-class accommodation to schooling may also be explained as a form of resistance, and that this is uniquely gendered (Fuller, 1980; Kessler et al. 1985; Anyon, 1984) and raced (Fuller, 1980; Luttrell, 1992) and contains the seeds of discontent that may be necessary to resist total co-optation by the terms offered by formal schooling. In other words, "accommodation" can also be understood in terms of how dominant meaning systems may get co-opted by subordinated people.

The practice of researching "lived experience" is based on the assumption that academic research, by and large, represents the views of dominant groups whose writings may not reflect the interests and concerns of the working class or other marginalized

groups. In the case of the literature on education and work, the gap reflects a tendency for education research to focus on the interests of employers and not those who work for them (Livingstone, 1993). When academics ground their research in dialogue with living subjects, they assume that the results might somehow lead to a different knowledge base that will assist in challenging existing social structures. As noted by Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) and others, there is a tendency to privilege or to assume an emancipatory potential of such practices.

In particular there are serious problems with attempts to include working-class perspectives in academic research. Lynch and O'Neill (1994) have argued that working-class perspectives can never be unproblematically represented in the academy because the working classes occupy a structurally contradictory role to the education system by virtue of their class status. That is, working-class people cannot directly represent their own experiences within academia because they are structurally as well as culturally excluded. The voices, perspectives, and experiences of working-class people are represented and mediated through middle-class theories, discourses, and practices. Academic knowledge about working-class people is *produced* through classed relations that refuse their experience and knowledge.

In this chapter, I make the claim that the identities, social practices, and economic interests of middle-class (and upper-class) academics are fundamentally at odds with those of working-class people. While this has significant implications for academic representations of working-class life, it is not something that has been discussed at any length in academic literature on education. I focus on the idea of the "working-class" as a social category in setting up a general problem of representation where the category working class is either suppressed or situated as an object of interest in academia—but

generally within bourgeois liberal humanist discourse. The rest of the thesis examines how working-class subjects are implicitly and explicitly positioned in bourgeois discourses: in workplace learning discourse, in standardized testing discourse, and in liberal democratic discourse in general. [2]

Materialist perspectives on the academy and "the working class"

The act of academic speaking to the "working-class subject" is ensconced in serious power differentials, from the ability to leverage funding to conduct research to the production of academic texts. Much of the work that academics do involves the active maintenance of class difference. It is my view that the dominant education systems (public schooling, adult education, higher education, and other institutionalized forms of schooling) require that working-class people get written out of academic texts, or written into academic texts in particular ways in order to maintain existing structures of authority. The act of representing working-class perspectives in the academy, therefore, is not a simple process of gaining access to working-class subjects or setting respondents "at ease" so they will be comfortable talking with middle-class researchers. There are some fundamental conflicts of interest that underlie this relationship.

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[2]There are many different ways of understanding class relations (see Gibson-Graham, 1996 for one overview). I use the broad categories of bourgeois and working class as a way of distinguishing the major classes under industrial capitalism (Miliband 1989). The term "middle class" is ambiguous in that it can be understood to include the working classes. I use the term "middle" and "working" class in the Marxist sense of production relations. In the remainder of the thesis I retain this distinction between the middle-class (bourgeoisie) and working class but I include other aspects of social relations that go beyond the economic. I understand class relations as a process of making and maintaining social identities and difference, of living the historical effects of domination and subordination, as well as the result of property ownership and control.

In Marxist terms, academics are members of the bourgeoisie. They are members of the professional and managerial class (Miliband, 1989). Academics are salaried mental workers who do not own the means of production and whose major function in the division of labour is one that reproduces capitalist culture and capitalist class relationships (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984). The professional and managerial classes can be distinguished from the owners of production in their cultural preferences and in their competition with capitalists for their share of economic surplus. The professional and managerial classes may appear to have some commonalties with the working-class. They may be seen to share (or represent themselves as sharing) with workers the vulnerability that comes with selling one's labour to the owners of production, for example. This is particularly true for academics as the teaching profession becomes more proletarianized (Wright, 1978), as well as middle managers displaced by economic restructuring (Clement, 1988). *But* this does not mean that the managerial and professional classes are allied with the working classes, or that they share the same relationship or forms of vulnerability with the capitalist classes.

As members of the bourgeoisie, academics can be understood to serve capitalist class relationships in a number of ways. The university produces and reproduces the middle classes through processes of certification that distinguish it from the working class. Although academics as teachers may share some economic commonalities with the working classes, they are located in contradiction to the working classes at an ideological and cultural level. Taking this view to its extreme, the universities train managers who then manage working-class people. The classroom (in general terms) is understood as a site for upward mobility, "a place where workers might gain the resources needed to make themselves supervisors, where entrepreneurs might become professionals, where professionals might join the ranks of upper management" (Lipsitz, 1997: 10).

This contradictory positioning of academics to the working class is actualized further in the political work that academics may do. According to O'Dair (1993) who writes about the complexities of class analysis in relation to affirmative action policies, academics tend to be quite conservative in their political commitment to working-class issues. O'Dair suggests that while academics may endorse left-liberal politics for minority groups and the historically marginalized they seem to be reluctant to acknowledge the historically marginalized position of the working class in a practical way. This practicality would translate, for example, into the inclusion of class background in affirmative action formulas, a process that would go against the very grain of bourgeois liberal individualism.

For O'Dair, a self-identified working-class academic, this is an "odd refusal" that springs from largely unexamined but powerful conflicts of interest, conflicts that are rooted in the proximity that various social classes have to the "distribution" as opposed to the "production" systems in capitalist societies. There is a curious symbiosis, says O'Dair, between intellectuals and the underclass, but not the working class. Furthermore, the socio-economic interests of the underclass conflict with those of the working class:

> Like the underclass who often must find assistance from social services funded by public monies, intellectuals find their livelihoods primarily in the public sector, including those employed by private institutions, whose budgets are supported to a considerable degree by public monies in the form of, for example, student financial aid, faculty research grants, and various kinds of tax exemptions (O'Dair, 1993: 245).

According to O'Dair, both intellectuals and the underclass, therefore, hold a vested interest in the expansion of the welfare state. Both groups, that is, have an interest in the "distributive machinery" of government, as opposed the production system. To the extent that the working classes depend on profitable production systems, they are situated in contradictory ways to the distributive machinery of government. This may account for "a

tense relationship" between academics and the industrial working class, especially as they are represented by organized labour (Peter Berger, cited in O'Dair, 1993: 245). Livingstone alludes to this issue when he suggests that Marxist scholars have tended to overlook the necessary shared interests between workers and their employers (Livingstone & Mangan, 1996). To be more succinct: it is not in the interest of workers for companies to go bankrupt.

Not only do academics and working-class people compete for economic resources, but they also benefit differentially from the tax bases that fund education. The working classes contribute to a tax base that facilitates the education of middle and upper class groups more than their own group, essentially helping to fund the education of those who will control their work.

Unlike the relationship between middle-class and underclass groups the relationship between middle and working-class groups is shaped by different political, ideological and economic perspectives. This is not to say that the middle class may not have conflicting interests with the underclasses as well, for example in determining how the welfare state should be expanded (particularly around the issue of tax cuts versus extended social benefits). Neither is it to say that the working classes do not also have shared interests with the underclasses in the expansion of the welfare state. Fox Piven and Cloward (1997) and many other Marxist scholars have argued that state unemployment, pensions, health care benefits, etc. are common interests of the working and underclasses, issues which are much less pertinent to the professional and managerial classes.

However, the point I am trying to make here is that there is some evidence to suggest that there are important conflicts of interest, particularly around the education of working-class people, that would predispose academics—left-identified academics included—to work *against* directly addressing the existence of class differences, much less

making serious attempts to change the classed relations involved in education or research. These issues appear to have been exacerbated under the conditions of economic restructuring where there appears to have been a declining interest, or belief in the efficacy of the category of "working class" as a cultural phenomenon or a political force (e.g., Gibson-Graham[3], 1996; McKay, 1996; Walkerdine, 1996).

The category of "working class" as problematic

A struggle over "new" social identities has emerged in the political fragmentation and instability characterizing post-war politics. In this struggle, it would appear that class politics have lost ground, or have become less recognizable than they were previously. The declining interest in class-based politics reflects both material and discursive class differences. It reflects material class differences to the extent that there have been significant changes in the organization of labour under post-fordism.[4] It reflects discursive class differences to the extent that these changes may be perceived as an *actual* decline in presence of a working class.

There are a number of different interpretations for the weakened interest in class politics taking place across the political spectrum at this time. The political right has argued

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[3] Gibson-Graham are noted as one author, but reflect the writings of two people.

[4] The relation of the working classes to the production system has become even more unstable than it was previously under Fordism, with the move toward more precarious forms of work and the attack on protective labour legislations. Fox Piven & Cloward (1997:51-52) describe a number of effects of capitalist restructuring on organized labour and the working classes: International finance markets have increased productivity through the exploitation of labour and resources across the globe. International organizations, multinational corporations and international banking organizations, as well as domestic corporations and financial insitutions, use the threat of disinvestment as leverage in their dealings with governments and become major constraints on the policy options of the state. The industrial labour force is reduced at the same time that old mass production industries are reorganized and decentred. Capital has launched a political project to attack unions and slash welfare state income and service protections which shielded workers from the market by discrediting kenesian macro-economic political regulation.

that technological advances, new international divisions of labour, and a general advance in the quality of life of working people, are minimizing the oppositional role that labour once played (Miliband, 1989). The right has also argued that class relations have been democratized to the extent that there are no longer any substantial gains to be made by the working class. It has been argued, for example, that there is no longer a substantial "working class."

The declining interest in class-based politics has occurred in leftist circles as well. In his examination of the historical documents of the Canadian working-class journalist Ian MacKay, Colin MacKay (1996) suggests that the term "left" has collapsed into an "overarching liberal hegemony" that has lost political meaning. The concept of "the working class" has been subverted to the extent that it can now be affixed with blame for the unstable conditions facing working people:

> To many people today, including those who are skeptical about capitalism and the liberal order the very idea of any class-centred "we" seems ambiguous, question-begging, even an oppressive return to old teleologies and master narratives; and "class interest" is commonly written off as a dated fantasy, when it is not derided as masculinist, speciest, and so on. One rarely hears today of a "Canadian working class." The very term "working class" has remained stubbornly and revealingly confined to the academy (MacKay, 1996: 498).

This is not to say that the term "working class" is no longer relevant *outside* the academy, or that it is not mobilized within specific contexts like trade unionism. Neither is it to say that the term "working class" is represented unproblematically in the academy. McKay is concerned about a particular historical context (the 1890s to the 1930s) where there appeared to be an emerging identifiable working-class culture; where working-class political and intellectual writings had a public forum. The idea that this space *appears* to be shrinking is one of my concerns here.

The demise of class-based politics (as represented by "left" politics) can be and has been attributed to a number of converging events. While it can be understood primarily as the result of the increased dominance of transnational capital, with its resulting effects on the social welfare state, this does not explain why the political right, rather than the left, has been able to dominate the political horizon. The political right has launched a successful campaign to obliterate representations and dialogue about class issues. This is part of a broad-based demonization of socialism and communism, philosophies which are considered to be "out of date" and backwards. Socialist and communist philosophies are rendered as anti-modern, or standing in the way of progress. In his discussion of post-modern identity politics in the context of post-war Britain, Mercer (1994) claims that the left has failed to "read" the political landscape in a way that allows it to capture the popular imagination in a way that the conservative right has done. The right has "successfully played on the binary polarity of "left" "right" politics where the left is identified with the past and the right monopolizes the imaginary horizon of the future" (Mercer, 1994:269).

According to Seidman (1994) the Marxist critique of capitalism began losing credibility in the 1960s: the absence of working-class radicalism and the "authoritarian turn" of Soviet communism precipitated a crisis of Marxism. Post-fordism and the resulting demobilization of the working classes also posed a problem for Marxist interpretations of class struggle. The emergence of new social movements during the same period (e.g. student movements, women, gays, and social justice and civil rights struggles) also challenged the Marxist critique of social transformation.

The relationship between the new social movements and class politics is important in the context of trying to understand a weakened left politics. One of the problems with Marxist theories was that they conceptualized the "working class" as a universal category

while at the same time focusing on the white, male industrial worker as the revolutionary political figure. By erecting a monolithic category of "the working class" Marxist theorists excluded other social political actors and overlooked many of the political axes that could link to a broad-based class movement (Touraine, 1988). Marxism, as a general or "grand" social theory, "rendered gender, sexual, racial, or nationalistic conflicts secondary, if not entirely marginal, by insisting that political economy and class is the organizing principle of all societies" (Seidman, 1994: 214). In this line of argument, the new social movements, largely representing middle-class interests, developed in opposition to the universalizing tendencies of class politics. Miliband (1989) claims that the new social movements largely rejected class politics as the defining agent of social change and questioned the emancipatory potential of a universal class politics.

The new social movements have been important in that they have challenged the liberalism inherent in Marxist critiques; they have challenged the assumed universality of a white male subject. According to Mercer (1994), the new social movements have both empowered people in their everyday lives and expanded the horizon of popular politics. But there have also been serious political problems with the ability of new social movements to unify their members. Mercer attributes these difficulties to conceptual problems internal to identity politics and also to limitations of the left to ally itself with this diversification of political subjects. He argues that through their tendency to essentialist or separatist identity politics, the new social movements have partly constructed themselves in the image of dominant power structures. He suggests that the consequences of such separatism is self-defeating because it "mimics the binarism of discourses that legitimate domination" (Mercer, 1994:281).

One of the major challenges to the universalizing tendencies of Marxist theory was initiated by the feminist movement which spoke to the possibility of women as a separate class. But by focusing on women as a unitary category, feminism also produced a monolithic category largely represented by white middle-class women. This conversation was initiated by Marxist and socialist feminists who critiqued the absence of class analysis in liberal feminist projects, (as well as critiquing the absence of women's' role in theories of class process e.g., Hartmann, 1981), and black feminist theorists who challenged the totalizing categories of woman, blackness *and* class (e.g., Collins, 1990; hooks, 1984). In a further critique of liberal universalism, post-modern feminism questioned the possibility of the category of "woman" (Harding, 1986).

One particularly striking example of the universalizing tendency of liberal politics comes to mind. The desire of feminists to have employment equity with their white middle-class male counterparts left many women wondering just what kind of equity these women were talking about. Working-class women were already located in jobs similar to their male counterparts, or their male counterparts worked in jobs that were not particularly desirable, or they lived in economically depressed regions where neither women nor men could get decent work. This is not to say that working-class women do not experience other forms of employment discrimination or pay inequity. I use the example to highlight the conservativism of liberal universalism which leaves oppressive capitalist relations intact. In Marxist terms, "As workers, women wage-earners would have achieved equality of exploitation" (Miliband, 1989: 101).

Mercer claims that identity politics are both a cause and effect of a weakened leftist politics. The left has failed, because it has failed to build alliances with the new social movements. It is the view of some social theorists that the weakened left also coincides with

what has been called the "feminization" of work. Leftist activists seem to have disengaged

in the struggle for class equality at a time when women's entry into the labour force has

increased, at a time when work has become increasingly "precarious":

> While men are increasingly subject to the terms of the feminized labour
> market with its proliferation of part-time and temporary jobs, women have
> become a central component of the restructured labour force. Women and
> men constitute a `new' working class, one that has lost its industrial muscle
> (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 47).

The "feminized" labour force includes those who were the most exploited workers in

the labour hierarchy. The transformation of the labour force to white collar and service

work seems to have shifted the political focus from a broad-based class struggle to a process

where "class" has become one among a number of interest groups competing for legitimate

access to state resources. The reconfigured labour force, it is argued, no longer represents,

nor is represented by leftist political interests.

This is by no means a comprehensive overview of the status of contemporary class-

based politics. Miliband (1989) does a more comprehensive review of the relationship

between the labour movement and the new social movements, the main argument being

that class relations remain critical to these movements in their bid for social transformation.

I wanted to allude to some of the main theoretical issues that have emerged around class

and identity politics and link this to the idea of working-class decline.

Academic conversations about the political and ontological status of the working

class seem to have centred around the status of the "left," the role of new social movements

in political change, why it is that the left has failed to ally itself with many of the new social

movements, and why it is that the right has been able to dominate the popular conscience.

In these conversations, it appears that working-class politics, to the extent that they are

identified with "left" political interests, have received short shrift. These issues are relevant

to the current situatedness of class politics in the academy, and the role of the discursive in understanding these relations.

The "working class" as a discursive construct

It is important here to make a distinction between the "working class" as constructed by the left, and the self-definitions of working-class groups (with organized labour being only one of these venues). Mercer and others whose works I review here, do not seem to distinguish between these terms in their writing. I think this reflects one of the problems of writing *about* the working class from within the academy. "The left" often appears to be confused and collapsed with "the working class," or with organized labour.

Walkerdine suggests that the relationship between the "left" and the working class is not self-evident.[3] She alludes to the idea of the working class as a fiction, or a construction of bourgeois intellectuals. For her, the demise of class politics appears as a reaction to a *discursive construct* of middle-class leftist and feminist intellectuals. What has happened is not simply a decline of the presence of an (industrial) working class. Instead, the traditional "left" appears to have abandoned their own construction of "the working class":

> For the left and for many feminist intellectuals, working class communities no longer exist, just as the decline of the manufacturing base in Britain and the USA means that there is no longer any substantial factory workbase. On this basis, it is argued that there can be no working class in the way it was traditionally conceived. While this might be factually correct in one sense, it has provided the basis for a writing out of working class peoples as a reactionary block rather than a spur to political change (Walkerdine, 1996: 355).

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[3]Just as there is no essential relation between the working-classes and any particular politics, I do not mean to imply that there is an essential relation between middle-class location and any one form of politics. But there is a tendency for power relations to work in ways that do map social location with certain types of privilege, and possibly certain types of politics, and certainly ways of seeing the world, as I demonstrate somewhat in this thesis.

Focusing on the discursive allows one to think about the possibility of "the working class," "the left," or "Marxism" for that matter, as classed representations or texts, as opposed to mirror reflections of social reality. To take one example, the idea that "the working class" equals "labour unionism" equals "white males" is a construct that needs to be understood from a particular vantage point. Labour unionism is often spoken about *as if* it were "white male" dominated, and *as if* it also represented the entire working class. This particular set of discursive relations is classed at a number of levels. For one thing, the tendency to equate "the working class" or "labour unionism" with "white males" has enabled class to be minimized in current academic debates that understand the "white male" to signify only as a bastion of privilege. It also tends to locate blame for current labour structures on labour unionism rather than on corporate practices. This conversation does not take into account the fact that unions are constituted by a diverse white and nonwhite racial and ethnic membership. While recognizing that white male hegemony has been a significant force within labour politics, just as it has been in all other dominant capitalist institutions, this is not to say that the "working class" is constituted and represented exclusively by white male interests. The unionized working class is comprised of a diverse racial and ethnic membership (Henwood, 1997) although the unionization rates (as well as wage rates) for equity seeking groups (e.g., visible minorities, Aboriginal groups, persons with disabilities) are generally somewhat lower than for non-equity seeking groups (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997).[6]

If the leadership of the main agencies of the labour movement is indeed represented primarily by bourgeois or petite bourgeois activists (as Miliband has suggested, 1989: 96),

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[6]Equity seeking groups as defined by Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics data for 1993.

then it may be that this is a conversation happening between bourgeois academics, and bourgeois labour activists without regard for the diversely sexed, gendered, aged, classed, abled, and racialized labour force. It may be that focusing on this hierarchy or "set of discursive equivalencies" is useful for politicizing such things as women's work, and the "feminization" of work in general (as it has been used, e.g. Brodie, 1995) but I think that it clearly reflects politicizing and theorizing from a bourgeois standpoint. I raise this issue here in order to point out the importance of understanding social categories and relations in terms of their discursive construction and particularly to point out the *classed* nature of such discursive constructions.

The problem that I think emerges in these analyses is one of class struggle over the representation of the categories of social class. This is an identity politics issue that arises at the level of academic theorizing. The idea that the discursive representation of the working class is an identity politics issue is important for anyone interested in education and social class issues. It is an important aspect of bourgeois capitalist knowledge production and social relations of power, and is one of the main contributions of this thesis to conversations about social difference.

Although there has not been much attention paid to the status of "class" in identity politics work, some writers have paid specific attention to the issue. Some of the recent work on "whiteness" as a racialized and classed construct for example, has paid specific attention to class identity politics and provides further insights into the ways in which class has become marginalized in academic discourse (e.g. Wray & Newitz, 1997). Others have situated the representation of social class issues within an "overarching liberal hegemony" of leftist discourse. I review two of these works here.

Gibson-Graham (1996), for example, are concerned that dominant formulations of political economic relations have been a key aspect of the struggle to define and represent class issues. They draw a distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices in order to carry out their analysis of class and the politics of identity. That is, they make an analytic distinction between the *production* of social constructs and the *effects* of those constructs in order to understand the politics of representing categories of social class in the academy. They claim that the Marxist discourse of class, which characterized class as the primary social relation of contemporary societies, is partially responsible for contributing to its marginalization. The restructuring literature in particular has created a discourse of working-class decline and disempowerment.

Gibson-Graham identify the construct of industrial capitalism as one of the internal contradictions of left politics that has disabled progressive movement on social class issues:

> Critics of Marxism proclaim the death of class, while Marxist theorists of contemporary capitalism lament working-class demobilization. From our perspective, what has died or been demobilized is a fiction of the working class and its mission that was produced as part of a hegemonic conception of industrial capitalist development (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 69).

They argue that capitalism has been a taken-for-granted concept around which both left and right critics have built their arguments for social stability. The main problem has to do with the way that "capitalism" is privileged by both left and right political interests, as the primary driving force in production relations. Class processes have been hinged to images of capitalist relations in ways that make it difficult to think about the possibility of other means of political and economic transformation. Gibson-Graham outline a politics of class that includes non-capitalist class arrangements to be thought, and allows an array of existing class processes to emerge *within* the current political context. Housework is offered as an example of a "feudal" class process in which men and women may both participate to

varying degrees. The focus on multiple and contradictory class processes opens up a new space to envision a politics of class that is not limited to the auspices of capitalism and that does not require a "revolutionary industrial vanguard" or some such thing as its primary agent of social change.

Importantly, Gibson-Graham note that *academic* representations of class struggle have become suppressed in battles over social identity and difference within the academy. This idea is key to my present discussion. They point out a paradox in academic research and writing about social class. Social theorists have paid lip service to social class as a key axis of political identity (along with race, gender, and sexuality) but at the same time tend to neglect theorizing class processes in their texts.[7]

Wendy Brown (1995b) also addresses the issue of class in relation to contemporary identity politics debates. Like Mercer, she agrees that contemporary identity claims "mimic the binarism of discourses that legitimate domination" (Mercer, 1994: 281). And like Gibson-Graham she also asks why it is that class identity is suppressed in contemporary identity politics. However, she goes further than these writers to explicitly examine some of the political underpinnings of social identity claims in relation to social class. There are some interesting results.

Emphasizing the discursive context of identity politics, Brown reinterprets the dominant claim of the European and North American Left, that emerging social identities are the result of the demise of class politics under post-fordism. She suggests that on the contrary, what has come to be called identity politics revolves around an unexamined

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[7]It is important to note that it is debatable whether there ever *was* any significant attention paid by academics to the working class—in Canada anyway. Clement, for example, claims that it is only recently that Canadian historians have paid any attention whatsoever to working-class culture. The

privileging of capitalist relations. Through their desire for certain bourgeois ideals, new identity politics are in part *dependent* upon the "demise of a critique of capitalism and of bourgeois cultural and economic values" (Brown, 1995b: 59).

Brown recognizes that the story of contemporary identity claims can be, and has been, told in a number of different ways. The emergence of identity politics has been characterized as the result of the commodification of social life; as the denaturalization of social relations due to (and created by) postmodern technologies and cultural productions; and as a form of political consciousness mobilized by Civil Rights movements in the U.S. But it is her focus on the genealogy (as per Foucault, 1977) and the production of modern identity claims that allows her to ask the question: "Given what produced it . . . what does politicized identity want?"

> If it is this ideal (the bourgeois ideal) that signifies educational and vocational opportunity through upward mobility, relative protection against arbitrary violence, and reward in proportion to effort, and if it is this ideal against which many of the exclusions and privations of people of color, gays and lesbians, and women are articulated, then the political purchase of contemporary American identity politics would seem to be achieved in part *through* a certain renaturalization of capitalism that can be said to have marked progressive discourse since the 1970s. What this also suggests is that identity politics may be partly configured by a peculiarly shaped and peculiarly disguised form of class resentment, a resentment that is displaced onto discourses of injustice other than class, but a resentment, like all resentments, that retains the real or imagined holdings of its reviled subject as objects of desire (Brown, 1995b: 59-60).

Brown suggests that it is possible that the articulation of identity politics through race, gender and sexuality, may *require*, rather than incidentally produce a limited identification through class. These identities abandon a critique of class power and class

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bulk of academic writings on the Canadian working class have focused on labour relations or labour unionism (Clement, 1988).

norms to the extent that they are established through bourgeois norms of social acceptance, legal protection, and relative material comfort.

According to Brown, contemporary identity politics are "tethered to a formulation of justice that reinscribes a bourgeois (masculinist) ideal as its measure" and in opposing these forms of power, also comprise them (50). In hinging their claims to difference to bourgeois ideals, these identity claims have minimized the political significance of their difference. Her point is *not* that these claims to exclusion are in any way trivial but that without recourse to white masculinist bourgeois ideals, politicized identities would forfeit a good deal of their claims to injury and exclusion, "their claims to the political significance of their difference" (61). She then asks a key question that I am interested in here:

> Could we have stumbled upon one reason why class is invariably named but rarely theorized or developed in the multiculturalist mantra, "race, class, gender, sexuality?" (61)

Brown goes further to provocatively suggest that it may be that this lack of attention to class identity is not an oversight but indicative of certain (unnamed) political allegiances. It is the abstraction of identity from political economy that has produced the failure of politicized identities to unify their members (60.).

Brown draws on Foucault's analysis of modern disciplinary power, as well as liberal humanist discourses, in order to understand how it is that identity claims turn back on themselves in their appeals for equality. This is an expansion of the argument that modern identity claims reproduce an authoritarian desire for the centre. She suggests that politicized identity claims "count every difference as no difference" through their appeals to both the "universal juridical ideal of liberalism" (we are all equal before the law) and the "normalizing principle of disciplinary regimes." Disciplinary productions work to "conjure and regulate subjects through classificatory schemes, naming and normalizing social

behaviors as social positions" (58). They also "count every potentially subversive rejection of culturally enforced norms as themselves normal, as normalizable, and as normativizable through law" (68).

It is through articulation in language, or through the very process of *naming* in the context of liberal and disciplinary discourses, that identity claims become recognizable in social discourse. It is through their appeal to inclusion that identity claims become observable and definable through law, and thus regulated through it. They become known as if their existence were intrinsic or factual rather than products of discursive and institutional power. Naming becomes a "vehicle of subordination through individualization, normalization, and regulation, even as it strives to produce visibility and acceptance" (Brown, 1995b: 68). Along with others who have tried to take politicized identity beyond the problem of political exclusion and closure (e.g. Hall, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Seidman, 1997), Brown wants to take politicized identity beyond its problematic investments.

What I see in Brown's analysis, is a picture of new social identities coalescing around an image of exclusion from a normative bourgeois order. Her analysis suggests that class may not, in fact, be raised as a category of exclusion in this context because it would threaten desires to claim exclusion and raise question marks about the centring of capitalist practices which rely on and produce a class stratified society. I think that Brown provides important insights into the status of class in identity politics discussions. But there are some limitations to this analysis. The fact that identities of class are rarely "theorized" is important, but the fact that they may not be *claimed* (specifically by working-class groups) is a more interesting issue. The possibility that class identities may not be claimed or named in ways that are visible academically is also interesting. It would seem to me that the relative

absence of discussion around class, as an identity politics issue in the *academy*, is a fairly obvious one that is a result of identity politics itself. The question is, *who* would make such claims from within the academy? And *how* would these claims be heard if academia works to moderate or negate class difference?

"Claims to exclusion" from the system might not be made for a variety of reasons. Not the least of which is the possibility that marginalized groups may *recognize* the internal contradictions of making such claims. They may *reject* bourgeois cultural and economic values. (Gibson-Graham's work is important in this regard because they try to recognize this fact in their study of non-capitalist productive relations.) Claims to exclusion are especially problematic around class. For the working class to claim historical under-representation in institutions of higher learning, for example, would require a deconstruction of the entire social structure of higher learning institutions. These are serious political issues that do not seem to have surfaced in identity politics discussions in the academy.

The academy and the politics of class identity

Here, I try to establish further, some problems around representing working-class perspectives in the academy. I deliberately by-pass well-known works on "the working class" and "working-class culture" such as E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, Lillian Rubin's *Worlds' of Pain*, or Sennet and Cobbs' *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. I take a detour around works that filter working-class experience through the lenses of academia, and go right to the "horse's mouth" to find out what self-identified working-class academics have to say about their own classed experience *within* academia.

I admittedly take a strong insider/outsider perspective (as if this is something that needs to be "admitted" or "confessed") in linking the problem of class identity with that of representation practices in academia. I use writings from self-identified working-class academics to establish and explain my major points here. It is through this insider/outsider perspective that I am able to raise further questions around the representation of "the working class" within the context of bourgeois knowledge production. Claiming that one is "inside" the working class does not (or should not) challenge the reality of a class-stratified working-class culture. Arguably the categories that are most exposed and opened to critique by the claims of working-class academics are the identities, desires and experiences of middle-class academics.

