

**CONTINUOUS LEARNING: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WORK,
SCHOOL, AND ADULT EDUCATION IN THE LIVES OF
FEMALE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS**

by

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**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Adult Education, Community Development
and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto**

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Education In The Lives Of Female Social Service Workers**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined the reasons why a group of female social services case workers returned to university to complete additional post secondary degrees, the meanings they ascribed to their experiences in the workplace, and the factors that influenced their decision.

Data was generated using qualitative methods, specifically participant observation, semi structured interviews, and activity/reflection logs. The discussion was grounded in adult education, career development, and social work practice literature.

Findings indicated that the decision to continue higher education was largely influenced by the women's experiences at work. The reality of the care they provided in a bureaucratic setting contradicted the notion of care that led them to the profession; thus, their jobs became a disappointment and a trap. Education was seen as the way to escape bureaucratic caregiving and their jobs as social service workers.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Objective

Since October 1996, I have been involved in a research study about female social service workers employed in welfare offices who have returned to university to complete additional post secondary degrees. The objective of the study was to determine the reason why they had returned to school and the factors they considered before making their decision. I hoped to find that there was a range of reasons why these women were returning to school, understanding that the meanings they ascribed to this action would also vary. For some women, it may have been a decision that came as a result of much reflection and introspection. For others, it may have been just the next step in their educational career, the step that would take them closer to their occupational goals. This thesis will explore how educational aspirations, employment realities, and domestic responsibilities contribute to the decision making process in which women engage when they decide to return to higher education as mature students.

My interest in this topic stems from my own experiences as a social service worker in a public welfare office. When I started working in the office a group of coworkers told me, "You're too intelligent for this job, you need to get out and do something else before you start building a family and get attached to the money. You'll get trapped - look at me." My friends and

family repeatedly encouraged me to aspire to higher occupational goals, and as a result, I made the decision to go back to school. I noticed that in the month of March and April when graduate schools informed applicants who got accepted there was a buzz in the air. In the office where I worked, I was one of the many social service workers who had applied to graduate school. I got accepted into OISE in March and I was scheduled to take a one year educational leave of absence beginning in September of 1996.

Rumors abounded suggesting that social service workers were returning to school or had applied for educational leave because they were afraid of losing their jobs. Some workers assumed that if you were on educational leave you would not be laid off because you were already off the payroll budget. Others suggested that those workers attending school were opposed to the legislative and structural changes that were happening in the social service sector; thus they were seeking new employment and needed better credentials.

Prior to sending in my application for school, my mother asked me, "Why are you leaving your good job to go back to school?" I explained to her that I feared I would soon lose my job because of changes in welfare legislation that decreased workers' caseloads and prompted the closing of two small satellite welfare offices. I was probably going to be cut in the next round of Conservative government cut backs. I thought it was better than I plan my future, rather than letting my employers plan it for me.

I had my own very personal reasons for returning to school to continue my education. At the same time, when I looked at my coworkers who were in school part time and working full time, I wondered, "Why are they doing this?" They read texts on their lunch breaks, they ran off to the library after work and went to evening classes twice weekly. I reasoned that there must be good explanations for why they returned to continue their education. There must be good reasons for enduring the stress of working full time, attending school and raising a family all at the same time.

In 1976, Helen Astin wrote about a cross section of mature women students engaged in adult education. Astin's (1976) largely quantitative study focused on the disparate educational experiences of female alumnae and students between the age of eighteen and seventy-five. McLaren (1985) and Hutchinson (1986) focused on women without previous post secondary education who were frustrated after working in numerous dead-end blue or pink collar secretarial jobs. Holland and Eisenhart's (1990) longitudinal study examined the experiences of female undergraduate students who were entering university directly from high school without any interruption in their academic career. Pascall and Cox's (1993) research about mature women students returning to adult education focused on women who returned to school after spending many years in the home raising children. Many of the women featured in these studies were out of the educational system for many years; moreover, they previously had no strong desire to complete any post secondary education. The women in my study differ in that some of them did

not spend much time out of the educational system. In addition, they all had previous post secondary degrees and were employed in white collar government jobs. Considering the differences in their educational attainment and employment status, would the factors influencing their decision making process and their educational experiences differ from the factors influencing women in earlier studies?

There are many contributing factors that may influence these women's decision to return as adults to education; however, I will focus on three. First, there are the elements related to their caring role as social workers in the bureaucratic environment of the welfare office. What are the social workers' perceptions of care and the personal and social value ascribed to their work? What is the effect of bureaucracy and power on the workers and their ability to provide care? How do the workers' experiences and perceptions of their stressful work environment affect them, and what mechanisms do they employ to cope with or "escape" their environment? What is the importance of their educational and employment goals in light of their desire to control their work and provide care? Second, there are the women's past and present experiences of post secondary education. What meanings do they ascribe to those experiences? What effect do their educational experiences have on their career choices? In light of their current occupational role and position, what is the importance of this second degree? What is the role of education at this stage in their life and career path? Third, there are the structural obstacles presented at work and in the

post secondary educational system. How do they negotiate their way through the difficulties in the work and school environment?

My desire to examine how social workers experience their work and create meaning has grown out of my own experience working as a social service worker in a welfare office. Historically, much of the scholarly writing about social workers focuses on their role, how they do their work, and their impact on clients (Sexton 1982; Whithorn 1984). Little has been written about how their position in the social service agency and their interactions with clients, peers, and managers impact on their own lives. Abel and Nelson (1990) note that "we have yet to explore how caregivers employed by formal organizations experience their work. What meanings do they construct from the services they render on the job" (p.12). By presenting the experiences of this group of social service workers and hearing what they have to say about their work and how it affects them, I hope to shed light on the meanings they construct from their practice of social work in a bureaucratic welfare office.

The provincial Conservative government , since October 1995, has enacted legislation that reduced welfare benefits to recipients and changed the funding of social services in Ontario. Since this time they have developed the Ontario Works (workfare) program which significantly changes the administration of social assistance in municipal welfare offices. Essentially, funding for social services has become dependent on the number of people registered in the Ontario Works program. According to the

legislation, all employable welfare recipients, those under sixty-five, not disabled or the primary caregivers of children 6 and younger, must be enrolled in the Ontario Works program. In addition, they are expected to be engaged in employment or educational training programs that will lead to their financial independence from welfare.

As a result of legislative changes, the current focus of municipal social service workers is to enroll welfare recipients in the provincial "Ontario Works" program. Productivity measures are being raised, and the processing of clients is becoming more routine in nature. The job is increasingly automated; thus, workers spend much of their time with the clients staring at the computer screen and filling out mandatory forms. The time allotted for workers to spend with clients in the office is tightly scheduled to optimize the use of interview booths. Consequently, more time spent inputting data into the computer means less time available to actually talk with clients about the social and financial challenges which affect their educational and employment goals.

Social assistance is now provided based on a business model where the welfare recipient is seen as an informed customer who is able to make choices that will lead to financial and social independence from welfare. In reality, however, choices are limited, and there are a host of physical, social, emotional, and financial obstacles which litter the road to independence.

It is important that we understand the impact legislative and structural changes have on the social workers who administer care. Changes to social

service delivery, like Ontario Works, affect the workers' daily lived experiences of their jobs and modify the meanings ascribed to those experiences.

Participant Selection and Profiles

Since I was previously employed in the welfare office as a social service worker, I had direct access to former coworkers whom I knew were attending school. I set the following criteria for all study participants: they had to have worked with the social service agency for four or more years; they had to be currently enrolled in and attending school; and the program had to be university level and lead to a second or third degree or certificate. Workers employed with the agency for over four years had permanent status and were not likely to be laid off while I was conducting my research. Of the seven workers I queried, five responded positively. It is the experiences of these female social service workers/university students which formed the basis for this thesis.

The women participating in my study have worked five or more years in the welfare office. They all have completed Bachelor of Arts degrees, and two have completed Bachelor of Social Work degrees. During my data collection period, in the winter of 1996, three women were completing Master of Social Work degrees, one was completing a Human Resources Training Certificate, and one was beginning a Long-term Care Administration Certificate program. The women identified themselves as either working

class or middle class. There were two African-Canadians and three Canadians of European heritage. The participants ranged in age from 28 to 38. Of the five participants, two of the women had children, three were single, one was divorced, and two were married. The following pseudonyms have been used to identify the participants: Sandy; Isabel; Sam (Samantha); Althea; and Denai.

Methodology

As a researcher, I was interested in both understanding the women's decision making process and the meaning of their action to return to school. Consequently, I approached my research methodology from the paradigm of phenomenology. Renata Tesch explains the phenomenological paradigm in the following way:

Phenomenological researchers study the ordinary 'life world': they are interested in the way people experience their world, what it is like for them, how best to understand them. In order to gain access to others' experience phenomenologists explore their own, but also collect intensive and exhaustive descriptions from their respondents... The researcher is open to themes that emerge [and]... finding commonalties and uniqueness in these individual themes allows the researcher to 'crystallize' the constituents of the phenomenon. The result is a description of the general structure of the phenomenon studied. (Tesch, 1990, 68)

I will use the women's narratives, diary entries, and notes from conversations to present how these women make sense of their experiences. The focus on the narratives allows the women to speak in their own voices to describe how they make sense of the world and what meaning they ascribe to their experiences and their actions. The purpose is to understand their

individual and localized experiences within the context of the larger social relations which frame them.

Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected using interviews, diaries, and field notes. I used more than one data collection method to compensate for weaknesses in any one method, and to ensure that my preconceptions did not direct the data and findings.

I completed one tape recorded in-depth interview, based on a phenomenological approach to interviewing, with each of the five participants. The interview was unstructured with only one question; I allowed the women to answer this and go in the direction that they felt best reflected their experiences and expressed how they made sense of these experiences. I asked the women to tell me why they were back in university now to complete an additional degree or certificate and what things they considered before deciding to go back? Before interviewing, I told them that there was only one interview question. Throughout the interview, I let them lead the discussion, but some participants gave very short formal answers. To aid conversation when it began to lag, I used a list of questions from an interview schedule I had devised (Appendix). Approximately one year after the initial interviews, I completed brief unstructured follow up interviews with all the participants to discover where they were in relation to the education and employment goals that they had set for themselves.

The second data collection tool was a seven day diary; I asked the participants to write their daily activities and thoughts as they related to work, school and family responsibilities. The diaries were to give insight into a week in their lives, their perceptions, and how they juggle work, school, and family commitments. I was especially interested in the type of things that they did, when they did them, and whether they did them individually or collectively. I asked them to include the time of the day that they got up , had their meals, left the house, and any other major activities. Finally, I asked them to include some of their thoughts and feelings as they went through the day. In order to clarify the worker's thoughts, I constantly compared the diary and the interview transcript to look for consistencies and inconsistencies. Where there were inconsistencies, I called the participants and clarified their meaning.

To triangulate my data collection I made field notes of any conversations that I had with the participants while conducting the study. I also wrote field notes when I visited the social service agency where they worked.

Biases

In order to surface my biases, I had a fellow researcher interview me using my interview question. This took place after I had already completed three of my five interviews. The purpose of the self interview was to

"bracket" or suspend my meanings and interpretations so that I could enter the world of each unique individual being interviewed.

Data Analysis

Having clearly identified my own meanings and interpretations, I was able to analyze the data looking for themes as they were expressed by the participants. Using a phenomenological approach to data analysis, I open coding on transcripts, diaries, and field notes. I made constant comparisons between the codes and the themes that emerged. Finally, there was a selection of major themes.

Ethical Issues

I had a professional work relationship with all the participants because I worked with them as a peer for two years; thus, I was privy to some general historical information about all of them. I had a social relationship with two of the participants; thus, I had access to information which they may not have told a stranger. In addition, I may have been told information as a "friend" and not as a "researcher."

In order to solve ethical issues, I employed various strategies to demarcate when I was speaking as a researcher and when I was speaking as a friend or coworker. I clarified which role I was taking when I initiated a conversation with them. For example, I called them at work during the day to ask research related questions. Any conversations we had in the evening or

at social events were not part of the research and I had to get their permission to use private information that I got in this manner.

Overview

Chapter one has reviewed the objective of this study and the research process. Chapter two will be a brief review of adult education and career development literature as it relates to women. I will consider how a women's initial education affects her aspirations and career choices. Chapter three will examine social work as a career choice. I will discuss the power dynamics in the struggle to professionalize social work and present a framework for analyzing the nature of care and stress in the bureaucratic social service office. Chapter four will begin the discussion of my findings starting with an analysis of the women's initial education and their subsequent career paths. Chapter five will present the women's narratives on the stress and contradictions of caring in a bureaucratic welfare office. I will consider to what extent their experiences of work influenced their decision and prompted their action to return to school. Chapter six will analyze the other experiences that these women considered before deciding to return to school. Finally, I will conclude with a summary of my findings and suggest how they add to the existing literature on caring in social work, women's career development, and adult education.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN, ADULT EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Women, Adult Education and Work

Adult education is an organized educational activity undertaken on a voluntary basis by adults, as young as 18, for the purpose of changing the individual or the society in which the individual lives (McLaren, 1985, p.19). Given this broad definition, adult education allows for a range of activities from interest courses at community colleges to full time professional programs at universities and private colleges. From this perspective, adult education includes learning that takes place in continuing education and higher education programs.

Historically, adult education programs provided a second chance to those whose previous education was seen as incomplete, or incompatible with new career and personal goals. If adult education gives learners a second chance and in Canada more women than men are adult learners what does this say about the initial education of girls and women in Canadian schools. Could it be that the traditional education of girls and women does not fully encourage them to develop clear and challenging academic and occupational goals?

