

"EVERYBODY NEEDS TO BE DOING SOMETHING"

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EXPLORING THE CONTRADICTIONS IN ONTARIO WORKS AND THE
NORMATIVE EXPECTATIONS BEHIND THE WORK OF BECOMING ELIGIBLE,
EMPLOYABLE AND EMPLOYED

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Abstract

Since Ontario Works (OW) was implemented in 1998, the policy has been tinkered with including making changes in benefits and relaxing of some of the more punitive practices such as a life time ban for recipients convicted of fraud. However in OW, one of Ontario's social assistance programs, the requirement to participate in work or work preparation activities, remains relatively unchanged. Intended to end the supposed free riding of recipients, work for welfare continues to be an unwavering policy instrument despite findings that the policy is at best ineffective and at worst counterproductive in helping OW clients find and keep work (Lightman et al 2005, Little 2005, Peck 2001, Quaid 2002).

Some scholars argue that administrative practices are maintained by the normative assumptions on which a policy stands (Fraser 1989, George and Wilding 2003, Plant et al. 1989). In order to investigate the normative underpinnings behind OW work, this study explored the literature on welfare state approaches. This review focused on the normative assumptions surrounding work that are engaged to diffuse and inculcate neoliberal imperatives and class and gender related codes of conduct connected to OW work. By conducting interviews with OW clients and staff, this study also examined the ways in which norms facilitate the administration of OW especially how internalized taken-for-granted ideas about work are leveraged by the policy. Gramsci's notions of hegemony and common sense (Gramsci 2010) and Bourdieu's notion of habitus, field and capital (Bourdieu 1989) were engaged as theoretical tools that might explain how

taken-for-granted assumptions facilitate the administration of OW and the enforcement of workfare policies.

The project found that the 'works' part of OW is comprised of 3 types of work: becoming eligible, employable and employed. A major contradiction that emerged during the investigation is that OW is focused on ensuring ongoing eligibility - not on employment. The administration of OW work engages with normative expectations surrounding work, welfare and gender that are connected to the contradictions in OW work. It is common sense ideas surrounding these normative expectations (such as the moral benefits of work) that maintain practices and reconcile contradictions. As well, a specific habitus (coach/gatekeeper) operates in OW which engages certain types of common sense ideas that align with normative expectations.

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“Everybody Needs to Be Doing *Something*”: Exploring the contradictions in Ontario Works and the normative expectations behind the work of becoming eligible, employable and employed

Chapter One: Introduction

In Canada, the recession of the early 90's and the rising levels of unemployment and welfare caseloads signaled a shift. During this time, Canada's welfare state was the focus of attention as policy debates turned a spotlight on mechanisms intended to protect the economy from the so-called extravagances of the welfare state. Provinces struggled to mitigate the economic crisis and in Ontario, the Progressive Conservatives championed a solution. Their "Common Sense Revolution" was built on the cornerstone of welfare reforms that ushered in the Ontario Works (OW) program.

OW is the province's welfare relief policy. It provides financial and employment assistance to people who meet the eligibility criteria. Eligibility for assistance is based primarily on financial need; applicants must have income and assets that fall below specific thresholds set in the Ontario Works Act (1998). Applicants must also agree to participate in work search and work preparation activities as part of their eligibility for financial assistance. The province does not deliver the program but rather contracts with municipalities to deliver both the financial and employment assistance available through OW.

Since OW was implemented in 1998, the policy has been tinkered with changing some benefits and relaxing some of the more punitive practices such as a life time ban for recipients convicted of fraud. However, as indicated in the participant quote used to title

this project, the requirement to participate in work, or work preparation activities, remains relatively unchanged. Intended to end supposed free riding, work for welfare continues to be an unwavering policy instrument despite findings that the policy is at best ineffective and at worst counterproductive in helping OW clients find and keep work (Lightman et al 2005, Little 2005, Peck 2001, Quaid 2002).

This contradiction is the primary driver behind this project and was informed by my experience in the field. As an OW administrator, I experienced a great deal of frustration with government's dogmatic and almost pathological adherence to reinforcing work requirements in OW despite its mediocre success in helping people who are poor and unemployed to find and keep work. This incongruity led me to question my naïve assumption that social policy is responsive to the needs it proclaims to address.

My experience with OW is that a fundamental contradiction undergirds its administration; although social policy in a neoliberal context is dominated by evidence based practice to rationalize its administration, as noted above, scholars have exposed a lack of evidence behind the efficacy of the 'works' part of OW. My inquiry is founded in the belief that OW work is based on an unsubstantiated normative assumption – namely that employment and employment preparation activities in OW are effective at meeting the objectives of welfare in a neoliberal context which is to return social assistance recipients to the labour market. This research project was my journey in search of the normative functions of work as a way to explain why contradictory practices persist.

This research project had two primary objectives. The first was to explore the literature on welfare state approaches in order to examine the normative assumptions

surrounding work and welfare that are engaged to diffuse and inculcate neoliberal imperatives and codes of conduct related to class and gender. The second objective was to examine the ways in which norms facilitate the administration of OW, especially how internalized taken for granted ideas about work and welfare are leveraged by the policy. This objective was achieved by collecting and analyzing data from workers, clients, the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and by reflecting on my experience with the policy's administration. As this inquiry is shaped by my role as an active participant in the administration of OW, my reflections and experience are included throughout the thesis; this vantage point is also demonstrated in my use of the first person where relevant. My insider status is taken up as part of the discussion regarding methods in Chapter Three.

This first chapter of the thesis is a brief introduction which serves as a general overview of the contents of the project. This chapter is brief because each chapter of the research project contains an introduction relevant to the discussion therein.

Chapter Two provides an overview of the relevant literature related to this research project. The chapter begins with a short theoretical orientation intended to provide the reader with an understanding of the vantage point from which I approach the research project; it is in essence the reflexive grounding of the project. I found that elements of critical, feminist and post-structuralist theories corresponded with my worldview and consequently, an amalgam of elements of these frameworks were applied in the research project. Secondly, the chapter covers concepts integral to examining the normative infrastructure behind OW work including neoliberalism (Good-Gingrich 2008, Graefe

2005; Lightman et al. 2006, McBride and McNutt 2007) and the functions of norms in welfare/workfare schemes (Graefe 2005, Good-Gingrich 2008, Moffat 1999, Mosher 2001, Piven and Cloward 1993, Polanyi 1957). The chapter then moves on to explain patterns that emerged during the literature review – namely that the ‘work’ behind OW can be categorized into three types of work; the work of claims-making (becoming eligible), training/re-socialization work (becoming employable) and labour-market participation/attachment (becoming employed). I argue that these three types of work are congruent with normative assumptions about work, welfare gender and class; the work of becoming eligible, employable and employed serves to enact and reinforce the normative consensus that undergirds the practice of workfare work in Ontario.

In Chapter Three, I summarize the methods used to collect and analyze data as well as some reflections on the methodology and process of research. This chapter begins with my approach to research which highlights the theoretical underpinnings of the methodology used in the research project. Social justice principles guided the development of the research question and provided the framework for the project's design and approach (Canella and Manuelito 2008, Fraser and Naples 2004, Mies 1996, Leonard 1994). Secondly, the chapter covers elements of the research design, highlighting the methods and data collection process. The project includes a mixed method approach; quantitative data informed the analysis, qualitative data was gathered from research participants through interviews and written text was analyzed. Chapter Three then moves on to detailing how I gained entry to research sites, the recruitment strategy that I used and specifics regarding the research sample. Following that, I cover the approach used to

analyze data. The data not only describes but also helps me to understand and explain some of the social processes behind the administration of work-for-welfare in Ontario. In line with Fraser's (1998) construct of social justice, which includes redistribution, recognition and representation, this inquiry examines the material, subjective and governance dynamics that undergird the practices of OW work. The chapter concludes with my approach and reflections on ethics, rigor and validity.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the patterns that emerged from the data. This chapter is structured around the four questions that were used to collect and analyze data. These questions were:

- What is OW designed to do?
- What does the 'works' part of OW mean?
- How is the work requirement enacted?
- Whom does this work benefit?

The chapter begins with a discussion of the OW directives. Directives are written documents provided by the MCSS to the field. Directives are intended to guide the decision making and rationalize the practices behind OW. As directives can be understood as documents that relay the official intent of OW, I used them as a reflection of OW's stated intent. Quantitative data, also supplied by MCSS to the field is used to enhance this section of the discussion. Following that, I move on to explore participants' understanding of the works part of OW. Although participants confirmed my claim that, as presented in Chapter 2, OW work consists primarily of three types of work: the work of claims-making, training/re-socialization work and labour-market participation/attachment, their responses also deepened my understanding of the 'works' part of OW. Responses to the question "what is the 'works' part of OW?" revealed that

although the ‘works’ part of OW started out as ‘any job is a good job’, the mantra was abandoned shifting the focus of OW work from being employed to becoming employable. Workers relied on clients’ compliance with OW’s eligibility criteria as an indication of their employability. As the work of meeting eligibility for financial assistance was seen as the first work test, both the client and the worker were implicated in the claims-making work necessary to satisfy the requirements behind OW work. The chapter then focuses on examining responses to the question, “how is the ‘works’ part of OW enacted?”. I found that it was enacted primarily through tools and techniques aimed at assessment. During this process, the social and financial dividends of work were used as normative cues against which the client was compared. As a result of this assessment, apparent violations surfaced. These violations were connected to neoliberal class distinctions and gender roles linked to the nuclear family. The chapter concludes with the final question, “whom does this work benefit?” This question was intended to draw out participants’ mindsets and attitudes toward workfare work. I also intended this question to identify elements that comprise this mindset. Participant responses revealed that common sense ideas reflective of hegemonic beliefs and neoliberal constructs surrounding work and welfare were used by participants to understand, explain and activate the benefits of OW work.