This insider/outsider approach does not mean that there are clear-cut, or fixed, boundaries around who belongs to a particular class category or not, or that only the working class can "speak" in this context. Clearly this is not the case. I would expect that there are relatively few "working-class academics" (in North America) who would be interested in identifying themselves in the context of academia, or who would even suggest that this self-naming is a possibility given the dominant myths around education and the politics of class erasure. This issue is clarified further in this chapter. I draw on these texts of "working-class academics" in order to highlight what happens when a working-class status is claimed by real bodies (not discursive categories) within the academy and to provide some basis for exploring some of the issues that I explore in this thesis.

It is hard to say what a politics of class identity in the academy would look like. Or whether or not the politics of class identity would suffer from a moralist policing in drawing up boundaries around "who's in" and "who's out" of the identity category. No doubt, there are a myriad of identity category problems that could conceivably arise in the

process of defining class membership—not the least of which would be establishing the difference between the working class and the working poor. One problem that seems to have emerged around class identity politics in the academy has to do with the establishment of *middle-class identities* in relation to working-class identities. For example, the process of identifying oneself as a member of the working class has become known (in some working-class academic circles) as being "prolier than thou." This is a funny joke. But it has serious implications because it refers mainly to a tendency for middle-class academics or labour activists to want to claim some kind of essential status or membership in the working-class communities with which, and *in* which, they may work. This appears as a flip-side identification problem to working-class rejection or denial of their own social histories within academia.

The "writing in" of working-class experience, or the writing out of class *difference* takes place at a number of levels in academic work. Not only does the problem lie in the fact that very few working-class people become writers of their own or others' stories within academia (because there are relatively few working-class people *in* the academy, e.g., Bellamy & Guppy, 1990; Fortin, 1987; Guppy & Davies, 1998)[8], but there is also a refusal of

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[8]Canadian census data indicates that while gender and racial inequalities in educational achievement have been continually decreasing, this is not the case when social class is considered in the analysis (Guppy & Davies, 1998). Historically, the post-secondary participation of students from high-income families has been greater than students from low-income families (Bellamy & Guppy, 1990). In Canada, undergraduate levels of education are largely occupied by children from upper- and middle-class families (Fortin, 1987). Recent census data show that access to education has increased since the post-war period, for many underrepresented groups, particularly for women. But this is not the case for working-class, Aboriginal, and Portuguese-Canadian students (social class was measured by both occupation and educational level of parents). Guppy and Davies suggest that they expect this trend to continue to dominate with tighter education budgets and with educational policies that do not forefront social class issues. "In many ways" state Guppy and Davies, "educational policy is not being directed to where it is most urgently needed" (1998:124).

any stories that do get written, for example in the literary cannon (Coiner, 1995; Willinsky, 1990).

When educated working-class people bring their experiences and culture into the academy they find resistance, lack of recognition of these forms, or blatant denial of their classed experience. *It is at this juncture, where working-class and middle-class bodies meet face to face, on the intellectual ground of advanced schooling, that some of the most revealing knowledge about social class difference is produced.* It is here that working-class people really do get an education. They get a chance to learn the practices of professional domination. They get to learn about the thinking processes of those who used to tell them what to do, how, and when to do it. They get to learn, through hands-on experience, how they are perceived by those who once exercised authority over them. In the introduction to her book, *Landscape for a good woman: A story of two lives,* Carolyn Steedman writes about the invisible classing effects of schooling:

> I read a woman's book, meet such a woman at a party (a woman now, like
> me) and think quite deliberately as we talk: we are divided: a hundred years
> ago I'd have been cleaning your shoes. I know this and you don't (1986: 2).

A growing number of working-class academics have spoken about the refusal of their working-class experience or identification within academia (e.g. hooks, 1984; O'Dair, 1993; Steedman, 1986; Walkerdine, 1990; Weatherbee, 1995; Thornton, 1998). This refusal also exists within leftist circles, largely represented by middle-class professionals. Working-class academics who acknowledge their classed history in the context of schooling, are placed in a position of having to justify who they are to their middle-class peers (Annas, 1993; MacLeod, 1995). For example, in her article entitled *Bob and Cathy's Daughter: Why I Call Myself Working Class,* Catherine Macleod talks about this refusal of class difference when asked by a friend, "How can you still call yourself working class when you have a

nice home? You have a university education, a library of books and music, you've been published, produced plays and had good-paying jobs. Surely you're as middle-class as they get!" (1985: 34).

It would appear that there are powerful assumptions at work in academic institutions that reveal how pervasive the problem is. The assumptions centre around the belief that the system is working as it should because any "difference" from assumed middle-class norms, gets educated out of working-class people. At a theoretical level, they centre around what constitutes an "authentic" working-class subject and the presumption to know the rules by which persons are so classified. While these issues deserve some debate, the interesting thing is the *desire* of middle-class academics to position and label the experience of working-class academics. This signals the ongoing need to "speak for" the Other, in this case the working-class subject, even though they are standing right in one's face. Perhaps even using one's language.

In his thesis on working-class male subjectivity, Doug Weatherbee writes about his professors' denial of the possibility that working-class people could exist in graduate school classrooms at all:

> As part of my graduate school education I participated in a course on sociological theory. We spent some time looking at Paul Willis' book *Learning to Labour*. The course instructor pointed out that through Willis' study we in the class were positioned in our reading as voyeurs. "We" in the course were being given a window to look at a here-to-unseen world, that of the working class (self-described) "lads" of Willis' study . . . Through "our"-- the members of the sociological theory course--relation of unfamiliarity and voyeurism to the "here-to-unseen" life of the working class lads of Willis' study, the course instructor positioned the lads as Other to the members of the course. "We" members of the course, by implication, were positioned as sociologists and middle-class. Since I too was/am a working class "lad" I felt quite at odds with the way the instructor was reading Willis: I read *Learning to Labour* from a different position or standpoint than the professor (1995: p 86-87).

It would appear that class identity, although largely unrecognized in academic conversations about social identity, is a complicated and contested social terrain at the level of the academy. Middle-class academics may indeed study the working-class Other and become active in labour movements or progressive new social movements, but at the same time they may resist or deny the possibility of class difference in the university. I have focused on this issue only briefly here. I think it is an extremely significant problem that is linked to basic conflicts of interest that I raised earlier. It may also reflect a bourgeois self-imaging problem that, in its hurry to wipe out any evidence of its failure to cure social disparity, stumbles over the fact that it is not the only show in town. Valerie Walkerdine is one of the few academics that I know of who has examined this dynamic in any detail. Walkerdine uses psychoanalytic imagery to explain how it is that desire for social change was projected onto the workforce by leftist academics, leading to a situation where failure for social change was then blamed on the working class:

> There is huge disappointment that The [working] Class has failed. The left then behave like an angry child in a tantrum which wants to wipe us out rather than face its own disappointment, its own massive fantasies that we have failed as the love-object. They either eulogize us or hate us. Same difference (1990: 207)."

These issues of class identity and difference in the academy become more intelligible in the context of liberal humanist discourse and practice. While bourgeois liberal ideology may support the possibility of individual transformation through merit, the practical transformation of oppressive social relations, *en masse*, is obscured. Individual transformation is focused on precisely because group change is not desired. There is not room for everyone at the top, that is. It would appear that the ideals of formal education, while empowering individual upward mobility, need to suppress the ideas of class difference and conflict. Those who exercise the power to "know" have to do serious sleights

of hand in order to maintain the illusion that everything is under control, and that things are naturally as they should be, for the good of all.

The desire to "know" the Other has been characterized as the result of a deeply rooted denial or fascination because there is a fear of real shifts in the relations of power that would lead to radical social change. Hurtado, for example, suggests that the desire of the powerful to "know" the subordinate may reflect a desire to know "exactly the oppressive conditions they do not have to experience" (1996: 129). Walkerdine has called these desires to know or to master, "perversions," in that they project a terror of the masses back onto the masses themselves (Walkerdine, 1990).

While the formal education system has been instrumental in reproducing social class difference, there is enough flexibility in the system to continually legitimate the idea of individual merit. Educational opportunities have made it possible for a very few working-class people to experience some of the ways that power, knowledge, education, and material possibilities intersect to shape and maintain certain hierarchies of knowledge that are said to reflect everyone's realities, but do not. When working-class academics write about their classed experiences, they lift the lid on middle-class assumptions about working-class culture. What is striking about this work is that working-class academics tend to highlight the authority relationships that pervade their lives. They are critical of, or uncomfortable with, their own position as academics, and their relationships to their subordinate students, for example (see Fay, 1993). Having been groomed for positions of subordination, they are surprised by the conditional privileges that educational capital can deliver.

There is a growing body of writing by educated working-class people that indicates that in spite of, or more accurately, *because* of the effects of hegemonic education, many

formally educated working-class people do not put on a new class identity like a new pair of shoes (see Corrigan, 1990; Kuhn, 1995; Spence, 1995; Steedman, 1986; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993). Interestingly, it is not until some working-class people are exposed to the advanced education system that they begin to understand their own class status as "marginal" from middle-class culture. This difference is not understood in terms of how the middle-class looks to them, because that information has always been available, *but it is understood in terms of how they, as working-class people, look from the vantage point of the middle class*. And this happens in university. The "bourgeoisie" generally know who they are.

Like other working-class academic writers who are continuing to speak about this process, Thomas Dunk describes how the insular practices of higher education were instrumental in raising his awareness of his marginal class status:

> I felt left out. I did not feel part of the collective readership. I wondered just who the "us" was, never mind who the "them" might be. It was evident to me, if only in a vague manner, that the culture of the vast majority of the people at university, and especially those pursuing academic careers, was different from what I was used to. I had, for reasons I am still not sure of, left behind my working-class culture, but had not made the transition into the essentially bourgeois culture of the university (Dunk, 1991: 5).

Dunk's experience is one example among many who reiterate very similar experiences across different academic contexts in North America (e.g., Barney Dews & Leste Law, 1995; Ryan & Sackrey, 1984; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993).

The experience of class "outsidership," or class difference, manifests itself in academia through the culture and content of schooling, as well as in the production of texts by working-class academics. If working-class people are denied entry into the university, even when their bodies have marched through the door, how then can they claim legitimacy through writing? Diane Reay writes about the complexities and contradictions of class identity when she describes her attempt to position herself in academic writing as

something to think twice about. Reay describes it as a "pretense which continually runs the risks of unmasking" because one would unmask something of a monster, something which may be viewed as "intrinsically inferior":

> Coming from a background where individuals are always more judged than judging makes self-disclosure a dangerous, risky enterprise. It is similarly a schizophrenic undertaking. There is the exposure of the working class "I" in the text by the now privileged educated woman (1996: 453).

Contrary to Lynch and O'Neill's (1994) idea that working-class people lose their primary social identity (their working-class identity) when they move upward through the education system, many working-class academics become increasingly aware of the social practices that create social stratification in the first place. Class-based identity is not necessarily lost, but there is a broadened frame of reference, and a sharpened experience of social difference. After all, working-class academics are still connected to their families and communities in one form or another. Like a pre-test post-test experimental design, these connections provide a background against which the "effectiveness" of education and training can be measured.

However, simply having "been there" or "being there" is no guarantee that working-class people will reject the various interpretations of working-class life that are provided to them by middle-class culture. Especially if one takes seriously the hegemonic effects of schooling that work in complex and covert ways to correct class memory and identity, or class identification so that it falls in line with middle-class expectations. In a review of a text about and by working-class women in academia "Who are the Laborers in Academia?" Mary Cappello (1995) points out that the stories of working-class women who work as support staff or custodial workers in academic institutions, are excluded from the text, except as they are invoked in memory like ghosts from the past. Cappello suggests that

there is a need "to examine the ways in which middle-class identity requires working-class academics to refuse identification" with their working-class communities (See also Spence, 1995, Childers & hooks, 1990; O'Dair, 1993). There is no "authentic" working-class voice that is not subject to correction.

The working-class subject as the "other" to schooling

I take the position here that the cultural practices of schooling tend to "white out" knowledge about class differences. Bourgeois representations are "colonialist" representations in that they produce a knowledge of the Other from a self-evident, and universalizing centre. Some contemporary social theorists have suggested that sociology, for example, is rooted in modernist, or enlightenment paradigms of knowledge that position social research as innocent in the production of knowledge about social difference:

> Through its focus on "scientistic culture" sociology has avoided a sense of ethical and political responsibility toward its own practises. Its progressivist hopes and narratives have been part of a dynamic of colonization. And through its language of rights, constitutionalism, and legality it has concealed disciplinary forms of social control (Seidman, 1997: 12).

The enlightenment project has relied on concepts of equality, rationality, freedom and autonomy in order to make sense of the individual. The idea of the "universalized individual" is central to how identities can be understood within dominant models of social knowledge. The "universalized" individual has the effect of "normalizing identities that are dominant (white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied) and subordinating other identities" (Fischer, 1997:26). Important to the present discussion is the idea that the "universalized" individual constructs *bourgeois* identities as normal.

Seidman has suggested that "otherness" is a figure that is "potentially troubling to dominant models of social knowledge" (Seidman, 1997: 99). The centering of western

enlightenment traditions in sociological thought has led to particular understandings of social difference. Sociologists have tended to avoid understanding difference as "otherness." They have retreated from differences which are threatening to the dominant regime of knowledge in various ways. They have either ignored them, "assimilated them to our episteme," "rendered them an instance or variation of a general principle," or made them "a transient condition or an evolutionary phase" destined to disappear (Seidman, 1997: 98).

Bourgeois, or middle-class identities, although rarely named or theorized, are centred in the academic pursuit of knowledge. But in providing names and theories of behaviour for the "other," arguably middle-class identity characterizes its own wants, needs, and desires. Connolly (1991) has suggested that identity requires difference in order to exist: it converts difference into "otherness" in order to secure its own self-certainty. But this is not a complete process, that is, identity is never wholly based on exclusion (Hall, 1993). Dominant groups also recognize *similarities* between themselves and "others" but through their control over representation they demonize those characteristics which they revile and displace onto others (and which they may fear in themselves). Further, these reviled characteristics come to be overemphasized as essential features of the Other's identity (Dyer, 1997). For example, the working class may be constructed as "lazy" because the middle class knows its own "laziness" or its own desire to hate "the lazy."

It is not just *any* kind of difference that is important to this definition and maintenance of a middle-class identity and power: it is the production of specific kinds difference and at the same time, the erasure of certain kinds of difference that is important for maintaining the centre. In "retreating from threatening differences" academics have constructed particular versions of the capacities and personality characteristics of the working class that position them outside of the middle-class centre. The outside group is

provided with markers that enable them to be recognized discursively in relation to the dominant group.

In categorizing or providing a name for the working-class subject, academic discourses acknowledge the existence of class difference, but they have also produced particular representations of the working class. The working-class subject is either "eulogized" or despised (e.g. Walkerdine, 1990). Marxist theories, for example, have produced a working-class subject in the image of dominant discourses; with desires and vested interests reflecting the bourgeois enlightenment project. The working classes tend to be idealized in Marxist perspectives:

> Marx most assuredly spoke of the working class as holding different interests than the bourgeois class. But did Marx understand the motivations, social interests and values of the working class in terms different from the way he understood Western bourgeois Enlightenment culture? No. The working class were described in the language of the dominant Enlightenment model-- as self interested, rational agents, as viewing the world from the standpoint of secular/scientific reason, and as assuming Western superiority and linear progress. In Marxism, the working class turns out to be a superior realization of Western Enlightenment ideals--its future, not its negation or contestation (Seidman, 1997: 98).

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, the working class rarely *is* represented in academic texts. But when the working classes and other socially marginalized groups *are* represented in academic discourse, they tend to be characterized in ways that map the ideals and desires, or the refusals and rejections of a presumed dominant centre. Liberal theories of social deprivation or cultural deficit, for example, have constructed the working classes as pathologized in some way (Curtis et. al., 1992). New social research has also represented working-class subjects in ways that situate them outside of a normative centre. They have been described as having "restricted" linguistic codes, as non-verbal, conformist, reactive, macho, hyper-feminine, submissive, lazy, hard-working, salt-of-the-earth, non-

verbal, street-smart, "learners," in need of "immediate gratification," lads, boys, and `ear-oles' (e.g. Bernstein, 1977; Dunk, 1991; Fingeret, 1983; McLaren, 1982; McRobbie, 1978; Walker, 1988; Willis, 1977; Wexler, 1992).

Academic work that is critical of what are considered to be negative representations of the working class has also tended to produce a working-class subject in the image itself. Instead of weak-kneed conformists, working-class students become hard-nosed rebels. Compliant, depressive housewives become resilient optimists. Dumb, lazy factory workers become street-smart subversives. Feminist researchers grappled with this issue in a number of ways as they tried to rethink the value of women's unpaid labour, or to figure out what was "worth knowing" in the curriculum. But in substituting dominant characterizations of the Other with opposite ones, these efforts "mimic the binarism of the discourses of domination (Mercer, 1994: 281)." They are still bourgeois representations.

In refusing to name its own investments in knowledge production, the middle-class centre denies its *own* class difference; it's own "otherness." In research this power has been exercised by obscuring the classed relations between the researcher and the researched subject. Michelle Fine has described this as a process where "researchers self-consciously carry no voice, body, race, class, or gender, and no interests in their texts" (1994: 74-75).

The symbolic and real separation of body and mind is central to understanding the ways in which class difference has been and is represented in academic texts. Academic discourses reject knowledges and ways of being that do not conform to rational-logical models of knowing. They establish primacy of the mind over the body, and treat the body as something to be named, examined, and regulated: the body is subsumed by the mind in academic discourse.

> Intellectuals generally have a vested interest in privileging work of the mind over work of the body, a value judgment and moral commitment revealed not only in the business of our own lives but in the bottom-line sense of what education does for the dispossessed, lifting them up from and out of their oppression and into comfortable middle-class lives (O'Dair, 1993: 246).

Because "labourers," or working people, are defined largely by the body, the mass going out of control, they come to symbolize that which must be harnessed by the mind (Walkerdine, 1990).

The working classes are positioned as the "other" to *schooling* through discourses that privilege the mental over the manual. The discursive positioning of "mental" over "manual" labour produces specific images of the working-class subject. Notions of "ability" and competence (and personal worth and worthiness) are intimately tangled up with where persons are located in the social hierarchy. The mental/manual dichotomy is also practiced in very concrete ways, for example through school streaming policies which perpetuate class divisions (Curtis et. al., 1992). Walkerdine (1990) and others have described how the education system developed historically as a key institution of social control in the emerging liberal democratic order. (This idea is discussed more fully in Chapter 5 of this thesis.)

The mind or the mental is further privileged through particular uses of language. There are many examples of how language works to establish and maintain class difference in the academic community. Language practices reflect and produce class difference at both the symbolic and instrumental levels: in social discourse; in theoretical stance; in soliciting, listening to and reporting lived experience; and in cultural communication in general. The language practices of formal schooling are rooted in an instrumental logic that has been considered to be at odds with working-class cultural forms (Bernstein, 1971; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). In a broad sense, language practices of the academy are used to separate

out those fit to govern and rule, from those who are not. The corporatization of the university means that academic languages increasingly reflect the views of corporate management systems (Meaghan, 1996). Corporatized language is used to distance, to control, and to know the behaviors, beliefs and social practices of those they rule (Smith, 1990). In its broadest sense, corporatized language is a language of management of the working-class subject.

Academic practices recognize only certain uses of language in the production of knowledge. The language practices of formal schooling privilege the written word as the preferred form of cultural expression or communication. "Knowing" through abstraction or objectification is prioritized to the extent that other forms of knowing (e.g. knowing through "first-hand experience") are minimized, or at worst, understood as "wrong-headed." For example, the language practices of schooling or of "authoritative intelligence" have not made embodied language a requirement of schooling (Childers & hooks, 1990).

In their article, "A Conversation About Race and Class" Mary Childers and bell hooks (1990) speak to the problem of language and the reproduction of class difference in the academy. Childers describes the hostility that can be evoked by simply emphasizing the performative aspects of voice in the university. She says that people in the academy recoil when learning through embodiment rather than abstractly, which she thinks is "an unwillingness to realize that we have been trained not to associate certain attitudes and accents with authoritative intelligence." Bell hooks says further, that,

> Since academia has not privileged our discourse as one that connects us, our verbal use of language to connect has been devalued. And in fact, often the work we do [as academics] that is most valued is the work that will make the least connections across class. The work that we do that is most valued is the work that not only reinforces class hierarchies, but establishes new ones (Childers & hooks, 1990: 74).

This is not to say that working-class people do not use abstraction and metaphor in their communications (Darville, 1995) or do not reflect on what they are saying, but that only certain kinds of metaphors or references are considered appropriate, or recognized as legitimate in an academic context.

The issue I want to focus on here is not so much that people use different language systems as in the previous example, or as in discussions on different linguistic styles that represented middle-class languages as "elaborated" codes and working-class linguistic codes as "restricted" (Bernstein, 1977; Labov, 1972). This characterization of language difference is itself classed through its subversion of working-class language forms to middle-class ones. I am more interested in language as a symbolic and social practice: it is the representations that are produced through particular uses of language, that are important here. (These aspects of language in relation to the research process are addressed in the following chapter.)

It is my understanding these are not innocent oversights of class difference nor are they ignorant mistakes. They are necessary effects of oppressive power relations. Class differences (the types of things that are "in" or "out" of an acceptable bourgeois identity) are produced at a discursive level so that bourgeois identity can be recognized, protected and maintained. Class difference is *regulated* through educational discourses that neutralize difference. It is regulated by creating a working-class subject that is, or should be, en route to the middle class; by creating a working class as something that should be naturally, or unquestionably, extinguished.

Conclusions

The "curious absence of class analysis" in academic knowledge production is multifaceted and is a key point underpinning issues that are raised in this thesis. Research on identity politics reveals that Marxist-influenced research vis-a-vis working-class people reproduced a distorted representation of the working class through its focus on the white male industrial worker. Similarly, feminists and identity theorists mention class as one of several social differences but fail to theorize class. I have focused on what it means for social researchers to claim to represent working-class perspectives in the academy when the academy largely represents bourgeois interests and practices. If middle-class research is seeking to "include" voices of the working class in order to rectify social difference, then it is highly restricted in what it can claim to represent within existing social structures.

The interest of the academic community in working-class people, their accounts of learning and their claims to knowledge, is linked to the academic community's own particular learning histories, and social location. For some, this interest may be based on theories of class difference through "leftist" political training. For others, the interest may be based on the lived experience of working-class life—either through their recognition of class differences—or through their own experience of them. In any case, there is no innocent position from which to study working-class culture from within the context of academia. All participants are in a disturbing position as they try to understand and reconcile the meanings of class identity, learning, schooling and social mobility.

These issues are related to academic theorizing about marginalized or oppressed social groups, including the working class, and the desire of researchers to have a working-class perspective in the academy. The problem is not one of letting in the voices, as these voices can never be unproblematically represented under existing social relations. As I have

suggested, socio-economic structures and relations mediate the representation of the working-class subject. The problem is one of recognizing that a multifaceted and basically contradictory relationship exists between the voices.

By focusing on such issues as class bias and exclusion (as in the "hidden curriculum"), social theorists have tended to reproduce a liberal humanist approach to social class in relation to schooling. I don't believe it is possible to write in this context without appropriating the voice of the Other, romanticizing, or constructing the working-class subject as the Other. As far as I'm concerned, the question is not how to overcome class bias or exclusion, as others have done, but how to *recognize* and how to document class difference within this context. One way of approaching this problem is by attempting to understand *how* bias comes to be produced and organized in representing working-class subjects in research, as I do in this thesis. Or by attempting to understand what it *means* for working-class subjects to be represented and positioned in certain ways in academic discourse. In this context, any research project focusing on working-class perspectives becomes an exercise in locating the shifting sites of power that maintain structural inequality, or not. This includes an examination of how academics construct their categories of analysis which requires an awareness of the discourses invoked in framing their research projects.

If I take the position that there is a tendency for middle-classed research to overlook or to refuse to recognize "class" issues in social research, which I do here, and that research can never unproblematically represent the working class, then one might ask why a declining interest in "class" issues would be a problem? The problem that I'm trying to locate has to do with understanding the limitations of representing working-class "perspectives" and the desires invested in the process of representation. The tendency to

overlook class, or to suppress class interests is in fact a constitutive feature of the problem of representation in academic discourse. Representation is both a form of power and a means of maintaining power.

When I say that the working class cannot be unproblematically represented in academic writing, I am not saying that there is no way of representing the working-class subject, *or* that there should be no attempt to do so. I have been trying to make a point that academic representations of the working class rely on constructs of class from a particular standpoint. In the case of schooling it is a very contradictory and devastating state of affairs. I have mainly been referring to claims of representing the working-class "voice" in academia as a way of remedying difference. I have also been referring to the fact that these conversations have not acknowledged class difference in a practical way, for example through affirmative action strategies (e.g. O'Dair, 1993). Discourses of schooling (and discourses of class as constructed through schooling) acknowledge that some forms of class difference exist, but there appears to be a reluctance to give up control around defining class, and a reluctance to give up control around the role of education in mediating class relations. In academia, middle-class identities are privileged in defining what kinds of social difference matter.

Focusing on the identity politics of class suggests a more careful reflection on the assumptions and meanings associated with the classed subject. By questioning the types of categories people use and the meanings that they attach to them (e.g., what does "class" mean to researchers when they use the term "class"?); by opening up these issues in the way I have done here allows questions to be raised about how academics are located in "knowledge," how they represent the subjects of their research and their own subject positions. It is in this context that the desire for "inclusion" or the desire to represent the

lived experience of those who are considered to be marginalized from the academy, is rendered problematic.

I bring into the thesis discussion the idea that some working-class academics struggle with keeping some of their knowledge intact in the face of practices and discourses that may not reflect their most central social identities, ideals, and practices (realizing this is not an either/or process). As I alluded to in this chapter, working-class academics are positioned in very contradictory subjectivities. Why do I bring this into the discussion? I bring it in to show that there is a basic problem of representation and desire going on around class issues. I'm not saying that there are not similar issues from the "outsider's" standpoint with regard to representing the "insider." I want to know more about the refusal of some (even self-identified Leftist) academics to *hear* that their object of desire, or what they have constructed as a "working-class subject" is just that: a construction or a representation.

One could say that these acts of refusal are in fact a recognition of social difference (Bhabha, 1994; Mercer, 1994). Both the refusal of class difference in the academy *and* the desire to know the Other provide important jumping off points into my thesis discussion. The pervasive refusal of class difference in the academy brings the topic of formal education into question. It brings up questions about how formal education may reflect a desire for equality but within limited terms. It would appear that bourgeois schooling discourses assume that class difference is educated "out" of individuals but this is in the direction of the ideal rational, well-rounded, well-traveled, well-read, well-fed, *responsible*, citizen. It is an invitation to "become like us." In this thesis, I attempt to document and explain some of these issues.

CHAPTER II: RESEARCH METHODS AND INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES

Truth is at once a material, discursive, political and subjective question (Henriques, et. al., 1984: 114).

Introduction

It is very difficult to write about education and social class with an eye to the working class without "coming off" as complaining or defensive. When I told a working-class labour activist that I was writing about schooling and class, one of the first things she said was "It's a really depressing topic." The writings of working-class academics interested in class issues also reveal an underlying struggle with the difficulty of this topic. In her introduction to the book *Working-Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory*, Michelle Tokarczyk (1993) noted that several contributors felt that it was the most difficult piece of writing they had ever done. I think that one reason for the difficulty is that one is continually haunted by the incongruencies of academic writing that can seem laughable, laudable, insignificant, or even terrifying from a working-class subject position. Writing about class, is never a straightforward, neutral act.

It took me a long time to convince myself that there was something worth writing down about this topic.

In this thesis, I try to demonstrate that practices of representation are political practices, or practices of power that arise out of and operate to produce and maintain class differences. I rely on a number of theoretical perspectives to do so. I use theories of discourse and language to understand power relations and practices of representation. The notion of discourse is useful as both an analytic tool and a data base. That is, theories of discourse make it possible to understand practices of classed representation through

mechanisms of power and language. On the other hand, discourses of schooling and social class make available particular understandings about classed subjects and suppress others. The subject of this thesis is the *classed subject* as it is represented and positioned in schooling and organizational management discourses.

How class relations are conceptualized in this thesis

One of the central problems of this thesis involves the manner in which the construct "working class" is defined and represented through bourgeois discourse. The act of defining class is a political process that needs to take into account various conceptual and analytic problems of representation. The thesis itself is a process of defining class relations by bringing together different strategies for understanding class relations as they are constructed through social discourse. My discussion in Chapter 1 proposed that the construct of social class is not something that can be adequately understood without reference to recent theoretical developments in critical and postmodern studies, including theories of identity and subjectivity, as well as notions of experience and power. Brown's analysis of what she calls late modern social identities provocatively suggests that interest in the construct of social class needs to be understood within the context of a liberal humanist privileging of capitalism (Brown, 1995b). This in itself tells us something about the nature and significance of contemporary class relations; they are brewing beneath a facade of progress and containment.