In what follows, I will review previous studies and literature written about the education of women as it relates to their aspirations and career development. I will consider how women's initial educational experiences

affect their career choices, and how their careers, in turn, affect their decisions to return to school. I will discuss some of the reasons women give for returning to adult education. In addition, I will trace the impact of gender on professional education program choices and woman's status in the work place. I will discuss different career development models and theories of identity formation to show the changing purpose of adult education as women seek new roles and identities that challenge the gendered division of labour. Finally, I will analyze briefly the importance of adult education in the career paths of women in caring professions like social work.

Women's Education and Lower Career Aspirations

Presently, traditional conceptions of gender roles, discourses of romance, individualism, and meritocracy combine to rationalize why many women do not achieve their original educational and career goals. Is the educational system responsible for making selection errors; does it fail to recognize and support the abilities and aspirations of female students? Or, are the students responsible for their own low educational attainment and often misguided occupational goals?

Hopper and Osborn (1975) provide an interesting systems perspective for considering the obstacles that females face and the effect of these obstacles on their educational and career aspirations. They view the "educational system as engineering a process of continually 'warming up' and 'cooling out' the aspirations of the participants in order to achieve a

legitimate selection of individuals for the hierarchy of economic and status positions that society requires" (cited in Pascall and Cox, 1993, p.12). They suggest that in an efficient system there should not be any need for adult education. The selection process in the education system should have provided students with all they need to fulfill their role in society. However, after looking at the selection process of girls, they find that the education system is more prone to errors when selecting girls for their future roles in society. Talent and educational ability in girls, if not encouraged and properly directed to appropriate goals, leads to the 'cooling out' of girls' aspirations. Hopper and Osborn (1975) argue that:

It is ... relatively easy to cool-out those females who are rejected subsequently, not only those whose talent was not developed and recognized, but also those who have already received some selective education. Traditional conceptions of gender roles provide legitimate personal justification for not continuing within the system of formal education, and, thus, rejection is experienced as suitable and not unexpected. (p.135)

Holland and Eisenhart's (1990) study of black and white female students at two universities in the southern United States also found that the obstacles and contradictions found in the undergraduate experience in many cases led to decreased career aspirations. They concluded that despite the race and class differences among the female undergraduates, "many of them ended up at roughly the same place relative to the world of work and careers: with very little solid identification with a career, with lower academic and

career achievement than they had intended, and with lesser credentials and training than they had expected" (p.210).

Holland and Eisenhart (1990) suggest that the shift in educational and career aspirations happened as the women became more involved in the peer group which emphasized romance over books. Decreased career aspirations resulting from an emphasis on romance for some women was mitigated by a belief that they would marry a man with a good job and would not be the primary breadwinners supporting the family. Women either escape or are lured away from the university's academic discourse to a romantic discourse that stresses love, family, and social stability. Although Holland and Eisenhart recognize the importance of systemic impediments, their conclusions emphasize the culpability of women for their lower academic and employment aspirations.

Lorna Erwin's (1996) research on the career aspirations of women at the undergraduate level shows that, "significant numbers of even the most committed and well-prepared female students lower their education and career aspirations over the course of their undergraduate education" (p.237). Her analysis is significant because she recognizes the interplay of structural obstacles and individual ability in determining women's educational and career aspirations. Erwin's findings suggest that the discourse of merit and individualism in the university causes women to internalize difficulties due to structural obstacles as personal failures. They discount the importance of gender discrimination or competing financial and family interests in their

decision to lower their aspirations. Rather, they frame their reasoning for decreased educational and career aspirations in a discourse emphasizing “lack of motivation” and “inability to cope with the work” (Erwin, 1996, p.241). She concludes that female students are generally “ill prepared for the profoundly gendered nature of the occupational structures they hope to participate in. How they negotiate the contradictions and obstacles they confront will have a significant impact on their career identities and ability [and desire] to pursue their goals” (Erwin, 1996, p.234).

Whether women are cooled out, married off, or just unable to successfully negotiate the structural obstacle course that the university presents, their educational and career aspirations are lowered often leaving them dissatisfied with their career choices. As I discuss the initial educational experiences of the women in my study, I will examine whether their educational and occupational aspirations changed as undergraduates and consider where my findings concur or disagree with these theories.

Are Women’s Career Choices Limited by Their Initial Education?

Social reproduction theorists argue that women are educated for unpaid domestic work or low paying jobs and their differential schooling places them in a disadvantageous position in comparison to men (Deem, 1980; Walby, 1986). Deem (1980) suggests that women have limited occupational choices when they leave school because they have been “schooled into accepting a patriarchal class society” where because of the

sexual division of labour, women are relegated to the private domestic sphere (p.182).

Beechey (1987) has argued that, "the reasons why women constituted a distinctive kind of labour force did not lie in "natural" differences of strength and skill, as Marx had suggested, but in the sexual division of labour within the home" (p.9). Since women are primarily responsible for child care and husband care in the domestic arena, paid work takes a secondary position in their lives and they enter the labour market from this position of disadvantage. Consequently, women are in and out of the labour market depending on the demands of their domestic lives.

Pascall and Cox (1993) respond to the reproduction theorists by suggesting that education's role in reproducing a sporadic pattern of paid work for women is not clear. Many of the respondents in their study were career women and none of them suggested that their initial education was the reason why they were dissatisfied with their current occupations.

The Decision to Return to Adult Education

Pascall and Cox (1993) argue that the decision to return to adult education is a response to many diverse personal realities. For some women, returning to school is a way to escape financial problems stemming from low paying jobs. For others, the decision may be a response to personal crises like marriage break up or illness. In addition, some women perceive returning to adult education either as an opportunity for self

realization and intellectual development, or as an opportunity to study the things that are of interest but do not have career potential (p.74).

Hopper and Osborn (1975) suggest that, "adults who have left the labour market to return to further or higher education have done so primarily in an attempt to 'adjust instrumentally' to the difficulties they have experienced as result of having been 'selection errors'"(p.24). As previously discussed, women are often selection errors in the education system; thus, it is not surprising that they make up a large percentage of students returning to higher education.

Pascall and Cox (1993) argue that women's decision to return to education as adults is not based upon a deficiency in initial education, but is best understood by looking at the interplay of paid and unpaid work in women's lives. They suggest that, "careers are plainly affected by unpaid work and responsibilities... but decisions about being a housewife are also affected by job prospects" (Pascall & Cox, 1993, p41). Women, whether in domestic or public careers, face both internal and external pressure to fit their identities into patriarchal definitions of femininity. This pressure to fit into patriarchal notions of the feminine, encoded in stereotypical gender roles, causes dissatisfaction in both women's private and public lives.

Pascall and Cox (1993) conclude that women were not fulfilled in their domestic roles because they were unable to forge an identity based solely upon their roles as mothers or housewives; "they were unanimous in feeling the inadequacy of domesticity as a life's work and a source of identity" (p.58).

Pursuing careers in the public sphere and pursuing adult education give women a chance to forge new identities for themselves which are not solely constructed by their domestic roles.

For women in caregiving professions like social work, what they do in the work place parallels their domestic role in the private sphere. Their identity as social service workers is very different from their identities as mothers and wives, but their role as care givers functions in the same way. For the social service workers in this study, pursuing adult education may be an opportunity for them to enhance or expand their role functions at work.

Furthermore, women's participation in continuing education courses provides them with the confidence, direction and connections they need to pursue higher education and better employment. Hutchinson (1986) found that the tedium of women's daily home lives restricted their intellectual and social range, thus reducing their self confidence in their abilities which were not prescribed by their roles as caregivers and homemakers.

Astin (1976) found that women completing academic degrees had returned to school because of job dissatisfaction. At the time of her study, many of the employed women were in continuing education programs to get new jobs. A major reason women cited for returning to school was to "achieve identity and an sense of independence" (Astin, 1976, p.80).

Despite the advances made by women in the public arena, women in routine or professional public careers still report feeling "trapped by

discriminatory attitudes and practices” that place their public careers in a subordinate position to their domestic ones, (Pascall and Cox, 1993, p.59).

What Do I Study Now That I’m In University ?

Once women returned to adult education, it is interesting to note that they often chose to study courses that made them feel comfortable and competent. Astin (1976) suggests that many of the women in her study considered the suitability of the field of study they wished to pursue in relationship to their perceived abilities and personality. A few of the women stated that they chose a certain field because of previous educational experience and fewer still suggested cost and length of preparation time were major factors in deciding their field of study. Ultimately the field of study that women pursue, whether in high school or as adults returning to education, determines career options and marks their position in the labour market.

Currently, female undergraduate students make up the majority of Canadian full time and part time university enrollment, yet they fail to move into non-traditional subject areas like engineering or chemistry (see Tables A & B). Women are granted more undergraduate degrees than men, 57 percent to 43 percent respectively, yet they continue to dominate the arts, education, social work, and nursing (Statistics Canada, 1997). “The basic structure of Canadian society has not encouraged the participation of women in the scientific, technological and entrepreneurial fields and professions”

(Vickers, 1977, p.72). Traditional gender stereotypes may influence what women determine to be their abilities and interests. If a girl grows up hearing that, "Girls are not good in math and science," it is very unlikely that she will pursue an engineering career. She is not encouraged to trust her academic ability in math and science; thus, she does not feel competent and comfortable in that academic discipline or that occupational field. As Gaskell and McLaren (1987) suggests, there is a gendered division of labour that has its roots in earlier educational and socialization experiences.

The gender division extends beyond the university classroom to the labour market; thus, university educated women end up in low level jobs that fit traditional occupational gender typing. Currently, due to a sluggish employment climate, these women remain unemployed or under-employed after completing their first university degree. They have little opportunity for advancement; thus, returning to adult education is a chance to adjust the inadequacies of their initial selection process. If their career goals were unclear when they were undergraduate students, as returning adult students, they have the opportunity to get the education they need to fulfill their new goals.

Early research on Canadian women in higher education showed that there was less female participation in self regulating higher professions with an entrepreneurial orientation like law, medicine, architecture and engineering. Based on statistical data, Vickers (1977) concluded that women required higher academic qualifications than their male counterparts to

obtain entry into professional programs (p.70). Later research by Guppy, Balson and Vellutini (1987) suggests that there is no "evidence that employers require higher educational credentials for women than men" (p.188). However, ten years later, Guppy et al agree with Vickers (1977) findings that despite the additional professional qualifications women receive, "most of them will find their careers in salaried positions in institutional settings which result in lower status and lower levels of remuneration even with the higher professions" (p.82). In their study of the composition of Canadian universities, Guppy et al (1987) find that even in academic teaching positions, women are "concentrated in the lower levels of the profession" (p.185).

Career Development and Identity Formation

Historically, the notion of career development, individual growth resulting from productive work accomplished through a series of choices and adjustments, has only been discussed since the 1950s. Prior to that time, it was presumed that one made a career choice that was a lifetime commitment to a single occupation. If individuals stay in the same occupations for their entire productive lives and there are no technological advancements then there is no need for adult or continuing education. However, in the context of a career path, adult education provides an opportunity to gain new skills and encourages the development of new identities.

Minor (1989) writes that the idea of career development allowed psychologists to build on Freud's description of the healthy person as one who is able "to love and to work" and incorporate "the importance of work as a contributor to individual identity" (p.346). Consequently, Erikson (1963) suggested that identity formation through occupation choice is a major task of young adulthood. Super (1957) proposed a hierarchical stage model of career development which suggested that, "development occurred through a series of choice and adjustments as individuals sought to play roles that they considered appropriate for themselves" (Minor, 1989, p.347). Perry (1970) focusing on college students developed a stage model of cognitive development to explain initial career choices. In addition, Tiedeman and O'Hara (1963) described a stage model of ego identity differentiation and integration to explain initial and subsequent career choices.

David Tiedeman in his later research with Anna Miller-Tiedeman (1984) discussed "life as career." From this perspective, career is much more than the role that one plays as an employee, homemaker, or student; in the broadest sense, career is any activity that an individual finds fulfilling or productive. They suggest that one should build a career according to individual needs and find a balance between work roles, community involvement, family and other social relationships.

The stage models of career development are significant in that they were developed from research completed primarily on men. Thus, they are models that describe men's more predictable and linear career development.

The lack of research on women's career paths may be based on a rationale that most women do not have "careers" in the traditional definition of the word as productive work in the public sphere.

Women's Career Paths and the Changing Role of Adult Education

A woman's career path is a juggling act between private and public spheres; there is no single field of vision that allows them to follow the traditional male career advancement path which is focused and less discontinuous. In this sense, it can be described as a deviant career path that is a process of becoming and a negotiation of contingencies rather than, "a movement through standardized, institutionally prescribed stages in a formally ordered sequence" (Abrams, 1982, p.271).

Abrams (1982) suggests that there "are significant conjunctures of uncertain outcome and decisive moments at which the career is framed and structured one way or another" (p.272). His view of social reality as a process of structuring and becoming rather than an order and a structure that is fixed will be utilized when analyzing the respondents education and career decision making processes. This theoretical framework re-frames the traditional role of education in the career path suggesting that education does not have to occur at one fixed point in the career path, but can occur again and again in the process of becoming.

As the concept of career changes, notions about what constitutes continuing education has also changed. Jean O'Barr (1989) suggests that,

“the evolution and diversification of continuing education programs, running the gambit from liberal education programs for masters’ degrees in elite institutions to in-house half-day training programs at places of employment, meant that returning women came to understand education more as a process than as a one time acquisition” (p.92). This leads to a new paradigm of continuing education where the opportunities for learning are truly ongoing and women will enter and re-enter the educational arena according to their immediate and emerging personal and professional needs.