In Chapter Five, I take up a more theoretical discussion of the data focusing specifically on what I learned from applying aspects of Gramsci’s (2010) and Bourdieu’s (1989) theoretical approach. The chapter begins with an explanation of my search for theoretical tools and covers briefly the elements of Gramsci’s (2010) and Bourdieu’s

(1989) work that I applied in this project. It then moves on to the application of these theoretical elements, specifically how hegemony, common sense, habitus, capital and field were useful in describing and making sense of participants' experiences. Next, I discuss the key theoretical findings that emerged by applying these concepts. The findings include: common sense ideas about work, welfare and gender in the administration of OW work; a specific habitus operating in OW (coach/gatekeeper); strategies employed by actors relating to occupied social locations; and metaphors of movement in OW's field. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical dilemmas that emerged from applying these elements to my research question.

The final chapter, Chapter Six, concludes with final reflections on the research project and how the project has influenced my understanding as a practitioner. I also include in this chapter unanswered questions that emerged for me which may be points of entry for other researchers and practitioners. Although many scholars have researched OW (e.g. Baker Collins 2004, Evans et al.1995, Good Gingrich 2008, Herd et al. 2007, Lightman 1997, Lightman et al. 2003, Lightman et al. 2005, Lightman et al. 2007, Peck 2001, Quaid 2002, Vaillencourt 2010), work as a policy instrument within OW remains relatively unexplored. I conclude that norms about work contribute to the policy's stability because normative assumptions about work, welfare and gender functioned to reconcile disparate intents which I believe render the seeming contradictions in OW work generally acceptable to those implicated in its activation. In this way, the common sense and taken for granted constructs operating behind workfare continue to be vital sites of

inquiry specifically because they remain powerful instruments with material and social consequences for people who are poor and unemployed.

Chapter Two: “Looking for work is hard work” - Literature Review

Since I began working with Ontario Works (OW) policy in 2000, the policy and program has gone through changes including benefit rates and relaxing of some of the more practices. However, the foundational architecture which requires clients to participate in work, or work preparation activities, remains relatively unchanged. As stated in Chapter One, an objective of this research project was to explore the literature on welfare state approaches in order to examine the normative assumptions surrounding work and welfare that are engaged to diffuse and inculcate neoliberal imperatives and codes of conduct related to class and gender.

This chapter provides an overview of the literature relevant to this research project beginning with a brief orientation intended to provide the reader with an understanding of the theoretical vantage point from which I approached the research project. This chapter also briefly reviews concepts integral to examining the normative infrastructure behind OW work including neoliberalism (Good-Gingrich 2008, Graefe 2002; Lightman et al. 2006, McBride and McNutt 2007) and the functions of norms in welfare/workfare schemes (Graefe 2005, Good-Gingrich 2008, Moffat 1999, Mosher 2001, Piven and Cloward 1993, Polanyi 1957). The chapter concludes with patterns that emerged during the literature review; patterns in the literature allow one to consider the ‘work’ behind Ontario Works (OW) as: the work of claims-making (becoming eligible), training/re-socialization work (becoming employable) and labour-market participation/attachment (becoming employed). I propose that that these three types of

work are linked to normative assumptions about work, welfare, gender and class; the work of becoming eligible, employable and employed serves to enact and reinforce the normative consensus that undergirds the practice of workfare work in Ontario.

Why another Analysis Of Norms Behind Workfare?

Workfare work rests upon two competing labour force development approaches: the Human Capital Development (HCD) model and the Labour Force Attachment (LFA) model (Herd 2006, Torjman 1996). The HCD model seeks to find stable jobs which provide family-supporting wages by improving long-term employability through education and skills development (Herd 2006, Torjman 1996). In contrast, the LFA model is based on the ‘work-first’ assumption that rapid job entry leads to increased employability with minimal, if any, training or education (Buchanan and Klassen 2005, Herd 2006, Torjman 1996). Although both of these models assume that employment is the key path to prosperity, they also convey vastly different normative messages and expectations regarding the problems of poverty and unemployment.

In line primarily with the LFA model, the employment related activities behind OW, which I have labeled OW work, are intended to end the supposed free-riding of poor unemployed people while utilizing as few state resources as possible (Buchanan and Klassen 2005). This goal rests on the assumption that a job is the best way to ensure continued employability. According to McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) employability has been featured in labour market policies in most OECD countries for decades. The concept applies to the unemployed as well as those seeking to change jobs or be promoted. McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) also note working definitions of employability

differ mainly on intrinsic (individual characteristics) versus extrinsic factors (the factors influencing the individual's ability to get a job). However, the current application of employability in labour market policies is heavily focused on the individual or the supply-side of labour market dynamics (McQuaid and Lindsay 2005). This notion corresponds with the framework applied in the administration of OW work which intimates that employability is also the best route to continuous employment which in turn the pathway to reduce poverty and the subsequent demand for welfare.

But, “there is overwhelming evidence that current policies and programs do little to realize and sometimes run contrary to their objective of supporting adults in gaining economic independence and a stable attachment to the labour market” (Buchanan and Klassen 2005:4). Debates regarding the quality and effectiveness of workfare work are complicated by the fact that there are few evaluations of workfare; the results of evaluations that exist are “typically mixed and often contradictory” (Buchanan and Klassen 2005:36). For example, Evans (2007:39) notes that the absence of “adequately paid jobs” sustains poverty and triggers returns to social assistance. Lightman et al. (2007) found that 20% to 50% of recipients who left OW for a job would most likely return because the jobs available to them are at the low-end of the labour market. Frennett and Picot (2003:12 and 16) assert that approximately 52% of recipients return to social assistance five years after leaving. Furthermore, 10% to 20% of recipients that return are “repeat returners or cyclers” (Lightman et al. 2007:37). This research demonstrates that workfare work produces neither sustained employment nor a

corresponding decrease in poverty (Buchanan and Klassen 2005, Frennett and Picot 2004, Lightman et al. 2005, Lightman et al. 2007).

Despite ineffective outcomes, (Buchanan and Klassen 2005, Evans 2007, Lightman et al 2005, Lightman et al. 2007, Little 2005, Peck 2001, Quaid 2002), work-for-welfare continues to be a stable policy instrument . This contradiction was the primary driver behind this inquiry and was informed by my experience in the field. For the last eleven years, I have worked in management in provincial and municipal government and most of the time experience an unquiet internal conflict while administering OW - Ontario's version of workfare. I have grown increasingly frustrated by the policy's dogmatic and almost pathological adherence to reinforcing work requirements in OW despite its mediocre success. This incongruity signaled to me that there may be other, concealed forces driving the policy and practice of OW. I also wondered how practitioners, including myself, made sense of the incompatibility between the practice of OW work and the results it produces.

While contradictions within policy are not uncommon (Peck 2001), contradictions are vital sites for inquiry because they reveal other purposes or goals that the policy responds to – normative expectations leveraged by normative assumptions. Norms can be defined as the way “societies are and ought to be” (Plant, Lesser and Taylor-Gooby 1980:13). These are the “deepest assumptions about the basis of human nature, its capacities [...] powers, and [...] possibilities” (Plant, Lesser and Taylor-Gooby 1980:213). Policy is constructed in response to these “specific networks of rules [...] which conceptually organize the practical means by which large groups of individuals

seek to satisfy their basic needs [via strategies] regarded as normal and acceptable by the majority” (Doyal and Gough 1991:80). In short, social policy enshrines social values and judgments. Relatively stable policy trajectories can indicate that society has in some way accepted the moral assumptions behind social policy’s distributional systems (Doyal and Gough 1991). In a liberal welfare state, the normative basis for social assistance reflects a fundamental yet tacit agreement regarding the distribution of wealth (Doyal and Gough 1991, George and Wilding 2003). Within this agreement, needs that have economic dividends are more likely to be legitimized as they are justified in normative terms congruent with capitalist values (Plant et al. 1980).

Interrogating the normative expectations behind OW work is one approach to explaining why the policy of workfare work persists despite its disappointing results. These normative expectations operate at different levels of society simultaneously: generally within welfare capitalist states, within neoliberal bureaucracy and within client and worker’s worldviews. In this study, I investigated how norms about work, class and gender are used to facilitate the practice of workfare work. My inquiry explored how these types of assumptions operate at these different levels and how this dynamic may sustain the contradiction of workfare work.

What Is Workfare?

The term workfare first entered public discourse sometime during Nixon’s presidency in the late 60s (Dostal 2007). It is a “contraction of “work-for-welfare”, the practice of requiring recipients to provide some type of work or training in exchange for benefits (Dostal 2007, Evans et al 1995).

Workfare's two primary characteristics, "minimalist welfare and work enforcement" (Peck 2001:9) manifest primarily as mandatory participation requirements, systemic orientation towards work, deterrence of welfare claims along with an active push of poor people into the low end of the labour market (Dostal 2007, Evans 1995, Peck 2001, Piven and Cloward 1993). Thus, relief acts as a temporary stop gap from welfare to wages; the transition is facilitated "typically through the combined use of 'carrots' in the form of work and job-search programs and 'sticks' in the forms of benefit cuts for the noncompliant" (Peck 2001:10).

Some claim that "only a strict 'work first feature [...] defines workfare concepts proper and separates them from earlier education and training policies" (Mead 2001:529 as noted in Dostal 2007:23). Others recognize variances in workfare's implementation. For example, Torjman (1996) notes that there are 2 distinct approaches to workfare, the human resources approach, or the Poor Law approach. Dostal (2007) identifies two types of workfare along the Active Labour Market Programs continuum; on the one end of the continuum is "market workfare" and on the opposite end is "make work workfare" (Dostal 2007:23). "The former concept relates to the labour market and waged labour, while the latter relates to the administrative imposition of 'work' by the authorities responsible for paying benefits" (Dostal 2007:27). According to Peck (2001) and Quaid (2002) the evolution of workfare's meaning into more generalized, abstract and hazy definitions reveals its policy value as more normative than pragmatic.