In social research, the categories of "class" have typically been conceptualized as stable entities that are products of one or more social indicators, such as "occupation," "family background," "education level" or "income," to name a few. The structural analysis of class has been a dominant method of class analysis which prioritizes the economic and

assumes that social structure has positions or "empty places" which people occupy. By using *a priori* categories of analysis, conventional social research has taken a somewhat un-self-aware, or apolitical position in relation to the classed research subject. The structural approach to class analysis has been criticized on a number of grounds. It has privileged the structural aspects of class to the exclusion of actual social relations (Veltmeyer, 1986; Miliband, 1989) and has limited the understanding of power in classed relationships.

Chapter one of this thesis used the dichotomy of the "middle-class" and "working-class" somewhat crudely in discussing representations of class difference in academic knowledge production. This dichotomy no doubt masks a number of more complex class relations. However, I used these categories as rough organizing principles (based on general economic and social conditions) in order to open up the idea that there are complex bases for interpreting and representing classed experience. I intentionally privileged these categories to emphasize the point that both the structural aspects of class and lived experience of social class are important to understanding class relations. Moreover, I privileged the structural categories of "middle" and "working class" in light of the tendency for "class" processes to be suppressed in contemporary identity politics.

In the thesis I do not intend to create the impression of one overarching, essentialized, or pristine, category of working-classness. There is difference *within* the category of the "working class" that makes a difference to how people identify and are identified within and outside of working-class culture. I focus on the overarching categories of class (the "bourgeois" and the "working class") in order to mobilize a general critique of class difference and representation in relation to schooling. This approach keeps the thesis focussed on the problem of perspective in the production of knowledge about the working

class rather than looking at the working class as an object of analysis, complete with its complexities and nuanced forms of social difference.

It has continued to surprise me, particularly during the process of writing this thesis, that very little attention is paid to class process even though it is flagged as an important aspect of difference framing the social milieu. Brown's analysis of late modern social identities is one of the few I know of that addresses this issue to any extent (Brown, 1995b). Her analysis, which examined the political claims of emerging social identities, suggests that claims of exclusion (from the centre) are based on a desire for, rather than a critique of capitalism. If these identities are based on a form of class resentment, as Brown proposes, then it becomes possible to understand why class issues would not be centred in political claims to difference. Focusing on class identity and difference would require a deconstruction of desires for equality among other things.

Much of my analysis in this thesis is based on this idea of politicized identity as driving the representation and significance of class difference within academia. I am suggesting that contemporary academics and political discourses of identity do not allow much room for class identity to be mobilized or authorized as a basis on which to make claims on one's own behalf. I am also suggesting that they obscure the process of representating working-class subjects Thus, my analysis does not focus so much on the desires and characteristics of working-class subjectivity but on the desire of *bourgeois* subjects to understand and represent working class subjectivity and identities in particular ways.

In understanding class relations discursively, I look at these relations as they are lived, experienced, and performed. This approach assumes a number of things about the nature of class and the researcher/researched relationship: It assumes that the political

identities and subjectivities of researchers play a significant role in the production of knowledge about 'their' research subject(s). And it assumes that discourses play a role in the production of both dominant and marginalized subject positions.

I understand that the construct of social class is not a stable or fixed entity. Conceptualizing class as a process rather than a thing entails a more complex understanding about what class relations are. Smith's definition of the social relations of class draws attention away from the tendency to define class in terms of fixed socioeconomic categories and focuses it on class relations as they are lived and experienced. Smith writes:

> While not seeking to draw sharp boundaries (an enterprise doomed to failure in the existing complex division of labour), in general the dominant classes include people in those occupations with high levels of income and access to various forms of political influence at all levels of the state (local to federal), and who may or may not participate in the processes of dominance through positions in professional organization, management, etc., as well as those who may be clearly identified as owning the means of production. These are not viewed as characteristics enabling individuals to be classified as members of one or other class, but rather as constituents of the social relations of class, ordering its internal processes as well as its external relations. The working class, by contrast, is that class which works for a wage, which does not own the means of production and which does not participate in the exercise of power (Smith, 1990: 224-225)[9].

The definition of social class that I use in this thesis includes processes of identification and subjectivity. I understand class relations as a process of making and maintaining social identities and difference, of living the historical effects of domination and subordination, as well as the result of property ownership and control.

Social class is a political, social, cultural, and economic relation which means that broadly, one's class position is subject to change. It is subject to the shifting relations of

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[9]See Clement (1988) for a similar definition of class relations.

political power, to the ebb and flow of the market. This does not necessarily mean that class "subjectivity," or political affiliation, is always altered to reflect new social positions. Neither is there necessarily a stable "fit" between political perspective, ("politicized identity") and social location, although there are trends that indicate that there is some relationship between the two (in the United States, "the working class vote republican," is one of these). It is true that individuals may transcend some aspects of class through education, contractually through marriage, or through other means like winning the lottery, but this approach seems to locate the individual as the primary unit of class analysis and ignores the broader historical and political contexts of class. It tends to reduce "class" to an economic function as well. While one may occupy a number of differently classed positions at the same time (see Gibson-Graham, 1996, for example) the stability of two class locations as general categories of social difference has been documented. Miliband suggests that it is possible to identify two stable classes throughout the history of industrial capitalism: a dominant class, based upon the control of economic and political power, and a subordinate class, mainly made up of wage earners and their dependents. "Neither social mobility nor blurred boundaries between classes annul this division, even though they may, together with many other factors, affect its sharpness" (Miliband, 1989: 25). I want to retain this broad distinction to help me think about the nature of class relations, not as a hard and fast way of defining class relations.

A focus on class relations is particularly important at a time when major changes are taking place in the structures of advanced capitalist societies. These are changes that proceed further entrenchment, if not expansion of new forms of social inequities. It is interesting that the academic community seems to have relegated class issues to the backburner at a time when such dramatic changes are taking place in the social world. In

Canada, as in other countries, these changes involve a number of things taking place following the second world war including the global redistribution of political power, changes in the nature of the forces of production, and the emergence of new forms of cultural politics (taken from Giroux, 1988; but there are many other concurring sources).

Wide-reaching economic and political changes such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, and more recently the Multilateral Agreement on Investment threaten to further influence the nature of classed relations as protective labour legislation is systematically dismantled to allow for more flexible business practices at the expense of labour protections. There have been visible effects of these changes on class relations including the "demise" of middle-class occupations over the past few decades in North America (Clement, 1988; Menzies, 1989). The effects of labour legislation in Ontario, Canada (one setting for this thesis) for example, have been documented by various groups trying to understand what happens to the casualties of large-scale downsizing (e.g, Canadian Labour Congress, 1997) and seem to indicate a general weakening of labour power and the increase in precarious forms of work.

The labour contract as a material basis of class relations

The formal labour contract between the owners of production and labour is central to understanding classed relations and yet is something that is often ignored as a defining feature of social difference. The labour contracts that developed in Canada and the United States during the 1940's are important landmarks in class relations. The "Wagner" and "Taft-Hartley" Acts in the US and the Privy Council 3001 in Canada entrenched certain classed identities in the law, that is, they produced formally negotiated class identities. This marked a move away from confrontational and oppositional politics toward a more consensual

labour-management relationship. There has been some debate regarding the power dimensions of this relationship, as to whether or not these legislations reflected consensual or coercive class relations (e.g., Price, 1995). The institution of legal regulations between labour and capital helped to stabilize industrial activity and production, and the relationship between labour and capital to a certain extent but at the same time set limitations on collective action that could be taken outside of legislation (Lipsitz, 1997; Price, 1995). Lipsitz (1997) argues that these legislations effectively insulated trade unions from broader social mobilizations and made them agents of increased productivity on the shop floor." More importantly, he argues that these legal acts removed working-class action from legal scrutiny because the mass actions and general strikes that had gained concessions from business and government often arose in response to alienated labour in the first place. Labour law "destroys the institutions workers created in the processes of mass struggle, but more important, it seeks to supervise the sites and proscribe the practices where the articulation of class identity emerged in the first place" (Lipsitz, 1997: 18-19). The point here is that legislation of labour relations implied that there was a consensual agreement between the working classes and the owners of production. The idea of a consensual relationship between labour and business evokes the idea of equal participation in decision-making, obscuring the fact that this relationship is always ensconced within the unequal power differentials between workers and owners.

The labour contract has far reaching effects in that it allows a certain amount of flexibility in the attitudes and actions of workers. While this may appear as "resistance" and materialize in concrete workplace actions such as strikes and walkouts, the "materiality" of workers' lives are partly defined through, and limited by, this legal relation. As one autoparts factory worker put it: "Workers are free to say anything--but management doesn't

care" (Autoparts factory worker, Working Class Learning Strategies Project, 1996). Management "rights" set limits on the actions that can be taken in the workplace. Labour standards in general reflect the bare minimum of rights, protections, and opportunities for workers in the context of unionized and non-unionized workplaces.

Working-class culture is defined by instability since it is based on a legal relation that privileges the employer's right to hire and fire, to close or set up new business at will, and to make investment decisions without the input of the workforce who make the business possible, as well as profitable[10]. Working-class subjectivities are embedded in this complex unstable social fabric as their bodies move in and out of employment, underpaid and increasingly precarious work. "Layoff," for example, is a common part of working-class vocabulary and experience.

When workers or managers speak, they are always speaking from within this relationship. Issues raised by individuals in the context of research interviews, for example, are symbolic of broader relationships of power. I observed several examples of this while conducting interviews for the Working Class Learning Strategies project (Livingstone, 1993). (I draw on interview material from this project.) The research participants for that project were asked to name their learning activities taking place in the context of industrial restructuring. In that context workers frequently referenced a lack of "caring" in relation to

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[10]Contractual agreements do not necessarily determine working-class culture or bourgeois culture, but they certainly influence class culture at a number of levels. To mention a few, contractual agreements set parameters on living conditions through negotiated wage levels, time off work, family time (the fact that union activists are forced to invest huge amounts of their personal time, much of which is unpaid labour, in defending and maintaining their contracts, and managing workplace grievances, is one of only a few aspects of this relation). On the other hand, the lack of contractual protections for management, or their subordination to changing market conditions means that they are also subject to unstable employment conditions. At a broader level however, the fact that management rights are encoded in legislation means that class domination and subordination are structurally legitimated.

their local management. Similarly, in talking about their learning practices, many interview subjects focused on the hierarchies of power that contextualized their learning experience (Terepocki, 1996). I raise these examples here because of the need to situate the thesis conversation within the material effects of power.

Research strategies

The methodology that I use to produce this thesis does not fit easily into any one neat paradigm or method. I use a number of different methods to establish and to explain my major points. My main task is to examine ways of thinking about how working people are represented in various academic, research, and management texts. I look at concepts such as "learning", "learning culture" and "learner" in order to deconstruct how working people are represented in different discursive contexts. Focusing on discursive representation allows one to see commonalties and relationships among seemingly disparate material or texts and I try to show that there is a coherent set of representations and ways of thinking about these things.

Critical ethnography, with its focus on meaning systems and power relations (Anderson, 1989; Thomas, 1993), probably best describes what I have done as I draw from my experience in a number of educational and labour settings, and try to understand the representation of classed identities and subject positions that are produced within such contexts. I use the process of "triangulation," bringing together different methodologies, to substantiate my claims (Denzin, 1989).

When I first began doing this writing I was excited by the possibilities of developing "alternative" or even "oppositional" knowledge that contested established forms, which I thought seemed inaccurate and oppressive. This is what originally drew me to qualitative

forms of research. I saw that there was more potential to examine dominant or "normative" knowledge claims using this approach. (It also corresponded rather directly to my experience in training as a school psychologist and psychometrician and my decision to "abandon that project" in a somewhat painful fashion.) However, I have since come to understand that a qualitative approach in and of itself does not necessarily enable one to see beyond normative definitions. Qualitative approaches also make assumptions about who the readership is and what the writer wants from them. There is no method that is not fraught with political difficulties and the main task for me is to provide the "reader" with the context and rationale for moving in one direction or the other. This is something I try to do throughout my writing here.

Another central question that emerged for me more recently, is "who is the reader?" or "who am I writing this for?" Am I trying to convince someone of something? Am I trying to "battle" with the established forms? Do I want to catalogue working-class experience for the elite institution, the University of Toronto, and why would I want to do that? It would seem that the University of Toronto did not want certain kinds of working-class stories sitting on its shelves. One of the interview subjects for a project on education and work (Livingstone, 1998) provided some insights about social class and schooling in her reflection on schooling's relationship to the labour market and her difficulty making the connections between schooling and work. Referring to a football game played between the university she had recently graduated from (University of Toronto), and the more working-class University (York), also located in Toronto, she said:

> And some of these people [from the University of Toronto] go `It's all right, it's OK, we're going to own you anyway'. That's one of the cheers of the football games: `We're going to be your boss anyway'. So you might find temporary, momentary joy in a football game, but in the big picture, `We're going to own you. We're going too—too— [mocking voice] we U of T people,

we're going to be your bosses!' (Unemployed University of Toronto graduate).

So this raises another problem: who really cares? And the other one is rather bigger. It has to do with the act of battling--I have had to ask myself "Who am I battling with?," and "Do I want to do battle?."

I do not want to use my thesis to demonstrate my knowledge, to compete. I am trying to understand some processes that have become increasingly important and problematic to me as I have engineered my own way through the schooling/work complex. I see this thesis mostly as an expose`, things that I want to know for myself, on behalf of myself, and I keep myself in mind as reader as I write: a now educated, white, rural working-class woman.[11] I am, in fact, educated far beyond my wildest dreams. I am out of context. I keep myself as classed research subject in mind and my discourse analysis develops against this background.

The identification categories that I have used here are not the only ones with which I can describe myself: I want to temporarily present and "fix" myself this way for the purpose of this thesis. I consider my writing to be an "exercise against forgetting" (Zandy, 1995). The topics that I have chosen to examine are based on a concerted effort on my part to remember contradictions and issues that inform, and informed, my own schooling and work experiences.

I do not take for granted the school-work nexus nor the fact that for me, advanced schooling has offered life-changing options that would otherwise not have been available. I was raised as someone who would either marry a worker, and/or work myself, in the

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[11] I centre myself as the author and audience of my thesis, not to alienate or exclude other readers. I do so in order to question a possible assumed identification with the academic as bourgeois writer, and also to highlight problems around subject positioning and representation that I raise in the thesis.

general labour pool. Advanced schooling was not a requirement for either of those vocations, although it was not discouraged. I had my first experience in the industrial labour force when I was 18 years old, although I had done various kinds of jobs prior to that. Within a year after I left high school I got a job at one of the local lumber mills. I had no idea whatsoever what I would do with my life, although I was almost neurotically concerned with that very issue. I had no option, really, but to work because I was not living at home and I had to support myself.

I considered myself to be very lucky indeed to have snagged a job at the lumber mill. My girlfriends were jealous of me getting that job. Two of my uncles worked there as foremen. I got the job by going very early in the morning to sit on "the bench" and wait to be called in as casual labour. Some extracts from my personal journal at the time explain how I didn't feel that working at the mill was at all an "option." I did not "naturally" consider it to be a stepping stone to better things; or as a way of funding my way through school. It was extremely hard work. And the chronic problem of "layoff," the beginning of "hard times" in Port Alberni, BC were upon us:

> I am so very tired and my arms feel like they've been run over by a herd of elephants. My eyelids are so heavy it's a wonder I can lift them to write in here . . . everything is mixed up. I have to change all my piano lessons every week and am to be laid off work any time. It won't be steady and I need it to be (March 6, 1980).

> I went to sit twice today for my job. It seems so stupid and futile. No one got on. I could go for weeks and not get on. Where will my thirty days be. I might as well be working steady at the S.P.C.A. (March 10, 1980).

> My job at the mill is hard work—pulling lumber. Yet the pay is good. In June 1, I will be making $10.16 an hour while the basic job rate is $3.00/hr. The problem is that I am constantly being laid off because the lumber market is very poor. I am called for anyone of 3 shifts (Day, afternoon, or nighttime) which doesn't help for a planned day (May 6, 1980).

I am laid off at work again. It is hard on my body—Working and sleeping at all the wrong times. I'm on "CALL" which means I can't work steady and may be called for any shift at any time (June 9, 1980).

I've been working very hard at work. My hands get numb and I feel so weary because I pull & pull & pull lumber -- 2 X 12's a lot (June 22, 1980).

Only 4 more days of work and I get 1 month off of work. "The big layoff" Well, I'd rather work—I need the money. Well-I don't know what will become of my life or my talents (July 15, 1980).

At work a Chinese man kind of taught me how to grade [lumber]—and he lets me mark the wood as it goes by. A grader needs to go to classes and get qualified—but I got almost all of them right. The foreman was watching and he said I did really well. If I wasn't going to school I'd stay and train—but I must be off to school for my own sanity and well-being (July 18, 1980).

Like other working-class academics and writers, the experience of advanced schooling has been key to the development of my interest in the topics that I explore in this thesis. The disbelief and challenge that have been leveled at me, or at the symbolic "working class," through peers and through teachers has been educational, if not alarming. I recently told a professional co-worker about my experience at the lumber mill. She quickly filled in the space with a knowing smile by adding, "Oh, so you could go to school." It is these kinds of dysjunctures that have helped to inform and consolidate the issues I raise here.

Generating a thesis problem

In my first attempt to generate a significant thesis problem I focused on interview data from the Working Class Learning Strategies project, a project I was involved in for about a 4 year period. I had spent a considerable amount of energy analyzing interviews that I had conducted with workers. Following other neo-marxist and feminist research approaches, I looked at how working-class people accommodated to, or resisted dominant discourses involved in schooling. Critical pedagogy researchers, and cultural studies

theorists have focused on such issues in order to acknowledge social difference in knowledge production and pedagogy; and also to determine political strategies for social change (e.g., Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1994). I had enjoyed conducting these interviews very much and listening to them again during their transcription, but I ran into trouble during the analysis stage. I began to wonder about the relevance of questions that had previously been asked of, about, and to, "the working class." I felt quite awkwardly situated in relation to the interview transcripts. I began to think more about the almost inevitably patronizing edge of some of these approaches (See Ellsworth, 1989, and Walkerdine, 1990, for more discussion).

The current thesis has moved some distance from this starting point. It has backed up and asked why such a project (in general) has been done in the first place, by whom, and for what purposes? Roxanne Rimstead (1995) has suggested that academic attempts to understand marginalized subjectivities need to involve a radical critique of the categories of analysis used by researchers, the context of inquiry and how and why researchers invoke marginalized subjects from their relatively privileged positions as academics. Although it is not my goal here to "understand marginalized subjectivities" (as I am arguing that this is a problematic task in relation to class difference) I ask similar questions in order to understand the representation of class difference through bourgeois discourse[12].

I grapple with a basic problem of perspective and audience throughout the thesis. How people think they are being seen and who they are talking to are important in the

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[12]I do not see parts of the conversation about inclusion and marginalization as that relevant to my thesis. Academic discussions on inclusion and marginalization have largely presupposed a bourgeois centre from which non-bourgeois subjects are excluded or marginalized. Some of these conversations have jumped the gun, in my opinion, in that they have not adequately formulated what the problem of exclusion involves. In deconstructing the bourgeois gaze through schooling discourses, I hope to get a better sense of some of the issues of power involved in this relationship.

thesis. When I'm writing I don't feel like I'm trying to convince the academic community of anything. I'm not trying to say that "working-class people are good" or that "the bourgeoisie are bad." I am trying to understand how the gaze of oppressive power works through bourgeois characterizations of the working-class Other. (There are other ways of looking at this relationship and other forms of power involved in the production of knowledge. Regulative power, for example, involves more subjective aspects of power relations, such as self-regulation in the production of knowledge.)

I have decided to carry out my analysis of class relations even though I am not completely committed to this process and have had a number of concerns about it over the last few years. My main concerns have to do with the position that I previously found myself in, "doing" research "on" the working-class subject—or the "direction of the research gaze"—that is a result of class relations in the first place. This is not to say that valuable knowledge cannot come out of this process, but given the fact that I am examining the nature of class relations from a (symbolic) position of privilege as far as class relations goes, then it is problematic no matter which way I look at it. This brings up a number of other problems. The minute I consider myself as privileged, I invoke a number of stereotypes about both the objects of this research as well myself as researcher: That the research subjects are disempowered; that they are disempowered to the point of having no control over their utterances or their social relationships; that they do not understand the nature of the research relation and may be "duped" by it; that they would want to receive "power" from me, even if I could offer it; that my power or position is better than theirs etc.: These are some of the issues that I am examining in this project.

The problem lies in the very structure of the project of "research" itself. Although I am aware that participatory and action forms of research seek to address and overcome

these barriers in various ways (for example, by developing a relationship between the academic site and the research site) there are a number of persistent problems with these approaches. They are rooted in a liberal humanism that tends to re-entrench existing power relations (see for example, Fischer, 1997). Unexamined participatory research approaches can have effects that are not visible to academic researchers even as they seek to overcome class barriers and to accomplish emancipatory projects. When Bob Fryer characterized academic participatory research with trade unions as a series of victimizations in his article "Trade Unions and Social Research: The Casualties and Victims of Social Research," I think he was referring to a lack of understanding, and possibly a refusal to know about these issues, in the academic research community (Fryer, 1993).

More recent theoretical approaches that do not hold knowledge and meaning so literally or conclusively are helpful for understanding some of the problems I have just described. Post-modern theories of language and identity, for example, recognize that there is "slippage" in meaning making, and more importantly, some perspectives recognize that there are some things that can't be understood or that can't be known (Weedon, 1987). The desire to "know," or probably more accurately, the feeling of entitlement to "know" is so predominant that even those theoretical approaches that seek to understand the desires and political investments of the "knowing subject" (e.g. Britzman on the "limits of intelligibility," 1995) seem to be caught up in a desire to colonize through academic knowledge production.[13] It is not my goal to examine my own complicity in the production of such desires or entitlements, as other theorists have done (e.g. Walkerdine, 1990), but to focus

[13]Walkerdine (1990) has suggested that the theorist's 'desire to know' contains both a fantasy of power and also a fear of the observed. She further suggests that scientific objectivity might be understood as the suppression or disavowal of this desire. According to Walkerdine both the

more broadly on how bourgeois practices of representation create and promote a privileged knowing subject, and to show how this is one aspect of the production of class difference.

What was done

My major analytic approach is a discourse analysis which attends to language and power issues. I use the term "discourse" quite broadly in the analysis. It is more than the conventional definition of discourse as actual texts or documents. I use critical ethnographic observations and narratives to show how discourse is working through the texts that I examine. I draw on prior studies such as Fischer (1997) who also examined how representation and power works in the research process.

My analysis is ethnographic in the sense that it is informed by my experience in a number of different educational and labour sites over the past five years. This includes my participation as a Ph.D. intern in a regional labour union in Ontario, between 1995 and 1996. During that period I was involved as a consultant to a local union on a workplace testing program. I was also involved in research on the effects of workplace restructuring on a manufacturing plant, a project that was funded by the provincial government (Ontario Federation of Labour, Technology Adjustment Research Project, Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, 1996). I spent some time "getting to know" union culture from the "outside," although I had been exposed to some aspects of the same union culture previously through my father's union activism some twenty years earlier. I became familiarized with this specific union culture and membership through conferences, joint

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suppression of this desire to know, and the observed's response to this surveillance need to become part of the deconstruction project.

union management forums and projects, and generally being around the regional union office.

Another major site of my participation in labour and education issues was the Working Class Learning Strategies project which was conducted between 1993 and 1997 (Livingstone, 1993). This project focused on the effects of economic and organizational restructuring on the learning practices and needs of a diverse unionized workforce (including the industrial sector, the service sector, and home employment in the garment sector). The project was carried out on behalf of the union membership with the endorsement of local and regional union officials. I conducted 20 life-history interviews with workers for the project, as well as follow-up interviews. I conducted interviews with both union officials and workers at three different sites: a community college, a paint factory, and an autoparts factory. Most of the interviews averaged about 2 hours each. The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed by myself. In addition, I participated in several research planning meetings, analyzed the interview material and produced reports for two union locals and for the project.

My participation in the Working Class Learning Strategies Project took me into union halls, work places, coffee shops, and into the homes of working families. Prior to this I had conducted similar interviews with unemployed residents of the Toronto area, for a project examining the gap between education and jobs (Livingstone, 1998)[14]. All of the projects that I discuss in this thesis were framed by the effects of organizational restructuring which had accelerated during the early 1990s in Ontario.

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[14]For an overview of the working definition of social class and theoretical perspective taken in both the Working Class Learning Strategies Project, and this project, see Livingstone & Mangan (1996).

I have continued to draw on my experience and observations through writing and assisting in planning different aspects of labour educational projects at the time of writing the thesis.

I use a range of data as textual evidence or resources for my claims in the thesis. This includes interviews with both managers and working-class subjects, academic texts, and my own analytic texts and research field notes. I draw on the interviews to help buttress and explain my ideas throughout the thesis. I use these interviews, (primarily with working-class subjects), to extend my own understanding and deconstruction of the apparent meanings of dominant discourses and to assist in understanding the construction of the gaze of oppressive power itself. Through the interviews and through discourse analysis, I investigate the classed investments in seeing the "other" in particular ways.

Research as social construction

I recognize that knowledge production is a process that is framed by a number of things happening at once that are impossible to control, predict, or in many cases, to understand. In other words, this is not a "rational" process. This includes such things as language differences, the power of the academic doing research on the working-class subject, and gendered dynamics in the interview situation (Denzin, 1989). It includes the limits that the research subject (whether this is an actual interview subject, the author of a written text, or a social category) places on what can be known. Bluntly, the research subject might withhold information during an interview. As one interviewee told me when I asked if she had anything to say about the school system: "I know a lot but I don't want to make no comment."

The production of knowledge is framed and complicated by gender, class, ethnicity, race, and other social differences. For example, during my research experience with the Working Class Learning Strategies project, I noticed that there were a number of interesting dynamics going on at the interview juncture. At an abstract level, this meant tenured university professor talking to people who in many cases were directly experiencing the conditions of industrial restructuring. It meant talking with some people who perceived that they were about to lose their jobs, or who were in the process of losing their jobs due to downsizing, or who were experiencing erratic layoffs. It meant white academics talking to workers of colour; younger, 'broke' female academics talking to economically established tradesmen. At all points, the interviewer represented someone with substantially more "educational capital" than the person being interviewed. In this context, the people interviewed talked a lot about how power works. They had an analysis of what power looks like. They spoke about the systems of gender and race relations that influence their lives at work and home. This included their classed relations with academics: "The whole attitude in academia toward support staff is so unreal. We are overloaded with work. We need to learn to stand up for our rights." These observations are not innocent in the production of knowledge although they can be treated as such.

I have to assume that many critical issues are left out of the texts that I draw on for my analysis, and my analysis is shaped partly by this absence. This does not mean that what results is a random spewing of unrelated parts. Order is imposed by research topics or the writers' sensitizing agendas. What people highlight, when they do so, and in what order people tell their stories, tell worlds about the social context that people are operating in.

If researchers are interested in relations of power and domination, then their projects need to include an analysis of meaning in order to disclose the means by which social

inequalities are produced and maintained. The language that researchers use to write others' experiences is important because language is a form of power that "isolates and communicates one set of meanings and excludes others" (Thomas, 1993: 45). Language is already produced within a context that defines who can speak, and how people can speak about what is going on. Understanding some of the ways in which language works is critical to understanding the politics of class identity and representation practices in the academy. Language practices are formed within lived experiences and are fundamental to class identity. People locate themselves in, and are located in relations of power, through language (e.g., Weedon, 1987).

Battles around language are at the forefront of organized political movements. This notion is quite well understood by labour activists, for example, whose survival depends on the ability to interpret the nuanced discourses and actions of both management and the workforce. An example of this follows where a local union activist described her company's attempt to entrench new workplace language in the local labour contract:

> I always found that whatever [our company] tries to teach us is informative and good--but they're bragging we're a self-directed workforce. Which is 'you know what'. I was hired as an employee--not an associate. That's like putting their arm around me and saying 'you're my pal, my buddy'. And I don't agree with that. This was very interesting. Our last union book had the 'associate' and the 'facilitator' instead of supervisor. Our last contract demanded our own language back. It's still employee and supervisor in the book but they still use "facilitator" on the floor. Some of us won't use that (Factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

If language is produced in contradictory and conflicting relations of power, then the stories people tell about their lives, and the stories that researchers tell about their lives, will reflect that contradiction. Related to the problem of just how "grounded" this understanding can be, is how the researcher understands "experience." When people provide accounts of their experience, the language used to account for it does not necessarily reflect how that

experience was produced. Theorists have focused on the representation of "experience" because of the need to situate experience within social historical frameworks and to politicize the act of story telling. The telling of experience (as opposed to the experience as lived) "is a retelling, is selective, partial, and in tension. There is a `myth of the seamless narrative and the omnipresent narrator'" (Britzman, 1991: 13). Reporting and producing the experiences of "others" further complicates the research act. "Experience is at once always already an interpretation and is in need of interpretation" (Scott, 1991: 779). Thus how experience is accounted for by both the researcher and subject of research are important.

What this means is that there are limits to both the research interpretations and reports of lived or subjective experience. The researcher has to be cognizant of the idea that there is no complete picture, but a number of (possibly conflicting) interpretations to be rendered. While this focus on language and interpretation may seem unsettling for those whose aim it is to recommend political courses of action, it is actually critical for broadening the scope of actions that can be taken in any given context. I am not starting from the position that there can be a balanced approach to knowledge production, nor that there is a whole story to be told. I am drawing attention to the relationships between a variety of texts, images, language forms and ideas. This focus helps me to characterize bourgeois thinking on and desire to understand the working-class subject and subjectivity, specifically with regard to schooling discourses.