Women Choosing Careers: The Second Decision Making Process

Three recent models for career choice decision making have been put forth by feminist researchers (Astin, 1984; Gottfredson, 1981; Hackett and Betz, 1981). Astin (1984) proposes a model for career choice that is influenced, by sex-role socialization, open opportunity structures, and the individual motivation to work. Hackett and Betz (1981) suggest an alternate career choice model that is influenced by how capable women perceive themselves to be in certain activities or professions. Gottfredson's model (1981) suggests that the image that an occupation has and a person's self concept determine occupational preferences. These preferences along with perceptions about accessibility and opportunity structure determine the range of occupational alternatives available to women.

The models for women's career choices put forth by feminist researchers suggest that women's career choice are influenced by the

socialization process and job opportunity structures. They argue that in order to expand women's career options there has to be changes in how girls are socialized to increase their exposure to non-traditional female role models, change perceptions about gender typing occupations, and encourage the development of a healthy self concept which views women as capable and equal to men.

In addition, there must be structural changes to compensate for biases in hiring practices that impede women's advancement. Differential pay scales between men and women at the same level in the organization, and the scant presence of women in the higher echelons of the organizational structure indicate the presence of practices that favour those without primary responsibility for family relationships and domestic maintenance. In difficult economic cycles there are periods of increasing credentialism which disadvantage women who leave the labour market (for pregnancy, child rearing, or elder care) and seek re-entry, as compared to those whose occupational experience is more continuous. Whether discrimination against women along the career ladder is seen as a finite point in the impermeable "glass ceiling," or as a process similar to the game of snakes and ladders, it is a structural barrier that can be overcome by changing daily practice in the workplace and in the classroom (Minor, 1989; Heward, 1994).

The Occupational Paper Chase and Higher Education

In traditionally female career fields, like social work and nursing, there is the possibility for women to be relegated to the lower occupational levels as the field gains professional status. The professionalization of social work has caused an increase in necessary academic credentials; women have been able to attain these credentials, yet they remain responsible for front line work while men remain the administrators and policy makers.

The professional status of social work has changed; thus, the traditional career path of social workers has changed. Previously social workers only needed a Bachelor in Social Work (BSW) degree to get a good job. Social workers who want to make decisions about caregiving and control the quality of their care now need a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree; thus, higher education has become a central part of any career advancement for female social workers. The "paper chase" is not limited to the social work profession, but as Guppy et al (1987) suggest it is the result of a tighter job market which in turn increases the demand for access to higher education.

Women return to adult education for many reason, and it is my goal to let this group of female social service workers express their reasons for returning to school in their own voices. Some may have had unclear educational and occupational goals when they completed their first undergraduate degree; thus, they have ended up in dead end jobs that provide little stimulation and challenge. Others may change their occupational goals after being in the workforce for many years or after

raising and family and their previous education is not sufficient for them to achieve their current goals. As women enter the private sphere and form professional identities for themselves as workers, adult education may provide them with the credentials necessary to challenge the gendered division of labour in the work place.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL WORK: THE STRUGGLE FOR PROFESSIONAL STATUS AND THE STRESS OF CARING

My analysis is informed by both adult education and social work literature, and now I will turn my attention to a literature review focusing on women's experiences and position in social work. Tracing the history of social work in Canada, I will explore the importance of power and autonomy as driving forces in the struggle to professionalize social work. Next, I will examine the concept of caring and consider how it changes as it moves from the domestic sphere to the public sphere. Specifically, I will analyze how caring in bureaucratic settings fits within a hierarchical structure that reinforces women's subordinate positions in the social service agency. Finally, I will analyze the impact of stress on caregivers and present possible theories for considering stress.

A Brief History of Social Work Professionalization in Canada

Carol Baines' (1990) historical analysis of social work in Canada suggests that social work grew out of an ideology of maternal feminism persuading women to enter the public sphere to provide the caring functions that they learned and practiced in the private sphere. From its inception in the women's organizations like the YWCA and Women's Missionary Societies, social work has reinforced the "lady bountiful" image of women as tireless caregivers. Baines (1990) argues that women's efforts to gain social

power were rooted in “a commitment to provide service to marginal populations” (p.38). In contrast, during the late nineteenth century, white middle class males gained social power by professionalizing their occupations making claims to specialized knowledge and expertise, thus gaining a monopoly on services. Hearn (1985) argues that after men monopolized the traditional professions they continued to take control of the semi-professions taking over leadership and management positions in social work, nursing and teaching. Consequently, a male ethos of efficiency, based upon scientific management principles, and the sexual division of labour within a hierarchical structure began to pervade social work practice.

In 1915 Abraham Flexner argued that “social work collaborated with other professions but had no specific area of expertise or knowledge and therefore lacked the necessary attributes for a profession” (cited in Baines, 1990, p.57). Since that time, the leaders of social work have ardently pursued professional status for the occupation.

The struggle for professional status is a struggle for power. Allen (1986) argues that the defining characteristic of a profession is monopolization. In comparison, Eric Freidson suggests that the defining characteristic of a profession is, “[the] organized power of workers themselves to control the terms, conditions and content of their work” (cited in Allen, 1986, p.4). Professional status in this sense connotes power and autonomy. Professional status supports social workers' beliefs that they have expertise in a distinct body of scientifically based knowledge which

informs their practice. In a “woman dominated occupation, professionalism promises to use the social value of science to escape class and gender restrictions in the workplace” (Allen, 1986, p.5). However, as Ehrenreich (1985) suggests, because of its roots in volunteerism and maternal caregiving, social work continues to be seen as low status, low paying women’s work. Attempts to professionalize social work only serve to reinforce existing gender based hierarchical structures that gives prestige and higher salaries to administrators while the bulk of the predominantly female front line staff remain undervalued and underpaid.

Social Work Reform and the Status of Social Service Workers

Mary Lagan (1994) writing about Conservative government changes to the welfare system in England, similar to the ones currently being made in Ontario, suggests that restructuring social services to fit within a free market, privately funded model reinforces the hierarchical sexual and racial division of labour within the field. She notes that “90 percent of directors are male and more than 70 percent of area officers are men... while 74 percent of social workers and 90 percent of social work assistants are women” (Lagan, 1994, p.76). Similar to Britain, the composition of front line social service staff in Ontario is predominantly female. Moreover, as Baines et al (1990) suggest, “the incorporation of caring services into the welfare state has produced a hierarchical bureaucracy and a division of labour that reflect the traditional demarcation of roles in families. In semi-professions like social

work and nursing, women provide direct service and are placed in subordinate roles under male managers" (p.27).

Caring

Caring has been defined as "people work" (Pascall, 1986, p.70). However, it has rarely been recognized as work because caring is perceived as a "natural" part of women's relationships with others; thus, the labour of love that caring represents is rendered invisible in the workforce. The construction of caring as a natural part of women's lives is further complicated by the reality that most caring takes place within the home - the "natural" domain of women. It is redefined when caring responsibilities are shifted from the familial domestic domain to institutions, government, or community agencies in the private sector. Graham (1983) suggests that this caring in public agencies is "both caring as feeling and the transaction of goods and services" (cited in Baines et al, 1990, p.15). Historically, in the Canadian context, poorly paid women have been largely responsible for the care of vulnerable populations. I suggest that we cannot analyze the social and psychological impact of caring on the lives of women without also considering the economic reality that stems from the gendered division of caring both in the home and in the social service sector.

Social Work, Caring and Bureaucracy

Many of the caregiving professions have been gender-typed as women's work. Specifically, women are over- represented in lower level

social work positions forming a new section in the female job ghetto (Hacker, 1983). The gender-role association of social work as women's work in Canada grows out of the gendered division of labour in the home. Epstein (1970) has argued that expressive tasks which include helping, nurturing and empathizing have traditionally been associated with the domestic labour that women perform in the home. Thus, the traditionally female work that women in caring professions perform may be seen as a parallel to their domestic role in the household (Fisher 1990). Viewed from the perspective of the public/private dichotomy, "work in the public realm offers an escape for women - a way to become a citizen, a person, a worker who controls her own labour power" (Fisher, 1990, p.109). However, if women escape the domestic realm only to enter a female job ghetto they may soon attempt to escape again (McLaren, 1985; Campbell 1993).

Fisher and Tronto (1990) provide a feminist framework for defining and understanding the nature of care in bureaucratic systems. A feminist approach to caring differs from traditional approaches in that it seeks to, "provide an analysis of the ideological context that shapes the relationships between the cared for and the carers and identifies strategies allowing women choices and control over their lives" (Baines et al, 1990, p.29). Fisher and Tronto (1990) suggest that caring occurs in four intertwining phases:

Caring about involves paying attention to our world in such a way that we focus on continuity, maintenance and repair. **Taking care of** involves responding to these aspects - taking responsibility for activities that keep our world going. **Caregiving** involves the concrete tasks, the hands on work of maintenance and repair.

Care-receiving involves the responses to the caring process of those toward whom caring is directed. p.40 (emphasis mine)

These phases of caring are not orderly stages, but they intertwine chaotically and in contradictory styles throughout the caring process.

In bureaucratic settings caring is distorted because it grows out of a political process that precludes control by care-receivers. In this context, caring is routinized and fragmented so that caregiving is separated from taking care of. Front line social workers do the hands on work, but policy makers and legislators have already defined the available resources and the scope of action that interventions can take. "Instead of directing attention to clients needs, the political process that creates the bureaucracy defines what it will care about and shapes caring to the agency's changing purposes and need for self-perpetuation" (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p.48). Caregivers may have to "break the rules" because what they and the care-receivers characterize as caring stands outside the scope of action defined by policy makers.

Power in the Social Service Agency

Champion (1975) states that, "all organizations, regardless of their size and shape, have patterns of authority which specify functional inter-relations between superiors and subordinates, and that individuals occupying authority roles share the common characteristics of "the exercise of power, decision making, or influencing the behaviours of lower level participants in

the organization to varying degrees" (cited in Cann, 1987, p.14). Within the welfare office, provincial legislators and policy makers occupy the top authority role, followed by managers, then social workers and finally the clients. This wide distribution of power allows it to operate "everywhere in a continuous way" thus enhancing its effectiveness and efficiency (Foucault, 1979, p.80).

Moffat (1996) defines and conceptualizes power as it exists in the social service office using post-structuralist theory. His framework is based on Foucault's concept of disciplinary power and an examination of Bentham's panopticon structure. Moffat (1996) states that, "power is a complex strategy of relations within a society. Each of the power relations and the strategic manoeuvre is neither inherently good nor bad but each is dangerous" (p.12). For Foucault (1979) discipline is "the specific technique of power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (p.170). Social workers who regulate their behaviour and social work practice to obey the legislation, policies and procedures of the welfare office are both the objects of discipline and the instruments of its exercise. Not only do social workers regulate themselves, they also regulate their clients' actions to fit within the parameters of legislation and social policy.

Power in the social service agency is also exercised through physical architecture. The panopticon is an architectural form which allows constant supervisory surveillance. As such, it operates as a technology of

power in the welfare office. Moffat (1996) describes Jeremy Bentham's panopticon as:

a jail or place of punishment which would economize and make more effective the exercise of power. There are two central features to the panopticon; the central tower and a peripheral building which surrounded the tower. The tower was to be constructed so that windows faced the inner ring of the peripheral building. The peripheral building was to be divided into cells which extended the width of the building. At either end of the cell was a window, the interior window was situated so that it was in line with the windows in the tower. A supervisor would be placed within the central tower and those who were to be supervised, were placed into each cell. The people to be supervised could be criminals, patients, workers or paupers.... The cell was back lit by light from outside the building. With the aid of the back lighting the supervisor could observe the movement of the inmate to the smallest detail and with the greatest precision. pp. 7-8

Moffat (1996) has argued that the design of the interview rooms where the clients and social workers interact is suggestive of the panopticon.

Management offices are in the middle of the welfare office and the interview booths form a circle around the periphery. There are windows on each booth, at eye level, which allows managers to peer in and observe the interaction between workers and clients.

In addition, the design of the study participants' desk area is suggestive of a panopticon. A team of workers sit in an open concept area with cells, containing three desks, encircling the manager's office. There are no partitions and no privacy. Managers' offices have doors and large windows with horizontal blinds so they are able to look out and observe their team, but the team can not see them.

Moffat's suggestion that the welfare office is designed similar to a panopticon may shed light on why some of the participants spoke about "escaping" their jobs. Taking caring from the domestic to the public sphere is an attempt to make it visible. However, care is transformed when it exists in a bureaucracy, and it is this version of care that is visible and objectified in the welfare office. The participants escape from the surveillance of the welfare office and its bureaucratic form driven version of care parallels, on some levels, women's "escape from domestic, that is, caring work" (Fisher, 1990, p.111). It is escaping from care that one no longer finds fulfilling.

Social Work, Stress and Coping Mechanisms

Greensberg and Valletutti (1980) argue that human service practitioners, like social workers, are exposed daily to harassing incidents that diminish their ability to cope with stress. " The humanistic element of [social work] jobs, such as the dedication of the individual and the assumption of responsibility for others, combined with the more tangible elements, such as long hours, low pay, and limited advancement make the study of stress vital" (Greensberg and Valletutti, 1980, p.9). They conclude that human service practitioners vulnerability to stress may result in job burnout, or in more severe cases it may result in mental and physical illness.