Although there is little agreement on what the term workfare definitively is or is not, there is agreement that there is a mandatory connection between work and welfare in

workfare policy (Quaid 2002). This project accepts the term workfare in the broader sense to include, as a condition of income support, the requirement that recipients participate in a wide variety of work search and preparation activities.

Policy Legacies and Shifts

In Canada, municipalities historically paid for and delivered relief programs; some instituted workfare schemes (Morel 2002, Peck 2001, Struthers 1996). During the 60's, when the federal government outlawed work enforcement, relief programs shifted from their origins in emulating Poor Law requirements (Morel 2002). Previously, relief schemes reflected the historical foundations of the English Poor Law report of 1834; the function of welfare was to meet the subsistence needs of poor unemployed people (Carragata 2003, Morel 2002, Struthers 1996) only if those assisted consigned themselves to some type of work test (Struthers 1996).

Some scholars have linked the changes in Canadian policy to changes in the economic context which facilitated and contributed to the import of neoliberal instruments (Graefe 2005, McBride and McNutt 2007). Few contemporary political scientists find great differences among Canadian and American societies noting slight variances in the two countries' adherence to liberated market economy characteristics (McBride and McNutt 2007). The similarities were however intensified in the 80s by "continentalism" (Graefe 2002:8) resulting from trade treaties.

During the 80's, Ontario's economy was particularly hard hit as its largely manufacturing based economy adjusted to the impact of free trade agreements with the United States (Haddow and Klassen 2004). This strengthened link was reinforced by

international pressures to better align policy in order to augment a competitive edge in global markets (Caragata 2003); Canada and the United States responded to international pressure by increasing market flexibility and redefining the role of government more in line with emerging neoliberal ideas (McBride and McNutt 2007).

The United States experimented and implemented welfare reforms that served as an “example to be emulated for many neoliberals in Canada”. (McBride and McNutt 2007:178). Scholars who write about OW commonly identify it as Canada’s imported version of American style workfare (Evans et al 1995, Herd et al. 2007, Peck 2001, Quaid 2002). Across Canada, all provinces except Newfoundland and Labrador implemented some form of welfare to work program (Good-Gingrich 2008).

Consequently, Canadian workfare politics emerged as a complex hybrid of “United States-style market liberalism with elements of European-style conservatism and social democracy” (Peck 2001:222). For some, the rescaled federal role, signaled by the replacement of Canada Assistance Plan with the Canada Health and Social Transfer, provided both incentive and direction to provinces to look for innovations such as workfare (Herd et al. 2009, Graefe 2006).

Neoliberal techniques, intended to facilitate neoliberal objectives, were rolled out concomitantly with the roll- back of previous policy legacies (Graefe 2005). Some argue that OW represents a significant departure from Canadian policy history (Evans et al. 1995, Herd 2002, Peck 2001, Quaid 2002, Vaillencourt 2010). From a path-shaping theoretical perspective, these events can be understood as “dislocations” (Torfinn

1999:376) that facilitated “destabilization” (Torfing 1999: 376) of Canada’s Keynesian policy heritage.

Although Ontario’s version of workfare represents a material and discursive shift (Peck 2001), it is also identified as a practical and ideological project that fit into Ontario’s policy path (Peck 2001). As provinces struggled to respond to the changing conditions, in the mid 90s, Ontario’s Progressive Conservatives championed a solution via their “Common Sense Revolution”: reduce government, liberate the market, and make people work for welfare.

During the mid-90s provincial election, “all three parties promised welfare cuts and a further crackdown on fraud, in each case underpinned by a workfarist policy orientation” (Peck 2001:327). Peck (2001) attributes this orientation to people’s belief that fraud and abuse drove the dramatic caseload increase in the early 90s. Shragge (1997:165) quotes the CAW (1994) as stating that workfare was “clearly designed to win political points for government by fanning the flames of public hatred against poor people”. At the time, the political economic climate contributed to Ontario’s thirst for policy innovation in welfare reforms. The Conservative’s “promise to clean up the system” (Lightman 1997) fed into the public’s insecurity about their own economic prospects. “High levels of welfare use became *prima facie* evidence not of a deteriorating economy, but rather of welfare abuse” (Lightman 1997). It legitimated the state’s attack on welfare and sanctioned the transformation of poor unemployed people into a source of “conscripted labour” (Lightman 1997:106). The public moral allegiance

was achieved around the idea that the welfare state and its beneficiary were the root of Ontario's financial problems.

Is OW Really A Change?

Debates about OW work can be attached to divergent purposes, convergences, and contradictions in the reasons and practices attached to the provision of welfare. But, in the literature there is disagreement regarding whether Ontario's workfare is in fact a change from welfare legacies or not.

Although the word workfare is relatively new, some scholars say that the practice is anything but new; it is the "most recent iteration of 'work tests' seen in earlier systems of poor relief such as the Victorian workhouse and of public works programmes during the [...] 1930s" (Dostal 2007:22). Struthers (1996:4) provides an account of the type of work test imposed on Canadians in need of social assistance which were to "impose work tests on the jobless, not to provide them with work".

This aspect of the debate is important because iterations of workfare reveal normative rules and values linked to the provision of poor relief (Piven and Cloward 1993, Torjman 1996). These debates have helped to shape the policy path and evolution of contemporary iterations and interpretations of the policy. For example, where the normative function of workfare is punitive, the coercive and threatening aspects of the policy are administratively reinforced. The more disadvantaged the group, the "more surveillance and coercion" (Henman 2004:187) are used. Whereas, where the normative function of workfare is reformatory, the assistive intent of the policy is highlighted (Keleher 1990).

Normative expressions reflect what is possible, what is valuable, and more importantly what is a threat to what is valuable. By appealing to the “common sense” of efficiency and affordability, rules of governing also evoke norms to rationalize workfare as a palatable policy option. As Gramsci (2010) posits, hegemony relies upon and is sustained by common sense. Through hegemony groups acquire and adhere to worldviews because it is assumed that they reflect what is ‘normal’ among group members. The taken-for-granted origins of these beliefs are often appealing because they seem to ‘make sense’ (Gramsci 2010).

In OW and workfare literature, one can attribute the normative functions of the requirement to work and the provision of relief to contemporary rules of governing. As I discuss in the next section of this chapter, attached to these rules are regulating mechanisms such as dominant norms and notions of need reflective of neoliberal tenets.

Workfare as a Rule For Governing

McKee (2009) posits that the mentalities of rule are comprised of the connection between thoughts and modes of governing played out in the discourse and interventions of governmental practice. These two dynamics intersect in social policy. Welfare policy is intended to “remedy the failures of the market” (Heady et al 1999:24) by providing for individuals who are not able, for whatever reason, to meet their basic needs from market dealings. In this equation, the welfare state and liberal market economies grew up together (Piven and Cloward 1993, Polanyi 1957).

Critical theory links governing mechanisms and rules of governing to social structures created by elites in order to exploit marginalized groups. In this framework,

governance is primarily concerned with the management of populations not of territory (Lazzarato 2009). It involves the “strategic relation between governors and the governed whereby the former try to determine the conduct of the latter” (Lazzarato 2009:114).

Workfare can be considered a regulating mechanism that yokes social norms to rules of governing in a capitalist welfare state (Graefe 2005, Good-Gingrich 2008, Moffat 1999, Mosher 2001, Piven and Cloward 1993, Polanyi 1957). In particular, workfare is reflective of fundamental neoliberal rules of governing (Graefe 2005, Good-Gingrich 2008, Lightman et al. 2006, Moffat 1999, Mosher 2001)

Workfare as a Neoliberal Tool

Among scholars, there is some consensus that workfare policy spread along with neoliberalism around the globe (Good-Gingrich 2008, Graefe 2002; Lightman et al. 2006, McBride and McNutt 2007). Stanford (2008) marks the neoliberal global shift with the appointment of Paul Volcker to the US Federal Reserve, Margaret Thatcher as British Prime Minister and Ronald Reagan as the American President. Bashevikin (2002:134) attributes Canada’s shift to the criticism that started in the 70s that the welfare state was “normatively bad, administratively broken and fundamentally backward in its effects”. Peck (2001:226-227) attributes the foundation of a neoliberal critique of the Canadian welfare state to “behaviourist explanations of unemployment on the Canadian landscape pressing the need to create incentives to work against dependency and its moral and economic negative effects.”

Graefe (2005) notes that similar to other political packages, neoliberal policy strategies must navigate among the general rules of social governing such as culture,

ideology, and institutions. Although, neoliberalism cannot be classified as a homogenous category, (Graefe 2005) it holds some characteristic core tenets. Neoliberal governance is underpinned primarily by an economic grammar.

The neoliberal perspective includes the claim that the welfare state is too heavy a burden on the economy; its excessive costs not only include the inefficient operations of state sponsored social security but also stymie potential growth and competition (Heady et al. 1999, Offe 1987). Some claim that the neoliberal agenda was a push to reshape the welfare state, not to abolish it (Hartman 2005). Roll-back neoliberals, such as Thatcher and Reagan, scaled back post war policies and institutions (Graefe 2005). Retrenchment reinforces the “common sense” idea that social well-being is achieved via the economy; government is then given free rein to protect the economy from the so called extravagances of the welfare state.

Neoliberal regimes introduced “new institutions, policies, and governmentalities” (Graefe 2005:3) intended to regulate marginalized populations affected by roll-back strategies (Graefe 2005). This process intends to submit “all aspects of human life to concepts of market efficiency and rationality” (Bakker 2007:550). Thus markets are promoted as being more just, effective, and efficient than the welfare state further legitimizing its roll back.