The issues that I have been discussing above, "language," "experience," "power" have been the concern of critical researchers who seek to understand the lived experience of marginalized subjects as a way of addressing social inequities in their research (Ellsworth, 1989). However there is a certain "one-way-ness" in these discussions. They reflect a tendency to focus on the production of experience in the 'target' populations of the

marginalized. Ignoring the power dimensions of language has led to the tendency to treat language as if it represented some kind of self-evident reality. It has also led to the privileging of "voice" and the idea that including voices of the oppressed will rectify power differences. But all voices operate in and through discourses of difference and power.

Recognizing that people's accounts of their experiences cannot be taken at face value does not mean that their accounts are invalid or not "real." Recognizing that experience is produced by both material conditions and within ideological contexts allows the researcher to get a better understanding of the complex conditions in which the research subject and the researcher speak. It provides a basis for understanding how power works and the process by which knowledge is certified (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994).

Power and language as research strategy

In this thesis, I rely fairly heavily on the idea that power relations, particularly those involved in class difference, are entrenched in, produced through, and reflected by language practices. The idea that the English language is based on a series of hierarchical binary oppositions is particularly important here. Derrida (1989) provocatively suggested that language constitutes a system of signs whose meanings are based in relations of similarity and difference. Linguistic dualisms such as masculine/feminine, nature/culture, positive/negative, are recurring themes in western culture, and as Derrida suggested, such dualisms are not equal terms but are hierarchical and reflect social power arrangements. The first term of the pair of binary opposites is considered to be superior, while the second is considered to be "derivative, undesirable, and subordinate" (Seidman, 1997: 203). Western thought and philosophy is based on hierarchical binary oppositions through which it has established an ultimate order of truth, with claims to objectivity, universality and rationality

(Seidman, 1997). The point of deconstruction is to destabilize these structures of meaning that reflect a belief in a rational, or natural order of power relations.

Many signifiers of social class are riddled with powerful binary oppositions that can be quite revealing as to the nature of power in class relations: I named some of these in the previous chapter: e.g. street-smart/book-smart, hard-working/lazy, high culture/low culture etc. The meanings associated with binary oppositions are not necessarily stable, and can be appropriated and re-interpreted to reflect evolving political circumstances and strategies. For example, signifiers of class, such as "the smart workforce" are now being shifted to include or to exclude different bodies, both literally and figuratively (see Chapter 3 for a more extensive discussion of this issue).

Understanding that language works through a system of identification of opposites is important for disclosing various aspects of power in classed relations. At the same time that binary oppositions erect a particular version of one reality or identity, they *recognize* the existence of another reality. In privileging, or in recognizing one voice in oppressive power relations, a version of the "hidden voice" also becomes visible. But it is a limited version that is reflected in the image of the dominant constructs and this is where things get complicated. Bhabha, for example, has suggested that the object of the bourgeois gaze, the working-class subject, may be understood to reflect bourgeois desire rather than any kind of objective reality about the working class:

> Do the endlessly repeated stories about the working class tell us more about bourgeois fantasies of the "other" than they do anything about working class subjectivity? (Bhabha quoted in Walkerdine, 1996: 357).

What is interesting here is that this approach to language provides a way of accessing knowledge about how the "self" and the "other" are constructed within various discourses. I rely on these analytic mechanisms in trying to understand some of the findings in my

thesis. In general, this approach to understanding knowledge production has allowed me to question the validity of focusing on marginalized subjects as a way of adequately understanding classed power relations. It has allowed me to ask questions about both the subjects and objects of academic knowledge production and to broaden what I think is an often limited approach to class difference and representation in academic knowledge production.

Discourse analysis

My thesis relies on notions of discourse as a way of constituting knowledge through relations of power. The analysis of discourse makes it possible to bring together a range of concerns that I have in the thesis, under one roof. Rather than viewing discourses simply as language, I take the position that discourses are social practices that are produced out of both the material and symbolic world, and also produce the material and symbolic worlds in which people participate (Henriques et. al, 1984; Weedon, 1987). "Neither the body nor thoughts and feelings have meaning outside of their discursive articulation, but the ways in which discourse constitute the minds and bodies of individuals is always part of a wider network of power relations, often with institutional bases" (Weedon, 1987: 108).

Discourses play a key role in establishing and maintaining dominant ideologies through the hegemony of subject positions in society. According to Weedon, discourses are effective when they are "activated" through the agency of the individual "whom they constitute and govern . . . as embodied subjects" (Weedon, 1987: 112). Weedon suggests that subjectivity is the most obvious site of the consensual regulation of individuals. The consensual regulation of individuals is possible through the identification of individuals with particular subject positions within discourses. The discursive constitution of subjects,

and of subjectivity reflect institutional practices as well (Seidman, 1994; Weedon, 1987) and are part of a "wider social play for power" (Weedon, 1987: 113).

Discourse analysis involves taking apart hierarchical oppositions as part of a broad critical social and political project. Researchers have tended to use discursive analysis in a way that targets the subordinated subject position within oppressive power relations (e.g., Dunk, 1991; Walkerdine, 1990; Willis, 1977). That is, there seems to be an assumption that the act of "subject positioning" through discourse is something accomplished by the oppressor "on" the oppressed. There is a kind of victim mentality involved in this approach, and yet, understanding power relations as diffuse and consensual, should enable one to go beyond this approach to power. Understanding social relations through discourse should allow one to understand the self-positioning and "othering" practices of both subordinate and dominant classes.

In this thesis I am mainly concerned with bourgeois knowledge production, not with working-class knowledge production, although these are related. I use quotes from interviews with working-class subjects mainly to provide another perspective on how bourgeois discourse frames working-class experience. I do not use these quotes to demonstrate working-class resistance or accommodation to dominant knowledge forms, although the interview material may demonstrate this and may be interpreted in this way.

Power and social class

How power is understood is important to understanding the way social class is constructed through various discourses of class. Marxism presupposes that the economic mode of production is a form of power that will be the ultimate determining factor in class relations. I rely on an understanding of power as a diffuse mechanism of social regulation,

as a consensual process rather than strictly an authoritarian force (Foucault, 1977). Understanding power as a consensual process means that people participate in the organization and maintenance of power underlying modern social structures. This is what makes it possible for certain discourses to retain their power and validity in the social world. Theories of hegemonic power (Gramsci, 1971) also pay attention to ways in which power is constructed, and understand power as consensual, although hegemony theory presumes a dominant and subordinate relationship between consenting groups. The Foucauldian approach to power suggests that the particular forms that power will take cannot be determined in advance. [15] That is, "The certainty offered by a Marxist, liberal-humanist or psychoanalytic perspective is missing" (Weedon, 1987: 114).

Viewing power as consensual means that what is "dominant" may not always reflect the views, needs, and desires of the economically powerful. The idea of power as a complex social bargain makes it possible to understand the question that is often asked by bourgeois intellectuals of the working classes (see Walkerdine, 1990): "how could they" (the working classes) continue to work within a relationship that they understand to be largely faulted?" This view is not intended to blame the "oppressed," but to acknowledge that there is awareness and recognition of power relations (rather than "duping") and that the social consensus involves negotiation, trade-off, and a certain amount of agreement in social arrangements.

Understanding that social relations involve consensual relations of power means that it is too simplistic to suggest that some discourses are "dominant" and others are

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[15]Foucault sought to show how modern forms of power worked to secure consent. He did not say that modern forms of power always worked, nor did he say that authoritarian forms of power are irrelevant.

"resistant" or "alternative" and that these things are easily recognized by social actors. Moreover, viewing power relations as consensual does not necessarily imply that people are involved in *equal* relations of power as I suggested earlier in this chapter regarding the social labour contract. Some discourses become hegemonic in that they are entrenched in law and define the parameters of social relations. I use the terms "oppressive" and "dominant" and "subordinate" power relations throughout the thesis in order to retain the idea that there is some level of coercion involved in bourgeois and working-class relations and in the discourses produced through these relations. I do not intend to use these terms to suggest that there is no participation, consent, nor struggle involved in class relations.

CHAPTER III:

THE WORKING-CLASS SUBJECT IN EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how working-class subjects are situated in relation to recent educational discourses on learning and work. Concepts such as the "learning society" and the "adult learner" are part of a major shift in organizational management strategies under restructuring. The representation of workers as generally "uneducated" or lacking certain types of knowledge and skills is a prominent feature of the industrial workplace. Workers were said to "check their brains at the door." This characterization of workers is considered to be a thing of the past as the workplace is "restructured" and a new social organization of the workplace emerges. The reorganized workplace seeks to change the image of workers as dull, repetitive beings and replace it with new images of the workforce as flexible, self-managing: smart.

"Learning" has become a dominant part of workplace restructuring efforts to the point that it has come to take on a life of its own. Workplace education, including literacy training that is now being advocated in many organizations, is seen as a "win-win" situation with hopes of increased productivity for companies and with opportunities to avoid sinking into joblessness for workers. The discourses of workplace education reveal an underlying assumption that there must be something wrong; some knowledge gap involved with being a worker. A recent study by the Conference Board of Canada (1997) reported that workplace literacy training would benefit employers because it "unleashes the potential and creativity of employees. The new ideas needed to move business forward will materialize

when employees are given the necessary skills to communicate ideas effectively" (Bloom et al., 1997:10).

Here I look at "learning" discourses broadly in order to think about some of the social identities that they produce and also to understand some of the assumptions that are embedded in them. I'm particularly interested in the implications of learning discourses for the working-class subject under economic restructuring. I ask questions about the types of knowledge that workers are supposed to have, how they are supposed to behave, and how this effects their relation to the reorganized workplace. I also pay some attention to the kinds of new classed relations that are created and maintained through recent educational discourses and how this differs from previous formulations. I specifically look at some of the things that are hidden by the focus on a "universal" or global learner and make the case that these generic categories of learning and the "learner" do not apply to everyone in the same way. They construct different set of meanings for different groups of workers. I draw on research that was conducted as part of the Working Class Learning Strategies project (a community college, an autoparts factory, and a paint factory) as well as a telecommunications company (Ontario Federation of Labour, Training Adjustment Research Project, 1996) in order to make some of my claims.

Meritocratic discourse and class difference

The discourses that dominate current educational thought are based on fundamental assumptions about the individual as a primary driving force in a market economy (Erwin & MacLennan, 1994). These include ideas like "if you try hard enough you can get what you want," and re-emerging rhetorics such as "learn more to earn more." As a key philosophy underlying ideas about social structure, meritocracy centres around the idea that

individuals are entitled to gain social rewards in proportion to their effort and ability (Guttman, 1988). Importantly, the ideal of meritocracy focuses on the equality of opportunity, not on the equality of social outcomes (Mazurek, 1987). This is a conservative ideology that dominates educational thinking and social policy in advanced western capitalist societies. In this system, it is taken as natural that high performers should have more and better social resources simply because they are considered to be more able and willing to learn. In its most extreme incarnation, meritocratic ideology is a survival of the fittest mentality.

Formal education is considered to be a key mediator of class relations in that it provides choices or opportunities for upward mobility through systems of qualification. Although the focus is primarily on individual social mobility, the economic surplus provided by high performers is said to trickle down and enhance the quality of life for *all* citizens. As with any discourse, there are a number of issues and ideas about education and achievement that get suppressed in meritocratic thought. In promoting the ascendancy and power of the individual, and individual choice, meritocratic thinking does not take into account the idea that social outcomes might not have as much to do with individual effort or ability as they do with the social context and power relations in which the individual is embedded. It thus overlooks the possibility that social differences based on class location, racial or gender oppression might have a part in determining social and economic position. The focus on individual choice also leaves little room for considering the fact that social success, ability and achievement, are deeply political constructs with distinctive cultural meanings.

Early work in the sociology of education demonstrated the ideological nature of meritocracy in that there was shown to be little relationship between individual ability and

class position. Some of this research demonstrated that the education system itself seemed to be implicated in the active production and reproduction of class divisions (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Rather than providing a fair and even footing for all individuals to perform, family background, occupation, and education levels combine to produce social difference and economic inequality at a number of levels.

Although rarely expressed in its pure form, meritocracy has been a dominant discourse of schooling and has influenced thinking around the quality and distribution of educational resources:

> Meritocracy is dedicated to distributing all educational resources in proportion to natural ability and willingness to learn. In principle, therefore, meritocracy must give the least educational resources and attention to those children who have relatively few natural abilities and little inclination to learn and the most to those children who have relatively many natural abilities and high motivation (Guttman, 1988: 113).

The ideology of meritocracy is practiced most fully in schools, as achievement is punished and rewarded through letter grades and examinations. Achievement and failure are artificially produced through what are considered to be natural laws. Evaluation procedures, for example, are based on the idea that there is a natural distribution of skill or talent in the population and are used to justify educational and occupational achievement (see chapter 4 and 5 for more on this). The effects of standardized evaluation practices on working-class children have been reviewed by researchers interested in the social and political contexts in which schooling occurs (Curtis et. al., 1992). As these writers suggest, standardized evaluation methods systematically assign particular definitions of cognitive ability to working-class children. Evaluation practices have contributed significantly to the divisions of labour in society as working-class children are streamed via testing into technical, general, or special education programs and middle-class children are streamed

into academic and professional track programs (Curtis et. al., 1992). Grounded in principles of meritocracy, the education system acts to reproduce the divisions of labour necessary for sustaining capitalist economic activity (Apple, 1982).

The credentials provided by formal education systems provide opportunities for social mobility, but at the same time are limited by the economic context in which social mobility occurs. Willis has suggested that part of the social democratic belief in education is that it actually transforms the possibilities for the working class in a way that challenges class structure. But the fact is, that opportunities are created by the state of the economy, and only in small numbers for the working class: "No conceivable number of certificates amongst the working class will make for a classless society, or convince industrialists and employers--even if they were able--that they should create more jobs." (Willis, 1977: 127)

It is the active production and maintenance of the *idea* of meritocracy that is of interest here. Because meritocracy is a way of thinking, or a philosophy, it doesn't necessarily matter if effort and achievement don't match up with individual experience. Meritocracy provides a set of principles for governing the way that people *can think* about their experiences. It is the ideal condition to strive for. The ideal condition has to be constantly produced, through the media for example, in order to remind people of the way things should be. It may be that there is an unfair distribution of resources that hasn't got anything to do with the individual, but the ideological message acts to disrupt alternative thoughts or interpretations on the issue, or to suppress them.

I am reminded of a television news program I saw recently about a mill closure in a small forestry town on Vancouver Island. The closure would put at risk any small business that was dependent on the population of mill workers. A pub owner in the community was being interviewed about his feelings on the closure. He talked about how he had worked as

a bar tender for 20 years and felt he had finally realized his dream when he bought and began successfully operating the pub. In struggling to find the words to explain the effect of the mill closure on his pub, he said, "I'm a fighter. I know that it is not *me* that has failed. I keep telling myself that." He then started crying and left the TV audience with the message: "I just can't find the words."

Meritocracy and the assumption of upward mobility

The assumption of upward mobility is a key aspect of meritocratic thinking. Hence, meritocracy does acknowledge that some power relations exist in society (e.g. class differences exist) but working-class membership is something that must be overcome through education and/or hard work. The discourse tends to ignore the idea that upward mobility in capitalist society depends on the subordination and exploitation of the "losers." Referring to the general suppression of class interests in the classroom, George Lipsitz suggests that liberal education systems reproduce dominant class ideology through a limited focus on "disadvantage":

> We might from time to time talk about "disadvantaged" populations, but almost never do we connect their disadvantages to their exploitation, subordination, and suppression as low-wage or unemployed labourers, as people taken advantage of or as people whose "disadvantages" secure pleasant and profitable advantages for others (Lipsitz, 1997: 10).

Because meritocratic thinking supports the idea that social position and status are a result of individual hard work and achievement, any failure to achieve socioeconomic success is blamed on individual lack of effort or ability. Blame for failure is generally not placed on the sociopolitical context in which learning and education occurs. There is not much room in meritocratic discourses, that pride a positive attitude and a winning spirit, for negative thinking, for conflict, or hostility. Hostility and conflict are taken as signs of

failure, or even pathology in a system that is viewed as natural and self-regulating. Meritocracy does not want to see the losers, or the failures that are the byproduct of its practices.

Education is promoted as key to mobilizing and liberating the individual (worker) from his or her position in the social hierarchy. Work is understood as the vehicle through which one might make social gains, and as such is placed in a subordinate relation to social mobility. Work is positioned outside of, or the Other to education, or to mental labour, the "mind." (The situating of manual labour outside of the "rational" is discussed in more detail in chapter 5 in relation to the democratic order).

The ideology of meritocracy is deeply contradictory for working-class people in that it holds out the promise of social equality (through individual hard work and conformity) while at the same time creating some of the conditions of inequality. The working class as a social group may espouse the ideology of hard work, but by definition they are never entitled to the full value of their labour. People are entitled to the full fruits of their labour only by giving up their place in the social world and by conforming to terms and conditions defined outside of their experience or control. Meeting the success criteria established by meritocratic educational discourse means that working-class people must make fundamental gambles with their cultural identities (I alluded to this in Chapter 1 in relation to language practices.)

George Lipsitz has suggested that "the mere promise of upward mobility depends on the suppression of class tensions, the erasure of class differences, and the construction of an ideological "middle-class" identity" (1997: 11). Unlike the success criteria promoted in middle-class culture, where there may not be a perceived need to be anything other than what one is: that is, one is "good enough," working-class subjects are asked to become

successful in a context in which they are not supposed to succeed. This very significant feature of class identity and relations is expressed in Sennett and Cobbs' analysis of authoritarianism as an element in some types of working-class families:

> A middle-class father may pass off the tensions of his work by thinking he is doing it for the kids, but in the process he needn't desire that they rise to a higher class—i.e., that they become unlike him. Working-class fathers like O'Malley and Bertin see the whole point of sacrificing for their children to be that the children *will* become unlike themselves; through education and the right kind of peer associations, the kids will learn the arts of rational control and acquire the power to make wide choices which in sum should make the kids better armed, less vulnerable in coping with the world than the fathers are (Sennett & Cobb, 1973: 128).

In the context of schooling then, working-class subjects are positioned in a contradictory identity formation in ways that middle-class subjects are not.[10] Paul Willis speaks to this in his observation of working-class student and teacher interactions in the classroom: "It is as if the pupils were composed of two people one of whom is supposed to save the other. They are continually exhorted to behave in precisely those ways of which they are supposedly incapable of behaving" (Willis, 1977: 81). There is a lot that could be said about the effects of meritocratic ideology on class identity. This is not the centrepiece of this thesis, but it is an important point which I continue to bring forward because it helps to understand the ways in which class differences are represented through bourgeois discourse.

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[10]The children of a declining petty bourgeoisie may also experience a similar contradictory identity formation in relation to schooling.

"Learning" as moral discourse

The notions of "learning" and the "learner" have emerged as specific discourses in discussions about education and work, and about society as we move from a relatively stable post-war economy into a less predictable and more competitive "global" one. In this context, the language of learning seems to have become globalized as well. It appears in the marketing strategies of corporate banking "everybody's learning," in the voices of popular culture "you live you learn," and in the mission statements of educational institutions as they become more closely aligned with corporate capitalism. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, the venue through which this thesis is produced, advertises itself as "Canada's leading educational institute dedicated to the establishment of a learning society, through immersing itself in the world of applied problem solving and expanding the knowledge and capacities of individuals to lead productive lives." The expansion of knowledge, the capacities of individuals, production and productivity are all focal points of contemporary learning discourse.

These discourses have a number of recurring themes, identifying features through which individuals and class relations can be understood. The dominant discourses of learning assume that everyone should be learning, or engaged in some kind of activity that is considered to be worthwhile. Learning discourses, particularly those involved in human resource planning, advocate positive and productive images of the workforce. Learning is considered to be a linear process of continual improvement and change. The concept of "learning" is vague, at best, but importantly it evokes a positive value, so that "learning" in and of itself is viewed as a generic activity, something good and something that everyone should be doing. For example, we do not commonly associate "learning to quit" or "learning to slow down," or "learning to do drugs" as features of a "learning society." Peter Senge,

author of the well-known management resource, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization,* takes the image of learning to new heights when he notes: "Learning organizations are possible because, deep down, we are all learners...Learning organizations are possible because not only is it our nature to learn but we love to learn" (Senge, 1990:5).

In the context of industrial restructuring, learning is presented as though it is a universal activity, something that applies to everyone. The production of "learning" as a generic activity is important because it is the abstraction of learning from its political and social context that makes it possible to use as a tool for workforce management. Literacy, for example, became used as a *mass noun* that isolated the ability to read and write from other human practices and referred to it as a measurable attribute of individuals, groups and whole societies (Ohmann, 1985). Similarly, the category of "learning" has become a "mass noun" and is being used in a broad sense to apply to anyone and everyone. In this sense, the construct of learning has become "universalized." The abstraction of learning from its social and political context is taken to an extreme in adult education paradigms that promote "learning *how* to learn."

While learning discourses promote a universal image of the learner, they arise out of and have significant material effects. Learning projects as they have been operationalized in liberal capitalist societies have a substantial role in organizing people's lives. Schooling and training projects determine how much time people have and what they get to do with it. Under capitalism, learning is tied to the production system, therefore to market need and to growth. We learn what we need in the marketplace. Education becomes increasingly functional in that learning activities that tie into the marketplace are sought out and more highly valued than other activities. The way that learning is conceptualized is important

because it is related to the distribution of educational resources. Under economic restructuring, this has involved the transfer of resources away from public education to the private sector (see Dunk, McBride, & Nelson, 1996). In recent decades the interests between corporate management and schooling systems have merged as educational institutions become increasingly aligned with corporate philosophies (Buchbinder & Newson, 1994; Meaghan, 1996).

Learning is promoted in the formal organizations of schooling and training which allows it to be defined, evaluated, and promoted largely by professional educators and bureaucrats. This means that the content of schooling, the theoretical preferences, are fixed outside of specific cultural experience (Pietrykowski, 1996). The dominant forms of learning discourse tend to focus on how much learning people do without reference to the content of knowledge and how that knowledge is produced. Even when the moral and political aspects of learning are taken into account there is a tendency to equate learning in and of itself with change, or transformation; as an inherently good thing (Edwards, 1991).

Under capitalist restructuring, discourses on learning pose serious contradictions for working-class people. At the same time that people are told to be learners not everyone is meant to be "learned." For example, managers are not considered to be "adult learners" nor "learners" for that matter. Managers are "knowers" and workers are "learners." Managers do "professional development" and workers do training, upgrading, learning. The category of "learner" suggests an image of an adult child who needs to be educated. The learned (man) is not in need. He may choose to enhance his credentials in order to extend his strategic decision making powers, to assist in his ideological expansionism. "Learners," however, are placed in a position of perpetual motion, a vessel that will never be filled. Their knowledge

is kept on reserve for the needs of the labour market. This process is accelerated in the context of capitalist crisis:

> So class struggle is persistently grounded in the contradiction that capitalist enterprises are compelled to nurture these general learning capacities of workers in order to enhance productivity, while owners must also appropriate workers' ingenuity and routinize their tacit knowledge in order to remain profitable (Livingstone, 1996: 12).

Workers are compelled to nurture their general capacities as well as they seek to secure employment while at the same time resisting further exploitation of their knowledge and skills.

Nowhere is the struggle over learning and work more evident than in the enterprise of literacy training. The profiles and definitions of dominant literacy training programs have a close relationship to labour market needs. Sheryl Greenwood-Gowen (1992) suggests, for example, that it is not a coincidence that the "literacy crisis" has occurred at the same time as the corporate reorganization of the workplace. Within the dominant discourses on adult learning and work, learning is generally equated with the functional literacies of reading, writing and arithmetic. Workers are asked to rely on expert-produced knowledge in order to solve problems in the workplace (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). The focus is on the skills that people lack, sometimes basic literacy skills and sometimes "higher order" thinking skills.

As with other colonizing aspects of education, literacy training is used to regulate the learning needs of working-class subjects. When working-class subjects don't see themselves as having a need to learn, they are charged with having behavioral or attitude adjustment problems (Brown, 1995a; Horsman, 1990; Swift & Perla, 1996). Literacy training is a key site of bourgeoisie efforts to teach or to modify working-class culture. At the same time, literacy education is recognized by social activists interested in the class implications

of literacy, as an urgent site of political struggle. The goals, practices, and social value of literacy education are among the most hotly contested educational terrains.

New literacies and the working-class subject

One of the dominant educational discourses that has emerged as a fixture of economic restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s is the idea that citizens and workers need to engage in perpetual or "lifelong learning" in order to secure employment as well as to strengthen the national economy. This shift is based on the belief that traditional methods of boosting economic growth, such as increasing consumer spending or encouraging business investment, are not bringing Canadian profits in line with international competitors. This has come to be called the "productivity paradox" where in spite of record capital investments Canada's position in relation to international competitors has fallen over the last decade (Bloom et. al., 1997). The recognition that there is a link between workforce training and productivity levels has spurred an interest, at least ideologically, in human resource planning and investment as suggested in a report by the Conference Board of Canada. This report introduces the idea that current economic problems are tied into human resource issues, specifically to a lack of employee skills and training provisions. Through training discourse, the workforce is represented as a renewable resource, a commodity that is subordinated to capital investment:

> Evidence is beginning to emerge that places part of the responsibility on the shoulders of inadequate employee skills and training. No matter how much capital investment occurs, without adequate investment in workforce training and education employers will remain unable to harvest the full potential of that investment. The country's economic well-being depends on its capacity to make the most effective use of people and to maintain the skills of its workforce (Bloom et. al., 1997: 1).

The belief that the workforce may be underqualified to meet the demands of shifting profit margins has brought together a number of groups who might not otherwise have a common political interest in workforce training and educational issues. These include public and private educational institutions, literacy organizations, corporate trainers, and labour representatives. The renewed interest in workplace training has also raised issues about financial responsibility for training and questions about who training should be aimed at and the kind of training that should be done. There is an alarmist quality to the training rhetoric as both corporations and the workforce are pinned with responsibility for "saving the national economy."

The call for increased workplace skills training reflects broader changes in global market conditions, as well as changes in the way that industry is organized. These changes mark a shift from the industrial to the post-industrial workplace and involve new discourses about how work is to be understood, as well as new understandings of workers themselves. Post-industrialism is talked about as a significant shift away from Tayloristic, or "scientific" management systems which dominated organizational management for the last century. Taylorism, which was responsible for large-scale divisions of labour, "took both the application of personal knowledge and the control of work away from workers and placed both in the hands of professional, highly educated managers" (Greenwood-Gowen, 1992: 3). Post-industrial organizational management intends to reverse this process and put the thinking cap back into the hands of the workforce. Whether it puts the thinking cap back into the hands of the existing workforce or not is another question, one that I address in a later section of this chapter.

A new set of literacies or skills are promoted as key to reorganizing the workforce. These involve the traditional basic literacies but are broadened to include a subset of skills

or "workplace know-how" and social competencies like being able to work in teams, interpret and communicate information effectively (Hull, 1993). There is a focus on non-technical or social skills that have to do with the attitudes and values people bring to work. Labour-management relations in general reflect these changes as consensus negotiation is promoted as a more productive labour-management strategy than the traditional oppositional bargaining

The way that workers are represented in the discourses of organizational management is also reorganized as workers are asked to take over some of the lower-level, and disciplinary functions of management. Workers are invited into a "participatory" relationship with management as some decision-making, but not all, is collectively dispersed among the workforce:

> . . . unlike the industrial framework, whose emphasis is on technology, the bottom line, and short-term goals . . . the emphasis would be on an integration of social and technical systems that make the human aspects of work dominant over the mechanical and technical aspects. Theoretically, in this new model, workers would be valued as members of a democratic community committed to long-term achievement based on continuous learning, shared problem-solving, and participatory management (Greenwood-Gowen, 1992: 5).

Here is another example from Senge's book on the learning organization:

> As the world becomes more interconnected and business becomes more complex and dynamic, work must become more "learningful." It is no longer sufficient to have one person learning for the organization, a Ford or a Sloan or a Watson. It's just not possible any longer to "figure it out" from the top, and have everyone else following the orders of the "grand strategist." The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization (Senge, 1990: 4).

Unlike the previous division of labour under Taylorism, where conceptual labour was theoretically separated from manual labour, the post-industrial workplace is supposed to integrate abstract, conceptual skills with the manual elements of work. Executive

thinking skills like problem solving, flexibility, decision-making and communication skills parallel the new designation of workers as executive decision-makers, or production associates. Workers are trained to become multi-skilled or "flexible," so that they can absorb some of the functions of middle management. Middle managers are replaced with self-regulating groups, or teams, which monitor the quality and pace of work on the shop floor. While not all workplaces have made the transition to quality workplaces, or to "high performance workplaces," many Canadian companies have moved (at least theoretically) in this direction[17]. At one workplace in Ontario, management envisions an environment where workers eventually will do all of the local management work (Ontario Federation of Labour, TARP, 1996).