A 1984 study by the Canadian Mental Health Association found that social service workers have high levels of burn out. In addition, a

government study of public sector employees found that, "38.5% of the women, compared to 26% of men, experienced too much negative stress" (cited in Wigmore, 1997, p.33). There is also a tendency for those at the bottom of the government hierarchy to experience more stress because they tend to have less control over their work; their work goals and expectations change with each inauguration of a new government. The participants in my study are both social service workers and low level public sector employees, as such they are particularly at risk for job burnout due to stress.

There are many common stressors and a few that are unique to the daily working conditions of human service practitioners like social workers. A high degree of stress comes from the workers' lack of participation in decision making processes that determine the scope of their work (Greenberg and Valletutti, 1980; Wigmore, 1997). Although social workers often assume responsibility for the care of other people, their ability to act in the best interest of their clients is limited by policy and legislation that have been set, without their consultation, by administrators far from the front lines of social work practice. A source of stress that Greenberg and Valletutti consider unique to human service practitioners is the extent to which they are exposed to unknown dangers and professional risks. In the social service office unknown dangers run the gamut from clients with highly contagious viral infections coughing on a worker in the confines of the small interview booth to verbal abuse, and the threat of physical violence (Stellman, 1977).

In terms of social work practice, social service workers must act on determinations, sometimes against their own inclinations, that clients are ineligible for funds and subsidies that can have a great impact on their lives. Other than workload issues and staff shortages, some social workers suffer from stress as a result of disillusionment with the profession. Instead of providing direct service to people in need, many social workers find that they are “pushing paper” and coordinating services. Disillusionment with the profession as a result of their limited ability to provide direct service is further exacerbated when government funds are reduced and services are cut (Greenberg and Valletutti, 1980; Wigmore, 1997). Considering the amount of stress that is part of the study participants’ daily experiences at work, what part does stress and burn out have in their decision to return to school?

From a theoretical perspective there are two major formulations on work stress, coping and women’s psychological adjustment. Wethington and Kessler (1993) summarize these theoretical positions in the following way:

The first position is based on the role-stress (or conflict) perspective, which argues that the combination of family and employment demands creates overloads (more demands than one can handle) and role conflicts (the perception that role demands in one area affect the adequacy of one’s role performance in another area). This increased exposure to stress is thought to create higher psychological distress among women workers (Coser & Rokoff, 1971). This distress is presumed to come about because the buildup of competing demands on time and energy overwhelms most women’s individual coping capacities at work and at home.

The second is based on the role expansion perspective which argues that multiple roles have positive effects on health and well being.... Alternative resources [increased exposure to social and

personal situations that enhance successful coping, such as social support, personal validation, and opportunities to develop self-efficacy] provided by multiple roles outweigh [negative] stressors.
p.271

Both positions have validity depending on social situational and individual factors, and these are the two positions predominantly used to explain empirical research findings (Bolinger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1990; Tiedje, Wortman, Downey, Emmons, Biernat, & Lang, 1990, cited in Wethington & Kessler, 1993). These two theories will guide my analysis of findings related to work and family stress as they emphasize the impact that stress has on the individual identity and psyche. The shortcoming of using these two theoretical positions is that they place too much emphasis on individual responsibility for stress management thus ignoring the necessity for structural and organizational changes that will reduce both workplace and family stress for all workers. I suggest an analysis informed by an acknowledgment of the important role of systemic changes in alleviating stress, yet cognizant that the individual must make personal changes that will reduce their individual stress.

CHAPTER FOUR

INITIAL EDUCATION AND CAREER CHOICE

University and Employment

The following discussion of findings will be informed by a phenomenological approach which allows the participants to give meaning to their own experiences. As a researcher, I acted as a conduit through which their interpretations of the events in their lives and the meanings they ascribed to those events came to light. Comparisons will be made with existing qualitative and quantitative studies relevant to the findings.

The women in this study, although they came from different class and racial backgrounds, all completed undergraduate degrees in predominantly female study disciplines. Many reported that as a result of their course selections, they were limited in their occupational choice after completing their first degree. In what follows, I will trace the educational attainments of the participants and their ensuing occupational choice noting the similarities and differences in their stories. Furthermore, I will cite some of the benefits of the workers' jobs and consider how much bearing employment benefits had upon their decisions to stay in their jobs.

Sandy completed a BA in child studies in 1986 and found that as an undergraduate she lacked direction and was not prepared for the realities of the job market when she left school. This echoes Erwin's (1996) findings that, " in educational institutions success and failure are seen as the

products of personal motivation, talent, and effort" (p.243). Failing to recognize how gender influenced their educational choices and how it affected the perceptions of their abilities, "they are ill-prepared for the profoundly gendered nature of the occupational structures they hope to participate in" (p.243). In reference to her first degree, Sandy said:

My first [degree] was a joke. It was something you did after high school and everyone thought you were smart. And you were probably in the wrong program anyway, but you were in University and you went to the classes that you like and you usually got an A, and you didn't go to the classes you didn't like and you usually got a D. And you could always tell because you had one absence versus 60 absences, and it was like who cares. As long as I came out with a BA, I thought oh yeah I can get a job I'm a university graduate, and then no one will hire you. Whoa, rude awakening.... I was a child studies major and anything to do with children other than day care, which I still wasn't qualified for because that was ECE [Early Childhood Education]. I didn't have ECE. The children I had been trained on were 6 and older. I could either go on further in the post-secondary thing - teachers college. Or there's really not a lot for you to do other than being someone's helper in a child care unit of some type which isn't what I wanted to do. So it's always been you need another degree to do what you want to do.

Although Sandy had a university degree, she was only qualified to get a job at the bottom level of the social service sector as a low paying low status helper in a day care. Sandy's occupational aspirations lowered over time, moreover, her initial educational aspirations to complete her Ph.D. and open her own psychology practice seemed increasingly unrealistic. Consequently, she opted for working in one low paying secretarial position after another. It is interesting to note that she did not follow up on her initial

career aspirations, but she accepted her occupational position for a period of time and began to build a family.

I used to always hope to open up some kind of practice doing something. Back then it wasn't that big a deal. It was like okay so I don't get a job, I could do an Administrative Assistant job or something because I could type very quickly, do computers and stuff like that. That's what got me through University. So I did that, got pregnant, worked out great always had a job, always did something. Till you start working in jobs that you have any aspirations to be and you realize boy I got to get back on track here.

Even though she had a University degree, Sandy could only get secretarial jobs; this is the reality of the gendered occupational structure that women participate in (Erwin, 1996). Like the some of the female students in Holland and Eisenhart's study, Sandy's frustration with academia and employment led to lower career aspirations and her involvement in the romantic discourse of men, marriage and child-rearing. "As [her] career identity eroded, [her] focus on romantic relationships increased" (Holland and Eisenhart, 1990, p.213).

Sam completed a liberal arts degree at university and then she took over 10 years away from school to raise a family. Sam admitted that when she completed her first degree, she did not have an occupational goal, she just took courses that interested her. After completing her first degree, Sam worked as a low level administrator for the provincial government for two years and then she began her employment as a social service worker over six years ago. Until she decided to go back to school, Sam accepted her

limited position at work and had looked for and found gratification in her role as a mother.

Isabel completed her first university degree in the social sciences after spending a few years in the food and beverage industry. She also did not have an occupational goal while attending university; she just knew that it was better than the “dead end job” in the food and beverage industry.

Althea and Denai both completed their first degrees in the social sciences. Denai went straight into the Master of Social Work program as soon as she finished her undergraduate degree. Although her educational goals were clear, Denai was not sure what she wanted to do once she finished her second degree. In comparison, Althea had clear educational and occupational goals which she adhered to while in university:

When I graduated the first time, from my first degree, I always wanted to do my masters. Actually, I was going to go back to do my masters in education and counselling, and decided to work for a bit first. And then decided that no, I didn't want to focus solely on counselling. There were some other things I wanted to work on, so I thought a masters in social work degree would get me where I wanted to go.... [I had to do the] bachelors [in social work]. I had no thought towards going, I just knew it was a stepping stone to get to where I wanted to go.... I want to do work in social policy.

Women often complete their first degree without much modeling and support to encourage them to consider professional occupations (Astin, 1984). As a result of inadequate support for undergraduate female students they often leave university with lower educational and occupational aspirations and expectations. Among my respondents, Althea and Denai

were the exceptions; they did not lower their academic and occupational goals. They acknowledged that their current occupation as social service workers was just a stepping stone on their career ladder. For Isabel, Sam and Sandy, without clear academic and occupational objectives disappointment and job dissatisfaction were imminent.

Although all the women in this study stated that they were dissatisfied with their jobs - they remained. They stated they wanted to escape the limitations, pressure and potential abuse of providing social services in an bureaucracy, yet they remained and attempt to provide care to those in need.

As Denai stated, "considering what we do, it's good money." The money Denai worked for allowed her to pay off student loans and save for her future. Sam and Isabel agreed that the money was good to start, but they had not gotten a raise in five years; they did not see any hope for a raise or bonus in the climate of government cut backs that existed. Althea said that she stayed because most social service agencies offered short term, low paying contracts without benefits. For those women with families, the job was one they could combine with raising children. The hours were predictable and let them get home in time for dinner, and it was possible to take vacation time when the children were out of school. Sandy and Denai were more appreciative of the agency's ability to give them unpaid leave without jeopardizing their employment. Furthermore, Sandy, Denai, and Althea had their tuitions reimbursed by the agency while they were in school.

These three women were actively job searching, yet they stated that they wanted to stay employed as social service workers while they were in school.

Although the job was a source of stress and dissatisfaction for the women, it was familiar and it did not require “a hundred percent” of their energy. Like the women in Pascall and Cox’s (1993) study, these women acknowledged the social and financial rewards of their job. It was this recognition which provided a tension to counter balance the dissatisfaction and stress they felt as caregivers in a bureaucratic setting.

CHAPTER FIVE

STRESS AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF CARING IN A BUREAUCRACY

Contradictions

As Fisher and Tronto (1990) suggest, caring about human needs is an activity that changes with the contexts of the care situation. These contexts, "involve power relations that affect the content, definition, distribution and boundaries of caring activities" (Fisher and Tronto, 1990, p.40).

Consequently, in bureaucratic settings the four intertwining phases of caring: caring about, taking caring of, care giving, and care-receiving unfold in a sometimes chaotic manner leading to contradictions in the workers' and clients' experiences of care.

In the following section, I will examine the contexts of care in a bureaucratic social service agency and discuss how certain forms of stress become an integral part of the caring process.

Workers spoke about the contradictions of welfare legislation as something written to provide care, yet, according to their daily experiences, it functioned to limit care and their ability to act as caregivers. They shared their perceptions of what care entailed for them and how they felt conflicted in their roles as "paper pushers," "welfare cops," and social service workers. Accordingly, the workers discussed what they viewed to be the value of their work and how their perceived contribution to society affected their self esteem and their self worth. Contradictions between what the workers

believed their roles were in the agency and what others perceived their roles were led to stress due to role conflict. In turn, this conflict led to potentially unhealthy coping mechanisms like self dissociation and the splitting of selves to maintain some form of “dignity” and “sanity” while at work. Finally, the workers revealed the contradictions between their feelings of power over the client, and their feelings of powerlessness in the face of government and management changes to the daily functions of their jobs.

Fragmented Caring and Accountability

Caring in bureaucracies is fragmented so that the front line workers who provide caregiving are not responsible for taking care of initiating and maintaining caring activities. Taking care of someone requires that a worker spends time with them and knows their situation in detail so they can intervene appropriately. Thus, the stress of daily interactions with others is an integral part of taking care of someone (Greenberg & Valletutti, 1980) . Fisher and Tronto (1990) have argued that taking care of someone or something means you have assumed responsibility for them and are accountable for the consequences of your actions. Taking responsibility for the well being of others is another source of stress. It is the reason why many people are attracted to human service professions, yet is also the reason why so many social workers “burn out” because they have reached their limit as to how much they can care and remain emotionally intact throughout the day.

For those social workers who want to provide caregiving, and 'take care of' people and situations, the legislation, policy and procedure of the bureaucratic welfare office puts limits on what they can do. As a result, caregivers may have to "break the rules" in order to really take care of clients' needs.

However, for others, who do not want to care about clients' needs, it is possible to avoid being held accountable for the quality of their care.

Isabel states that, "If you're working for somewhere like social services, if you screw up who cares?" There is no sense of personal accountability for action, or inaction, because the bureaucracy will continue to work even if you don't. Sandy supports this when she suggests that, "One of the good reasons for working for welfare [is you can] just pretend you're asleep half the day." Denai further suggests that:

At social services you don't really have to be on the ball to do your job {laugh} right. Not to say that you don't function properly doing your job right, but you could come in and you wouldn't have to be all that alert and on top of the game.

The workers' comments indicated that everything was so structured and regulated in the welfare office that they did not really have to be alert while on the job. There were no reprimands for falling asleep at the wheel. This acknowledgment stemmed from a belief that they would not be held accountable if they failed to help people. They would not be held responsible if they chose not to care about, or for, their clients due to their own burn out from work place stress. As Denai suggested, certain aspects of

care were neither part of their job function, nor part of office policy and procedure:

The purpose of the organization is to provide financial assistance and to assess ongoing eligibility for that assistance. It's not to look at the individual from a systemic perspective and determine the different kind of difficulties that exist and how you can intervene to alleviate or facilitate anything. That's not the purpose of the organization; it's just one aspect of difficulty that the person is having, which is the alleviation of financial distress. I wouldn't be considered a good case worker, because that's not the job that the organization has provided. That's not the function of the job. The job is just to provide income maintenance. It's not really to provide counselling to people... Because of the kind of function that I have at work, it wouldn't have been my place to ask [clients] what their [other] conditions are, so I wouldn't have understood the whole picture as to what is going on with this person.