But, less government does not necessarily mean less governance (Larner 2000). The neoliberal minimal state (Lightman 1997, Offe 1987) has a stronger presence in protecting business in the interest of profit making (Shalla and Clement 2007). A neoconservative ideology includes “valuing individual autonomy, [...] the sovereignty of

the marketplace” (Caragata 2003:562) and “a relatively limited redistributive intervention on the part of the state for social reproduction” (Bakker 2007:547). “Neoliberalism is both a political discourse about the nature of rule and a set of practices that facilitate the governing of individuals from a distance” (Larner 2000:6)

A minimalist government instead “endeavors to devolve autonomy and responsibility from the state to an active citizenry [...] in which the subject’s capacity for action is used as a political strategy to secure the ends of government” (McKee 2009:470). From a critical perspective, this changes “how and whose interests” (Stanford 2008:48) government protects. Rather than protecting the interests of citizens directly through social security programs, neoliberal strategies seek to protect citizens indirectly via a healthy economy. However, an indirect path to well-being can further exclude marginalized people, such as women and racialized groups, who have historically not been adequately accommodated by labour markets (Haddow and Klassen 2004).

But marginalized workers in marginal jobs are more difficult for employers to discipline (Stanford 2008). Disciplining labour markets includes intentionally lowering labourer’s expectations around job security and decent wages (Caragata 2003, Shalla and Clement 2007, Stanford 2008). Perhaps, this is where OW’s relevance becomes apparent; it can be considered part of a policy package that translates neoliberal core tenets into practice (Baker Collins 2004, Evans et al.1995, Good Gingrich 2008, Herd et al. 2007, Peck 2001, Quaid 2002, Vaillencourt 2010). OW can be understood as a roll-out strategy that picks up where labour market functioning has slacked; it acts as the “meaningful discipline” (Stanford 2008:105) of low-waged workers.

OW's Normative Foundations

Discipline is also a common feature of an economic ethos. According to Baines (2007) social norms operate in macro systems and structures. Within liberal welfare states, capitalism can be understood as a macro system and structure in which social norms operate. One can identify correspondence between the principles driving capitalism and those driving workfare. Polanyi (1957) asserts that the principle of self-interest drives capitalism; Evans et al. (1995) identify workfare as resting upon the normative ideas of desert, self-respect, social responsibility, and citizenship through work. There is, however, some debate regarding the intent of workfare's normative foundations.

Some scholars argue that the normative drive behind workfare is well meaning (Miller and Rose 1998, Heady et al 1999, Keleher 1990). Heady et al (1999:36) argue that all welfare regimes are in some way concerned with the well being of citizens; “none thinks poverty is a good thing.” Evans (2007) argues that social assistance reforms were driven mainly to reduce costs and that shifts to workfare would have occurred regardless of political affiliation; the change was neither benevolent nor malevolent but rather a matter of affordability.

In contrast, other scholars claim that the normative foundations of workfare are nefarious and the state's intent is to punish or marginalize poor people (Baker Collins 2004, Lightman et al. 2003, Fraser 1994, Moffatt 1999, Mosher 2000, Piven and Cloward 1993, Torjman 1996). The import of workfare into Ontario was facilitated by normative assumptions about people who are poor; these assumptions exploited the deteriorating

economic conditions noted earlier. By invoking a discourse of waste, frivolity and unaffordability, Mike Harris's PC government was able to reinforce making people work for welfare as the solution; in their campaign work, any type and at any wage, was affirmed by demeaning public relief.

Normative Foundations Facilitate Moral Imperatives

Heady et al. (1999) claim that liberal welfare states share common moral values and goals such as promoting autonomy, social stability, social equality, economic efficiency, reducing poverty, and avoiding social exclusion. According to neoliberal tenets, state intervention via welfare policy undermines the moral behaviour of citizens such as hard work and private savings (Heady et al 1999) as well as healthy family and community dynamics (Baker Collins 2004, Bakker 2007, Shalla and Clement 2007).

Workfare proponents often claim that the welfare state can cause moral damage (Keleher 1990); accordingly neoliberals urge the state to rethink its role. From this perspective, workfare is a responsible way for government to influence client's morality; they should be shaped into competent functioning citizens (Offe 1987) by blaming themselves and accepting "employment as duty" (Offe 1987:507).

Workfare supporters, such as Keleher (1990:93) point to a long list of social ills created by welfare which are "chronic, and in many cases worsening, indicators of social pathology in areas such as household formation, illegitimate births, teenage pregnancy, high school completion, functional illiteracy, alcohol and other substance abuse, and crime, especially crimes against the person". Norms around work are linked to morality;

explicit and implicit links are made between paid work and virtuous behaviour (McDonald and Marston 2005, Mosher 2000).

By leveraging “the old Poor Law distinction between deserving and undeserving poor” (Lightman 1997:93), the logic of workfare resurrects the efficiency of hunger as best motivator for economic productivity and consequently social wellbeing. Hunger, “nature’s penalty” (Polanyi 1957:165) only works if other systems of relationships are weakened. In this context, the provision of rights based welfare is morally disorienting (Offe 2008). A significant by-product of neoliberal governance is that poor unemployed people become progressively detached from social systems while at the same time assuming individual responsibility for systemic problems (Bakker 2007).

Workfare schemes single out beneficiaries from the collective in a categorization that includes taxpayers, consumers and scroungers (Clark 2004). Consequently, the state’s relationship to citizens is recast; citizenship is narrowly defined in economic terms where the taxpayer’s interest is efficiency, the consumer’s interest is choices about services, and the scrounger is a grave threat to both (Clarke 2004). The moral benefits of work are discussed further in Chapters Four and Five and emerged as a strong theme in participants’ experiences. The moral benefits of work are also a central and defining principle in positioning these interests as needs.

Governance Is Linked To Needs

The ascription of need is sensitive to social, political, and economic contexts. Although, defining needs is both relative (Plant et al. 1980) and contested (Baker-Collins 2004, Fraser 1989), “some conditions are necessary for doing anything” (Plant et al.

1980:37). Furthermore, “unmet basic needs hinder a person from acting as a moral agent” (Baker Collins 2004:5).

According to Plant et al. (1989), if according to society’s moral code, you ought to do something then nothing should stand in your way of doing it. “Needs claims have a relational structure [;] A needs *x* in order to *y*” (Fraser 1989:163). The normative foundations and the provision of welfare are generally based on varied notions of need (Baker-Collins 2004, Doyal and Gough 1991, Fraser 1989, Ignatieff 1986, Plant et al. 1989). With the provision of welfare, comes the implicit construction and recognition of a need (Henman 2004) in order to achieve certain ends (Fraser 1989, Henman 2004, Plant et al. 1989, Doyal and Gough 1991). Needs have traditionally been defined in a minimalist sense; instrumental needs are those that are necessary to meet basic needs (Heady et al 1999). These basic requirements are satisfied by providing the necessities to physically sustain life, such as food and shelter (Plant et al. 1980).

Welfare, in the process of addressing need, is comprised of two elements – that of establishing, denying, or validating the “need as a legitimate political concern or to enclave it as a nonpolitical matter” (Fraser 1989:164). Interrogating the intended beneficiary of policy can reveal the normative rationale used in establishing, denying or validating a need.

Although Piven and Cloward (1993) traced the dialectic between relief schemes and labour markets back to the birth of capitalism, contemporary residue of this historical connection are evident in OW. Some claim that in this context, needs addressed via welfare evolved from status concepts such as equality to include equality of material

conditions such as equal opportunity (Caragata 2003). One can identify that ‘need’ and the response to ‘needs’ in workfare are established “*uno actu*, i.e, simultaneously and through the same mechanism, namely the market for labor and capital” (Offe 2008:4).

The transformation of labour markets are implicated in the concomitant transformation of governance regimes that moved from “enhancing the social rights of citizens [...] secure employment with benefits and decent wages to precarious jobs that are short term, unprotected, and poorly compensated” (Shalla and Clement 2007:349). Thus the needs of labour markets are fundamental to the principles that drive workfare.

Polanyi (1957) writes of the tension between welfare and capitalism noting that “popular democracy was a danger to capitalism” (Polanyi 1957:226) and that in essence citizens only had a “right to a job” (Polanyi 1957:256). This observation could apply to the current neoliberal context in which work can be understood as an instrumental need; workfare represents the welfare state’s intervention to satisfy this need.

By constructing the welfare client’s need into a concrete objective – work - the provision of welfare transforms a moral, value based debate into a managerial problem. Consequently, satisfying need is primarily assessed in economic terms and in relation to the marketplace (Fraser 1989, George and Wilding 2003, Good Gingrich 2008, Offe 2008, Plant et al. 1980).

Some scholars claim that OW is constructed to meet the needs of capital holders and, by enforcing work obligations, an army of desperate reserve workers is constantly regenerated for the elite to exploit (Lightman et al. 2005 and 2007, Peck 2001). Through workfare, the state is granted symbolic and material authority to demand labour force

participation; its claim to all poor people's labour is both exigent and legitimated by the provision of welfare. In this context, citizens become responsible to meet the needs of the welfare state by fulfilling their moral and economic obligation to work. OW becomes the vehicle for poor unemployed citizens to demonstrate their commitment to the state; those who lack economic "self-sufficiency" exclude themselves from economic and political rights "until they get a job" (Peck 2001:253). Similarly, Fraser and Gordon (1994) and McDonald and Marston (2005) posit that the normative foundations of workfare are revealed in the state's claim that the client is the main beneficiary who is reformed from a supposed dependent recipient to the ideal, independent worker. The notions of work and agency are pivotal foundations supporting workfare as supposedly the best way to meet needs.