The focus on increasingly efficient organizations involves an emphasis on the consumer, or customer. Quality standards become important in this context as efforts are made to promote the continuous improvement of production and service to the customer (Parker & Slaughter, 1994). Workers are also encouraged to think of *each other* as customers (Blaugh, 1996). The quality movement has added to the previous focus on quantity production as workers are encouraged to not only produce more, but to produce more, much better. In one of its truck assembly plants in Flint, Michigan, General Motors implemented its quality program with a particularly interesting twist. Writing about life on the rivet line, Ben Hamper explains how the company introduced a larger than life "quality cat" as a mascot for the production floor:

> Howie Makem stood five feet nine. He had light brown fur, long synthetic whiskers and a head the size of a Datsun. He wore a long red cape emblazoned with the letter Q for quality. A very magical cat, Howie walked

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[17]Studies of actual changes in workplace practices in the U.S. have found that only about a third of private sector firms have made any substantial use of new work practices (Ostermann, 1994; Lawler et al., 1992).

everywhere on his hind paws. Howie would make the rounds poking his
floppy whiskers in and out of each department. A "Howie sighting" was
always cause for great fanfare. The workers would scream and holler and
jump up and down on their workbenches whenever Howie drifted by
(Hamper, 1991: 112-113).

All of these changes have implications for the types of education and qualifications

demanded of the workforce. For example, carrying out the tasks of quality control is

facilitated by teamwork and self-regulation concepts. Employees are supposed to have

more responsibility working in teams than they used to have doing isolated, repetitive

functions on the production line. This is partly because they have to know how to do a

variety of jobs and they have to know how to manage their own work. Working in teams

implies a certain ability to participate, communicate, and to get along with other team

members. A supervisor at a Canada Employment Centre explains:

> Employees now take on responsibilities once expected of middle
> management, which has been squeezed out in the recession. For example,
> when workers now encounter a problem on the line, employers expect them
> to be able to solve it rather than have to turn to a superior for help.
> (Supervisor at Canada Employment Centre in Brockville, Ontario, quoted in
> a local Ontario newspaper, _The Recorder & Times_, Brockville Ontario, Sept. 18,
> 1995).

These changes are considered to be more democratic by new management systems and are

expected to improve production levels because people have more input into the system

(Blaugh, 1996; Greenwood-Gowen, 1992).

Computer skills also become an important social technology organizing and

reflecting new work practices (Menzies, 1989). Companies use computer technology to

monitor stocks and orders, and to perform other managerial functions. People need to have

a general knowledge of computers and how to work them to perform in both areas.

Keeping track of quality and production data and managing backup quality systems means

that workers need to rely more heavily on certain types of social skills than they did before.

At some workplaces, work groups or teams are assigned to take over parts of the quality control process. Work goals are posted, and product defects are identified, diverting potential manufacturing problems (Parker & Slaughter; 1994; Ontario Federation of Labour, TARP, 1996). This public display of work outcomes is supposed to provide a backup for the statistical control system, but more importantly it acts as another check on production and reduces the need to pay floor supervisors to do this job. Under total quality management, workers are asked to monitor each other in the workplace; and they are being monitored more (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997; Rifkin, 1995).

The learner as "individual"

The new learning discourses that have emerged as part of organizational restructuring, direct attention toward the individual, and the individuals' learning capacities. The concepts of "learner-centred," "student-centred" and "client-centred," for example, have become a common currency of adult education (Edwards, 1991). In dominant forms of adult education, learners are encouraged to view their learning needs as belonging to themselves as individuals, decontextualized from the social relations which frame their lives. The focus on individual capacities and needs situates "learners" as continually lacking something or as deficient in some way.

At the same time that learning discourses make the individual the centre of attention, the adult learner is positioned within institutionalized frameworks that define the content and context of learning. The institutions of employment training, workplace and literacy training, for example, already locate the individual in a set of understandings about what needs to be learned, who needs to learn it and how things need to be learned. The learning project is produced through training programs that reflect organizational rather

than individual needs (see for example, Matt Sanger's discussion of the social organization

of learning needs in a unionized sector, 1989).

Organizations are encouraged to "harvest the potential" of their capital investment

through workforce training (Bloom et. al., 1997). Learners are centred as the *object* of the

learning discourses of business. Business is promoted *through* learner-centredness as

suggested by the Conference Board of Canada in their report on workplace training: "The

new ideas needed to move business forward will materialize when employees are given the

necessary skills to communicate ideas effectively" (Bloom et al., 1997:10). The business-

centredness as learner-centredness of learning discourse was repeatedly pointed out in the

working-class learning strategies interviews. One example of the subordination of

workforce learning to institutional needs was raised by a college support staff worker who

talked about the college's investment in corporate training that did not reflect local college

needs:

> They have to go to the U.S. to find someone who knows about customer
> service. And when we have 600 plus teachers here--like none of them know
> anything about it? The support staff could have designed a course, but the
> college is willing to spend a ridiculous amount of money to get the video
> tapes and special forms that you have to use. Right from the beginning
> people were saying 'This is garbage, it has nothing to do with my work, it's
> about an American telephone company.' You can't talk to people that way
> here. Instead of coming to people here who are good at it, we get something
> where you're turned off (College staff member, WCLS project, 1996).

Individual learning "wants" and "desires" are subordinated to organizational needs in adult

education discourse. Edwards has suggested that the focus on need, instead of wants or

desires, reflects an ethic of corporate-centred efficiency in new learning discourses. The idea

is that "waste in human and educational resources is reduced as learners no longer have to

learn what they already know or can do, nor what they are interested in" (Edwards:

1991:85). It is through the discourse of learning needs that the relations of liberal capitalism are "revitalized" (see Edwards, 1991).

Through their focus on the individual, discourses of learning produce the idea of a universal subject that is abstracted from its particular historical and social contexts. The individualism of learning discourse suggests the idea of equality of opportunity; the idea that all learners are on an equal footing and through merit, can achieve whatever they want. Learners are encouraged to make wider choices through their learning which increases their capacity for autonomous choice and action in their own lives. Individual growth (e.g., professional "development") and work satisfaction are all implied in this framework. The production of the learner as individual makes it possible for learning discourses to promote the ideas of choice and empowerment. The learner is "normalized" through discourses that focus on the equality of opportunity, but not on the equality of outcomes. Learning discourses construct the *bourgeois* identity as normal by focusing on the ideas of individual choice and empowerment.

The very notions of learning "culture" or "society" evoke an image and promise of community. Yet, at the same time, learning, with its promise of empowerment and mobility, is offered as a way of mobilizing the individual. Worker potential and creativity are promoted to the extent that they meet the desires and values of the corporate community. The ideals of bourgeois individualism: individual choice and autonomy, are therefore used to facilitate organizational restructuring. In constructing the learner as individual, the learning subject is isolated from any broader sense of social planning. Participation in business planning is encouraged, while participation in defining the goals and means of work is discouraged (discussed in later section). Learning discourse highlights the idea of individual escape rather than social emancipation, and disrupts the potential for collective

action on behalf of the workforce. Individualism "fragments potential sites of opposition" and encourages the view that individuals can make it through their own efforts (Edwards, 1991:95). These arguments pave the way for the discursive repositioning of the existing workforce, or working class, as "trainable" or "educable."

The working-class subject as adult "learner"

Although learning culture theoretically includes all members of the workforce, including employers, not everyone is considered to be adult "learners." I suggest at least two ways in which the discourses of learning position the working-class subject as "learner" in ways that other members of the workforce are not. First, learning is conflated with employment training in the context of economic restructuring and therefore refers to members of the workforce who are most directly affected by downsizing. Second, only some members of the workforce are positioned as "learners" as inflated hiring criteria selects the already educated or "learned" into the workforce. I draw on research conducted in the service sector (a community college) and the industrial sectors (paint and telecommunications industries) in order to illustrate my points.

Current discourses of learning direct all of the needs to change or to learn at the workforce, and they further place responsibility for "employability" on the shoulders of individual workers. As Edwards (1991) has pointed out, constructing workers as having learning needs is one way of regulating the individual workers' relation to his or her employment. The discourse of "life-long learning" for example, is implicitly linked to employment stability (or instability) because it facilitates the understanding that jobs are no longer stable: people can expect to have more than one "career" in a lifetime and therefore continually need to upgrade their skills. In effect, the new learning discourses take the

responsibility for employment provisions off the employer and load it more heavily onto the workforce.

The Working Class Learning Strategies project interviews with college support staff workers demonstrated how "learning" discourses are being used to displace employment responsibilities from the organization to the waged workforce, quite well. The focus on learning culture was embedded in college restructuring that projected a closure of several campuses as well as a reduction of jobs. This was underscored in the college's 1996 strategic plan, where much of the language around training was vague and the responsibility for change was placed on local college divisions, and more specifically, between individual employees and their supervisors. Furthermore, employees' learning responsibilities were subordinated to the college's "clientele" (the students) learning needs:

> *The ability of the college to respond to a diverse student population and changing learner needs depends upon the capacity of its employees to continue to learn and to adapt. Employment stability can only be achieved if all members of the College community maximize their employability by continually upgrading their skills to meet these changing needs.*

The college restructuring process included a restructuring of staff members' relations to learning by creating a discourse on the need to do life-long learning. The type of learning promoted was heavily individualized and job-centred. The college also began moving from a language of "sustained employment" to "employability" and talking about retraining for jobs both inside and outside the college. This was recognized many staff members, and their union, as a shift in responsibility for employment security from the employer to employees and caused a great deal of uncertainty in the workplace and in people's lives in general.

The shift from employment security to employment insecurity, was also reflected in the new language of the Strategic Plan where employees are encouraged to take "joint responsibility" for their development. Some staff members felt that this ignored the fact that

they had already been actively adapting to changing work demands at the college. The shift was also reflected in the increasing number of professional development courses offered on general themes such as "trends in the workplace," "job search strategies" and "retooling your resume." While there was a feeling that the college should support people in their efforts to become more mobile in their careers, staff members felt this should not be at the expense of their job security (Working Class Learning Strategies Project, 1997). In this case, learning discourses were used to offload training responsibilities onto individuals as job security deteriorated.

The blue-collar worker as learner

Although restructuring has an effect on all members of the workforce, including management, it is only particular members of the waged workforce that are positioned as learners in this context. What is largely absent in discussions about workplace learning and education, is that it is emerging at the same time that downsizing is leaving more and more people with substandard employment, part-time employment, or no employment at all. For example, the number of part-time jobs in Canada has increased every year since 1975 reaching 2.9 million in 1993 (Ontario Federation of Labour, TARP, 1996). This represents an increase of more than 120%.

Organizations can modify their entrance requirements to select out whichever applicants fit their organizational needs. As a result, organizations that in the past may have accepted applicants without high-school qualifications, have made substantial changes in their hiring criteria. Entry level qualifications, for lower-level jobs in particular,

have increased substantially in the past decade (Livingstone, 1998) [18]. This is particularly true in the industrial sector where learning culture has come to be almost synonymous with computer skills training.

In addition to increased formal education requirements, many companies are using comprehensive intellectual and social skills testing to select new workforce entrants (Cronshaw, 1986; Hanson, 1993; Chapter 4, this thesis). The increase in hiring qualifications destabilizes existing definitions of skill and job knowledge that have been built up through negotiated agreements. The continuous evaluation/regulation of skills becomes important in this context because skill itself is not something that can be defined very well. None of this is really new to business hiring practices, but the process has accelerated in the last decade in the context of "jobless recovery."

For example, in 1991 one Canadian telecommunications company which had previously required at most a grade 12 entrance level now requires new hires to have at least 3 years of college or university training in order to work at their assembly lines. By 1994, fifty percent of the 500 unionized employees at this operation were new hires (Ontario Federation of Labour, TARP, 1996). The new entrance level requirement had a significant impact on the culture of the workplace, creating a noticeable gap between the ages and education levels of senior employees (with at least 25 years of seniority) and new hires (with less than 3 years' seniority.) The hiring practices at this company resulted in a

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[18]Livingstone (1998) suggests that over the past decade there has been an increase in the proportion of jobs requiring a high school diploma, nearly doubling from 24 to 45 percent, while jobs requiring less than a diploma have experienced a comparable decrease. These estimates are based on a study by Livingstone, D.W., Hart, D., & Davie, L.E. *Public Attitudes towards Education in the Ontario, 1992: The Ninth OISE Survey*. Toronto: OISE Press, 1993. The proportion of the workforce requiring post-secondary credentials seems to have remained comparatively stable over this period.

situation where over half of the employees had a higher formal education than their manager in one of the production areas.

Entrance levels have been increased in the name of the need for a "smarter" workforce, yet in many cases the skill levels needed to do the jobs have basically remained the same as before. In the case of the telecommunications company mentioned earlier, only ten percent of the new hires had technical training that related directly to their jobs. Furthermore, both employees and managers at the company said that three years of college or university training was *not* needed to actually do the jobs.

Changing work practices, new technology, a culture of "continuous improvement," and corporate downsizing have made it possible for organizations to justify the redefinition of qualifications demanded of the workforce. Importantly, these changes have made it possible to construct new worker identities.[19] Generic, transferable, global intellectual skills, rather than specific skills, are considered to be the skills needed to operate in new work systems, reflecting the changing relations between the workforce and management. The desired working subject is to be intellectually "flexible." The intellectually "flexible" working subject maps onto the discourse of "smartness" that pervades talk about workplace reorganization. This shift is evident in the following quote by a plant manager at the telecommunications company I referred to earlier:

> We might get someone who is excellent once he finally learns his job. But if it takes a long time to train him, what good is that if his job is always changing? (quoted in a local Ontario newspaper, *The Recorder & Times,* Brockville Ontario, Sept. 18, 1995).

The discursive positioning of the workforce as "smart" means that inflated skill levels can be ignored. Formal education is conflated with the global abilities that are said to

be required in the reorganized workplace. According to a manager at the telecommunications company, new hires are more "fit" than senior workers for doing the quality control work precisely due to their higher education and youth:

> Education is the main reason we can move to self-directed teams. They [the new, higher educated hires] understand the concept and want to use their brains at work. Younger workers seem to comprehend new concepts better than older workers. Nevertheless, older workers have a better work ethic than younger people. This is because younger people expect more from their work and feel that they are really only going to be here for a short time until something better comes up (Manager, telecommunications company).

Here, the new workforce is positioned as "learned," not "learner." The educated are characterized as those who fit with the values of new work systems. The educated are positioned as more responsible, smarter, and able to adapt better to new concepts in the workplace than the older class of workers who are considered to lack these abilities.

Although new and more diverse intellectual and social skills are said to be needed, people are still required to operate within the traditional managerial work ethic. The work ethic that is valued is one in which people do not expect too much from their work, and are willing to work within the boundaries of low expectations, probably including static if not deteriorating wage packages. In effect, the ideal worker is characterized as someone who can accept responsibilities on demand without questioning the conditions of his or her work. This is probably the most contradictory aspect of the new work system, where it runs up against its own discursive limitations. That is, there are limits to the types of problems that are to be solved, and the types of communications that are to be done in the maintenance of a profitable workplace.

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[19]In his article *High tech skills: The corporate assault on the hearts and minds of workers*, George Martell (1989) describes "learning" *as* the new labour.

In this context, it is the older blue-collar workforce that is being displaced, and replaced with generally younger workers with higher formal credentials, that is positioned as having learning needs. This idea is punctuated by a supervisor at a Canada Employment Centre who reproduces the image that it is the existing workforce that is incapable of meeting the demands of high performance organizations:

> Employers are looking for workers armed with the so-called "soft skills," such as decision-making, problem-solving, teamwork, communication and flexibility. Unfortunately those least likely to have these [new] skills are the very people who used to monopolize the blue collar world (Quoted in a local Ontario newspaper, *The Recorder & Times*, Brockville Ontario, Sept. 18, 1995).

Here's another example from the same newspaper article:

> They [companies] want their employees to think for themselves. That wasn't the case in industry before. Workers used to be told what to do (Education Consultant, St. Lawrence College, quoted in same newspaper article).

I assume that advocating a smarter workforce is supposed to appeal to working people, but this is hardly good news to members of the existing workforce because it diminishes what they have done in the past to contribute to production and problem solving in their workplaces.

Through a process of discursive exclusion, workplace learning discourses select out only certain types of subjects into the workplace. They give preference to workers who not only adapt, but conform easily to a rapidly changing work environment. A bourgeois ideology of education is reasserted in this context. The workforce is redefined as self-managing executives. Smart workers are responsible, flexible, and self-governing. There is a preference for formally educated new hires. It is as though the workplace is discursively re-classed in order to attract and to absorb the surplus of higher-educated middle-class subjects. The reorganized workplace can then be understood as a short-term solution to a

temporary middle-class employment crisis (see Massey, 1983: on industrial restructuring as class restructuring.)

All of these changes can be linked to a new discursive regime of corporate management and education. It may be that the flexible ability to "understand" that new hires are supposed bring to the workplace is the ability to accept and to understand management techniques and philosophies. The notions of "teamwork" and "cooperation," for example, have been promoted in the education system throughout the last decade. Younger hires are familiar with management techniques used to get students to improve themselves and their productivity (e.g., "back to basics," bench-marking.) When new hires arrive at work at least some will have heard about the benefits of cooperation and teamwork that are being promoted in contemporary classrooms. More importantly, they may be more familiar with the contradictory notion that they have to co-operate in order to get ahead as individuals.

The older workforce likely will not meet the standards set by new work systems if it means giving up a work ethic that includes negotiated job protections. At the same time that new hires have been learning about management techniques in school, senior workers have been acquiring the knowledge they need to secure work: the language of collective bargaining, how to gain and promote solidarity in an atmosphere of power difference and conflict. These skills have to be taught to new hires because they are not things people learn in school (Davis et. al., 1989). If "cooperation" means giving up job-security, if "self-discipline" means doing more for less, and if "communication" means disciplining co-workers, then it becomes easier to understand why some workers might not be considered capable of fitting into the new system. Whether or not people have college degrees, or good interpersonal skills, or quick learning abilities, probably doesn't have as much to do with

quality control and production levels as it has to do with having control of the workplace and who works there. It is possible that creating new names like "problem-solving ability" for supposedly new behaviours makes it easier for management to tailor their workforce according to their own needs.

The "learner" as contradictory identity

The discourses of workplace learning and change set up a number of contradictions for workers, particularly for the older unionized workforce. I have already discussed one of these contradictions: the promotion of learning as a way to prepare for work in a context of broad scale downsizing. The resulting mismatch between job qualification levels and actual job requirements is regulated through redefinitions of both skill and work, and through the designation of worker as learner. In some cases, restructuring seems to have led to the selection of an already "educated" workforce rather than a broad scale retraining of the existing workforce. When training is promoted it reflects the needs of new management philosophies. The ideology of learning and training is aimed at economic recovery, at controlling the remaining workforce, and easing the transition to a conflicted workplace. "Learning" signifies a learning society that is abstracted from the particulars of work experience. This autoparts factory worker points out the problem of logic that results for workers:

> The re-organization in the workplace leads people to feel far worse because they have the skills and training and they're not able to use it . . . In a lot of jobs, the requirements are ridiculous. I'm not talking about surgeons, but your average working people . . . most of it could be on-the-job training. If you make the effort, it doesn't take long to learn (Autoparts worker, WCLS project, 1996).

Most of the workers interviewed across different work sites for the Working Class Learning Strategies project agreed that they did not need any formal training for their jobs.

In fact, many of the respondents said they were over-trained or over-qualified for what they were doing. The college site was a particularly interesting example along this line because the workforce were staff members of a learning institution. Many of the staff had accrued substantial credentials and expertise beyond their jobs. But broad scale and rapid downsizing had led to a situation where many individuals were located in completely new jobs that did not draw on their prior experience or current expertise. Furthermore many of the jobs were collapsed, adding to work loads and the "learning" that needed to be done, at a time when there was no one around to do any of the training. Even the traditional on-the-job training was difficult, if not impossible to obtain. The downsizing of the organization combined with "learning culture" talk highlighted the contradictions involved in learning discourse because there were few, if any, organizational supports to facilitate the changes:

> Because we are in such a sink or swim situation, how is it that we can get better trained for our jobs? How is it possible to do the work more efficiently given less and less resources? We are left on our own and there is no training. I suspect it is because there is no answer to that question. There is an assumption that somehow we are going to do it without direction and training. We now no longer have a manager on campus and they rarely come or call so we have no access to them. So we have had to make many types of decisions which normally we would not have to make--management-like decisions and judgments relating to students and faculty and administration --which would not be ours to make. We have had no training other than experience in how to do this and also no remuneration for being self-managing. We do jobs like audit but while doing that we are not compensated. I have to sit in high-level meetings and still draw the exact same salary as six years ago with no increase (College staff member, WCLS project, 1996).

The promotion of worker participation as empowerment is possibly the most contradictory aspect of the corporate restructuring agenda. The idea that workers should be empowered is recognized in participative management projects which are designed to facilitate consensus based decision-making, and cooperative rather than oppositional relations in the workplace. But the constructs of "learning" and "learner" promote images of

empowerment and the possibility of change at the same time that the workplace is becoming more conflicted and restrictive.

Again, the college experience provided some interesting examples of how participative management operated at a discursive level in order to manage some of the contradictions and conflicts that were created by restructuring. Staff members at the college had received training in participative management, a philosophy that was so well organized that it was offered as a professional development course for staff members. The participative management program was adopted at the college as a problem solving mechanism. The 1994 Annual Report introduced these aspects of participative management in the following way:

> During 1994, the process of creating a more empowered workforce involved nearly 70% of [college] employees in participative management workshops with their work groups. These sessions are designed to incorporate real issues that work groups currently face, allowing them to solve problems or challenges with which they have previously struggled.

Ironically, several staff members noted that it was the failure of the participative management philosophy that was a barrier to staff development. Although, in theory, participative management offered staff members the potential to make more decisions over their work conditions, there were limitations as to what role people were actually playing: "They're giving input and ideas and the actual decisions still rest with the board of governors" said one of the staff members.

Implementation of the philosophy seemed to rely on individual managers and their previous relations with workers. Some department managers followed through on the concepts while others followed a traditional top-down management strategy. Most staff members interviewed suggested that they had not seen much coming out of the participative management program. Because the participative management program was

combined with downsizing, it in fact led to outcomes that were opposite to what the program espoused. More than one staff member pointed out the limitations and contradictions of participative management:

> The way things are now fosters a competitive spirit. People are afraid to depend on others for fear of being seen as weak. Decentralization of power is not what is happening here. One person is in control (College staff member, WCLS project, 1996).

> I've been thinking a lot about it, that there's a difference between giving people the impression of something and actually teaching somebody and allowing them to learn what it is they're dealing with as opposed to just trying to explain a process to them (College staff member, WCLS project, 1996).

Furthermore, "participative management" seemed to be phased out as restructuring proceeded. Any new developments in participative management had been compromised by the new Draft Action Plan prepared by the college administration. In this plan, participative management was fundamentally altered since the college president would unilaterally select members of the participative management committee, limiting the possibility of worker representation.

Support staff also recognized that the college restructuring led to a situation where management and supervisors needed to rely more heavily on the staff in order to make some organizational decisions. Although staff members said they would like to be taken more seriously, and have a hand in decision making, they were also aware that there were problems with worker involvement in policy and restructuring decisions. Their concern was that staff members may inadvertently become involved in making decisions about layoffs, thereby hurting co-workers, or themselves in the process. As well, there was no guarantee that staff members of the participative focus groups would represent workers in general because they were not elected and did not have a mandate to do so. The call for

more decision-making power was also complicated by the fact that under the current restructuring plan, a number of workers were forced to make more decisions with fewer resources. But without adequate training and compensation for these activities, decision-making was experienced as exploitative rather than empowering.

Workplace participation appeared to operate within a logic that set up contradictions for the workforce but not for management. For example, the management at the telecommunications company (described earlier) considered that their quality program had been implemented successfully. Management felt that everyone (even the plant "militants") had accepted the new work methods and felt that there was now more trust and openness in the workplace than before. Many of those interviewed, however, felt that the changes were exploitative. "Why should we take initiative with the new work methods since we are not getting paid to be the boss" said one worker. The trust and openness was questioned in another worker's image of participative philosophy: "When management gives you something they expect something in return. Like telling your fellow workers to ·move their ass' and act like spies for management. This kind of management just won't work." Others recognized the unilateral nature of corporate "participation" programs: "It's like we are playing baseball but never getting a chance to bat."

According to the research I've reviewed here, "learning" and "learning need" appeared to be promoted in a context where there was no "need" to learn, or where there were few, if any, supports available to facilitate organizational change. In this context, the promotion of a "smarter" workforce through learning discourse positions workers in a contradictory identity. Like the pupils in Willis' *Learning to Labour*, it is as if workers are "continually exhorted to behave in precisely those ways of which they are supposedly incapable of behaving" (Willis, 1977: 81).

Learning discourse as the regulation of working-class subjects

There are limitations set up through the discursive control of the construct "learning" and other categories of the post-industrial workplace. That is, there are a number of things that workers do not hear about in the shift to new work practices. For example, workers do not hear that their participation in decision-making programs is limited and primarily geared toward the increase of corporate profits, not necessarily toward a comprehensive democratic reorganization of the workplace. They do not hear that it is OK or even possible to disagree with management, or each other for that matter, while at the same time still getting things done and working productively. Neither do they hear much about the fact that corporations save money in their move to leaner, higher performance workplaces. The need to save money is used to justify downsizing but it is not explicitly linked to participation and workplace education programs. By hiring new workers with low seniority companies can save money in basic wages and benefits as well as in some training expenditures like computer skills training.

The shift from fixed capacities to more flexible and global ones is promoted as a major shift away from scientific management, as though it is meant to overcome the inadequacies of that system. But because work practices still reflect a limited view of workers, their capacities and their relation to the owners of production, it is misleading to talk about new work practices as an improvement over Tayloristic work methods (Blaugh, 1995; Hull, 1993; Parker & Slaughter, 1994).Technical rationality is not so much displaced but it becomes part of a broader method of work and the social regulation of working-class capacities (Hull, 1993).

Maintaining control over the meaning of formal education is critical in a context where people are overqualified for their jobs, or where learning is promoted, but there is no organizational commitment to provide training. As I mentioned earlier, maintaining control over the meaning of education involves the production of new worker identities. It is true: workers have to be "smarter" in order to accommodate to the contradictions and stresses of restructuring. I am suggesting that the dysjuncture between what people are hearing, and what they are experiencing, destabilizes the ideology of merit that is promoted through bourgeois learning culture. The ideology of merit was questioned by workers from all of the sectors in which I conducted interviews for the WCLS project. One autoparts worker was particularly sensitized to the need for companies to manage the workforce through discursive means:

Her: A lot of Canadian companies are still back in early 1900's, the CEO's, the managers.

Me: The hierarchy you mean? You'd like to see that change significantly?

Her: Yes. You know they talk about people empowerment. It could work . . . [but] They don't want to teach us too much, just enough so we know what's going on . . . A lot of our bosses don't have as much education as we have, so you don't want your people to have any more than you have. You need to feel safe. They [the company] don't want trouble (Autoparts worker, WCLS project, 1996).

These contradictions were also expressed in the following interview quote with a paint factory worker who summarized some of the changing employment conditions of industrialized labour in Ontario:

Working people today are getting raw end of the deal. You see it's black and white in the daily star. Like that song "You got the gold mine, We got the shaft." Why are we working? Why should I get this amount of dollars and somebody else is sittin' back gettin' a kick back. But we have to work. Today we're working just to survive. The big thing today is survival for the working people. Tinsmithing, welders etc. are a dime a dozen . . . You get contracts

> and it's not steady. There's so much competition. It wasn't always like that
> here (Autoparts worker, WCLS project, 1996).

This worker linked the problem of engineered employment instability with control over knowledge when he followed up with a story about a boss who didn't like the fact that he knew how to do things:

> He wouldn't teach me anything. So I lit into him and told him `You have to
> teach me. Don't throw me in the corner'.

The workplace learning and reorganization agenda embodies a very comprehensive human resources strategy that minimizes and regulates the contradictions set up by the languages of workplace reorganization. Internal contradictions are justified discursively, through teamwork and cooperation programs, through problem solving, conflict resolution, and self-management strategies, while at the same time designing workplaces that result in higher levels of conflict and stress (e.g., unreasonable work loads, age differences, stress on unions). (See also Parker & Slaughter, 1994; Rifkin, 1995).

The concept of "self-regulation" or self-management is particularly important in this contradictory learning environment in that it places more responsibility on the workforce to regulate conflicts that are set up through workplace change. The idea of a self-managing or self-regulating workforce individualizes conflict and places the responsibility for any problems to be resolved at the individual level. Blame for problems that are not solved, or for conflict can also then be placed on individual workers. It seems as though the (idea of) decentralization of power in the workplace also means that blame can also be decentralized. The individualized discourses of learning contribute to "the production of regimented, isolated and self-policing subjects" assisting in the maintenance of inequality without force (Edwards, 1991: 90).

Conclusion

New workplace discourses on learning and work arise out of real and perceived needs to compete in a globalizing economy. These discourses create a working subject that is responsible for absorbing more and new types of work, for accepting more responsibility in the workplace, and for performing minor decision-making functions in the workplace. They produce new classed divisions of labour, as well as new forms of identity through which the working subject can be known. The desired working subject is more flexible, adaptable, and "smarter" than its predecessor. It is more cooperative and accommodates to changes taking place in the restructuring workplace. It accepts its "pink slip" with gratitude as it makes its way into the new world of short-term contracts and individualized labour disputes. The way that the old working-class subject was known comes into relief here: hoary, uncooperative, stupid; a blockage to more refined, "consensual" labour-management relations.