The rule and regulations of the bureaucracy can provide workers with an "out" if they do not want to care, or are unable to care in a manner that they deem necessary. It allows workers to distance themselves from stressful situations when they are unable to really assist their clients. Even in situations where they are responsible for inadequate care, because of the nature of the bureaucracy, workers can shift accountability from themselves to make the legislation and the policy accountable for inadequate care. This was cited as one way to reduce stress when customers were threatening or yelling at them because of the quality of care they provided.

Perceptions of Care and Job Dissatisfaction

The social workers in this study appeared to be generally disillusioned with their job because it focused only on the financial aspect of care giving.

They did not perceive income maintenance as really providing care. When they started working at the welfare office they assumed they would be doing social work and helping people with other aspects of their lives beyond processing a cheque.

However, the fragmentation and routinization of bureaucratic caregiving limited their ability to intervene and counsel. It reduced the job to cheque distribution, record keeping, and assessing clients' credibility and eligibility. As Isabel indicated, you were so busy "pushing paper" and being suspicious of clients' "stories" that you did not have the time or energy to address other social issues which limited their ability to be financially independent of the welfare system:

It was really weird, it was like, I'd say things to people like, "I don't believe you" [gruff voice] like that you know. And I'm thinking oh my god, this is not who I am, this is not what I'm about, this is not what I envisioned this job being. 'Cause of course everybody comes in with the thought that, 'oh you know, tra la, I'm going to save the world, and blah blah blah, and it's going to be wonderful.' Not realizing that all you are is a glorified paper pusher, and an income maintenance officer, you're not doing any social work because you don't have time, you just don't.... I thought that we were there to help them with, you know, lots of other aspects of their lives, besides just giving them the cheque every month. Cause giving somebody a cheque every month isn't doing them any favours.... I think that that's where the real work has to happen, but it's not happening. I mean in rare cases it is.

Isabel's statement revealed her dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the reality of her job. She was not able to care in the manner that she believed would really assist her clients. According to her definition of care, helping clients solve social and emotional problems is what constituted real

work. Thus, she felt that she was not doing real work. She defined caring as interventions that addressed more than a client's financial needs.

Sandy, like Isabel, acknowledged the limitations of her role as a social worker in a bureaucracy. However, for Sandy, the reality of her job was even more frustrating because she had social work skills and was trained to care, yet was unable to do so because of legislation and policy:

When I started working I assumed that I was going to do social work. Surprise, surprise that the element of social work is about five per cent out of the hundred percent of the work that we do. [It is] very administrative, very much a bureaucracy, and very demanding, and very limiting even if you have the social work skills necessary.

When I asked Sandy, "Do you see your role as actually helping them beyond the cheque, working with the client one on one?" she defined her role in the welfare office and her perception of caregiving by responding:

Yes, but I don't think it's expected from the office, and it's something that I just do because that's me. That's my social work background coming through. I don't think it's what the welfare worker is supposed to be doing. They're supposed to be playing client police, which is what I think it's become nowadays - playing the welfare cop.... I try to take it a step beyond that, and try to plan beyond the cheque. What will your options be, which direction would you rather be in. To work with them, which is very hard in this kind of limited environment.

For these social service workers, any attempt to take care of a client's needs is overshadowed by the need to ensure that the client was credible and truly deserving. Sandy told her clients, "I'm here to help you and I make that clear to you, we'll find a way to work around this issue, but if you're lying to me I'm going to know it, so come out straight." Isabel suggested that the

welfare cop role interfered with her ability to fulfill her social worker role and actually help people in a significant way:

I think the pressure of getting those cheques out, and the pressure of catching up with the people who are actually abusing the system, and the pressure from management as well to keep your stats up and all that kind of stuff. The whole idea of why we're there is completely lost, we're there to help the people, that's the bottom line and that's not happening.

For both Sandy and Isabel there was a tension between their roles as caregivers and their roles as a "welfare cops." The welfare cop role assumes that workers are policing the poor and that there is some deviant behaviour associated with poverty. Moffat (1996) argues that, "the war that wages within the social assistance office is situated within a renewed belief in the immorality of dependence in the broader social context" (p.20). The character of welfare recipients become suspect because they are dependent on others to meet their needs.

Trusting and respecting the care receiver is a central tenet of social work care. However, Fisher and Tronto (1990) maintain that, "trust in a bureaucracy depends upon the belief that bureaucratic forms will produce needed care.... From the standpoint of women, who are disproportionately the caregivers and care-receivers of bureaucratic caring, then, trust is an ephemeral quality" (p.50). Ultimately, Sandy and Isabel were conflicted because their perceptions of care, and the way that care should be administered, differs from the bureaucratic perception and administration of care.

The Value of Care and the Value of the Social Service Worker

When workers provided care in a manner that fit their personal definition of caregiving, they believed that they are doing something important. They got a sense of gratification from the belief that they were helping someone. At the time of the interviews, Isabel had recently received a transfer from her caseload to a special assignment as an employment liaison. The new position gave her an opportunity to provide assistance beyond cheque processing. It also gave Isabel the chance to develop her counselling skills and fulfill what she believed to be her caring role as a social worker:

I'm pretty lucky where I am now cause I'm in employment, working with jobs and I'm actually getting to help some people out which is really cool, and I'm happy to be where I am now. I do realize that it could be a lot worse... [On Thursday], at the end of the day, I get called into a booth with a worker to speak to some people who are desperately trying to find employment. Both of them are educated people with a lot on the ball but haven't been having any luck. These kinds of cases break my heart. These people are hardworking, honest people who are trying to support themselves and three kids on one salary and welfare. Both are extremely frustrated and emotional. The stress really shows on them. I tell them about the program I am working on and promise to help them as best I can. They seem to leave the office with some more hope than what they came in with. [It] makes me feel good to be actually helping someone.

Like Isabel, Sandy occasionally left the office to do intake appointments at a local woman's shelter. Her diary entries suggested that there was a marked contrast between the way she perceived the value of the work she did at the shelter and the work that she did in the office. Sandy writes:

Today I get to go to the women's shelter. I don't mind doing that because at least I'm out of the office and using some of my real social work skills with women that need me. I get four intakes when I was supposed to have three but I don't mind. Funny extra work here doesn't bother me.

In comparison, when workers were in team meetings and staff training they felt that they were wasting valuable time that could be spent engaged in tasks that actually helped their clients.

The afternoon is spent in a meeting that is unproductive. We have a new supervisor and we have to brief her on how the team works, what we do, etc. It's just a re-hash of discussions we've been having for weeks and I'm frustrated because I could have used this time to pull resumes for job calls that came in today. I'm thinking... "what a waste of time!" We don't even get to discuss what we were there to discuss in the first place. (Isabel)

Work is very frustrating, and you feel like you're totally wasting your day, you're wasting your time. Nothing is more boring than training in the welfare department. They say the same thing a different way each time and take three times longer... My co-worker and I spend the time passing notes back and forth to one another about how bored we are. (Sandy)

Social workers value and derive gratification from specific aspects of their work. Providing direct care in a context that is perceived as helpful is seen as more desirable than filling out data entry forms, checking up on clients to maintain their eligibility, or answering the intake phone lines. For example, Sandy did not mind doing extra intakes at the shelter, and she would do in-office interviews; however, filling out intake information sheets, booking appointments for other workers, and answering routine phone inquiries were all tedious activities which she tried to escape:

I begin to answer the phones on the intake line when my supervisor asks me to help cover on another team. "Sure" I don't mind, it gets me away from this mundane activity. Now I'm back to my own team, answering phones again. I sometimes hope someone will call really upset just to give me a challenge. I feel like a glorified secretary and nothing else.

It is important to note that Sandy did not ascribe much value to administrative job functions. They did not challenge her to use her social work skills; moreover, performing them daily devalued how she viewed herself and the work that she did. Sandy remarked that when she went to school, "It's like, oh this is real social work is it. It's not what I do all day, and in fact, that's very frustrating." Greenberg and Valletutti (1980) argue that the discrepancy between the practitioners' role expectation and the daily successful functioning of an agency is a source of additional stress.

The workers did not view much of what they did at the welfare office as valuable "real work." Time appeared to be wasted because it took them away from doing the employment work or the caregiving that they perceived as valuable. Once an activity fitted workers' definitions of what they were at work to do, it was not perceived as a source of frustration and boredom. In addition, if the work they performed was perceived as valuable by themselves and their clients then it increased their perception of their own personal and social value.

Sam made a connection between the value she placed on the work she did, how others valued the work she did, and how this affected her perception of her own ability:

The public devalues what you work, we feel that our employers devalue what we work, we devalue what we work, or what our work is worth, and therefore you come out of it believing that you can't do anything. Which is crap... And you know what the sad thing about it is. It's that some people are there and have come to the point, because they've been there for so long, that they're totally in the belief system that they can do nothing else at this point and time.

After a period of reflection, Sam came to the conclusion that, "I have a huge number of skills. And I'd have to redefine them and make myself believe that they're valuable." Fisher (1990) argues that, "the need for women to establish their social value does not arise in a vacuum. It results from the emergence of particular social forces that render women's value problematic" (p.110).

As a woman and social worker, Sam attempted to resist the devaluation of her work and her worth to the rest of society. By redefining her skills in her own terms, she began to see the value and the wealth of her contribution to society. Fisher's (1990) proposes that women's attempts to gain control of their lives in the face of internal and external constraints "revolve around the problem of women's social value: her value as a human being to herself and others" (p.111). Sam's redefinition of her value at work and her value to society was an attempt to regain control of her life after a disturbing emotional incident due to work-place stress.

The Public Perception of the Worker's Identity

Isabel suggested there was a common perception that social workers in government agencies were "lazy, angry, burned out and have no idea

what's happening in the real world as far as needs; they are income maintenance workers that don't know how to do anything else." She added that when sending out resumes, "as soon as private companies see government employment, they tend to write you off right away." All the workers I spoke with had devised various strategies to disguise their government experience and overcome the barriers to employment caused by negative perceptions of welfare workers. Sandy said, "I was actually advised by a professor to sell myself as a social service consultant because I do a lot of consulting about social services." On their resumes, both Sandy and Althea disguise their employer and experience. They also do volunteer work with other social agencies so that others, outside the welfare office, will vouch for their ability and skills as social workers. Sandy says, "I want them to look at me and not the category; I want to have the rest of the world view me as a social worker, and not the social service worker."

All the women in this study were involved in a process of redefining themselves; they were forging new identities that were not solely based on their roles as mothers, wives, and social service workers. Not finding total fulfillment in these roles alone, these women built their careers by looking for new areas to find fulfillment and be productive (Tiedeman, 1984; Pascaill and Cox, 1993).

Perceptions of Power and Powerlessness

"The notion of 'taking care of' has built into it assumptions about power, that is, about the ability not only to predict and to judge but to command resources" (Fisher & Tronto, 1991, p.43). In the welfare office, social workers can exercise power to make judgments and command resources, but only within the parameters set by legislation and policy. All the workers are cognizant of the power of legislation, policy and procedure as it affects their ability to do what they perceive to be caregiving. Sam notes that, "you really have to get a grip on, and watch, the changes in the legislation whenever the people in power change." Whenever the people in power change, the way social workers in welfare offices do their job also has the potential to change.

The study participants expressed feelings of frustration, defeat and anger about how limiting their jobs were because of legislation and rules. They also felt a sense of conflict because they had to re-define the clients needs to fit within the bureaucracy, rather than directly meeting the client's real needs:

[At the shelter] it becomes very frustrating trying to meet the needs of these women within such a restrictive piece of legislation. The needs are great, but the resources are few. Even the ones I am authorized to disburse, management makes it difficult to obtain. Excessive verification and documentation are constantly necessary but difficult to provide when you have just run for your life. It doesn't seem like management is human sometimes, they rarely understand and seem to continue the abuse they were fleeing.(Sandy)

I recognize that, me as a social worker, I'm very much limited by the kind of social and political climate that I work in. So when I recognize that there are certain restrictions or limitations in that environment, there's only so much that I can do with the individual to accommodate them to the environment. So yeah, I sort of feel defeated sometimes. In terms of - why bother? With the kind of social climate that we exist in, the policies work disadvantageously to people. I think that in terms of priorities for government, it's not to alleviate the suffering of the individual. (Denai)

We get it from both ends. There's the legislation part of it coming at us that we are bound to follow, and then there also just the people that you deal with. You're getting it from inside and outside, and so is everyone else that you work with. (Sam)

[Today I] referred some people to programs. I like being able to help people, but sometimes all the red tape and procedures (stats, etc) can get very cumbersome and time consuming. If I could spend more time with the customers and less time tracking everything on six different statistic sheets, I'd have a lot more time to actually do what I'm supposed to be here for...I just wish it could be on my terms instead of following "the rules". I could be more efficient and effective without all the procedures I have to follow. (Isabel)

The workers were also limited by the amount of time that they were supposed to spend with each person. Hugman (1991) suggests that workers exercise power "though their command over the considerable resource of their own time" (p.125). Isabel and Sandy have already said that the way their job is structured did not leave time for real social work. Even when interacting with potential clients for the first time, there were limits on how long social workers could take to assess their circumstances and decide whether clients could come in to complete an application for welfare.

Sandy described a typical intake booking phone call when she said, "Name, address, assets, tell me your life in five minutes and maybe I'll give you an appointment!" The booking sheet she had to complete reduced

clients' lives to name, address, assets and enough of their personal history so Sandy could categorize them into case types: employable; unemployable; single parent; aged; temporarily ill; and disabled. The statistics that she was required to record detailing all her phone calls and intake bookings made it necessary that she used her time efficiently. The fact that she gave potential clients only five minutes to tell their life histories is one example of her efficient exercise of power over clients.