According to a neoliberal ethic, work is the vehicle to prosperity; it follows that the welfare state ensures collective well-being by requiring welfare clients to work. As Piven and Cloward (1993:368) note some believe that meeting needs as a right is constructed as harmful, the argument being that "so much more spent on relief, so much worse the poverty". The normative arguments for this position is that workfare foregrounds the individual client as the primary beneficiary in two ways; firstly by not meeting their needs directly which would be harmful to them and to society and secondly by forcing their agency thereby making them better off. For example, Keleher (1990) states by satisfying basic needs, welfare can be considered a benign variant of slavery. In contrast, workfare is "emancipatory" (Keleher 1990:94) because it "effects the transition of the productively disabled from a condition of economic (and in many cases,

psychological) dependence to one of economic (and psychological) independence”
(Keleher 1990:94).

Keleher (1990) founds his workfare as benevolence argument by linking notions of work and agency. Agency is the combination of freedom and well-being defined as “*the ability to formulate for oneself a life plan [...] and to be able to try to execute, to make real, one’s life plan*” (Keleher 1990:96 italic in original). This position claims that clients who choose or are unable to participate in the labour market are in essence expecting a life-long free ride thereby limiting their own agency (Keleher 1990).

Thus, neoliberal governance frameworks leverage workfare as a vehicle to symbolically and materially grant and glorify autonomy. Lack of paid employment becomes synonymous with loss of autonomy; workfare satisfies the beneficiary’s need and right to work. These normative assumptions were fundamental themes in participant’s responses and are discussed further in Chapters Four and Five. While helping recipients to find work is necessary in our social context, at issue is the fact workfare forces classes of people to do the “harshest work for the least reward” (Piven and Cloward 1993:xix); “in the capitalist scheme [...] the proletariat receives an unjustly large share of the burdens and an unjustly small share of the rewards” (Fraser 1997:17). Further, in a neoliberal governance context, the proletariat class is further stratified and under workfare, the lowest caste of workers, those who are poor and unemployed, bear an even greater portion of the unjust burden.

As neoliberal norms and codes dictate that welfare clients need to participate in the labour market not to be poor and to be good citizens, relief schemes are founded in

the notion that employment is the primary need of citizens and the state in this way becomes involved in the “distribution of resources including jobs” (Chunn and Gavigan 2004:235).

The right to work and the right to having basic needs met become one in the same with the provision for basic needs being subordinate or a condition of the right to work. In this role, applicants abdicate their claim to a social safety net and instead agree that by receiving financial assistance from the state they “incur a debt or obligation that must be repaid through participation in workfare” (Mosher 2000:35).

Perversely, by satisfying work as a need, constructed as necessary for autonomy, workfare violates autonomy by binding or eliminating choice for people who are poor and unemployed. The state can claim to respect “individual’s rights while demeaning them as persons” (Ignatiuff 1986:13). Further, workfare contributes to the “experience of passivity and the authoritative denial of meaningful choice” (Offe 2008:10). Neoliberal codes of governing do not equally value all freedoms; recipient’s freedom to choose is not valued enough to even to be considered as freedom. Rather, it is constructed as pathological dependency. Through workfare, poor unemployed people are systematically denied the “quintessence of all freedoms [which] is to say no” (Offe 2008:10). Thus work contains and transmits normative ideas and expectations that institutionalize how needs are interpreted and enacted in relation to the claim for and provision of welfare. This tenet was reflected in participants’ common sense ideas behind work and manifested as fundamental to the support and drive for workfare in which welfare embodies the relationship between labour and wellbeing.

Kinds of Work

In Chapter Four, an analysis of the OW Directives (tools for practice provided to the field by the province) examines the official guidelines for enacting the work requirements behind OW. In this next section, I detail a pattern in the literature I was able to identify surrounding the type of work required and undertaken by clients in order to prove or retain their eligibility for income assistance. This analysis is informed by the existing literature on OW and workfare but also draws on my experience in the field.

Piven and Cloward (1993) claim that workfare schemes are very effective at transmitting the normative meanings and valorization of paid work. These perspectives reveal that *work* is a powerful policy and governance instrument; it is effectively leveraged as a site of highly normative activity. In a neoliberal context, *worker* is a greatly valued expression of the Western normative consensus; paid work represents the most esteemed expression of citizenship (Bakker 2007, Carragata 2003, McDonald and Marston 2005; Miller and Rose 1999).

Normative assumptions behind work, welfare, class and gender drive OW work. Not only is the provision of benefits conditional upon satisfying the requirements related to work search and preparation activities, moreover the provision of benefits is itself seen as a vehicle toward becoming employable and employed. Welfare is provided not solely on the notion of need but is conferred based on its utility in relation to labour force participation. Consequently, work is more commonly used as a lens through which policy commitments are made or denied.

As welfare clients potentially escape the discipline of waged work, workfare acts as a mechanism to yoke them to labour market regulation. It does this by extracting three types of work: (1) welfare as work (Good-Gingrich 2008, Herd et al 2005, McDonald and Marston 2005, Mosher 2001, Vaillencourt 2010); (2) training, education and re-socialization (Baker-Collins 2004, Fraser 1984, Fraser and Gordon 1994, Good-Gingrich 2008, Herd et al. 2005, McDonald and Marston 2005); and lastly (3) paid or volunteer placements (Herd et al. 2005, Little 2005, Vaillencourt 2010).

Welfare as Work – First Type of Work

Claims making, the first type of work, can be understood as reflective of normative concepts surrounding desert and dependency that are also linked to gender based and class related norms. Codified in the links between workfare and the work of claims making, the administrative practices directing petitioning for benefits are used to ensure compliance with these normative expectations.

As noted earlier, Peck (2001) argues that the cyclical patterns of work-for-welfare are most vehemently enforced when work is available allowing the state to reinforce the illusion that the strategy is a success. During these periods, eligibility rules become more stringent and the activities associated with establishing and maintaining eligibility for benefits represents a type of work obligation; the first work test is the work of making claims for benefits (Evans et al. 1995).

Fraser (1989) identifies a major normative tension between beneficiaries' claim to unemployment insurance versus social assistance. She notes that the process for claiming unemployment insurance is less administratively and bureaucratically capricious, requires

less efforts to acquire it, is “far less subject to intrusive controls and in most cases lacks the dimension of surveillance” (Fraser 1989:151). Insurance contributors make their claim as “*right-bearers*” (Fraser 1989:151 emphasis in original). In contrast, social assistance claimants are heavily engaged in claims making work positioned instead as “beneficiaries of governmental largess” (Fraser 1989:152). This difference reveals that administrative practices are implicated in the policy’s normative goals; these techniques facilitate the normative interpretation of needs resulting in the claimant’s legitimized or illegitimated claim based primarily on their attachment to the labour market.

The normative assumption mobilized to legitimize the process of claims making relies implicitly on the notion that not all individuals share the same moral code about work and welfare. OW acts as a technique for moral regulation; “a project of normalizing, rendering natural, taken for granted, in a word ‘obvious’ what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order (Corrigan and Sayer 1985:4 as noted in Chunn and Gavigan 2004:224). Individuals and groups who don’t accept the dominant order or moral code are forced via administrative practices to adopt or adapt. The first type of work in OW is attached to two primary moral codes: deservedness and dependence.

Claims making is linked to notions of deservedness. Eligibility involves proving moral and financial deservedness. Deservedness as demonstrated in the claims making process means entering into a quid pro quo contract with the state. As noted earlier, although in a neoliberal context, the notion of individual freedom is sacrosanct, OW recipients must abandon their individuality and dedicate themselves to fulfilling their

responsibility to the state. This duty is expressed as full participation in the labour market which transforms the “welfare cheat” into a good and deserving citizen. Clarke (2004) identified the contract as an important neoliberal tool. This symbol is no more evident than in OW where the recipient enters into several mandatory contracts such as the “Rights and Responsibilities” and the “Participation Agreement” which must be fully executed as part of the eligibility determining process. The Participation Agreement was identified by participants as a fundamental tool in the enactment of OW’s work expectations and is discussed in Chapters Four and Five. In this arrangement lies a deep contradiction. Although the idea behind these OW contracts is autonomy and choice, the “significant disparity of power and resources that characterize the different sides of the welfare transaction [mean that administrative practices are] characterized by scrutiny and stigma, not mutuality and reciprocity” (Evans et al. 1995:89).

Desert also includes proving that applicants have been looking for work, that they will not commit fraud and that they have exhausted all other resources including the financial support of friends and family; however, they are penalized for using the support of family and friends (Baker Collins 2004). It is not only necessary to satisfy these requirements at the initial point of application but recipients are required to continually establish their deservedness (Herd et al. 2005, Moffatt 1999, Piven and Cloward 1993). Some scholars have identified this type of activity as coercive, dehumanizing and destructive (Herd et al. 2005, Moffatt 1999). Polanyi (1957) noted that coercion became an integral part of welfare with the rise of capitalism; capitalist wealth depended upon the constant threat of starvation for workers (Polanyi 1957). Plant et al. (1989:40) note that

“coercion is justified if it works” or if experts say that it is necessary. Consequently, “the scrutiny is a constant reminder of one’s status as “dependent” on the state’s willingness to meet basic needs” (Baker Collins 2004:6). OW clients internalize the precarious relationship between their legitimate need and their ability to demonstrate their deservedness (Moffatt 1999).

In accordance with the quid pro quo logic underpinning OW, the claims making process becomes a process to extract a type of labour from clients. As Stanford (2008) notes, labour is extracted from workers; the intensity, quality, and quantity of work performed is in response to the incentives or punishments conferred. Similarly, efforts to qualify for assistance are extracted from clients directly in response to incentives or punishments conferred via administration of the policy. Akin to an employment relationship, the OW administrator becomes the client’s boss (Peck 2001); recipients exchange their claims making efforts for financial assistance (Shragge 1997). In the exchange for benefits, clients become dependent upon the state’s provisioning however this expectation is frustrated as the role of government shifts from providing to policing (Baker Collins 2004).