My brief review of a few companies has focused on learning discourses in the context of economic restructuring. The economic restructuring agenda constructs the workforce as "learners" rather than knowers. Conceptualizing workers as learners means that there are always things that they will not know, and will need to know in order to sustain their organizations and to survive in a competitive environment. It also means that years of workplace experience and on-the-job training can be dismissed as irrelevant. Rather than inviting the unknowledgeable to the table of knowledge, the continuous improvement agendas hype up the discourse of deficiency that already prevails around workers and their abilities.

Although there have been definite changes in the way workers are represented--post-industrial workers are identified as "smart" and "flexible"--learning discourses

continue to position the workers as the opposite of this. Through their focus on "learning" or a "learning society," new learning discourses continually place workers outside of knowledge, as perpetually incapable of understanding or managing the conditions of their lives. The characterization of workers as learners for example, reflects the idea that they never were considered to be "learners" in spite of the fact that apprenticeship, on-the-job training, and other formal means of education such as health and safety training have been historically significant educational practices of the working classes. Workers are positioned as becoming, but never being. They are known, but never knowing. They are learning but never learned.

The idea that workers are now "learners" however, means that they at least now have some "choice" in the matter. They can attempt to become *more* than what they were, or more than what they are now, which contrasts with earlier formulations of working-class identity. But the door of "learning" is opened at a time when educational credentials are inflated and job opportunities are restricted. I suggest that the ideology of merit is promoted more blatantly in this context where it is less likely to be accomplished. These discourses are heavily classed. The possibility of a middle-class identity is asserted at a time when it is impossible to achieve. (Not that I'm saying it's desirable).

It is not my intention to argue here whether workers are "capable" or not. I am suggesting that the discourses of learning operate within a bourgeois ideology that always positions the workforce outside of the centre. The "rational" subject, or the "learned" subject, is a bourgeois construction. In the context of these arguments or discourses, it doesn't make sense politically to ask if the working class are capable (or rational) or not. Suggesting that workers are capable or rational (and providing the evidence) holds the dominant constructs, or the "centre," in place. Learning discourse as bourgeois discourse positions the

working class as incapable of being learned. The point I'm making is about the discursive construction of class difference.

What is important about learning discourses is that they set up the *idea* that there is an important connection, or essential relationship between learning and workers. Discourses of learning are important to the extent that they connect images of learning "ability" with "workers" in the public imagination. The image that is produced is a negative imagery that casts doubt on the working-class subject, or that makes it responsible for social failure. These connections help to define and restrict interpretations of individual social mobility, the structure and meaning of work, and the possibilities for organizational change.

One of the ways in which doubt is cast on the working-class subject is through the production of *evidence* that the working class does lack certain capabilities. Standardized workplace ability testing is one kind of social practice that assists in producing such evidence about the working-class subject. Ability testing arises out of certain notions of naturalized ability and social difference and produces the evidence for such notions. I discuss this issue in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV:

LEARNING CAPACITY AS OBJECTIFIED KNOWLEDGE

The Enlightenment tradition imbued science with enormous significance: as producing objective, nonideological knowledge, educating humanity, and directing social progress. The culture of the Enlightenment has been central to the organization and legitimation of the social scientific disciplines (Seidman, 1997: 274).

Introduction

The product or outcome has an important role in industrial culture. Industry produces "things" and in the process, it also produces beings or ways of being. This includes the technical and bureaucratic procedures that have a role in defining the social reality or objective reality in which people participate. Standardized testing is one of the technical procedures that has been promoted as an essential in the tool kit of organizational management. Organizations use standardized testing as an agent to determine appropriate job candidates and to scientifically validate organizational decisions.

A crucial feature of standardized testing is that it is based on the assumption of a natural distribution of ability in the population. Normative testing practices grew out of a biological or medical treatment model (Burman, 1994) which were then generalized to human development and behavior, with a particular emphasis on the measurement of mental capacities. In the context of organizational management, testing relies on the notion (and produces the notion) of learning capacity as a measurable human attribute, the idea being that if something can be measured, if it can be predicted and controlled, then it can also be justified as capital investment.

The assumption of "natural ability" is extremely important in testing practice: it allows administrators to define and thus to measure individual abilities, to compare the testing outcomes with other individuals in the population, and to draw conclusions about school or job performance. Learning capacity and its measurement is intimately tied into notions of equal educational opportunity, and meritocracy, in that it provides the tools needed to measure "ability"; the ability that entitles individual reward through social mobility.

Working-class people in particular are influenced by standardized testing practices, through the school, but also in the workplace. Standardized testing was a crucial aspect of managing organizational growth throughout the post-war period and was closely connected to the scientific management and organization of the workplace (Holloway, 1984). Standardized testing has been described as a "technology of the social" (Henriques et. al., 1984) in that it is based on principles of natural science which are generalized to the social world. As a social practice, testing produces particular representations of ability. It produces the *idea* of ability, as well the idea of differences in ability (Hanson, 1997). Tested ability becomes regulated ability *per se*, just as schooling becomes regulated knowledge acquisition). Testing can be considered part of a process of social engineering through which it is possible to select an ideal workforce. It is promoted as a way of intricately matching individual abilities with specific job requirements. This is possible in part because of the highly isolated and regimented organization of work under Taylorism.

Standardized testing has been widely used in North American industries in the past and there has been a recent resurgence of testing for assisting in hiring decisions under economic restructuring (Holloway, 1984; Murphy, 1994). A recent survey of 2,500 Canadian companies showed that 44 percent of the companies surveyed used employment tests for

hiring and promotion decisions (Thacker & Cattaneo, 1987). According to this study, the testing done in Canadian industry primarily involved some kind of mental aptitude testing, with fewer companies reporting the use of other psychological tests such as personality measures, interest surveys or honesty tests in their hiring practices. In some cases, testing is linked into career planning and training, but in other cases it is strictly used to determine job adequacy. It is this aspect of standardized testing that I discuss in this chapter.

Aptitude tests are promoted to employees in a highly favourable manner. A widely used aptitude test, the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB), introduces its test to potential job candidates as "signposts that will point you in the direction of success." One Canadian telecommunications company that initiated a comprehensive testing program in 1989 advertised its employment testing program to the workforce as something that would lead to higher job satisfaction when they wrote in their advertising campaign:

> Aptitude testing provides opportunities for employees to be appointed to jobs for which they are suited. It can prevent career mistakes from happening. Employees who are in positions which suit their capabilities are more comfortable with the work they do, and are more satisfied with their jobs (Sasktel International, 1989).

Testing is promoted to organizations and to the workforce as a pathway to job satisfaction and success, in spite of the fact that the rank ordering procedures of testing, which reflect the ideology of a natural distribution of ability, result in only some successful job candidates. The successful job placement of some individuals is enhanced while opportunities for the workforce as a whole are reduced. Job placement is also limited by the range and nature of jobs available. The potential for successful job matching is further reduced under the conditions of organizational restructuring.

The use of standardized tests for employee selection in the current economic context is linked to a broader movement of work reorganization, to the development of a flexible

workforce that will meet the needs of a shifting economy. Here, employees are being sought out who can be easily "trained" for new flexible work practices. Instruments for measuring worker's learning "capacities", or potentials, are continually being developed and refined. Recent developments in standardized testing practice show that testing is moving out from a hard core cognitive centre to encompass the "softer" ability areas. Social cognition, emotional intelligence, practical intelligence and tacit knowledge have all become valid measurables in the universe of employment testing. A report by prominent researchers on this subject concluded that traditional cognitive ability tests are no longer enough to successfully predict job performance: both cognitive ability and tacit knowledge are needed in order to predict job performance (Sternberg et al, 1995). These movements correspond to the growing demand to measure social and executive-style thinking skills and behaviours that reflect the corporate reorganization of the workplace.

The social construction of learning potential: A case study

> Little Jimmy's as thick as two short planks (but) he'd make a marvelous milkman or breadman. And you know it's considered, 'Well, he'll have to go on the milk won't he', instead of saying, 'Just the job for you, you've got personality, you're honest with money, you like people, ideal', you know, so the kid thinks, 'I'm getting the right job, I'm going places' (Quote from a senior teacher at Hammertown school, *Learning to Labour*, Willis, 1977: 70).

In this section I look at employment testing practices that took place in the early 1990s at a manufacturing plant in Ontario, Canada. I describe how the tests came to have a particular kind of credibility from management that was not shared by members of the workforce who were being tested for job selection. I describe how testing, although it is supposed to be rooted in a discourse of objectivity, is a highly ideological practice. Employment tests are part of the conceptual practices of management that create a

particular understanding of the working-class subject that in turn allows a number of organizational actions to take place.

The employment testing that I describe here mainly involved aptitude testing and had been implemented on the heels of a number of other significant changes at the plant. These included a move from the eight-hour to the twelve-hour shift, the flexible replacement of workers, administrative teams, and new computerized inspection systems. According to the union representatives responsible for testing issues at the plant, the company implemented the testing program because they wanted to select "supermen" who would be able to do all of the new flexible workforce jobs. Management cited quick turnover in new technology as the rationale for selecting super-workers. The union maintained that while technology changed quickly it did not change the level of expertise needed to do the jobs.

But, instead of finding "supermen," management found that many of the workers who applied for promotions were failing the tests. For example, in one of the testing sessions, twenty out of twenty-four workers failed to meet the criteria set by the test administrators. Employees who failed the employment tests were subsequently not being selected for positions that their seniority would otherwise have entitled them to, jobs they had done "successfully" for years[20]. It appeared to employees (and to some local managers as well) as if the testing was failing to predict "successful" employees adequately. One employee had been laid off from a job he had done for fifteen years and when he attempted to re-apply for his old job he was required to take an aptitude test. He failed the test, but later ended up *training* a new person who was selected for the job because this person had

passed the test (even though he did not have on-the-job skills). A similar problem arose where several female employees had failed tests that would have allowed them to obtain new jobs that were very similar to their old jobs.

It was in this environment of apparent contradictions that the union representatives involved in the local joint union/management testing committee, raised questions about test fairness and validity. It was the opinion of the local union representatives that the tests might be instrumental in the unfair exclusion of employees who had seniority rights to the available jobs. They suggested that there were significant trends in how the tests were operating at their plant: the tests were selecting the "youngest, strongest, and fittest" to the jobs and were leaving out older more experienced employees.

Furthermore, for the most part the tests did not appear to have anything to do with what the jobs entailed. As one worker put it, "I could see why the dexterity tests would be relevant, but there were other test questions like, 'Which cow would be harder to see from an airplane'? What does this have to do with anything?" The union felt that people should receive training *before* they applied for jobs in order to create a pool of qualified workers. The company could then draw on this pool of qualified workers without the need for a test. The union considered this to be a fairer system that would broaden people's learning opportunities and respect seniority rights at the same time.

In response to pressure from the union representatives, management hired a psychologist to examine the fairness of their testing practices. The psychologist largely affirmed the testing practices going on in the plant, that they were generally fair, and that over time they would ensure a "higher calibre of employee" at the plant. Finding the report

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[20]However, some people were "grandfathered," or selected to the new jobs for convenience sake: there was no other qualified pool of job candidates available at the time.

unsatisfactory, the union continued to pressure the company to do something about the testing. Management responded by offering to hire a consultant to the union to examine the testing practices. It was during this time that I was asked by the regional labour union to become involved as a consultant to the local union on the testing issues. (I was completing a clinical psychology internship in the union setting and had been trained in psychological testing practices). This was an unusual situation from the perspective of psychological practice as well as from the perspective of labour unionism because I was hired as a management consultant to a labour union around the issue of job testing. Testing and evaluation practices have been so heavily dominated by scientific psychology that there has been little, if any, crossover between the fields of labour unionism and psychology. Psychologists operating in the field of industrial or occupational psychology are taught to behave as impartial practitioners who rely on an objective body of knowledge in order to do their work. However psychologists are hired almost exclusively by management to assist in defining and correcting human resource problems. This is done regularly within the highly politicized context of industrial relations (Prilleltensky, 1994). That said, the hiring of a consultant to the union was made possible by the recent "joint initiatives" programs, programs that were organized and sponsored financially by the government, and to a lesser extent by consenting managements and labour unions in order to provide a joint forum for solving problems that arise in the workplace during restructuring.

Management's vision for resolving the testing problems was to get the respective "experts" together to work out testing issues independent of the workplace. I intended my role to be different than this. The union's new direction policy was written as a guideline for joint union/management initiatives in the workplace. This meant that I would have to consider whether or not the testing practices supported some of the union's goals for the

workforce. For example, did it link to job security and equitable working conditions? Did it promote solidarity in the workplace and was it oriented to educational development? I planned my work so that I could come to understand why some of the workers described the testing experience as a "slap in the face" and why they did not think some of the tests were relevant.

Since I understood that traditional arguments around testing and ability were not broad enough to address the issues going on in the plant, I concentrated on conceptual issues around mental ability and the effects of standardized testing at both the personal and organizational levels. I felt that the most useful route would be to put non-traditional arguments on the agenda. Most of the testing literature points to things like test "validity" and "job-relatedness" as central problematics in standardized workplace testing. While I addressed these kinds of issues and their various meanings, I also attempted to put up the idea of general bias around the definition of mental abilities for discussion. At any rate the management representatives and psychologist were not willing to address this idea to any extent, avoiding discussion around accommodations, and other issues that did not fit into the typical testing talk.

The union was able to reclaim some control over job advancement for its membership. After constant pressure and intervention from the union, the company agreed to drop one of the tests. They also agreed to provide more information about the testing system to job applicants and to the union. People would be allowed to redo the tests if they thought the results were unfair. Significantly, the union was able to get a commitment from the company to stop testing for promotions where applicants could demonstrate job-related experience. Testing was still entrenched in the hiring strategies of organizational management, but in a somewhat modified form. In the remainder of this chapter I focus on

some of the limits and contradictions within testing discourse and practice that help to explain how testing came to dominate hiring practices at the plant. I pay attention to the discourse of objectivity that pervades standardized testing discourse and underlies the continued use and growth of mental testing in employment decisions.[21]

Working class capacity as "data"

The problems that I have been describing can be understood more extensively when they are viewed as part of a complex system of management and regulation. Smith (1990) refers to this system broadly as the "relations of ruling" which constitute the activities by which society is governed. These practices of ruling are organized as social entities that are "separate from those persons who work for them" (Smith, 1990: 15). A basic feature of large organizations is that they produce objectified knowledge that exists outside, or independently of their local members, but which is used to coordinate and direct the activities of its members.

Smith tends to limit her analysis of discourse to the textual (actual texts) but I think some of the analysis is useful for understanding the social relations involved in the psychological testing practices described here. Textual materials such as letters, forms, policy documents, etc. are central to the coordination of the complex activities of the ruling apparatus. These textual materials inscribe the beliefs of the ruling system into the everyday

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[21]Objectivity is considered to be a critical feature of standardized ability testing, particularly in relation to employment decisions. Rothstein and McDaniels repeat a common justification for using mental abilities testing in industry in their comment on ability testing and the American meritocratic ideal: "Mental ability testing is closely related to the American idea that people should be chosen for positions on the basis of talent rather than on the basis of family, connections, or of being the `right type.'" They go on to suggest that mental ability testing actually enhances job opportunities because it provides an assurance against discrimination, prejudice, and stereotype (Rothstein, H. & McDaniel,

practice of its members. Thus, they provide links between sites of local activity and the systems that are responsible for managing and controlling them. Because they provide information about the organizational features of institutions, it is to these texts that one can look for clues about how local activities are organized. At the same time these texts organize how the activities actually happen and are reported and thought about.

The aptitude test known as the GATB (the General Aptitude Test Battery, U.S. Department of Labor) is widely used for vocational counselling purposes in North America (Bezanson & Monsebraaten, 1984), as well as for hiring, and is the test used at the manufacturing plant I have described here. The GATB can be seen as a standardized text that mediates the working relations between employees and management. Aptitude tests like the GATB are part of a mental testing complex that is controlled by practitioners and researchers in the field of psychology. As such, the tests have been manufactured within a discourse that practices objectification as a method of inquiry. The practice of objectification has been described as instrumental in maintaining a distinction between local experience and the way that local experience is thought, talked, and written about:

> The practice of objectification in the social sciences is a property of an objectified discursive organization. As professionals, we know how to practice and preserve the rupture between the actual, local and historically situated experience of subjects and a systematically developed consciousness of society. If we are to claim full and proper membership in our discipline, we must be competent performers of this severance . . . We deploy special methods of collecting accounts of actualities as data that substitute for the world as it is experienced. Data become stand-ins at the level of social scientific discourse for the actualities of people's lives (Smith, 52: 1990).

The account of actuality that I refer to here, or the data that substitutes for the employee's experienced world, are the aptitude test scores. These scores are extracted from

M., 1990. Mental Abilities Testing in Industry. In Dunnette, M. D. & Hough, L. N. *Handbook of Industrial and Occupational Psychology*. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologist Press.)

the employee in order to show human resource personnel the potential of individual workers to learn to perform a given job. The "actuality" that is being substituted by the data is the employees' potential to learn to perform certain kinds of work.

The special methods of collecting the "accounts of actuality as data" are used to provide managerial bodies with the power to make objective decisions about employees and their generic learning capacities ("aptitudes") as they relate to particular kinds of work. They are also supposed to provide employees with a profile of their ability to learn certain kinds of work (their "trainability" as it was described by the psychometrician responsible for testing at the plant I am discussing here). But it is a particular account of employee learning capacity that is produced through complex methods of objectification.

Learning potential as objectified knowledge

The process of objectification takes place at many levels of the testing enterprise: during test construction, during the process designed to "validate" the tests for public use, and when the test is administered and regulated by formally trained psychometricians. The practice of objectification is entrenched in the construction of the tests. For example, when standardized employment tests are designed, the contents are largely determined by professionals who do not have a first-hand understanding of local job demands (Holloway, 1992). During this process, a variety of related jobs are grouped into a general category, and then generic cognitive abilities are targeted that are supposed to be necessary for the performance of specific types of work described in the job category. The test items are selected in order to assess the cognitive abilities which represent, or "stand-in," for the actual job requirements.

The test item represents a particular version of reality. This can be seen in one of the test questions from the GATB:
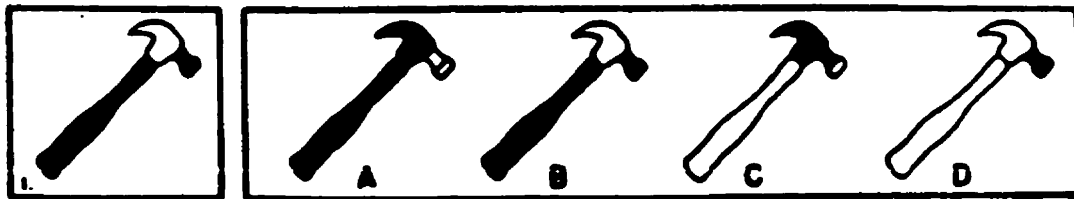
A hammer is pictured here. The employee is supposed to find the sample that is the exact match of the test item. This is a test of "form perception" that is considered to provide a measure of the employee's attention to visual detail, and his or her ability to discriminate small differences in such things as shading, length, width. But the ability to perceive form on the job cannot be adequately represented in a two dimensional line drawing. During actual time, the hammer is in motion and there is purpose involved in the activity. Purpose, motion, and form cannot be separated from each other in the assessment of a dynamic form perception. Thus, the test item substitutes for an "actual" world that exists outside the textual representation of it.

The score that is derived from such test questions also "stands in" for the employee learning capacity that it is said to represent. An aptitude score reflects the employee's ability to complete a certain number of test items accurately within a given period of time. The ability to read and follow instructions in English, and the speed with which the employee can do so correctly is also reflected by the score. All of the successful responses are added up and converted into a form where they can be compared with a reference group. This comparison results in a ranking of "low" "medium" or "high" and determines the employees' general aptitude level for a particular ability area.

It is this score that is used by personnel managers involved in making hiring decisions. The following passage is an example of how these scores get presented to, for example, a human resources manager. This is an example of what was produced by the testing agency involved in evaluating employees at the manufacturing plant I have been describing.

> *HIGH - The employee's scores equal or exceed those of workers judged to be satisfactory in the occupation. If the applicant is also qualified on the basis of factors other than aptitudes, there is a good probability that the applicant will do well on the job and may be referred.*

> *MEDIUM - The employee's scores are close to those of workers judged to be satisfactory to the occupation. The chances of the applicant doing well on the job are somewhat lower than those of individuals in the "H" category. However, the applicant may be referred to the job.*

> *LOW - The employee's scores are similar to or below those of workers whose performance is judged to be marginal in the occupation. The chances of the applicant being satisfactory on the job are low, and consideration should be given to other jobs which utilize the applicant's stronger aptitudes.*

These testing practices that I have been describing are all steps in a process of objectification that characterize how employees' fitness for work is determined by the apparatus of ruling (the psychology practitioners, the local management). What gets talked about as "aptitude" to do a job by members of this ruling body is a rating that has been abstracted from a line drawing, converted into numbers, and then into words that can be understood in everyday language.

The practice of objectification can also be observed in the administration practices of psychology. The "formal training" of test administrators translates into taking an objective stance, a disinterest, in the effects of the measurement process on employees and their working conditions. This characteristic of objectivity was described by the psychologist

who evaluated the testing program at the manufacturing plant I have been describing, who reported:

> I have checked *how* the testing is done, and it is in a most professional and ethical manner. I have extensively interviewed the psychometrist and he is well qualified. He carries out his work at arms length. This means that he does not know who gets the jobs and who doesn't and that he himself has no interest in the testing outcomes [original emphasis].

It is interesting how employee learning capacity gets constructed and obscured by a textual reality. The textual representation provides the basis for understanding employee learning capacity in a particular way. The score turns out to have a literal effect although it is certainly not a literal representation of employee capacity to learn a job. It gets used as an "indicator of success," as "proof of trainability." Removed from the context in which people are actually doing things, it becomes easy to talk about employee learning capacities as fixed entities. The production and meaning of the test score becomes hidden in its abstraction. At the same time, the production of the test score constructs the meaning and identity of workers as "trainable" or not; as "educable" or not.

Aptitude testing as ideological practice

A problem of knowing arises when knowledge that is created by the ruling bodies is inconsistent with what is known in the site of local activity (Smith, 1990). According to Smith, this contradictory relationship between local and extra-local knowledge is characteristic of the relations of ruling. The idea that a person's capacity to learn a job can be recognized without reference to the actual activities of the job in its specific setting was not consistent with the workers' ways of understanding their own abilities. Extra-local definitions of learning capacity set up the conditions for the tests to "work" in a way that was not consistent with the way they were talked about by those who use them.

But even within the testing discourse there was evidence that the particular tests that were being used were not adequate. For example, critical reviews of all mental tests are published and widely referred to in the psychology profession. These reviews rendered one of the tests used at the manufacturing plant (Bennett Mechanical Aptitude Test, The Psychological Corporation, 1980) highly questionable on technical grounds (Kramer & Connely, 1992). When the company psychologist brought this information to the attention of the production manager, the manager was extremely reluctant to discontinue its use. And when I suggested that we remove one subsection of a test altogether because it did not appear to relate to the jobs in question, the manager reacted with alarm, remarking "is there anything else we can drop in its place?"

It is this kind of situation, where a theory or a conceptual structure gets primary organizing power over lived experience, that reveals what Smith (1994) calls "ideological practice." Organizing the conditions for learning *before* the testing subject enters into them is characteristic of standardized testing practices:

> The objective test was designed by the tester and usually defined what was adaptive or maladaptive in advance of any conception of adaptation that those tested might have had . . . This non reflexive approach is still very apparent in current objective testing (Sullivan, 1984: 13).

Understanding the testing practices as ideological makes it possible to understand management's refusal to discontinue the testing in spite of growing evidence from the ground floor and from within the testing discourse itself, that it was not doing the predictive work local management expected it to do.

The testing practices I am describing in this chapter are ideological because they are based on preconceptions about the employees' ability to learn things necessary to do the

job. There is a conceptual closure that results from this kind of thinking that has implications for how people get things done.

In the test construction, for instance, where the tests are scientifically validated, a statistical relationship is drawn between the test score and job performance. Job performance is usually measured by some form of supervisor appraisal. This means that other ways of assessing job performance are not taken into account. For example, supervisors' ability to train employees to perform their job functions could also be used as a measure of performance evaluation, but it is not used. The adequacy of an employee's training, or aspects of the work environment (such as the performance of equipment), are just a few other possible indicators of job performance. The subordination of employees to management is therefore embedded in this (already highly objectified) process of validating the tests.

The understanding of the tests as "valid" measures of employee ability made it possible for management to agree to put a testing program in place in the plant. When employees comply with the requirements to do a test, they enter into "textual time" and into a certain set of relations imposed by the testing regime. They enter into a contract whereby particular selection procedures can operate. I have been trying to explain how the tests are constructed in order to show this relation. The tests are organized so that job applicants can be ranked one against another. These comparisons are accomplished by holding the test material and the test conditions constant. These standardization procedures mean that particular types of knowledge and ways of accessing knowledge are prioritized and that some forms of "ability" are selected for testing at the expense of others. The aptitude tests select abstract, conceptual forms of thinking and strip away alternative ways of demonstrating job knowledge.

The tests produce particular types of ability as important to job performance, and they also produce an understanding of "aptitude" as a fixed entity, something that cannot be altered. Testing produces a particular "truth" about how workers capacities are to be understood and this translates into a certainty about *who* should do *what* in the social organization of the workplace. Notes from my meeting with the company psychologist and psychometrist explain how the "truth" of fixed capacity is imposed on the workforce:

> During the meeting I was able to ask a few questions that I think are important in understanding the vested interests in the testing practices. One of the things I was curious about was how the psychometrist thought and talked about the notion of aptitude. Here, I found some very strong opinions: "Aptitude scores show the ability to be *trained*. They are not necessarily good ways of predicting job performance, but they select who will do well with supervision and coaching." At one point I brought up the example of the man who had done a job at [the plant] for several years and then failed the test that was supposed to predict his ability to do that very job. I asked him, "What do you think was the problem? Did he just have a bad day or something?" The psychometrist actually replied "yes." The other reason he gave for the failure was that this employee may not have had the aptitude for the job in the first place, but that his motivation may have made the difference. (I did not press him on the problems around this example). There was more information to come about the conception of aptitude. I asked the psychometrist whether or not he thought a person could *learn* some of the aptitudes being measured by the test. I was told that people could learn to change the arithmetic and verbal subtest scores. (Neither of these are administered at the plant). However, one could *not* alter something like "spatial ability," which is one of the subtests given to employees at the plant. The psychometrist's exact words were "No, you can't improve these scores. There's nothing to improve upon. There is no way to change spatial ability at this stage in life." . . . Another thing I challenged them on with relation to aptitude that may seem rather naive on my part is whether or not they agreed that a higher aptitude equals a higher wage packet. They responded by saying "Well that's the way the world is" (Plant meeting notes, 1995).

The spatial ability subtest, mentioned in the above meeting notes, was the *one* subtest of the battery of tests administered at the plant that was used to determine who would be acceptable for a promotion. What the test administrators did not divulge is that the

psychometric community understands "spatial ability" to be a key indicator of general intellectual capacity.

What these practices suggest is that the standardization procedures which are critical to sustaining the discourse of scientific objectivity do not exist in their own terms, but as products of psychological discourse.

Conclusion

I have used the example of aptitude testing to demonstrate one aspect of the discursive organization of knowledge involved in classed relations. Aptitude testing is an ideological practice that privileges certain types of knowledge about the testing subject and suppresses other types of knowledge. It produces a subject of testing that is naturally suited, or has a natural capacity to do work defined by management systems, and thus a subject who "naturally" fails or succeeds on its own merit. (The idea of "natural capacity" as an important aspect of class regulation is discussed in further detail in the next chapter).

The evaluation methods employed by industry presume and produce a subject that does not know things, or that needs to learn. At the same time, they construct an image of the ideal worker. In the context of increased competition for capital, the desire has shifted toward the "super-normal" as testing seeks to meet the needs of high performance workplaces. Testing assists in producing the possibility of a superman, or super-person who will perform at maximum capacity.

In turn, the understanding of workers as incapable, inefficient, and needy makes it possible to justify what can be considered to be coercive monitoring or regulation of the workforce. I suggest that these forms of human resource management are coercive because there are few, if any, ways of contesting the facts, or "truths" produced by the testing

outcomes *within the logic* of testing.[22] As I suggested in the previous chapter, these knowledges about the working-class subject are produced by the very mechanisms that are promoted to rectify social difference and inequality.

The way that testing is organized has implications for the management of the workforce in that it allows management to justify a particular distribution of workers throughout the workplace. The stakes are high for workers. Here, good performance (low, medium, high) is rewarded with autonomy in that workers who perform well on the tests have more choice ("flexibility") over work, and over career pathway. Because many of the tests are based on skills that are used widely within the context of formal schooling (e.g. paper and pencil tests), and not in the everyday work setting, younger people may be advantaged in obtaining jobs that require testing. The testing may effectively select a younger, more school-wise body of workers and contribute to the displacement of the existing workforce.