There are, however, other times when Sandy and other participants would spend more time with a client than they were supposed to because spending less time was not really caring and not doing any justice to the client. The exercise of discipline in the office encouraged them to regulate their own behavior and use of time to fit within the structure of bureaucratic policy and procedure:

[Fifteen minutes] that's all the time that is allowed [for an interview]. So if I were to go and do an in depth assessment and intervention plan for all my clients I wouldn't have a job. There are times I took the time to do a little bit more in depth assessment with individuals who asked for my help, or who I felt were in a major crisis situation that I would sit down, you know, I would take the hour and deal with them if necessary. (Denai)

Spending more time doing the counselling than really you should. Or taking the time to make referral calls and things like that it's something that I feel I have to do. I have to do it, to me I wouldn't be doing any justice to this client. (Sandy)

The decision to spend more time with a client, to listen to their story and to take responsibility for an intervention is also an exercise of power. By taking the time to listen and by taking responsibility for their actions, these

social workers were “taking care of” a situation; they were not just acting as caregivers. Their actions may be seen as an attempt to subvert the power that lies within all the legislation, rules and time restrictions of caregiving in a bureaucratic setting. Sandy stated that she sometimes found herself, “Bending rules, or stretching rules or doing things to meet the clients’ needs without breaking the law. Spending more time doing the counselling than really you should, or taking the time to make referral calls and things like that.”

Nevertheless, there were consequences for spending more time with clients; workers left themselves open to emotional stress as well as stress related to meeting administrative deadlines.

Allowing clients to tell their stories, to cry, and to vent was emotionally draining on workers. There were times they had to leave the interview booth to take a breath and compose themselves before going back in to see the client. Allowing clients to tell their stories engaged the worker in a process where they began to “care about” the situation and took responsibility for repairing it in an effective manner. For the workers, the most effective way to immediately vent after emotionally draining interactions with clients was either to talk to coworkers and share the experience, or seek distraction in idle chatter. This “unproductive” talking became a problem as management would monitor workers and sometimes interrupt conversations. Structural changes are needed to allow workers an opportunity to vent either in informal conversations with fellow workers, or through formal channels like stress

management seminars and increased access to employment assistance counselors.

Taking more time to assist certain clients left less time to complete mandatory administrative reports; in addition, it left less time to follow up on missing cheques, missing files, and missing clients. Workers ended up not taking lunches and breaks, and sometimes worked outside of office hours to complete follow up and paperwork. In this case, workers have to take responsibility for their own health and stress management. The system gives allotted times for lunches and breaks, but when workers choose not to take these necessary breaks due to their involvement in casework, they become candidates for stress related illnesses. Two ways that the system can alleviate workers' stress due to excessive paperwork is to be more flexible about report deadlines, or centralize report follow up with a member of the clerical staff; thus, leaving workers with more time to spend with clients in need of assistance.

Ultimately, there seemed to be conflict between workers' roles as "petite -bureaucrats" who managed people and resources as efficiently as possible, and their roles as social workers who wanted to take the time needed to contextualize their clients' experiences and respond in a manner that was truly helpful. The role conflict these workers experienced was a source of stress resulting from "a discrepancy between the pattern of expectations attached to a given role by the practitioner and that attached by agency managers and clients" (Greenberg & Valletutti, 1980, p.24).

This conflict between the two contradictory roles led to a splitting of selves in some cases, and disassociation from self in other cases. Workers spoke of "turning off their brains" when they went to work so that they would not have to think about their clients' experiences in real human terms. Isabel recalled times when she caught herself speaking gruffly to clients trying to hurry them along; she had to remind herself, "Wait that's not me." Samantha spoke of, "becoming human again" when she left the office; she attempted to keep the person that she was at work separate from how she was with her family and friends.

Workers also expressed feelings that many things that happened at work were out of their control. They were not consulted about management decisions that affected their ability to do their job. They were informed of new programs and changes in service delivery and told they must do it even if they did not agree with it. The workers' inability to control the means of their productive labour is consistent with the experiences of others who do "women's work."

Lack of involvement in the planning process left the front line social service workers feeling stressed, and at the mercy of management and government legislation. Denai remarked that, "It makes me feel very powerless, helpless, in terms of how effective I can be as a social worker." Furthermore, Sandy said, "It's very very limited, and it's become very very frustrating. I'm starting to go nuts." Others expressed anger about specific

management or government decisions, but they felt powerless to change the structure and nature of their work:

There are all kinds of stupid problems caused by other areas of the bureaucracy that we work within. And it's just like, all you can do is sit there and nod and say 'yeah I know, but you can't do anything about it. That part bugs me too. (Isabel)

At this point and time, I am so furious that they're bringing back in the customer service process. They are doing more training on it. And it's going to be the biggest hard sell with me this time, let me tell you. (Sam)

A supervisor from another office has been assigned to our team part time. The supervisor in our office is to take care of all the "maintenance" roles, and the one from the other office is to take care of the more executive type decisions because she's the employment team supervisor at the other office and knows the history of the programs, etc...Whatever!!!!!!.... Apparently the powers that be have come to this momentous decision because they think it's going to work somehow. This leaves us wondering if anybody really knows what's going on. I see the potential for some horrendous breakdowns in communication because of all this. As usual, the blanket excuse...Operational Needs. (Isabel)

Staff meetings and the local operation committee provided formal channels to discuss work structures and influence management decisions. It seems, however, that even when given an opportunity many workers did not say anything to management because either they feared reprisal from management, or felt that nothing would change. Sandy was a member of the local operations committee that presented management with workers concerns, and she was one of the few workers who spoke during the meetings:

Technically we are sitting in this meeting to help solve problems in the office and make the office run more efficiently yet everyone is too afraid to speak up and complain about things that bother them. They use the easy out of representing a group of people who don't have any complaints this week. So as usual, I do. Myself and one or two others discuss everything that no one else wants to mention. Management's usual response... 'We'll look into it and get back to you.'

It seemed that workers were afraid to bring up issues, or they felt that management would not take their concerns seriously and respond to them.

Sandy in particular appeared to be frustrated and dissatisfied with the limited amount of change that she was able to make in the office:

Trying to make change in the organization is a very difficult thing to do. I'm constantly in battle with management over different items, whether it be some legislation or policy and practice within the office. I want to change the system to make it more humane. I think the whole structure should be changed. Which I couldn't even tell you where to start with that one, but the policies in general are part of the problem. I have come to the point where I don't feel I'm making much change. I can make little changes, but I can't make enough change.

The workers reveal that they exercised a great deal of power, but they also felt powerless in the face of legislation, procedure and management decisions. If power is defined as a "complex strategy of relations within a society," then the amount and type of power one exercises depends on the nature of the relationship (Moffat, 1996, p.12). By limiting the time they spent with clients and following all the policies and procedures, the workers exercised power over their clients. At the same time, management, policy makers and legislators exercised power over the workers because they defined what the workers could and could not do. The validation and sense of power that workers felt when they were able to help someone is tempered

by the frustration and powerlessness they felt when the rules and the structure of their job prevented them from providing what they perceived to be care.

The contradictions between feeling powerful and at the same time powerless is a source of stress which is indicative of many human service organization; it is a source of stress that cannot easily be alleviated. Ultimately, for these workers, the stress level goes up every time the government writes new legislation and every time there is a change in government parties or platforms.

For all the workers the stress caused by role conflict and the contradictions of providing care in a bureaucratic setting greatly affected their decision to return to school. Adult education, in this sense, provided them with an opportunity to develop their career and eventually seek employment elsewhere. In addition, creating new identities for themselves as students, as educators, as consultants, and as social workers gave them a sense of personal fulfillment that they were no longer receiving from their job. Ironically, the fulfillment they received from their roles as students proved to be a good coping mechanism for dealing with workplace stress. It confirmed for them that their brains had not "atrophied" while working as social service workers; it confirmed for them that they had valuable contributions to make to society.

CHAPTER SIX

EDUCATION AND ESCAPE: THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Making the Decision to Continue Education

Existing research on women and adult education suggests that women consider primarily family and finances when deciding to return to school. The women in Pascall and Cox's (1993) study identified family based factors like decreasing demands from children or divorce as influencing their decision to return to school. A number of those women also suggested that their experiences at work were a major factor; work was neither financially rewarding, nor conducive to their physical and mental health. Pascall and Cox (1993) argue that, when describing their decision to return to school, "women pointed to a particular decisive factor, but described it against a background of possibilities and impossibilities" (p.60). As McLaren (1985) suggests adult women students "had to take several important factors, such as money, their work, or their educational and occupational opportunities into account, not just their family circumstances" (p.90).

In the following section, I will highlight the factors that this group of social service workers took into consideration when deciding to return to school. In some cases, there was no one decisive factor that these women considered before returning to school; they noted that it was a web of complex reasons that influenced their decisions. Experiences have meaning and meaningful experiences direct action; thus, my analysis will focus on the

workers' experiences of work and family life to determine why they acted as they did. The workers spoke of their negative workplace environment, bad relationships with management, boredom, burnout, and glass ceilings. In addition, they discussed their family responsibilities, occupational goals, and their desires to become professionals.

Survivor Stress and the Negative Work Environment

Since 1995, social services had been laying off staff, offering retirement packages, educational leaves, and personal leaves so that they could stay within their fiscal budget. During this time a lot of staff had volunteered to leave permanently or for a short time. In the age of downsizing and business engineering redesign, the workers that were left behind after the lay-offs and retirement parties had to manage their own survivor stress. It was the stress of having to take over a previous coworker's caseload; the stress of wondering if there would be another round of cutbacks and they would be the next to be laid off. In addition to the stress that was inherent in organizational change, workers had to manage higher caseloads with fewer resources. The workers' experiences in this stress charged negative working environment is one which deepened their job dissatisfaction and prompted them to act to change their circumstances:

I'm so tired of the whole gossip grapevine, I'm tired of the petty little in fighting, I'm tired of the ineffective management, I'm tired of, just the stupid policies and the bull shit. I know there's bull shit every where you work, but not to the extent of where we work.... There doesn't seem to be any kind of humanity or integrity or any of that kind of stuff and I just, it's a really negative environment and I want out.... Getting

out ... is another very important step. I am determined to accomplish all of these goals. (Isabel)

I mean people are dropping like flies trying to get out of there and it has to be indicative of the working environment in all aspects. Whether it's just chronically boredom, it's not giving you enough money, it's not giving you enough challenge, it's giving you abuse from both ends, management and the public, what more can there be wrong with it? Who likes this job? Name me one. (Sam)

Office Relationships

The workers described numerous experiences between themselves and management and between themselves and their coworkers. The meanings they ascribed to these experiences prompted them to look for employment elsewhere in the hope that they would be surrounded by people who were competent and accountable.

The stress of interacting with managers and coworkers you have no respect for took its toll on some of the workers. Isabel remarked, "What upsets me it's not the actual work itself, the people that you're dealing with like the customers and so on, it's the staff. It's the people you have to work with."

Both Isabel and Sandy described experiences with a coworker who seemed to infuriate them because of his behaviour. They suggested that his behaviour could only happen in an environment where there was little accountability and responsibility to clients. Management failed to respond to complaints about him from staff and clients; thus, Sandy felt that she had to

stand up and say something to him to see if he would take responsibility for his inappropriate treatment of clients:

You see there is a man on this team that will drive you crazy... He is practically yelling at his client on the phone and ordering him around. I am making comments under my breath and don't know how long I'm going to last. I have had to work with this man before and his behaviour never really changes. I knew the supervisor would not do anything because I had complained about him before, they just give him a slap on the wrist and he continues. I could no longer hold back. I walked over to this worker and told him "You know, you have no right to speak to clients like that". His response was "this is my caseload and I know what I'm doing." So inappropriate as it was I told him, 'You know if you called me first thing in the morning and talked to me like that I would tell you to fuck yourself.'

In terms of staff management relationships, Isabel has described the relationship between workers and management as a bad parent/child relationship full of fear, resentment, and mistrust on both sides. Isabel stated that she was ready to leave because, "I've had enough of being treated like a child." She fully expressed her feelings towards management in the following way:

The incompetence of the management... Lip service is paid to every single thing, what ever comes out of the assistant or area managers mouth is lip service, you can't trust them. You wonder if what they're saying, how long they rehearsed it... All of this kind of political stuff where I am now really bothers me a lot. I mean, you see the management and you just go 'what the fuck!' Who do they know or who gave them the answers to the test, or who owes them a favour.

The workers expressed feelings of fear and paranoia associated with the knowledge that they were always being watched by management. Sandy seemed outwardly hostile to her manager's attempts to observe and control her work, at one point she even plays into the bad child/ disciplining parent

metaphor. She wrote in her diary, "I'm starting to get those glaring looks from my supervisor. It's her way of getting the message across that she wants her team at their desk. I purposely stroll back to my area, just to irritate her." In comparison, Isabel feared management harassment if she came into work a little late. She avoided conflict by rushing to be early at work. She wrote in her diary, "I don't want to deal with any supervisors, just want to quietly go to my desk and start my day in peace without anybody bugging me."