Further, the work of claims making has specific implications for women who are poor. As Lister (2000) notes, it is mostly women who interface and negotiate with welfare agencies. Although these forms of “informal [...] political activism are important for citizenship from the perspective of their impact both on the wider community and on the individuals involved” (Lister 2000:101) they are not often recognized as legitimate expressions of citizenship (Lister 2000). For women, the time

and effort involved in claiming benefits is experienced as a “struggle for both resources and for control over time” (Bakker 2007:548) and for recognition of their status as participating rights bearing citizens. The lack of recognition frustrates society’s responsibility to confer to citizens what they need in order to fulfill their obligations (Plant et al. 1989, Doyal and Gough 1991).

So, one could say that the OW contract in essence is not truly *quid pro quo* as the state only partially fulfills its obligation while demanding and extracting full engagement and recompense (in the form of effort) from clients. Although OW recognizes the eligibility process as necessary, it is not necessarily recognized as laborious. Not only is claims making the administrative mechanism to determine deservedness, enacted as needs-claimed in relation to needs-recognized, but it is also the technique used to inculcate the transformation of recipients from dependence to independence.

Claims making linked to notions of dependency. The process of petitioning for benefits is infused with the normative attributes of work in order to influence clients’ subjectivity; that is their status as dependent is reinforced as a mechanism to produce humility, malleability and compliance. An important tool used in this process is official and unofficial discourse linking welfare and work.

Fraser (1989:162) identifies discourse as a highly charged site of political conflict in which “inequalities are symbolically elaborated and challenged”. “Moral and ethical discourses [...] in the programmes of workfare states” (MacDonald and Marston 2005:379) are used to translate ideology into program imperatives and furnish government with legitimacy to implement practices (Hartman 2005) intended to influence

behaviour. This action relies upon the connection between discourse, interpretation, and internalization that accompanies the provision of welfare. Highly powerful discourses around notions of dependency are effectively invoked to promote workfare (Hatala 2007, Keleher 1990) while denigrating rights based welfare (Fraser 1987, Fraser and Gordon 1994, Henman 2004).

Many scholars have documented the shift in discourse with the implementation of OW (Moffatt 1999, Mosher 2000, Peck 2001) and workfare (Chunn and Gavigan 2004, Fraser 1989, Hartman 2005, Henman 2004, McDonald and Marston 2005). Welfare discourse nested in needs and rights frameworks were reworked focusing instead on work, responsibility, self-sufficiency, and empowerment (Peck 2001). This shift implicitly or explicitly constructs the welfare client as different from the norm (Henman 2004) by linking poverty and crime (Chunn and Gavigan 2004) and other “deeply negative and harmful stereotypes [such as] idleness or laziness, sloth, ignorance, [...] dishonesty, promiscuity and immorality” (Mosher 2000:32). The workfare story plays upon and leverages well-worn pathways of tacit rules, boundaries and normal patterns that speak specifically to “the failings of the poor and the virtues of hard work” (Peck 2001:17). Discourse sanctions and legitimates officially different intervention and treatment for welfare recipients. Correspondingly, participant responses revealed a specific discourse that constructed the welfare client as ‘damaged’ in some way. This finding is discussed further in Chapters Four and Five.

In Ontario, the notion of dependency facilitated the ideological attack on welfare recipients allowing OW to emerge as an acceptable alternative policy (Peck 2001).

Dependency discourse foregrounds the client's moral status in relation to work and workers. Not only does it mute the normative values of poor relief and welfare previously underpinning the provision of Family Benefits Allowance (FBA) and General Welfare Assistance, dependency discourse also attributes the cause of unemployment to the individual; the problem is rectified via mutual obligation (Henman 2004) in the labour-capital exchange.

Expert discourses, such as the pathology of dependency, play a formative role in creating or fostering consensus around normative beliefs. Claims making engages normative beliefs to discipline poor unemployed people in order to transform them from dependent recipient to independent worker. However, there is a stark contradiction in the administration, enforcement, and implementation of OW's employment assistance compared to financial assistance.

Determining financial eligibility is an extremely prescriptive process which is encoded and reinforced in the tools and technology of administration including the software program, Service Delivery Management Technology (SDMT). Financial eligibility tools and processes are designed to ensure that the same questions are being asked in the same ways at the same time with the same frequency thereby ensuring a greater likelihood of consistency and compliance.

However, as workers revealed, there are no official tools provided by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) to determine clients' eligibility for employment assistance; as discussed in Chapter Four, there was a great variance in how employment assistance was approached by workers. Were OW's primary goal to help

people to find work then one would expect that employment assistance would receive the same level of administrative attention as determining financial deservedness. However, employment assistance is far more discretionary and unlike financial assistance, a decision to deny employment assistance cannot even be appealed. Thus, client's claim making work does not guarantee them access to employment assistance.

While norms about dependency are leveraged to valorize work and reinforce the image of the citizen worker, it is interesting to note that welfare dependency is normatively negative while the highly dependent and increasingly capricious relationship between labour and capital remains formally unacknowledged; the dependency of workers upon labour market demand is simply accepted as the normal character of the worker-capitalist relationship. Inherent in the normative assumptions grounding this relationship, lies the supposedly common sense idea that market forces dictate the demand for labour and that when it is no longer needed, the relationship should end, regardless of worker's hard work. The law of supply and demand appears amoral and apolitical all the while effectively absolving any moral obligation toward the poor. In this context, the administrative process of claims making in OW relies on enacting ideals such as desert and dependency in order to shift normative expectations in the provision of relief so that even the practice of making an application is aligned with normative rules around work.

Training, Education And Resocialization – Second Type Of Work

The second type of work required of OW clients is training, education and re-socialization. As I discuss further in this section, the gendered division of labour can be identified as a primary normative foundation behind this type of work.

Training and education programs can be successful at leveling the playing field for groups typically disadvantaged in the labour market such as “women, youth, older workers, recent immigrants, and persons with disabilities or low levels of education, and/or individuals with a history of repeated income security reliance” (Buchanan 2005:5). Little (2005) notes that if adequately and appropriately resourced and executed, training programs for welfare recipients can be successful. She also notes that critical program design elements, including longer-term and flexible participation, are not currently core features of most Canadian workfare programs (Little 2005). What accounts for this gap?

For workfare supporters, work and education are seen as techniques for training recipients to increase their agency and freedom which are assumed to be lacking (Keleher 1990); successful training is not seen as the goal. Piven and Cloward (1993) claim that the liberal approach to enforcing work norms is via training and education. Herd et al (2009:136) identify the purpose of training as bringing “supposedly deviant behavior in line with dominant cultural norms”. Discourse that effectively constructs individuals as the root cause of poverty and unemployment allows discipline to emerge as an appropriate remediation (Caragata 2003, Mosher 2000).

In the strict sense of the word, discipline means training and education. The training activities in OW therefore include both preparation for work skills as well as “moralistic regulating strategies for governing the resocialization of individual welfare claimants” (Bashevikin 2002:138). Even though the program promises:

economic independence and freedom from welfare, the reality is instead of investing in training that might provide labour market advancement, short-term and low-cost programs focus primarily on shaping participants’ attitudes. Indeed, on a daily basis, programs stress the financial and psychological value of work and individual responsibility (Herd et al. 2009:135).

Some argue that training and education programs are developed to achieve desired socio-political objectives including enforcing officially recognized behaviour for wellbeing and collective good (Miller and Rose 1998). In considering the intended therapeutic aspects of welfare, Fraser (1989:155) posits that these are in fact ways to compensate for the “debilitating effects” of the two tiered welfare system; the breadwinner versus residual model of relief. This system also connects work to normative constructs of family, culture, and community (Calhoun 1995, Piven and Cloward 1993, Shalla and Clement 2007).

Thus, preparation for work activities such as training and life skills workshops are techniques that marry welfare claims to client’s social relationships including their relationship with the labour market. This combination is highly effective at actively engaging the recipient in reforming their own actions, behaviour, and identity (Bakker 2007, MacDonald and Marston 2005). As evidenced in participant responses, by requiring clients to participate in preparation for work activities, OW encourages them to interpret poverty and unemployment as the result of their own pathology. Consequently,

one could say not only that training, education and re-socialization work is a response to internalized normative expectations surrounding work, welfare and gender but also this type of work is in response to an interpretation that the welfare client has transgressed these expectations.

Interpretation of Normative Expectations. Fraser (1989:146) speaks to “institutionalized patterns of interpretation”. She considers interpretation as the orchestration of “juridical-administrative-therapeutic apparatus (JAT)” (Fraser 1989:154). This apparatus functions to “translate political issues concerning the interpretation of people’s needs into legal, administrative, and/or therapeutic matters” (Fraser 1989:154). Interpretation has a neutralizing effect that transforms normative assumptions into ambivalent technicalities (Fraser 1989). Both Fraser (1989) and Miller and Rose (1998) posit that psychotherapeutic logic is used to shape subjectivity.

This logic, found in the administrative practice of determining a recipient’s training requirements, is a highly interpretative process that draws heavily on normative assumptions about work. As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, the enactment of OW work relied heavily on participants internalized taken for granted assumptions about work, welfare and gender. McDonald et al. (2003:499) remark that more than ever before, the outcomes of workfare are dependent on “how it is implemented by those responsible [...] for assessing, monitoring and supervising the unemployed.” During this process, OW workers and recipients are immersed in the intractable dilemmas of fiscal restraint, alleviation of poverty and enforcement of work ethics. These are normatively

engaged as though they are rooted in the recipient's pathology thereby rectified via preparation for work activities.