The use of standardized tests for employee selection in the current economic context is linked to a broader movement of work reorganization, to the desire for a flexible workforce that will meet the needs of a shifting economy. Here, employees are being sought out who can be easily "trained" for new flexible work practices. Organizational cost savings are not presented to workers as justification for employment testing, nevertheless testing has been widely promoted to organizations in terms of their cost benefits (see, for example, Goodman and Novarra, 1977). If testing translates into hiring younger, more school-wise

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[22]However, there is more going on that governs the production of class difference in the workplace than just the testing logic. In the case I've presented here, the way in which contradictions and arguments were handled by the local management and managements' hired professionals was critical to shoring up inadequacies and contradictions involved in the testing practices. I did not focus on these aspects of testing discourse as much as I might have in this chapter.

workers, then cost savings would also be incurred through lower wage levels and benefits. Steven Cronshaw, a professor of psychology at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, makes a regulative link between testing and cost savings when he writes that any effort to stand in the way of employment testing is "seriously misguided and compromises the future economic prosperity of Canada" (Cronshaw, 1986:191). This message keeps corporate dollars flowing into the pockets of testing industry professionals and effectively disciplines any union movement that would seek to protect the rights, job security and advancement of its members.

With respect to the case I have described here, the fact that the jobs may not appear on the face of it to require the same kinds of skills measured by the tests, or that they may occasionally fail to predict successful employees very well, becomes less important given this broader corporate agenda. The union's policy that emphasized job security and equitable employment practices (*as well as* claims to "objectivity" and "fairness") get suppressed in the testing shuffle. Workers' local knowledge and experience are displaced by a testing regime that works in the interest of management.

CHAPTER V:

SCHOOLING THE WORKING CLASS SUBJECT

Introduction

I have suggested that the construction of workers as incapable, and in need of training, is a key aspect of educational discourse in modern capitalist society. As I discussed in Chapter three, both industrial and post-industrial discourses position the workforce outside of knowledge production. Modern management systems operate out of a complex history of the rational individual, notions of choice and freedom, with an interest in the maintenance of a bourgeois order. Managerial systems set themselves out with the task, the responsibility, for defining and regulating both the physical and mental needs of the workforce. In this chapter, I ask how it is that these differences have come to be produced. And how do managerial systems continue to position workers outside of knowledge? What is management's investment in the maintenance of their position of dominance?

Modern schooling systems are a key site of the production of ideas about individuals and their role in democratic social life. The bourgeois subject was to be a rational individual, free from coercion, able to participate freely in a democracy. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, scientific discourses are a central assumption and strategy of modern ruling practices. The model for the ideal democratic subject was produced through normative practices of modern science which legitimated and established labour hierarchies. The centering of a masculine rationality through science, meant that women as well as working classes were situated outside of the rational. In this chapter I suggest that manual labour, or the workforce, is feminized in relation to bourgeois rationality. I focus on the model of scientific rationality as a central force in modern

workplaces. I draw on interviews conducted in a number of workplaces, primarily in the autoparts sector, to examine some of the claims about rationality, and to examine the effects of these constructions on the workforce.

Schooling and the democratic subject

The creation of modern, or democratic governing practices involved new concepts about power and governance of the population. It was a shift from overt authoritarianism, or sovereign power, to less visible forms of governance (Foucault, 1977; Seidman, 1994, among others). The establishment of modern democratic governing practices depended on changes in how the populace, or the "masses," were to be understood. Central to the covert regulation of populations was the idea that individuals were free to participate in democratic structures. The democratic individual, or self-regulating individual was positioned as the ideal democratic subject.

> The idea of democracy, with rights and responsibilities, became government by reason, in which individuals, at first men with property, would have channels to power, a power previously accorded only to the aristocracy. While universal suffrage increased those channels, the concern with the threat to the bourgeois order (by the working class) grew. The masses had to be bought off, to prevent their rebellion and their disruption of liberal capitalism. (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989: 41).

The new order was based on ideas about science and reason. Ideas about "knowability" and control were important, taking the place of religion and the supernatural "as the guiding force." Man, rather than God was positioned as the centre of the universe. Ideas about reason "supplanted magic, the supernatural, religions, with the guarantees of science" (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989: 41). From this perspective a number of things could follow. Nature could be considered to be under the control of man and regulated according

to scientific laws. Scientific management was a key development in the regulation of the population:

> In the 19th century science was used to calculate and produce a knowledge of the population on an unprecedented scale. The production of "knowledges" became intimately bound up with the devising of new techniques of population management and this was part of a move toward normalization in the population (Walkerdine, 1989: 19-20).

This shift depended heavily on the concept "normalization" or the possibility of the normal. The idea of the "normal" individual was fundamental to population management and formed the basis for the development of social and scientific technologies to assist in governing practices (see below). The idea of the normal individual, for example the "ideal" child as far as schooling was concerned, and the "docile" individual as far as the workplace was concerned, assumed that there would be deviance from that which is normal. The normal individual was the product of regulative power, creating bodies that were outside the normal; creating a problem for example, "for the education of working-class and black children, since they rarely conform to the ideal child" (see Walkerdine, 1990: 30).

Schooling was considered as central to the project of controlling the population through the production and maintenance of a normal and self-regulating individual (Walkerdine, 1990). Schooling could help to produce the standards and conventions by which the population could be known and regulated. The idea of the self-regulating citizen was important here in that it was necessary to produce the idea that citizens were capable of participating freely in a democracy, rather than being forced into compliance through an authoritarian regime. It is within this context that tools for defining and controlling the population were developed (Foucault, 1977; Venn, 1984).

The early development of the Canadian public education system reveals that schooling was considered, primarily by conservative and liberal critics to be an important

institution for the production of democratic, self-regulating citizens (Corrigan et. al. 1994; Curtis et. al., 1992). Although recent formulations tend to downplay the political role of schooling, early debates were explicit about schoolings' relationship to the political regime. The conservative sectors of society were concerned that schooling should produce good citizens and workers who would be "sober, reliable, religious and orderly people who would respect established authority and private property" (Curtis et. al., 1992: 34).

The production of the cultivated, rational subject as the standard, the ideal subject of the emerging bourgeois order, dominated the formation of Canadian public school systems and persists to the present organization of schooling. Since the Education Act of 1850, education policy has aimed at teaching the general "moral" skills of a wage labour force, such as punctuality, regularity of attendance and orderliness (Curtis et. al, 1992: 35). The Hall-Dennis Report of 1968, for example, entitled "Living and Learning: The Report of the Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives of Education in the Schools of Ontario" centred the educated subject as (male), as anathema to ignorance and poverty:

> The underlying aim of education is to further man's [sic] unending search for truth . . . This is the key to open all doors. It is the instrument which will break the shackles of ignorance, of doubt, of frustration, that will take all who respond to its call out of their poverty, their slums, and their despair" (Hall & Dennis cited in Erwin & MacLennan, 1994:5).

Like the public schooling agenda of mid 19th century Canada, formal adult education was concerned with harnessing difference as pathology. Working class thought was pathologized in these formulations as a threat to the democratic social order. This was particularly evident in the early development of adult education through the formal system of the university (e.g., university extension). The Workers' Education Association established through the University of Toronto is one example of this. During the first two decades of the 20th century, there was an explicit concern by capitalist powers about the

survival of democracy as this was a period of labour unrest and threat by communism. Adult education was promoted by university and business representatives as a "means of equalizing the classes without abolishing class domination" (Welton, 1991: 33).

The existence of class division was clearly recognized by early corporate/university developers of adult education; education was considered to be in "crisis," reflecting a class polarized society. The University Extension of the University of Toronto presented its understanding of the nature and purpose of education in a document entitled "The Education of the Working Man" (published in the *Queen's Quarterly* in 1919). In this document, working-class thought and behaviour was constituted as a threat to the dominant social order and was explicitly positioned outside of the formal system, or outside the rational. It was through compliance with bourgeois standards that order could be maintained, and the formal adult education system would provide that opportunity:

> 'There was an immense danger to a country in the existence of two languages, the language of the cultivated and the language of the street, neither of which is really comprehensible to the other'(W.L. Grant, cited in Welton, 1991: 32).

The choice of the street/cultivated metaphor is significant for my discussion here as it demonstrates an important political representation of class relations. As suggested by Welton, "The languages of social transformation—products of workers' own learning and experience are consigned to the street, the realm of the undisciplined, the untrained, the untutored, and the rebellious" (32). As cited in Welton, the authors of this document contend that:

> 'if it could be brought about that more or less the same proportion of every class could be found in the ranks of the thoughtful cultivated people, an immense stride would have been made in the abolition of class differences'(32-33).

The university proponents of adult education were public about their fears of unregulated, uncensored knowledge in the working class sector of the population. There was a fear that democracy would collapse. Labour was organized like never before through organizations like the One Big Union and expressed through mass actions such as the Winnipeg General Strike. One of the key players in the development of formal adult education at the University of Toronto (W.L. Grant) made it clear that the only way to create social stability was through the formal education of working people. Grant believed that uneducated working people and citizens, "leapt uncritically at every new idea" (Welton, 1991). Ideas alone, without the civilizing institutions of formal education, operated by the ruling class, were not just consigned to the street. Workers were situated in such a way that they were not allowed to have a knowledge, not allowed to think:

> 'Ideas without education' were very dangerous fodder. Ideas without education meant the triumph of the half-baked; and the results of the triumph of the half-baked are manifest to the world in Russia today' (Grant quoted in Welton, 1991: 35).

Clearly formal education was considered to have a regulating function around class difference. I suggest that schooling presented the possibility of a social safety net, *not for the poor and the working classes*, but for the ruling classes, as rational thought and conformity were promoted as the norm. Schooling was to be the tutoring ground for the production of the *idea* of a bourgeois subject. This orientation toward education and the working classes also acknowledged that all was not well in society.

The assertion of a "normal" or rational subject was essential to maintaining control over the population. That is, it supplanted the need for direct coercion with guidelines for self-regulating citizenship. The notion of the abnormal subject helped to define and justify, that which was normal; that which did *not* need to be fixed or regulated (since it would be

proved capable of self-regulation). These ideas were based on powerful fictions or fantasies (male fantasies) about domination and control over nature (see Walkerdine, 1990). It was necessary to constantly produce the idea of difference from the norm because any failure to find difference would threaten the "very possibility or existence of that power" (Walkerdine, 1990: 62)[23].

The idea that nature could be controlled through reason was fundamental to the task of schooling the masses. Thus, the development of science had an important role in substantiating or providing evidence about what and who was rational, or fit for the bourgeois order: Science was also deeply patriarchal. "Human nature" became the object of science as the human was accorded the status of nature (e.g. through Darwinism), with natural as opposed to god-given traits. This was closely related to the rise of schooling for the masses and to the idea of schooling as a way of controlling the laws of nature (Henriques et. al., 1984).

Drawing on work on the colonization of non-European populations (e.g. Bhabha, Said, Fanon), Walkerdine describes the rise of science as a regulative power in modern government:

> Science tells stories about human nature in an attempt to control nature. The rise of science in the 17th century sought to map and control a nature which was indeed delighted in and feared (noble savages, peasants vs lords, noble men). Nature had to be tamed. Civilisation meant taming the animal, the instincts, rationalising that outside reason. Those who were supposed to be living nearer their instincts—the masses posed a constant threat. With colonisation, the so-called primitive peoples also threatened to rise up against the oppression of the coloniser. Democracy was to be assured through a process of knowing and taming. This process was never simple. It

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[23]In their review of the political formation of Canadian public schooling, Corrigan et. al. (1987) describe the work of John Millar, a key contributor to ideas about school governance in Ontario at the turn of the century. Millar's ideas clearly promoted the normalizing function of schooling. According to Millar, social inequality provided evidence for a more *advanced*, or healthier, society (Millar, J. 1901. *Educational Demands of Democracy*. Toronto: Federal Press).

> always involved horrendous suppression and oppression, like the
> suppression of witchcraft, which was the Other to the rise of science
> (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989: 40).

The masses were seen as a part of nature that needed to be harnessed or brought under

control in the new democratic order. Science would produce a new truth about civilization,

and provide the tools to define, and monitor that truth, thus legitimating its own practice.

The intellectual subordination of women

The history of the intellectual subordination of women can provide additional

insights into how educational and managerial discourses have positioned workers, or

labourers, as irrational, and intellectually inferior. The development of ideas about

rationality and reason, ideas about control over nature, are key to understanding the way

that power is distributed in modern democracies (Seidman, 1994). The history of western

thought centred, and assumed, a rational masculine subject. "The rational self was . . . a

profoundly masculine one from which the woman was excluded, her powers not only

inferior but also subordinate" (Walkerdine, 1990: 67).

Women's exclusion from reason involves somewhat complicated ideas about the

body, and relies on the belief in a natural gendered division of labour that situate women's

work as reproductive and men's work as productive (e.g., Hartmann, 1981). These gender

relations are not necessarily about "real" men and women, but about the power to

represent, or to define a symbolic order. It is a "fictional" account that has powerful effects

on how things are thought about and become organized.

Biological arguments about sexual difference are key to the centering of masculinity

as rationality and dominance. Women's body is viewed as the natural site of reproduction

(of the species), as something that needs to be protected. Women are considered to be

natural care-givers, having a natural capacity to nurture children, to absorb conflict. Through women's domestic labour, and their caring labour through teaching for example (see Walkerdine, 1990; Smith, 1990b), women are positioned as not only naturally suited, but essential to these roles. (Although the biological is not the only site of women's subordination within capitalism.)

The masculinized discourse of "reason" viewed women as reproducers, or nurturers, incapable of performing intellectually. Femininity was situated as the opposite to masculinized reason and as such was located outside of intellectual work. "The thinking subject was male; the female provided the biological prop both to procreation and to servicing the possibility of 'man'" (Walkerdine, 1990: 67). Science, and the belief in objectivity and truth, were important tools in positioning women outside of rational knowledge because it provided the objective evidence, or "truth" needed to sustain its claims. The focus on objective truth claims made it feasible to ignore the possibility that "truth" might not be universal, or that it might not reflect the viewpoint of all members of society.

The idea that man could control nature through science made it possible for the female body and mind to both became objects of the scientific gaze (67). Science would be able to produce a knowledge about human nature that was rendered as "facts," and could therefore legitimate its practices of exclusion. Walkerdine (1990) suggests as evidence of this, that ideas about female nature did not pre-exist the development of "doctrines" that produced it as its object (67). If science could be used to demonstrate objective facts about human nature, (including facts about the correct nurturance of children, see Burman, 1994) in this case, women's capacity to think, then the social order could be justified as natural.

The idea of women's bodies located outside of reason, as naturally suited to reproduction were taken to an extreme in deciding who would be able to participate as citizens in the emerging democratic order. Rational thought, or "thinking" was considered to be outside of women's capacity. Thinking was considered to be physiologically dangerous for women and that women's natural capacity to reproduce would be threatened by too much thinking. Girls and women were seen to not only be harming themselves but also endangering the species. "This was hard to oppose and those who did oppose were understood as "hard" "masculine" women of dubious sexuality, the target of pejorative evaluation and general scorn" (Walkerdine, 1990: 69). Such constructions provided justification for the exclusion of women from higher education systems and the professions:

> It was quite common in the nineteenth century to exclude women from higher education and the professions on the grounds that they were swayed by their emotions and not, therefore, invested with the capacity to make rational judgments. It is by arguments such as this that the sexed body (the seat of `nature') becomes the site for the production and explanation of mind. Since the very differentiation between men's and women's bodies is central to this approach, there is no way reason can ever be gender-neutral (Erwin & MacLennan, 1994:8).

The intellectual subordination of workers

It is possible to draw a link between women's intellectual subordination by a masculinized bourgeois thought system and workers' intellectual subordination by modern management systems. Walkerdine for example, alludes to the idea that the working classes can be included in this analysis about women's intellectual and social subordination through appeal to the natural or the biological (Walkerdine, 1990; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Some of this analysis can help to explain the persistent representation of workers as incapable or "outside of reason":

> Domestic and manual labour are opposites to intellectual labour—the
> symbolic play of the Logos. Yet domestic and manual labour are taken to
> indicate a lack, something missing. Of course, intellectual activity, in
> whatever location is quite impossible without the other kinds of labour that
> provide a servicing function (Walkerdine, 1990: 70).

Both women's domestic labour and working-class labours were necessary to sustain

the emerging capitalist order. Both women and workers' were situated outside of reason,

that is. Their capacities were attributed to nature, to that which had to be controlled. In turn,

women and workers defined the rational bourgeois subject.

Through its positioning in manual labour, the work force can be viewed as the body,

or the Other, to the mental gatekeeper of management or ruling systems. Although workers

are comprised of both women and men: the "body" (or "nature") as opposed to the mind, is

a significant feature of the relationship between the workforce and its management. It is in

this sense that manual labour is feminized and subordinated to intellectual work. Workers

do the physical labour that makes the conceptual and intellectual work of management

possible. The dichotomy between "mental" and "manual" labour does not refer so much to a

clear-cut distinction between physical and intellectual work as it does to the power relations

involved in the management and execution of labour. It is the conceptual division of labour

involving the level of autonomy, or degree of authority over others that determines whether

or not work is considered to involve intellectual skill (Connell, 1998; Dunk et al., 1996).

This broadly gendered division of labour is visible at the "material" level as well

since some of the lowest paid levels of production work, the lowest "skill" levels, are

dominated by working women. As Gibson-Graham have suggested, labour is further

"feminized" under restructuring as both women and men are subjected to a labour force

that has lost its "industrial muscle" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 47). A maintenance worker

involved in the Working Class Learning Strategies interviews characterized feminized wage

labour in relation to his own vulnerable work history. In this context he depicted management as a father figure, or saviour who has reached down and picked him up off the production floor. On the production floor, among the mess of steel shavings and dirt, are the prospects of layoff, homelessness and welfare. In this factory, there also happens to be a majority of female workers, who are mostly immigrant women, working on punch press machines: the lowest paid jobs in the factory:

> When I first got started I thought `Awe, what is this company trying to do, trying to make a fool of me or something like that?' Because I never had any -- no background of any machinery or *anything*. But they took me under their arms and that, and they said, `Jack, this is what you're going to do', and they taught me everything, and I have to appreciate them for the rest of my life. They taught me that. Otherwise, a fellow with a grade eight education would never have anything. Probably never have been able to have a home. You know, I would probably have had to do all kinds of dirty jobs -- real dirty jobs. And probably been on pogey so many times, because when you're working on the press, how many times you know, there's a slow down, you got laid off, where if you're a tool and die maker, they always check you in a job, no matter what. They always check you in a job, no matter what. Found somethin' for you to do, just to keep you (Autoparts factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

"Feminized" labour is insecure work; and it is often physically difficult. It is "precarious" in that it lacks institutional protection. But Labour as a whole, is feminized in relation to a masculine rationality. In the above example, the worker is still subject to an authoritative paternalism. He is positioned as a dependent in relation to management, even as he takes flight from the "real dirty" insecure jobs on the production floor.

In the following interview, a female worker comments on women as a special case in workplace relations. She is a quality control inspector who started out on the production line in an auto parts plant. She says, "A lot of gender comes into it with the hiring. They will hire males from outside with any kinds of qualifications, but women must have good qualifications. It's an unwritten rule." However in the following example the same worker

describes a broader system at work that is based on a general discrimination of workers in

relation to management:

Me: So there may be actual pressure there to not allow people to know about other things?

Her: Case in point, when our company is hiring, when women go through, the men go 'Oh she's nice. Did you see her? We should hire her.' But when the men go through they say, 'Well, he's done this or that', or 'He's got a certificate'. A lot of the men they hire didn't even have the courses they required *us* to take, to pay us level with the people they were hiring from outside. One of the women they hired from outside is being paid more than us—we knew the job, and have done the job for years. Anyway the job didn't work out and she left. When we went to take the course, guess who was in the class? And yet we were required to take those courses to make as much as her, or some of the other men. So there's a lot of discrimination around gender (Autoparts factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

Whereas women find themselves at the mercy of a false credential system that privileges

men over women (as in the above example), the system also privileges men and women

from outside the workplace, over "workers" regardless of merit. (Although we see that the

"woman" to which the worker refers ultimately ends up leaving her job and having to get

qualified too.)

Even labour which is relatively secure and "masculinized," e.g. skilled trades, is

subordinated to rational masculinity. For example, this tool and dye worker suggested the

overall maintenance role of labour. It does not hold a particularly important place in the

overall context of management worker relations:

I have a feeling if you make a space shuttle one day they going to say 'Oh, it's nothing'. That doesn't push you forward to work, to think about that. Whatever you do, they say nothing. But if you don't [produce], oh, there's a big deal (Autoparts factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

It is the discursive division of labour, the *idea* that mental work is the property of

specific groups that is important. If the workforce is represented or understood as

"naturally" suited to their role in the labour hierarchy, then the relations of power, the

divisions of labour, workplace hierarchies, and other social differences can appear to make sense. The system of credentials that is supposed to organize a rational labour hierarchy can also be seen as relatively insignificant in this context.

Another worker in the same autoparts plant explained how the discursive system worked in a way that categorized salaried workers as "these" people and waged workers as "those" people. Workers were positioned as "uneducated" whether they held formal credentials or not. The *imaging* of workers as uneducated is what is stressed here:

Me: Why do you think they're saying the formal courses are needed for the job?

Her: It's a double standard. If you're salaried, it's a double standard. If you're hourly—there's "these" people, and there's "those" people. And they look at "those" people as uneducated labourers. To such an extent, you mentioned that I'm not very trusting, I know what courses and non-courses my bosses have. I don't get taken seriously—I don't think anyone in the workplace does unless you are valued enough to be promoted or salaried. They look at everybody as being irresponsible (Autoparts factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

The factory is a particularly important symbol in the positioning of labour in relation to bourgeois rationality. Like domestic labour, factory work under industrial management systems has not been considered intellectual work. The factory can be understood to symbolize the ultimate inferior of the work world: it expresses the idea of assembly line labour and of robotic, grinding labour. In the current "deindustrializing" context it symbolizes the "past." And in relation to the "smart" reorganized workplace, the non-factory, it symbolizes the intellectual inferior. It is the site of the factory to which references of "blue-collar" workers are made. One of the respondents for a project on education and work (Livingstone, 1998), a housekeeping staff member in a hospital, is informed by her sister that she is better off, and more capable because she doesn't work in a factory. Her

sister, who works in a factory, says "well you're a little better than I am because you're not in a factory and you're out there in the world so you can do things better."

Many of those interviewed for the Working Class Learning Strategies project voluntarily defined themselves in relation to factory work, whether they worked in factories or not. By and large, the "factory" does not get high ratings from the workforce. It is not viewed as a place in which to "grow" or to fantasize about a rewarding working life (particularly for women): Reflecting about what kind of work she wanted to do, one woman constructed factory work as a dead end street. Factory workers don't "do" anything. They are not "becoming" anything:

> It was like 'Oh, my sister's a secretary. That sounds like a cool job.' It's either that or factory work, and I don't like factory work! I've been doing it all of my life now and that's why I kick myself that I didn't stay in school and do something (Autoparts factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

The following worker wanted very much to get a job that she said was functional, that brought in money, yet was something that she could enjoy doing. Both of her parents worked in factories, one at a car factory, the other in a refrigerator plant. The only person in her family to go to college, this woman did summer jobs putting clamps on dipsticks for cars. In working through her decision to go to college, she says of factory work:

> I would never do that. I knew I didn't want to work in a factory. And I knew I had to do something in order not to do that. So maybe that was it (College staff member, WCLS project, 1996).

Production work is particularly subordinated in the rationalized workplace. For example, production work in the autoparts factory was done mainly by women. Unlike the men who invent or fix machines, women on the production line learn to operate the machines. The men want to comment on the production line work. A material handler who did not like his previous experience on the production line says that "it is *slow*." A tool and

die maker implies that production work is not important when he contrasts it with his own work saying, "In this skill, we never is complete. We have a job every day. Each job is one problem. Not is a serial production. *Not* is production. Individual job every day. Every day. Every day. It's a very very important job."

There were numerous examples of people juxtaposing office work with factory work in one way or another in the Working Class Learning Strategies interviews. Factory work is often contrasted to "paper work" or office work. One production worker combined imagery about women, factory work, and professional work. In this example, the factory is situated as the opposite to professional work. Professional work is constructed as the site of the mind, rather than the body:

> My oldest daughter got married young and had a daughter. But she's not stupid by any means. I mean the work she does at the bank, she's a professional at doing it. And my other daughter has had various jobs too, mind you she works at the factory [where I work] too, but she's not stupid either. She knows a lot when it comes to computers, paper work and all that stuff too (Paint factory worker, WCLS PROJECT, 1996).

The office is a space of regulations, surveillance, books, and discipline. It is a clean space; clean cut and well-mannered. There is something intelligent about it. It is through this space that managers look at workers. Being seen, is a common concern for many of the people I interviewed. On the one hand they are seen through surveillance cameras and tabulation devices, through the production and quality charts on walls. On the other hand, they are walked by, brushed off, or shrunken in processes that diminish their place in the workplace. (In the autoparts plant they were also seen through a glass tower that overlooked the production floor.) One worker explained how managers see workers in the autoparts plant:

> You get the feeling that they don't really care about the people at all. They pay you to work, and you're supposed to work like a machine, and if you

have problems, 'we don't care, just do your work, punch your card in and
out.' They don't care that you're an actual person that has feelings. You're a
number. Things could be changed, they could be a little more human
(Autoparts factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

Constructing images of the workforce as the incapable or ignorant Other to rational

masculinity is one way of enforcing the idea of difference between management and the

workforce. Because there is actually no clear fit between ability and social location (it is

socially constructed) there is a need to make sure that this link appears to have some

legitimacy.

Manual labour as irrational

The images that are produced through rational masculinity, the representations of

the working-class Other, are not just ideas floating around independent of social practices.

They arise in and affect how people organize and do things. As the "other" to rational

masculinity, the manual workforce is situated as irrational. It cannot control itself. It

therefore needs to be controlled. It is not considered to be responsible, therefore it is not

taken seriously. Being "treated like a human being" is often flagged by workers in

conversations about education and work (WCLS project, 1996).

Regulating the images of workers' capabilities involves regulating actual bodies.

Discursive regulation *is* bodily regulation. Bodily regulation *is* discursive regulation.

Control over the body is a significant aspect of worker-management relations. Workers'

bodies are treated as though they are perpetually on the verge of going out of control. One

woman who worked as a quality control inspector in the car parts factory described this as

management's lack of faith in workers' ability to conduct themselves as "adults." The

company had stopped covering liquor costs for an employee Christmas party. There was a big dispute over this and the party didn't get organized:

> They were afraid people would drink too much and take advantage of them. But for the last five years alcohol has been included in the price and there's never been a problem. Everybody's been responsible. They've either taken a cab home or rented a hotel room. It's like 'you people can't control yourselves'. Sometimes the supervisors would rather go to the employee than the management parties because they have a better time. Then the company began bringing in lunch the last day before Christmas, and nobody wanted to eat it. We're adults not children (Autoparts factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

The regulation of workers' bodies is taken to an extreme under scientific management. The regimentation of the body was a key feature of scientific management with its rigidly defined, repetitive job tasks. In the current economic environment, scientific management is situated as an inferior way of organizing the workforce and is replaced with new ideas about the nature of work and the distribution of labour. Labour should be more flexible and self-regulating, a shift which is accompanied by notions of worker empowerment. But as I suggested in Chapter three, there is evidence to suggest that this is largely a discursive and ideological shift, and not an actual change in relations of authority in the workplace. There is an attempt to reconfigure the labour force, but labour functions are still highly regulated physically, conceptually, and socially.

Here is one example from the Working Class Learning Strategies project. This factory worker described the drama of her work on the production line in the autoparts plant. The production process is designed in such a way as to exhaust the maximum capacity of workers. The process itself influences and constructs the way workers conceptualize themselves in the workplace. She says that she becomes "invisible" after a day's shot at meeting production goals:

Me: Can you tell me a bit about your job?

Her: People stand so much distance apart, you have to do it. Send down to the next person, until it reach the end and the part is finished.

Me: And what are you actually doing with the part?

Her: Well you make so many, like the machine have two station, three station, to do the job, right?

Me: Are you using a press?

Her: Yes.

Me: So you're using sort of like a machine?

Her: Yes, punch press machine. Right. It is something to see.

Me: I think it would be really interesting.

Her: You have to do so much production a day. At the end of the day. Sometimes they say they want twelve hundred, fifteen hundred you know. Like you going to be invisible after that, you know!

Me: Yes, you try to meet the demand. How long have you been doing this job?

Her: Seventeen years.

One startling example of bodily control in the factory is a photograph that was taken of an autoparts factory worker as part of the Working Class Learning Strategies project (WCLS project, 1997). A woman sits at her punch press machine, one in a row of machines. She is tethered to her machine, metal clasps around her wrists, attached to leather thongs that keep her hands from getting crushed in the machine. The image is rather disturbing when viewed from outside the context of the workplace. This picture was taken at a time when new corporate philosophies of learning culture and quality programming have been circulating through the corporate literature for some time.