Like the supervised cell occupants of the panopticon, these workers are "trapped by virtue of their visibility" (Moffat, 1996, p.8):

The entire ride to work is a constant panic hoping there are no accidents or traffic jams because I'll definitely be late.... Panic sets in, I'm going to be late for sure. It never fails, a perfect day, turns to total disaster. Actually if I was ten seconds late I'm sure she'd tell me. She lives for this kind of thing. Surveillance is her specialty. Sure enough here she comes. You become so angry, you don't even want to look at her. 'Late, eh Sandy'. No kidding I'm thinking. Sarcasm begins to be your escape. 'Just noticed' I replied. She smiles, 'oh well, you're not on flex time so you don't have to worry about losing that,' like I care right now. She walks away. I know I'll be documented but, like I said before, who cares! (Sandy)

[I don't want to] have to worry about what the big boss is going to think or say, or what ever, and not have the booming voice of authority lurking over my shoulder all day. Being able to do what I want to do never mind what the rest of them want. (Isabel)

Sandy in particular seemed to feel that she was constantly being watched by her supervisor. She wrote, "It seems the best way to run a welfare office is through constant surveillance of the worker. After you get used to them constantly watching you, you start to watch yourself. You're always paranoid." For example, when there were no more walk in interviews

during the afternoon, Sandy sneaks a peak at her school work and keeps "a watchful eye not to get caught." Even when her supervisor was not present she expected the other team supervisor to observe her actions and reprimand her:

I arrive at work, but where is my surveillance team to catch me? I rush over to my desk and change out of my boots, the girl beside me says hi and tells me my supervisor is away today. That would explain why she wasn't staring in my face.

Moffat (1996) has noted that, "each person who is under supervision within a panoptic structure is constantly visible to the supervisor" (p.8). At the same time the person being observed anticipates that their surveillance is constant, but they do not know "precisely at what time, by whom or in what manner" (Moffat, 1996, p.9). The workers in the office existed in the periphery circle of the panopticon, in the sense that they were constantly being observed by supervisors. It's interesting to note that as the workers documented their client's actions, whereabouts and future plans, management documented the workers. Their data entries were recorded and reviewed daily, their case plans were reviewed and signed off by management, their arrival, departure and their walking about while in the office was also observed by their supervisors.

Boredom

The study participants expressed varying degrees of boredom causing job dissatisfaction. The boredom and lack of challenge at work contributed

significantly to their decision to return to school. Denai stated, "I was just darned bored at work. I was really dissatisfied with the job and it became very repetitive and monotonous after a while. I just wanted a change. It was just a lot of job dissatisfaction there." Likewise, Isabel remarked, "I'm bored very easily too, and I think I reached the boredom threshold at about year two or three. Just the mindless paper pushing and filling out the forms and so on its just really mind numbing." Althea looked forward to getting a new job, although she was in school and the schedule of the new job might make her studies more difficult. She stated, "The only thing that I think would probably help me positively is that, assuming I get work, a job that stimulates me during the day then I'd probably feel fresher in the evening to pursue my academic endeavors." She believed that a new job, a stimulating job, would actually help her to do better in school. In the same manner, Sam indicated that stimulation was what she needed to keep her sanity:

Well that's the other huge reason why I want to go back to school with our job, like oh my God I'm so bored. Like bored, bored, bored, bored, bored out of your mind. If you don't do something for stimulation you go nuts after a while.

Burnout

Consistent with the experiences of many workers in human services, the respondents described changes in their values and perception after joining the welfare office (Greenberg & Valletutti, 1980; Wigmore, 1992). They experienced stress due to disillusionment with their jobs. Some became cynical and judgmental towards clients while others felt that they

were burnt out. Splitting of selves and disassociation from are two coping strategies that the women employed to deal with the stress of role conflict; however, this strategy took its toll on the women. Another strategy do deal with the stress of client interaction is to build up a nearly impenetrable wall around your emotions; ultimately, this strategy is ineffective and self destructive.

The participants experiences of burnout gave them the desire to leave the welfare office; it seemed the only possible effective coping mechanism remaining for dealing with their workplace stress:

I want employment, but not if it means that I have to sacrifice everything that I am as a person and have it deteriorate me completely. Is it worth it? It doesn't seem to be to me... It's almost like osmosis is happening with me and this disease is seeping inside me and I really don't like it. I'd like to be able to acknowledge that it comes for a reason and I don't want to negate the validity of why it's there. It affects you as a human and you take it and act it out in you personal life then you begin to really have a negative view of the world. And I think that at this point in my life I no longer want that. The jadedness that this particular job tends to develop within a person; I don't really feel that's how I am as a person and I don't agree with that position that I'm adopting... I just want to go. (Sam)

I don't think that I could really empathize or see where this person was coming from. It was very cynical and sarcastic, just very cynical in terms of "what's your problem? Just get on with it." Employable customers that I came into contact with I'd always look at them and say, "Well after five years on the system surely you can do something with your life?" - you know? But I saw I was very skeptical as to whether or not they were genuinely unemployable. (Denai)

Before I went to school too, I was just turning into this person that I didn't even recognize, I was just like ugh what am I doing, I can't believe that I just said whatever it was that I said to this customer. I'm thinking oh my god, this is not who I am, this is not what I'm about... I think the turning point was when I was on intake, cause if you have to hear one more sad story, I think you sort of build up an armour and

you become very cynical almost as a self defense mechanism. You get that 'just yeah, well, right, yeah, cry me a river okay - next' [cynical and nasal laugh] That kind of attitude and I think that of attitude comes out unexpected, because it really can affect you. I think the burnout level and the stress level and all of those sorts of things is just pushed me to the point of 'oh my god I have to get out of here.' and nobody going to do it for me. I have to do it for myself. And it's sort of gave me that extra push. (Isabel)

Age and Family Responsibilities

Regardless of whether or not the women had children, they acknowledged that family responsibility, or lack thereof, was one of the reasons why they were now attending school. Those women who did not have children or other family responsibilities stated that this was the perfect time to go to school; Denai stated:

I thought about the fact that I'm young now, relatively young, I've matured over the years and I have some more experience. But I figured that I don't have any major responsibilities now so this would be an appropriate time to go on to that second level of education. I didn't have a mortgage, that somebody was relying on my income, I didn't have children, I mean, those kinds of factors, I guess, played into my decision too.

Denai was in her late twenties; she wanted to finish her education before she got married and had other pressing family obligations that would affect her ability to accomplish her educational goals. In comparison, Sam, in her late thirties, felt that if she was going to move into a new occupational field that required more education - now was the time to go to school. She had already spent ten years out of school and had raised a family. Sam felt that if she delayed her education any longer she would not get the jobs she wanted because of her age and lack

of experience; by the time she anticipated finishing school and got some new work experience she would be in her mid forties.

Those women who had children saw that they were positive role models for their children. Sandy recalled an incident in her diary where she noted that she was the model of a good student for her children. She wrote, "I help everyone with their homework, and try to convince them how important it is to study hard. They have a hard time arguing about homework when every time they see me I'm doing homework!" For Sam, who had a daughter, it was important that she took control of a bad situation in her life and modelled behaviour that was recognised as positive and powerful:

[I think] can you afford to go full time, can you not afford to go full time? All of that comes into play and having a family is difficult because, you know, I want to be a positive role model for the children by saying okay I'm taking charge of the situation that was so bad in my life. I'm going to make it better, no matter what happens to me It's going to get better, I will not let it get worse. And if that means going back to school, then I'll have to face that and the challenges that that's going to be to our family - time wise financially everything.

Being a good role model is not without its guilt. Like many women who work and raise a family, Sandy felt conflicted by the responsibilities in her multiple roles as a mother, worker and student. Although she enjoyed the challenge of school and knew that it was necessary for her to reach her occupational and financial goals, she felt guilty about not spending enough time with her children. It is a guilt that causes stress, due to role conflict, and often stops women from attaining their educational and occupational goals. Sandy expressed her guilt in the following ways:

I walk through the house and collapse on the couch. The kids come running in and want to play. I just don't have the energy. I ask them to come back in awhile when I've had a rest. It's not fair to them. Sometimes my grandmother tells me how I'm ruining their life with my school. It's times like this that I would agree. I know she just says it when she's upset, but it often makes a lot of sense. If deep down I didn't know I was doing this for the betterment of myself and family, I couldn't continue.

Hitting the Glass Ceiling: The Need for Role Expansion

The women identified that they had hit the glass ceiling and could not develop any further in their current job so it was time to leave. There were no opportunities for any of the women to move to the supervisor level and develop their careers. Due to the provincial cutbacks to the social service sector, the laid off and retired staff needed to be replaced; thus, there were no special project positions being offered where workers could get away from a caseload for period of time. Since there were no new possibilities for role expansion on the job workers felt trapped in their work environment. While referring to her current job Isabel said, "This is dead end as well, because there's nothing, I mean that's it. I've gone as far as I'm going to go.... Well if I settle for this then I, it's almost like a defeat." Althea concurred with Isabel when she said, "I'm tired, I've exhausted any possibilities of development, not that they exist."

In some cases, workers used the image of a cage or a tight confined space to describe the environment where they work and their lack of opportunities for advancement:

You go until you hit the glass ceiling then you realize that you can go no further. Now mine just happened to be a whole lot lower than hers was. Because you know our little cage is smaller. (Sam)

Anybody who enjoys a challenge is really stifled in an environment like that and claustrophobic because there's not a whole lot of room to manoeuvre.... [It's] the feeling of being trapped, hitting the glass ceiling and not going anywhere. No hope in hell of ever, god forbid, becoming a manager and making more money and so on. (Isabel)

Since there was no opportunity for role expansion in the workplace, some women sought fulfillment in their roles at community organizations. Althea in particular seemed to find time to volunteer at various community agencies in working as a researcher and later as a board member:

Right now I'm volunteering at this agency. Basically I am reorganizing their resource centre. The researchers do special projects, so it's really cool, and it's nice. The woman I work with says, 'but you should get tired of this.' And I really don't because it's a nice escape from work and school and whatever... It is interesting and it allows me to 'step outside of myself.'

Others had entrepreneurial part time jobs which supplemented the family income and gave the women a way to cope with or escape the boredom and burnout of work, However, for Sam, once she entered school and found fulfillment in her role as a student, she no longer desired to do home renovation projects or her part time sales job:

Some of the things that I was doing to occupy my self, my time or whatever, was just out of complete boredom. And they're not necessary things. As far as taking on tasks that I might have done. Like, oh let's redo a room, let's paint this, let's take on that little renovation. Now [that I'm in school] why would I bother?

Educational Aspirations and Career Plans

Considering that none of the participants saw any opportunity for further development or advancement in their current jobs, it was not surprising that when I asked them about their goals none of them wanted to continue to work in the environment of the welfare office. They all had clearer occupational goals in mind when they entered university this second time; these were goals that could not be met with their existing educational attainment:

My short term goal is to get out of social services. Absolutely any job that I can. Any job in social work that is, so I'm not picky, it could be with kids, it could be with adults, it could be with seniors, it could be in community development, but it's out of there.... My long term goal is to open my own therapy practice. (Sandy)

I'll be looking for work elsewhere in order to use the skills that I've acquired through my education. But, if I don't find something else I'll be going back.... I'm thinking that maybe I could open up a business. I don't really want to work [here]. If I open up a business, I was thinking maybe even a nursing home, I could utilize my social work skills maybe running something like that. (Denai)

I want to eventually do [human resources] consulting and freelance and hire myself out to companies and do contracts. It's still sort of in a helping context, but it's something that I could eventually do on my own and work for myself as opposed to working for somebody else, and that's really important to me, yeah being able to work out of my own house . When you're working for yourself, your success depends on you as opposed to how well the person above you likes you or how well they like your work. So the are more rewards and you've earned them. (Isabel)

I do not want to work in a public service environment anymore. If I had the opportunity to work with some kind of policy direction, try to find a job where I can get in there and do what it is I want to do. I just don't want to wade my way through the public system anymore. I've been there too long now and I don' want to do it. (Sam)

I want to do work in social policy. And that's actually where I did my practicum for the BSW. I want to work in member organizations, or places like the Social Planning Council, or not solely doing policy work, but doing some kind of policy analysis. (Althea)

All the participants wanted to leave the welfare office and eventually leave front line social service delivery; this move required additional educational attainment. Although there were a few chances to do something that they perceived to be real social work, the participants felt that they could not develop their skills in their current work environment. They believed that an additional professional degree would help them get employment positions where they had a greater ability to control their work. The movement of these women from front line social service delivery into policy development, private practice, and ownership was indicative of their desire for power to control the conditions of their labour and the conditions of their caregiving. Fisher (1990) suggests that, "the movement of women human service professionals towards establishing their own private practice... may offer such women freedom from bureaucratic control" (p.129). However, this "freedom" has its limits because not all social work professionals have the resources to set up their own business, nor are there many clients who can afford to purchase care.

For those who wanted to move into social policy development, their occupational goals were a direct challenge to existing power structures. In social services, men, not women, were often the ones to determine policy. Althea remarked that she wanted to work in policy development because:

Basically, policy development are where the decisions are made, you're talking about people who have no understanding of the impact of their policy and legislation what not.... They're probably sleeping when they're doing it.... Through school I've realized that there's a big push to get social workers involved in policy development instead of lawyers and other people who do, they have no idea of what they're doing.

Professional Designation and Identity

For some women the decision to return to school was influenced by their desire to become "professionals." Without the academic letters behind their name, they did not feel that they would have the ability to progress in their career. In part, this is the academic paper chase that Guppy et al (1987) refer to; however, both Althea and Isabel believed that having professional status would allow them to move geographically without jeopardizing their careers. Althea stated, "I wanted a professional designation, so that if I left Toronto and went somewhere else I would have, I could say I am whatever. That was the primary motivator." Isabel spoke of leaving Toronto as soon as she had finished her degree and setting up business in her home province where it was less competitive.