As noted by participants, the training in workfare includes self-work which is deeply implicated in contested interpretations of norms and needs. However, the highly subjective process of interpretation is not officially acknowledged as an embedded instrument within workfare policy. Interpretation actively occurs and is political and contestable because needs legitimized in discourse and policy elucidate the normatively accepted interpretations dictated by dominant groups in order to protect their privilege (Fraser 1989). The legacy of these patterns of interpretation are perpetuated and promoted through social policy (Fraser 1989).

Although subjectivity is the result of belief systems and techniques (Miller and Rose 1998), it is depoliticized and normalized as OW reinforces individual morality as inextricably determinant of national well-being. Within OW, the term "participant" is used to categorize the unemployed person who is obligated to engage in preparation for work activities. McDonald et al. (2003:514) identify this type of nomenclature in workfare as signaling "an active subject of labour market assistance, in contrast to the 'passive'" recipient [signaling] the transformation of the citizen into the citizen worker". However, OW's training work is not only intended to transform the dependent welfare recipient into the worker citizen, but also to inculcate an active citizen-worker mentality in which the individual is defined in relation to valorized normative roles in social systems. The technologies used to assess recipients' training needs include employment terms and other categories such as "single parent".

These categories implicate systems such as the nuclear family and rely on normative ideals of women as domestic and care workers (Bashevikin 2002, Caragata 2003, Fraser 1989, Fraser and Gordon 1994, Mosher 2000) and men as breadwinners (Fraser 1989, Fraser and Gordon 1994). OW constructs participants in relation to these two institutions and via training attempts to reconcile the supposed failure of recipients in one system (a sole support parent in relation to the normative expectations set in the nuclear family) by reinforcing the urgency of competency in the other (unemployed welfare recipient in relation to the normative expectation of the active citizen labour market participant).

Although both work and gender norms are primary organizing variables in social structures (McCall 1992, Mills 2003, Fraser 1997), work is strongly linked to the economy whereas gender is a “mode of social differentiation whose roots do not lie in the political economy” (Fraser 1997:18). The hegemonic norm of the male breadwinner is noted by many feminist scholars who write about OW (Bakker 2007, Caragata 2003, Evans 2007, Mosher 2000) and workfare (Fraser 1997, McCall 1992, Mills 2003). This ideal conceptualizes the male of the household paid a wage sufficient to support children and a wife who provides full time domestic labour (Fraser 1997). It serves as the underlying logic and official recognition of work and provision of wages and social benefits such as welfare or unemployment insurance (Fraser 1997).

Because OW administers benefits based on households or family units, training can be understood as rehabilitation of the so-called failure of the head of these units according to the nuclear family or male breadwinner norm. Male heads of households

are retrained because of their failure as breadwinner and lone female households because they are without a male breadwinner. Further, supposedly gender blind “forced employment and retraining” (Little 2005:149) can exacerbate conflicting normative obligations. Thus, labour is accorded legitimacy based on contribution toward material or social reproduction. This tension also appears in the third type of work required by OW.

Community And Employment Placements – Third Type Of Work

The third type of work in OW is placements. Placements are the most recognizable workfare activity – benefits exchanged for public waged or unwaged labour. In a community placement, recipient’s labour is exchanged in non-profit organizations without pay; in an employment placement, recipient’s labour is paid by a private sector employer who receives subsidy from OW to offset employment related costs.

Although work is a very broad site of social and normative activity, because placements more closely mirror labour market exchanges, it is important to explain how I conceptualize the idea of work in the context of workfare.

Work in the Context of Workfare. Often, scholars who write about work in a liberal welfare state draw a distinction between work and labour (Bakker 2007, Polanyi 1957, Shalla and Clement 2007, Stanford 2008). In this context, work is defined as non-commodified (Bakker 2007) “productive human activity” (Stanford 2008:65). “Work broadly mediates relations between social and natural orders and combines the theoretical and practical activity of human beings” (Bakker 2007:548). It includes the creative elements of human activity (Bakker 2007). “Voluntary, effortful activity in the pursuance of a project determined by oneself, in co-operation with others, or at the behest of someone else is a commonly accepted necessary condition of an activity’s counting as work” (Winch 2000:441). The activities undertaken by OW recipients do not reconcile with this definition. Instead, OW work is more closely aligned with activities described as labour because work search and work preparation activities are mandatory and also commodified.

Labour is a particular aspect of work, which, under capitalism, is characterized by the “alienation of the labourer” (Bakker 2007:548) and an atomistic, individualized existence (Polanyi 1957). Labour is appropriated by capital in return for a wage (Bakker 2007, Shalla and Clement 2007, Stanford 2008). Also, “capitalism makes labor conditional on market demand” (Piven and Cloward 1993:5). It is commodified human activity that “reduces the creative capacities and potentials of workers to an instrumentality, with the effect that it transforms the advantages of human freedom and its objectification into the means to accumulate profit” (Bakker 2007:548).

In this context, work becomes more narrowly conceptualized and congruent with definitions of labour. Notions of agency, both personal and economic, are used to commodify work transforming it into “both a condition of servitude and an expression of [...] creativity” (Doyal and Gough 1991:231). Normative assumptions and expectations facilitate the reification of ‘the worker’ and regulation of work is applied across social relationships (Miller and Rose 1998) as the organization of work and labour is congruent with the larger organization of society (Shalla and Clement 2007). Norms govern who and how people should work; work and the norms surrounding it are a source of tension for individuals in relation to others. As there is no normative distinction between the principles of work, labour, and independence, one could say that they are intrinsically linked, derivative one from the other one and because of one another. Subsequently, as notions of work are more closely aligned with the concept of capitalist labour, the relationship between the individual and their work are “no longer private affairs only relevant to the individual” (Miller and Rose 1998:187) but rather a matter of public interest. Work becomes an expression of citizenship and self-identity (Keleher 1990) and labour is constructed as having “rewards external to the activity of working” (Keleher 1990:107) such as purchasing power and status (Keleher 1990).

Participants acknowledged that the moral and financial dividends to work are fundamental to the enactment of OW work; this is discussed further in Chapters Four and Five. However, as I discuss in the next section, placements can be also be understood as reflective of the broader social and symbolic value accorded to work/labour; placements require that clients either volunteer their labour or provide paid labour in a subsidized

employment placement. This type of work is congruent with internalized concepts and structures that reinforce work, gender and welfare norms.

Internalized normative expectations. McDonald et al. (2003) posit that there is a constitutive relationship between social structures and personal identities that is continually contested or validated by welfare state mechanisms and techniques. These “systems of ideas are coupled with dispersed, intricate yet comprehensive strategies of power, and ways in which individuals manage (or are enjoined to manage) themselves (McDonald et al. 2003). Needs are interpreted in this dynamic interplay and “as a result of these processes, members of subordinated groups commonly internalize need interpretations that work to their own disadvantage” (Fraser 1989:169).

In OW “meaningful human agency is perverted [;] coercive measures can force people to act against their own well-being if they are to comply with the regulations” (Baker Collins 2004:7). Compliance is achieved because it is constructed and internalized not only as a moral imperative or legal duty but also as personal fulfillment (Miller and Rose 1999). Bourdieu’s post-structural work is useful in understanding internalization as a powerful dialectic that occurs between micro level transactions and hegemonic norms. The interplay between administration and interpretation underscores the possible political drivers behind internalization; Bourdieu’s (1989) theoretical concepts of habitus, capital and field are helpful in dissecting and accounting for the dynamic. These concepts are applied more in depth in Chapter Five to the research project data however they are also useful in analyzing the placement type work required of OW clients.

Bourdieu (1989) states that the world is real, not only due to substance, but also due to relations. The world is both objectively and subjectively structured because our ways of perceiving are expressions of the quality of the power relations we experience (Bourdieu 1989). Categories of perception and analysis are guided by cooptation of the same categories that are dialectically related (Bourdieu 1989). When this idea is applied to the context of OW, it can be understood as the practice of explaining poverty and unemployment as individual failures while downplaying the role of the economy and capitalism in the selling of one's labour. This interplay was evidenced in participant responses.

“Field” and “habitus” are bundles of relationships that account for external system constraints on individual choice (Williams 2001); this is the material and symbolic interplay between internalization and enactment. Fields are comprised of groups and social classes and habitus is the combination of perceptions, thoughts, and actions (Bourdieu 1989). Individuals use this apparatus and method to navigate in objective fields that constitute the social world with the purpose of accumulating capital which can be cultural, symbolic, social, or economic. These theoretical elements are helpful in understanding OW work as the policy and practice of OW work engages with material and symbolic meanings and relationships that are evident in the general welfare state, the neoliberal bureaucratic setting and the individual's actions and perceptions in relation to norms surrounding work, welfare and gender.

Work is identified by Offe (2008) as one of the most significant institutionalized patterns of identity and relationships. As such, work can also be understood as a highly

dynamic field in the exchange of capital. The relationship between capital, field and habitus play out in placement work; not only does the OW client's labour exchange involve the pursuit of symbolic and economic capital but more importantly the process of negotiating his/her identity by moving from 'welfare client' to 'waged earner'. Both the capital earned and the process of earning that capital becomes an expression of identity.

However the sense of identity transmitted via workfare work is not a positive one (Vaillencourt 2010). Placements may frustrate the symbolic and economic capital that usually accumulates with public sphere contributions. That is, the placement does not consistently translate into a job, meaningful connections or experience for OW recipients (Little 2005, Lightman et al. 2003, Vaillencourt 2010); despite OW's assertion that placements lead to employment, the result is in fact the opposite (Little 2005, Lightman et al. 2003, Vaillencourt 2010).