The more mundane aspects of bodily regulation are equally interesting. They are less visible, yet they permeate people's thoughts about work. Some of the workers I

interviewed described the experience of bodily control indirectly. Nevertheless, highlighting these features of work in a short interview with a stranger is revealing. One woman recalls her restricted mobility as if it was a natural part of life, just something to get used to:

> I used to work on drill machines--like drilling holes through bolts, and we used to have this five spindle drill and put each of the bolts in and they would go down and the things would come back and you'd just keep working. And you could eat or drink on the job, it wasn't like [where she works now], like your food and everything contained in the cafeteria. But with us there it was different. Like if you had to go to the washroom, you could go if you had to, and pick up coffee on your way back. We used to open a little part of it, set it there, keep on workin' take a sip--never miss a hole [I laugh]. I just kept working . . . (Paint factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

Controlling the space in which adults do their work: where they can move, who they can associate with, controls the extent to which they get to "know" their workplaces. It also controls the extent to which people can be known by others. It delimits the expression of competence. But it is also a recognition that communication amongst the workforce could threaten the balance of power in the workplace. For example, one factory I visited was in the process of decentralizing their lunchroom into smaller rooms that were closer to people's work areas. This would serve two functions. Workers understood it was a way for management to cut down on the amount of time it took them to punch in their time cards to get to their work areas. It was also described as a way of fragmenting the workforce so they could not communicate as easily with each other as a group. The main lunchroom was fitted with an over-sized television screen that projected corporate videos to the workforce. In another example from Hamper's *Rivethead* (1991), General Motors had installed electronic message boards to supplement their quality program. One of the message boards was

hooked up directly opposite Hamper's work station, at eye level. As a worker on the rivet

line, Hamper experienced the messages as an assault on the senses:

> The messages they would flash ranged from corny propaganda (green neon
> bulb depictions of Howie Makem's face uttering shit like QUALITY IS THE
> BACKBONE OF GOOD WORKMANSHIP!) to motivational pep squawk (A
> WINNER NEVER QUITS & A QUITTER NEVER WINS!) to brain-jarring
> ruminations (SAFETY IS SAFE) . . . I remember the first day the message
> board went into operation. For the entire shift, it beamed out one single
> message. They never erased it. No such luck. The message blazed on brightly
> like some eternal credo meant to hog-tie our bewildered psyches. The
> message? Hold on to your hardhats, sages. The message being thrust upon us
> in enormous block lettering read: SQUEEZING RIVETS IS FUN! Trust me.
> Even the fuckin' exclamation point was their own (Hamper, 1991: 160).

Scientific management dominates the social organization of the workplace, ordering

the social relations there, and fitting the proper bodies into the proper spaces. Bodies are

ordered rationally according to gender, ethnicity, race, "ability," complicity. Science, or the

technologies of the social, assist in the process of producing a truth about working people's

mental and physical capacities. Technologies of the social assist in producing a

representation of what is to be considered normal or natural. I referred to one aspect of this

in Chapter 4 (ability testing). Evaluation strategies that are based on the statistical sampling

of populations depend on averaging characteristics, or the idea of the "norm" in order to

produce certain images about the population. The social institutions which are responsible

for population regulation and control: education, psychology, medicine, social services etc.,

all rely on normative methods of comparing and contrasting, creating disembodied

representations of human activity. The norm was an artifact of statistical practice which

came to be applied to human development studies. Human development could then be

understood to either match the norm or deviate from it. Walkerdine and Lucey (1989)

suggest that "the `fact' of sampling in this way helped to locate the problem and find the

solution while at the same time, naturalizing the specific conditions of its production (43)".

They argue that these procedures locate problems that are generated by social relations and practices *inside* individuals, naming them as pathology, deficiency, and lack.

In the previous chapter, I discussed one type of problem that is "located" through these types of normative practices. The problem is defined as productive in-efficiency; the solution is found in the proper match between workers' capacities and job demands. The technology of statistical sampling is critical to producing the appearance of a natural fit between manual labour and work requirements. But there is slippage in terms of how people are situated: the process identifies people as numbers; inanimate objects rather than "doers" or "knowers." The idea that there should be a "natural" link between ability and social location is proven false on a regular basis.

This is why the definition and measurement of mental capacity is so important.[24] It is one method of keeping these images from slipping around. It produces the image that there can be satisfaction in work, that there should be satisfaction in one's natural placement in the labour hierarchy. Mental measurement and other ranking procedures fix the link between social location and ability through appeal to natural abilities, rather than to prior experience, or to the social. The bourgeois desire expressed through workplace testing, for example, is that there should be a natural hierarchy of ability, that "these" people are naturally suited to do "this" kind of work and "those" people are naturally suited to do "that" kind of work. The telecommunications company advertisement for aptitude testing pointed this out quite clearly: "Employees who are in positions which suit their capabilities

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[24] I am not contesting the existence of difference in mental capacities here. Certainly people have distinctive capacities. But whether or not these can be defined and measured is another issue. The practice of developing categories of generic ability is so problematic that I consider it to be politically useless.

are more comfortable with the work they do, and are more satisfied with their jobs" (Sasktel International, 1989). The desire is to rationalize a grossly irrational labour hierarchy.

Such technologies that position the workforce outside of the "normal" also place them in a "state to be corrected" something that needs to be, or deserves to be disciplined. Technologies such as standardized psychological testing can then be said to provide a disciplining function. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the workforce is disciplined by ranking them in ways that have real consequences for social mobility.

Bourgeois rationality positions manual labour as the "other" to mind and this serves to justify the labour hierarchy. Labour is fit for doing labour and is not fit for managing the conditions of its own work. This is the discursive message. The point here is that bourgeois rationality has to find ways of enforcing this message. There is slippage: the link between ability and labour is constantly proven false. So bodies literally need to be fixed in place (through a regimented workplace) as well as through other means of scientific management such as ability testing. If the discursive message doesn't do its job, then direct bodily coercion will as bodies are tethered to machines, channeled into separate lunchrooms, refused promotion based on merit.[25]

The evidence of blatant bodily control in the workplace is a recognition that something needs to be contained. What needs to be contained is not just an irrational working class, but the possibility that the message is wrong. That bourgeois identity will be revealed as fraudulent.

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[25]There is a related discourse at work that claims to recognize the knowledge and skills of workers, to 'harness' it for economic competitiveness. However, the required knowledge and skills base is produced and surveilled through management discourse as I discussed in chapter 3.

The refusal of competence

The idea of workers' competence or ability as a fixed or a natural entity is key to the positioning of power/knowledge relations between capital and labour. Workers mental (and physical) abilities are produced as "natural" through their positioning as the natural other to the rational. They can thus be seen as naturally inferior, or underdeveloped. The idea of fixed capacity is particularly important in relation to the way workers are positioned with respect to bourgeois rationality. The definition and fixing process starts early, in schools, and continues into the workplace. Theories about human development, for example, which have been central to schooling practices, operate on the assumption of progressive stages of development and rely heavily on appeals to the natural (Burman, 1994). From this perspective, adults located in factories have already proven themselves as "failures" in a system that rewards people with more autonomy, ever increasing responsibility, even increasing freedom. In this context the fact that some workers may have more education (than their managers etc.) can be ignored, because the very fact that they are located in these roles in adulthood speaks to some aspect of their failure.

Because workers are not *seen* as educated and yet they are adults who have contracted to work, they are not seen as subjects who are capable or who merit the autonomy and responsibility of those who hold management positions. Public schooling has given them the opportunity, the choice to become something else, and they have failed. It's natural. The concept of "choice" is critical for understanding the refusal of competence or opportunities for adults in the workplace. If it's understood that people had choice, then they must be seen to have chosen to be where they are. It's in this way also, that I draw a link between labour and the natural—the natural capacity to perform work. This worker

explained how the credential system operates to mask actual issues of ability and performance, even as it promotes ideas about fairness:

> I think to myself 'Why didn't I get a better education?' I could have been a nurse like someone else, or I could have been at the intake desk where they answer the phone, or more with the patients. I could have been a supervisor. Because you see how they work and you say well just because of my education, I cannot do that work, I don't have the diploma . . . It wouldn't be hard to do [the desk job]. One lady said to me 'you'd do fine'. But they don't give you the opportunity—even if you were in housekeeping and don't have the education. I'd like to have this kind of training, not just for myself but for the other girls too, that's why I'm taking these courses. . . . I have the ability but need to show I can do it. I need that little push. I need encouragement from the employers, 'if you apply for that job, you'll be able to do it' (Hospital worker, Livingstone, 1998).

If workers are seen as naturally incompetent, and even more than that, as untrainable (as seen in recent workplace training discourses) then a number of other things can fall into place. It would be easier to justify the idea that workers are not capable of understanding (or meeting) their own needs. Their ability to participate in decision-making or control in the workplace would be questioned. The displacement of the workforce with more flexible thinkers, or those who have demonstrated the ability to adapt to changing corporate philosophies (by virtue of their higher education attainments) would be possible. There would be little justification for worker participation schemes, particularly with regard to the older workforce. There would be tighter control over educational resources.

There would also need to be a way to make sure that certain forms of competence are *not* expressed or recognized. Any expression of competence that would threaten productive capacity; any expression of competence that is not defined through managerial philosophies would be directly refused, ignored, or even punished. There were many examples of such curtailments in the Working Class Learning Strategies interviews. A college support staff worker indicates a refusal of staff members' "local" knowledge and

experience by importing an American customer service program that she considers to be insulting and of little relevance to her organization. A production line worker confides to the interviewer that "They don't let you know so many things, you know." Someone from another workplace says that "They don't let you get involved in things." A paint factory worker admits that the company has courses "but don't really encourage participation. We tell management but we don't hear back from them." An autoparts factory worker reveals her understanding that management controls knowledge in the workplace because they want to feel "safe": "They don't want to teach us too much, just enough so we know what's going on."

It is the possibility of workers being seen as capable or having abilities that is at stake. They can be seen to have intellectual "capacity," (learning but never learned) but cannot be legitimated (e.g. rewarded socially) for their capabilities. Just like intellectual activity was thought to threaten the reproductive capacity of women, too much thinking might ruin the natural capacity of workers to perform the productive and maintenance work required under capitalism. To legitimate working-class capacities would pose questions for controlling the division of labour. This factory worker points out the risk posed by the idea that workers have the capacity to be educated:

Me: And what would that training look like?

Her: Any further education. Places will come into the workplace, but they [the companies] will only do it if there's something in it for them, very rarely for the individual advancement, or for betterment of the individual, or for giving the individual options so that they could be qualified for something else. Especially if it's a blue collar job—they want to keep them there.

Me: Why's that?

Her: Well someone has to do the job—if there are too many people educated and looking for something better, a job that pays more, or a job with better respect and treating people as human beings—so that's a threat—they can

keep the people there if they can say they're uneducated and what else are they [the blue collar workers] going to do? (Autoparts factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

Drawing on notions about what is normal and natural, management can situate labour power, the power upon which it depends for surplus profit, outside of itself. Labour is banished to the realm of the abnormal or the subhuman. Management needs a pool of workers who can be situated outside of the rational/knowing subject in order promote the idea of its dominance in the social order of the workplace.

In a context where workers generally have more formal education than they used to, the struggle may become more covert. Workers may be forced to live out a charade because they are situated more vulnerably in relation to work, as this worker explains:

> A lot of people today are well educated, even in the work place. So people have to make it appear as if they conform, or as if they can work with directions because it makes their jobs more secure (Autoparts factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

Through its refusals, management acknowledges the value of and "threat" posed by the possibility of competence. At the same time, it creates symbolic and actual difference through these refusals. A bourgeois identity is erected that attempts to overcome the contradictions and paradoxes that are embedded in its relation to the workforce.

The refusal of the possibility of competence finds expression through some form of "put down." In the Working Class Learning Strategies interviews, this refusal of competence was expressed in a violent physical imagery such as being "pushed," "thrown" or "knocked" down. There were many references of this kind throughout the interviews. The role of the mind, of bourgeois knowledge, is central here in that references to being put or thrown down, usually occur in relation to the possibility of some kind of upward social mobility. For example, people refer to work and education experience in ways that reflect

vertical social movement. These are also terms that reveal the dependency of the individual on unstable conditions of work, and a lack of control over them. Thus, a support staff worker talks about her boyfriend's troubles in passing a fireman exam in these terms: "That's *brought him down* a bit." Another staff member describes her son's movement into the work world in similar terms: "Someone *picked my son up* and taught him a trade."

The "put down" is about putting down the mind in some form. The focus on putting down the mind signals the role of knowledge in labour hierarchies. The lower one is in the hierarchy, the less capable one is viewed. The higher one is in the hierarchy, the smarter and more responsible one is viewed. The "put down" seemed to be expressed more by people who did labour in the factories, or who did lower status work. One worker described how this was related to the gendered distribution of labour and wages in her workplace. Viewing people as dumb, or incapable made it easier for management to make arbitrary hiring decisions. When I asked her to talk about her experience as a woman in the workplace she said:

> I find our company is very male motivated. Their attitude, they come across like woman are lower and dumber, and if you're a male there, you're a great guy and you can do anything and they promote them (Autoparts factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

The following quote is part of a long story about being systematically excluded from white-collar work. The woman's story is situated against a backdrop of isolations and insults around knowledge acquisition, which includes her own schooling experience, as well as her parents' history of immigration, stories that were permeated with issues of getting respect. She now finds herself in a job that reproduces this situation at work:

> My problem is still—like if you're in a group of people, to say what you really want to say. But my feeling is if I say something, I'm going to say it wrong. I'm going to be thrown down. Because you're stupid, you don't know what

you're saying. Some people have no problem, but because I don't know too much, they'll throw me down (Hospital worker, Livingstone, 1998).

Images of knowing and knowledge are a set of strategies used to justify gendered hierarchies of labour. When this production worker insists on taking up her position as an equal in relation to her supervisor, she is punished.

> . . . like I say to my foreman, if I can't come here and voice my opinion, well, I don't have a problem, the way I look at it--no. Because I should be able to come to work and say what's good or what's bad. You guys had your meetings, you tell us how you feel, I'll tell you how I feel. Like that's why I say to them, a lot of people just sit back and just take it. I figure . . . cause once they start walkin' over you they always will. Then you're going to try to get up and they're going to knock you down. And then you'll try to get up and they'll knock you down (Autoparts factory worker, WCLS project, 1996).

Refusal surfaces in a violent imagery when claims to knowledge, or equality are made by working-class subjects. The simple act of "knowing" things that will permit social movement or enhance social position, or even *thinking* that you know things, threatens class relations. It threatens the legitimacy of a bourgeois identity that is constructed on the rational that there are fundamental differences between workers and their managers.

This refusal of the possibility of competence doesn't mean that there is never any opportunity to express, create, or to contribute, or that there is no struggle involved in defining the terms of work. The workforce asserts itself through unions, government forums and other organizational venues. The meanings that individual workers attach to their labour sometimes disrupt this dichotomy. For example, the production women lay claims to mental activity in their work (e.g., "everybody's got their own ideas") and the skilled tradesmen claim both mental and physical labour in their work (e.g., "you have to become brilliant in both senses of the ability, in the mind and in the hands"). The point *is*, is that obtaining recognition always seems to involve some kind of *struggle*.

The bourgeois desire expressed through education discourses is for a rational and democratic organization of labour. It is bourgeois desire that is projected onto and through the workforce, that I am examining here. To admit to the possibility of workforce competence in this context would challenge the ideology of merit and the legitimacy of a naturalized division of labour. Again, I'm not trying to argue whether or not the workforce is competent, or any more than I am concerned about management's competence. I am simply suggesting that the discursive division of labour is a crucial part of the construction and maintenance of class difference.

Conclusion

Ideas about autonomy and choice are central to notions of liberal democracy, and are held out as possibilities, that which is to be desired. I have said that the discourse of meritocracy is based on the idea of individual choice in a democracy. In this formulation, the individual is privileged over the "social." The idea of choice is central to the covert maintenance and control over the population. If people are free to choose their futures then they can also be held responsible for their choices. The individual is schooled to be self-regulating, or self-disciplining thus assisting in the possibility of covert control in the democratic system.

Individual "freedom" or "choice" are presented to workers, as that which is to be desired. For example, education discourses that I talked about earlier produce the idea that hard work will result in social gain. But the idea of freedom from coercion is a fantasy, an illusion (Walkerdine, 1990). There was a tradeoff or a "price" to be paid for the maintenance of the bourgeois order, for the idea that there could be an "autonomous" or free individual.

That is, the idea of the rational (bourgeois) individual is only possible by the suppression of

labour power, since the bourgeois order depends on that labour power to make it work:

> The price of autonomy is woman. The price of intellectual labour (the symbolic play of the Logos) is its Other and opposite, work. Manual labour makes intellectual play possible. The servicing labour of women makes the child, the natural child, possible (Walkerdine, 1990: 24).

Because women's or working-class labour is crucial for the possibility of autonomy

and "choice" in order to facilitate the capitalist order, then what this means is that there

cannot be choice. To present this as an option for everyone in the system is an "elaborate

fraud" (Walkerdine, 1990).

Ken Osborne writes that "the workplace, like the economic system generally,

continues to be the most fundamentally undemocratic institution in Canadian life"

(Osborne, 1994: 418). Workers are constantly faced with experience that contradicts the

message of choice. For example, the rise of post-war liberalism led to a humanistic

psychology that countered the widely held managerial belief of the time that understood

workers interests or "needs" as primarily economic (Holloway, 1984). Human-centred

psychology went beyond this model to acknowledge broader aspects of work and workers,

like work satisfaction, the social skills of managers and alienation from work. Maslow's

hierarchy of needs, for example, (a doctrine that was widely adhered to in the 60's and 70's

and still is in some management and labour education circles) viewed workers' needs as

involving higher-level needs like self-fulfillment when the basic material needs were met.

Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) suggest that the liberalism and self-actualization of the '60's

fell on deaf ears on the shop floor because it was so far removed from workers' experience.

As I have noted in previous chapters, and in this chapter, there is a downward

pressure on workers to conform to an ideal subject position that is held out to them through

bourgeois discourses. But they can never "measure up." The ideal subject position is paradoxical in that it embodies the problem that workers are required to perform in ways they are supposedly not capable of performing (Willis, 1977). It is an imposed middle-class fantasy. As Manicom (1988) writes in her study of teachers' work, teachers simultaneously describe working-class children as "knowing too little" and "knowing too much." These apparently paradoxical representations are only possible through a bourgeois fantasy of what constitutes an ideal knowledge base.

Scientific rationality is still dominant in contemporary workplaces and continues to place the workforce in a subordinate relationship. The production of the image of dumb factory workers, or an incapable working class, is a necessary part of producing and sustaining *bourgeois* identity. By representing labour as its opposite, bourgeois identity is produced as intelligent; controlled and rational. Bourgeois identity needs to continually produce this image of difference in order to sustain a particular image of itself. Bourgeois identity is required to misrecognize "sameness" in order to maintain its hegemony in relation to working-class subjects.

At this point in class identity politics it doesn't really matter what's going on at the "ground level." That is, it doesn't really matter if evidence can be constructed to the contrary because this is a discursive practice. The image is what matters. Bourgeois image production provides the terms, and the proof, of what is to be considered normal and what is not. As I have suggested in this chapter, when the evidence of "difference" fails, it is particularly important to produce the image of difference. The continual emphasis on merit, objectivity, rationality, and fairness creates the need for proof of difference.

CONCLUSIONS

Part I:

I began this thesis with a question, or more accurately with a pretty serious disgruntlement, about the refusal of some academics to acknowledge the prospect and operation of the "working class" as a socially constructed category. In academia, there certainly appears to have be some attention paid to the status of the working class: Is it declining? Has it lost its "industrial muscle"? Where have the images of a militant vibrant working class gone? And what does this mean for the struggle, for social transformation? These are the kinds of questions that social theorists have asked about the working class.

But as I pointed out in the first chapter, there seems to be relatively little interest in actually theorizing about the possibility and meaning of class difference, particularly in relation to the academy. There has been very little discussion about the actual imaging of the working class as a product of class relations itself.

The refusal of working-class identity in the academy was a critical starting point for this thesis. I was particularly concerned about the politics of working-class identity at the level of the academy. I was not referring to theorizing about "class consciousness" or to the formation of "working-class cultural forms." I was referring to the school as a meeting ground for actual bourgeois and working-class bodies. What happens when working-class bodies claim a working-class status in a context where the working class is supposed to have been schooled out or transformed in some way? I wanted to ask who is emancipated by schooling? One of the places to look, I thought (and I think it is an interesting comparison), was at the intersection between educational discourses and working-class adults. I tried to show how some education discourses construct and affect working-class

adults who are no longer "in" school, but who continue to be schooled through ideas about schooling.

What I found was that educational discourses produce a particular knowledge about the working-class subject. Bourgeois learning discourses imagine a working-class subject who is always learning but never learned; always becoming but never being. I described how the discourses of "learning" place workers outside of knowledge at a number of different levels. Rather than empowering workers, the new workplace literacy discourses highlight their inadequacy. Workers are situated as perpetually incapable of understanding or managing the conditions of their lives. There is never room for the working-class subject to claim an identity in this space.

I found that what is most important about these learning discourses is the images and connections they create about the working class. They set up the *idea* that there is an important relationship between learning and workers. Discourses of learning continually connect images of "workers" with "learning ability." This connection always creates questions about the abilities and capacities of workers. The connection is a negative one in that it suggests that being a worker is always about "becoming" but never "being" anything.

In this formulation the working-class subject is never able to claim ownership over knowledge or over the conditions in which that knowledge is to be acquired. The outcomes of this positioning are not nice. Working-class subjects are put in a position to *prove* their knowledge or their abilities to a rational bourgeoisie which has constructed the terms in which they are to participate. This does not mean that the working classes do not, or cannot, demonstrate or replicate some forms of bourgeois cultural power. There is also a problem of audience, of how, and whether or not, these performances will be recognized. One would

expect that the projection of questionable working-class capacities onto the grand social viewing screen to be quite powerful. I have suggested that this orientation makes it possible to justify the organization of an undemocratic workplace.

The discursive positioning of the working class outside of the rational does not mean that these terms of are not struggled over, or are stable, or uncontested. The issues of struggle and resistance have not been the emphasis of this thesis, but the thesis findings certainly relate to these issues. I realize that I could have said a range of things about how educational discourses are contested and struggled over. Some workers buy into some of them and refute others. Some don't care. It is the same for managers. What I wanted to do was to understand more about what kinds of images these discourses create, and how they position both working-class and bourgeois subjects discursively in relation to each other. I wanted to do this while at the same time recognizing that what is "dominant" may also reflect some of the views of the workforce. I have suggested that these discourses are all based on liberal humanist desires and assumptions about individual capacities and social mobility.[2b]

Part II:

The images of social actors produced through schooling are very powerful. But so are the images of "schooling" itself. The academy, or schooling, is a site of intellectual

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[2b]It is possible that working-class people may or may not want to learn and participate in this bourgeois cultural stance. The working classes may choose to participate in relative powerlessness as a cultural and political (survival) strategy. This may complicate the question of power, or "that which is to be desired" (e.g. social power over others, material goods, bourgeois cultural capital, educational capital, etc.) in class relations. The 'veritable hall of mirrors' (an expression used by Dunk, 1991 to explain working-class resistance within oppressive relations of power; also implied by Willis, 1977) comes up here because one can ask whether or not working-class "resistance" reproduces oppressive structures that the working-class participate in, or not.

power. At the same time the "school" has been represented as a means of social emancipation, as a way of reducing the economic and cultural disparities between classes, and as a generally good thing. Through my examination of education discourses, I found that at a broad level, "schooling" fails miserably in promoting a social "good." However, at the level of discourse, schooling does accomplish a kind of social emancipation. It produces the idea that there is social difference—but it is "out there"—and not "in here." Class difference is *overcome* by schooling. Being *working class* is overcome by schooling. Schooling *overcomes* the condition of being working class. Thus, schooling does change things and it does emancipate. But, as I suggested earlier, as a whole, schooling represents a social safety net for bourgeois subjects not for the poor and the working classes.

I am not suggesting that these images are produced in a social vacuum, or in the absence of some kind of struggle, or social consent. One of the concerns that was expressed by readers of earlier versions of the thesis was that I tended to produce an essentialist picture of class difference—one that potentially reproduces a version of fixed class relations, or that positions the working class in either a victimized/or sainted role— the very thing that I was trying to write against. I do not think that this is the case. I used examples from interviews with workers in order to help me explain some of the things that I wanted to say about the construction of the bourgeois gaze.

I did not intend to say that only bourgeois bodies look at the working class with a bourgeois gaze. Or that only bourgeois bodies participate in the construction of a bourgeois gaze. There is no doubt in my mind that this is not the case. (But then again, there *is* something essential about being managed, as opposed to managing; or doing maintenance and reproductive labour as opposed to conceptualizing what kinds of labour needs to be done and how it should be done. Isn't there? Don't "we" (the universal we) live in a social

world that is full of these kinds of differences? Credentialized schooling is an admission that this is the case.)

As I suggested throughout the thesis, one of the features of the bourgeois gaze is that curiously, it constructs social difference at the same time as it refuses it. My discussion on aptitude testing, for example, suggested that testing reproduces class difference using the very mechanisms that are promoted to rectify social difference and inequality. In order to understand this contradiction better, I chose to look at this as an identity maintenance device. Bourgeois identity produces itself against the images of difference that it also constructs.

In her discussion of modern identity politics, Wendy Brown described bourgeois identity as "phantasmic," in that its survival depends on keeping certain images, even contradictory ones, in place. Middle-class identity is, she said,

> . . . an articulation by the figure of the class that it represents, indeed depends upon, the naturalization rather than the politicization of capitalism, the denial of capitalism's power effects in ordering social life, the representation of the ideal of capitalism to provide the good life for all.
>
> Poised between the rich and poor, feeling itself to be protected from the encroachments of neither, the phantasmic middle class signifies the natural and the good between the decadent or the corrupt on one side, the aberrant or the decaying on the other. It is a conservative identity in the sense that it semiotically recurs to a phantasmic past, and imagined idyllic, unfettered, and uncorrupted historical moment (implicitly located around 1955) when life was good—housing was affordable, men supported families on single incomes, drugs were confined to urban ghettos (Brown, 1995b: 60-61).

If bourgeois identity is based on denial then it continually needs to construct contradiction as normal, and to either erase bothersome differences or produce them as abnormal.

One of my major tasks throughout the thesis was to keep this perspective in place. I described how it took me some time to come to a point where I could even realize doing

this project. I did not come to the project already able to articulate exactly what the problem was. I constantly had to reorient my analysis so I could think about what kinds of ideas were being constructed "about" the working class, rather than looking "at" the working class as an object of analysis. The needle of the compass kept wanting to swing "north." This in itself speaks to the power of schooling to discipline and to represent (and to discipline *through* representation). But by keeping focused on the idea of "gaze" and "perspective," and spending some time rooting around through these ideas, I found I was able construct some powerful analytic devices for myself. The concepts of discourse, imaging, identity, and difference were particularly useful. These are all tools that helped me to understand some of the recurring themes in the literature on the working class, and in the texts and data that I used in my analysis. For example, understanding the mental/manual dichotomy as a social construction (a false dichotomy) is much more interesting and intelligible if it is also understood as a bourgeois construction. Many of the contradictions of working-class identity also come to be more understandable when looked at though this lens.

Keeping focused on this particular "direction of the gaze" enabled me to understand why it is that self-claimed working-class identities (as I described in chapter one) seem to be systematically denied and rejected in the academy. As I wrote earlier,

> There is an assumption that class difference is educated "out" of individuals but this is in the direction of the ideal rational, well-rounded, well-traveled, well-read, well-fed, *responsible*, citizen. It is an invitation to "become like us".

It also helped me to understand how these types of "refusals" might operate across different contexts. Unlike the school, there is no assumption of sameness in the industrial workplace. The blue-collar worker has not been "educated" yet. In this context blue-collar workers are symbolically, and literally refused the right to claim knowledge or competency.

In my analysis of worker interviews, I suggested that the simple act of "knowing" things that lead to class mobility or even *thinking* that you know things, threatens class relations. As I suggested, it is the possibility of workers being seen as capable or having abilities that is at stake. They can be seen to have intellectual "capacity"; there is a possibility of becoming, but they can never actually become bourgeois. At the level of the workplace, this refusal surfaces in a violent physical imagery when claims to knowledge, or equality are made by working-class subjects. At the level of the academy, this refusal surfaces in blatant denial when claims to difference are made by working-class subjects. The ideals of knowledge, and knowing, are intimately bound up with class position. Bourgeois identity is constructed on the rationale that there are fundamental differences between those who conceptualize and those who carry out work. Bourgeois identity is threatened by the possibility that this picture is wrong.

Because the ideology of merit fails so badly at this point in class relations, it is utterly necessary to control the imagery of difference. As I suggested in the previous chapter "when the evidence of 'difference' fails, it is particularly important to produce the image of difference." Bourgeois identity needs to put energy into maintaining the image that everything is under control, even as the everyday world proves this to be problematic.

At a broad level this thesis has addressed some major issues about the purpose and function of education. Keeping focused on the direction of the gaze has helped me to think about the possibility that "progressive," or oppositional approaches to education may also be enmeshed in liberal humanist assumptions about human development, growth, and equality. Critiques of dominant bourgeois discourses, including this thesis, are also produced in and through bourgeois schooling, not outside of it. This raises a number of questions about research and theorizing about class difference and identity. The idea that

the discursive representation of the working class is an identity politics issue is one of the main contributions of this thesis to the literature on social difference. It seems as though the representation of class difference and identity is co mplex and pervasive, and a significant feature of schooling. These are issues that seem to be unresolved.

As I have introduced briefly in my thesis, it is possible that bourgeois refusal to acknowledge the contradictions and power differences involved in class relations has its roots in a long history of rational bourgeois identification. Bourgeois rationality is about schooling. It "schools" us with a desire to identify with certain kinds of images and not with others. It schools us to desire that which can't be had. It schools us to accept the social order as natural. It schools us to refuse our working-class identities.

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