For these social service workers, the desire for professional status is not only about credentialism, but also about the acquisition of expert knowledge and a new identity not based on their current role. Sandy stated that the general public has, "a very negative impression of welfare workers....We are government, lazy, angry, burned out and have no idea what's happening in the real world as far as needs. Income maintenance

workers that don't know how to do anything else." However, in the process of acquiring a professional Masters of Social Work degree Sandy began to form a new identity for herself:

It was interesting.... that whole category of expert knowledge and master's level. Like the degree of degrees sort of thing, that you should be able to think like this, and I'm putting myself into that format. I should be one of these people that you can ask and I can analyze and, where as before I wouldn't have a clue how to do it unless someone gave me step by step instructions.... I'm challenging myself. (emphasis mine)

Like the women in earlier studies, Sandy saw her involvement in adult education as an opportunity to build a new identity. It provided the challenge that she was not getting from work; in addition, it provided the challenge of re-creating herself into a new image.

An overriding theme in all these narratives was that education is the way to escape the realities of work. It gave them the skills they needed to get a new job, or it provided them with the fulfillment and role expansion that they needed to counter balance the stress of working in the welfare office. Pascall and Cox (1993) concluded that, "education is unambiguously the route away from domesticity" (p.76). Their study participants saw education as a way to escape "being a house wife and the low paying part time jobs that go with that role" (Pascall & Cox, 1993, p.76). Likewise, these social service workers saw education as the way to escape fragmented front line caregiving that is a part of lower level of bureaucratic social service delivery.

Education was a challenge, a potential source of validation and stimulation, and opportunity of re-create oneself into a new image.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

For all the women, their dissatisfaction with their employment in the welfare office played a significant part in their decision to return to university for additional professional education. It is interesting to note that none of the participants wanted to continue to work as front line social workers in a bureaucratic environment. For them, social work in the welfare office appeared to have less social and personal value than social work in other settings. Within the welfare office, the participants perceived that the work they did and the care they were able to provide was limited by legislation, policy and procedure. Consequently, they were often unable to provide care to address many of the emotional, material, and physical needs of their clients.

In general, the participants viewed their work environment as materially and mentally disadvantageous, confining, boring, and frustrating. In addition, some expressed feelings of fear and paranoia about being constantly watched by management; this led them to continuously regulate their behaviour and caregiving to fit within the boundaries of bureaucratic expectations. For all the participants, caregiving in this environment did not provide the validation and gratification they sought. It provided, however, stress due to conflict between what they wanted to do, and what they had to do, or were allowed to do. They felt that they did not have direct control over

their work as front line social service workers - this became an additional source of stress for all the women.

In contrast, at school, at home, and in volunteer work settings, the women regained a sense of control; they used existing skills and learned new ones. Moreover, they received gratification and validation for good work. Participation in education and other activities outside the workplace provided new identities and role expansion that helped some of the workers handle the stress they faced at work. In this sense, some of the women did not wait for structural changes to the stressful work environment, but they initiated processes to manage their own work related stress.

The women's employment goals suggested that they want to work in jobs that provide challenge, responsibility, decision making latitude, and control over their work and the care they give. They believed, that in order to achieve their goals, they had to work outside of the bureaucratic structure, or leave behind the caregiving aspect of the social work profession. For others, to get the fulfillment they were looking for in their careers they believed they had to leave the social work profession.

The social service workers suggested that it was necessary to return to school because they could not develop their careers without higher credentials. Even if they stayed in the social work profession they could not get better jobs without a Master of Social Work degree. When I did my follow up interviews with the women, both Althea and Sandy had achieved their short term goals. They had left the bureaucratic environment of social

services and were working in organizations where they had a considerable amount of control over their work. They attributed their new jobs to the fact that they were completing their Master of Social Work degree; without additional educational qualifications they would not have been able to achieve their goals.

Both the literature reviewed in this study and conventional ideas of women's career development suggest that women return to school and continue their education mainly to get better jobs, make more money, or expand their social and intellectual horizons. However, for this group of social service workers, the decision to return to university to continue their education was influenced by a desire to escape a job that had become a trap. Their job as a social service worker allowed some skill development, it had good training and special project opportunities, it was secure and paid well, and it was accommodating to raising a family or getting an education. How did this job become a trap? Why would they be disillusioned with their jobs? The women went into their jobs expecting to make a difference in their communities as caregivers, instead they became welfare cops. They found a disappointing contradiction between social services' mission statement of care and its reality of administrative red tape, routine, and boredom. Eventually, they lost their desire and ability to care in this limited and negative environment. They became victims of burnout - the cost of trying to care when the structure will not allow you to care. Getting out of this

environment required that they go back to school to enhance existing social work skills or learn new skills to leave the profession.

Many social workers are leaving front line caregiving jobs to occupy more "professional" positions that meet their personal, financial and employment needs. Others leave the caring professions all together; either they no longer get validation from their work, or they do not feel they are able to continue to make valuable contributions to society. More research needs to be done showing how social work practice affects social workers. As researchers, we need to consider in more detail how the nature of social work and the caregiving environment impact on workers ability to provide care. From a feminist perspective, we need to analyze how, as a traditionally female profession, social work is devalued particularly when it occurs in hierarchical bureaucratic structures where men are often the ones who write legislation, and define policy and procedure. We need to further develop the connection between caring in social work practice and the career path and educational goals of female social workers.

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Appendix

Interview Schedule

Question

Could you tell me how come you are back in school now for a (certificate/degree) and what things you considered before deciding to come back.

Possible Prompts

Perceptions/Feelings:

How have your perceptions about your current career and educational background affected your decision?

How does it feel to come back to Metro after a stimulating class or work term

Goals:

Does the course of study relate to your current job?

Why are you taking the course?

Is this an attempt to develop and continue to work in Metro?

Is this an attempt to get an education to leave Metro and peruse other goals?

What would you like to do when you complete your studies? How will your education help you achieve this goal?

Program:

What type of educational program are you taking?

Where are you taking it?

Are they pursuing it full time or part time?

How long is the program?

What stage are you at in your program i.e. 1st year or last?

Is this a degree or certificate program?

Is this the 1st or 2nd additional degree?

Personal Information:

Family

What is your family size?

Do you have the support of your family?

What effect does family support have on performance?

Financial

What financial/social things had to be reorganized so you could pursue your education?

Is Metro reimbursing you for the courses you take?

Time Management

How do you manage your time to do homework/readings?

Do you have any other extra-curricular activities like volunteer work that demand your time?

University Degrees Granted by Field of Study and Sex

	1991	1992	1993	1994
Canada	159,806	168,872	173,928	178,074
Male	70,347	73,671	75,443	76,470
Female	83,459	95,201	98,485	101,604
Social Sciences	63,027	66,248	68,050	69,586
Male	28,529	30,053	30,542	30,701
Female	34,498	36,195	37,508	38,885
Education	28,074	30,033	30,438	30,383
Male	8,614	9,030	8,954	9,140
Female	19,460	21,003	21,484	21,279
Humanities	20,489	22,098	23,038	23,057
Male	7,497	8,005	8,561	8,416
Female	12,992	14,093	14,477	14,641
Health Professions	10,769	11,262	11,832	12,183
Male	3,125	3,206	3,412	3,475
Female	7,644	8,056	8,420	8,708
Engineering & Applied Science	10,895	11,505	11,795	12,597
Male	9,269	9,687	9,887	10,285
Female	1,626	1,818	1,908	2,312
Agriculture & Biological Science	8,975	9,224	9,687	10,087
Male	4,064	4,037	4,268	4,309
Female	4,911	5,187	5,419	5,778
Math & Physical Science	8,859	9,163	9,325	9,551
Male	6,329	6,458	6,572	6,697
Female	2,530	2,705	2,753	2,854
Fine and Applied Arts	4,445	4,993	5,126	5,308
Male	1,426	1,703	1,686	1,773
Female	3,019	3,290	3,440	3,535
Arts and Science	4,273	4,346	4,637	5,322
Male	1,494	1,492	1,561	1,710
Female	2,779	2,854	3,076	3,612

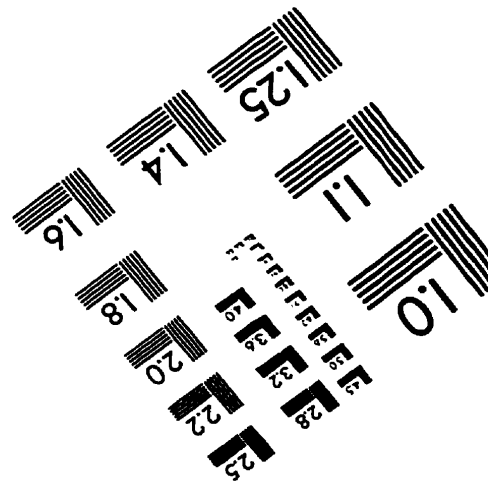
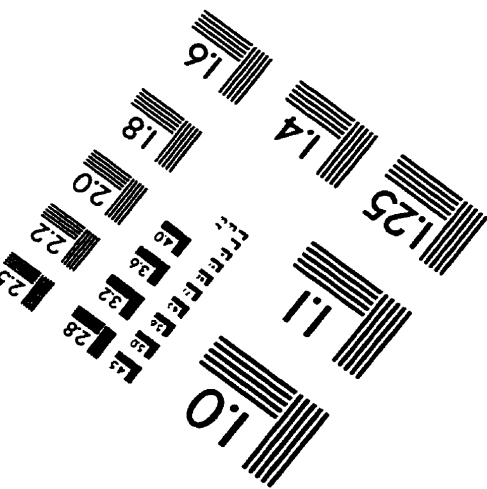
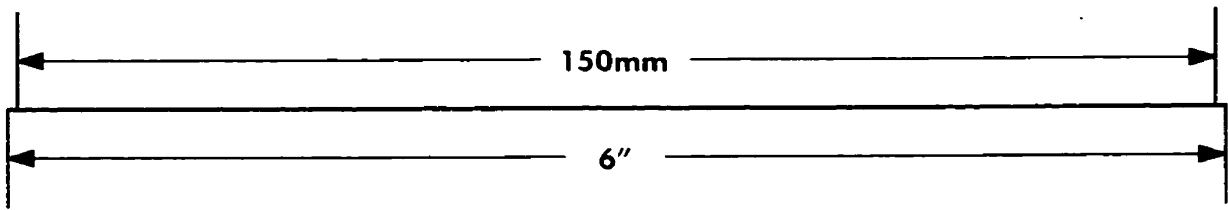
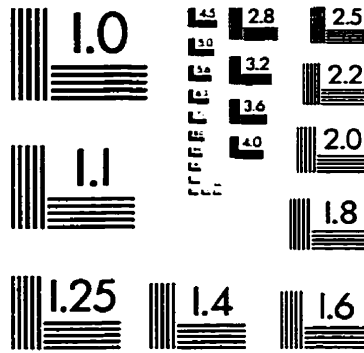
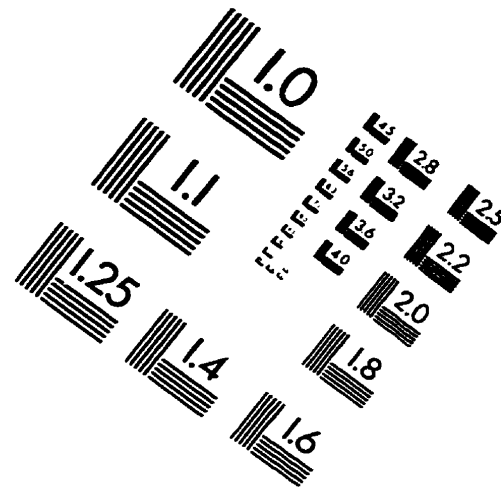
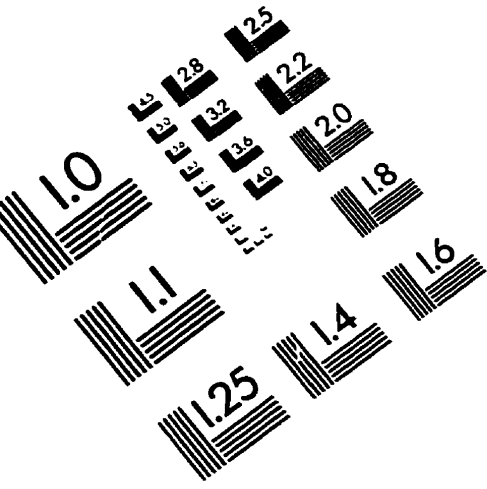
Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM cross-classified table 00580602

University Enrollment, full time and part time by sex, Canada and the provinces

	Total	Female	Male
Full-time Enrollment	1993-94	1993-94	1993-94
Canada	574,314	301,670	272,644
Newfoundland	13,029	7,176	5,853
Prince Edward Island	2,691	1,530	1,161
Nova Scotia	29,996	16,184	13,812
New Brunswick	19,493	10,394	9,099
Quebec	137,750	72,697	65,053
Ontario	231,156	120,432	110,724
Manitoba	20,296	10,376	9,920
Saskatchewan	23,018	12,094	10,924
Alberta	51,083	27,010	24,073
British Columbia	45,802	23,777	22,025
Part-time Enrollment			
Canada	300,290	183,287	117,003
Newfoundland	4,368	2,585	1,783
Prince Edward Island	776	502	274
Nova Scotia	7,989	5,122	2,867
New Brunswick	5,566	3,690	1,886
Quebec	117,804	71,361	46,443
Ontario	99,567	60,887	38,680
Manitoba	16,758	9,562	7,196
Saskatchewan	8,689	5,452	3,237
Alberta	17,685	11,339	6,346
British Columbia	21,088	12,797	8,291

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM cross-classified tables 00580701 and 00580702

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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