As of December 2012, approximately 3% of OW clients with active Participation Agreements are involved in Community Placements. When first introduced, many non-profit agencies vehemently opposed the Community Placements in OW. However, after OW's implementation, some of the agencies that originally contested workfare began to reconsider their position as they came to see a role for themselves in protecting or helping "people living in poverty, who are on Ontario Works [by accepting recipients] as workfare placements in their organizations" (Vaillencourt 2010:80). As a result, agencies may profit from recipient's free labour while claiming to help them. When applying Bourdieu's framework (1989:16), this type of shift can be understood as a "strategy of condescension". These are techniques that agents use to deny the space between their

privileged location and those subordinate (Bourdieu 1989). The strategies used by OW's actors to manipulate the symbolic space between themselves and others are taken up in further detail in Chapter Five.

However, as non-profit agencies continued to work with poor unemployed people and some of these agencies continued to lobby the province for changes to OW, MCSS changed tactic and contracted with the private sector for placement services perhaps as another attempt to stymie the social justice activities assumed by some of the non-profit agencies. In the mid-2000s, the provincial government piloted jobsNow and temporarily contracted a for-profit agency to match recipients with placements. This type of attack against solidarity with poor unemployed people can be understood as a “functional ideological smokescreen for the continued dependence of capitalism on the welfare state” (Hartman 2005:67). Further, the conscription of recipient's labour via placements can be seen as a roundabout way for the state to reinvest in the non-profit sector after drastic cutbacks (Vaillencourt 2010).

Exploiting the labour of recipients via paid or unpaid placements can be understood as a form of discipline intended to mold OW clients into workers; that is by attaching clients to unpaid or paid labour market relationships, OW conditions them to sell their labour in exchange for low wages or no wages at all. Placement work results in a circular pattern of “ever rising taxpayer subsidy” (Bashevikin 2002:136) for low wage employers and earners expanding the lower end of the labour market impeding the potential growth of decent wages. This strategy is predicated on the assumption that the market failed at disciplining recipients into selling their labour and now it is up to OW to

take up the task. However, there is a contradiction in using force to motivate when we know that motivation is negatively affected by coercion. Offe (2008:8) notes that “there is little demand on the part of employers for workers who are coerced into employment through the threat of strong negative sanctions.”

Furthermore, one could contest the argument that OW work effectively creates a reserve army of desperate workers. If this were the case, there would be a high demand for OW recipient’s free or subsidized labour. In my experience, placements are difficult to negotiate and have been dwindling since they were first introduced. This experience supports Offe’s (2008) claim above. Further, perhaps the disparaging discourse used to usher in OW effectively pathologized clients making this army of reserve labour too unattractive to employers despite the offset in costs. Because not only “material life chances are largely determined through people’s job status” (Offe 2008:16) but also social integration is also largely dependent upon employment. The normative cues surrounding work and welfare are powerful ideas stratifying groups of people. In Chapter Five, I use Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts to explore further the stratification of groups of people based on the normative cues surrounding work. As evidenced in placement work, the work contributions made by a segment of workers, those workers receiving welfare, has been devalued and discredited. The net effect is that workfare work is not valued work and far from being a stepping stone back into paid employment, workfare is “only a dead-end avenue in which manual labour will be provided on an ongoing basis in exchange for the welfare cheque” (Lightman 1997:107). Positive outcomes from workfare are inconsistent and therefore coincidental (Offe 2008).

Another dimension implicated in the social value accorded to work, that is also present in the placement work required by OW clients, is the demarcation of labour in public and private spheres. As I outline in the final section of this chapter, placements can be seen as a type of OW work that corresponds with notions of work contributions that are organized along two social fault lines – public and private. This differentiation is informed by gendered associations and conflicting norms regarding the labour of men and women in each of these spheres. The tension is fostered by a specific model of the workplace assumed in the construct and operations of the welfare state (Bakker 2007). Thus, this normative picture rests on public and private sphere work as the foundation for the different degrees of “autonomy, rights, and presumptions of desert” (Fraser 1989:9) evidenced in the funding, administration, character and level of benefits in hierarchical welfare schemes (Fraser 1989).

Within the private sphere, the welfare state regulates issues concerning social reproduction and therefore individuals internalize “imperatives of the (official) economy and administration” (Fraser 1989:130). This sphere becomes the site of “shadowwork” (Illich as noted by Caragata 2003:570) which not only includes work necessary to maintain waged labour, such as childcare, but also the work necessary to stay in the labour market, such as upgrading skills.

Miller and Rose (1999) identify the private sphere as a mechanism used to encourage positive collective values and behaviour, such as exercising to promote good health. They claim that official influence is not intended to punish supposedly bad behaviour but rather intended to encourage positive behaviour (Miller and Rose 1999).

In contrast, Fraser (1989) argues that instead of citizen's influencing the system, the system influences or "colonizes" (Fraser 1989:130) the citizen. Specifically, patriarchy lies at the root of this colonization.

Understood in a classical economist sense, social reproduction is the site and process necessary to create workers (Bakker 2007, Caragata 2003, Fraser 1997, Stanford 2008). A fundamental premise behind the retrenched welfare state is that the private sphere will assume more responsibility for this role (Plant et al 1980). In this paradigm, women are assigned dual and contradicting roles as "genderless worker" (Bakker 2007:550) while at the same time, being expected to pick up the slack for reproductive and care work (Bakker 2007, Stanford 2008). This impacts the conditions and context of material and social reproduction (Bakker 2007). As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, participants' responses support the notion that there are dual expectations of female OW clients related to public and private sphere contributions.

Previously in Ontario, Family Benefits Allowance acknowledged claims to welfare based on the status of mother. The state recompensed single mothers in their quasi civic duty of child rearing by not requiring them to work while receiving assistance. This paradigm meant that women's claim to social entitlements could be made primarily on her "status as an unpaid domestic worker, a homemaker, and mother, not as a paid worker based in the labor market" (Fraser 1989:150). However, this past practice could have left many single mothers without access to employment and training opportunities because they were supposed to be at home caring for their children. The right to choose

to participate in paid work was available to middle and upper class mothers but not to mothers who were poor.

But, policy and labour market shifts displaced the previous framework for single mother's welfare entitlement; it is no longer acceptable for single mothers "to stay at home to raise their children" (Little 2005:149). That is, they are no longer able to make their claim to welfare based solely on their status as mothers. This shift is evident in the elimination of FBA and the introduction of the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) which removes children's basic needs from the OW entitlement. Although this change was intended as a strategy to level the playing field for all low-income families by creating a basic level of financial support for all low-income families and not just those receiving social assistance, it also reinforces gender constructs related to work and welfare. As the OCB is administered via the tax system and is no longer considered part of social assistance, this essentially recast women's claim to welfare primarily in normative expectations regarding material rather than social reproduction. One could argue that OW requires female OW clients to behave as the male breadwinner, putting poor women in a double bind. While this is not a new phenomenon (Mills 2003), OW reflects a contemporary practice of asserting hegemonic gender and work norms.

Further, the subordinate social status attributed to women as determined by their status as earners serves to devalue their labour as supplementary (Mills 2003). While increased labour force attachment has allowed women greater access to the public realm (Caragata 2003), OW challenges this access by negating the private sphere contributions traditionally made by women unless it is in addition to paid work. Not only is women's

labour "cheap but socially and economically worth less" (Wright 1999, 2001 as noted in Mills 2003:43).

As Kershaw et al. (2008) argue, unlike the roles assigned to men, poor women are expected to actively and fully participate in both private and public sphere work. As placements are organized to mirror the division of labour, they can also be understood as reinforcing poor women's failure to function in the nuclear family and drive the continuous challenge for her to assume the breadwinner role. Poor women are pushed into competition in the labour market as unequal male counterparts. In this context, women are "not absent from the paid workplace [rather] they are present differently" (Fraser 1989:124). Moreover, in the context of workfare, how individuals understand their relationship and status in relation to the labour market further defines their social status as deserving worker or undeserving free-rider. For the OW client, paid public sphere work is symbolic of the ideal breadwinner citizen; private sphere reproduction work evokes suspicion of the despised welfare cheat.

Thus, one could argue that the public contribution made by men's labour reinforces his provider status; the private contribution of women's labour reinforces her dependent status (Fraser 1989, Mosher 2000). Consequently, the idea of a family wage is not based on "payment to a genderless individual for the use of labor power but rather as payment to a man for the support of his economically dependent wife and children" (Fraser 1989:124). Although the distinction between private and public labour is contested as a false dichotomy because both types of contribution are interdependent (Bakker 2007, Caragata 2003, Fraser 1997), the gendered division of labour is

institutionally legitimized in OW placements because private sphere contributions, such as social reproduction, are accorded contradictory status in the normative interpretations and concomitant value of work.

Workfare's attention to masculine notions of public sphere contributions means that poor unemployed women are trapped in an arrangement that is unsustainable and unrealistic. OW placements valorize paid and public sphere work which reinforces it as the more legitimate contribution to society and well-being. Although public and private spheres are not so neatly defined, the taken for granted states of work norms enacted through OW placements can depoliticize highly contested issues.

While OW reifies work to facilitate, and legitimize citizen's status and entitlement, for women and other marginalized groups, OW work can reinforce existing material, social and, political exclusion. The dichotomy between public and private sphere labour and the social meanings they evoke include hegemonic gender norms but also normative assumptions regarding the value of labour which is not dichotomized between the proletariat and capital holders but rather more as a caste system that classifies and distinguishes the contribution made by different workers.

Conclusion

By engaging the literature, I have come to understand that OW extracts the labour of participants in many ways in order to codify and reinforce work norms as a way to govern. Despite lack of empirical evidence to support the idea one of OW's founding principles is that people who are poor don't want to work (Shragge 1997:133). Studies "clearly demonstrate that many low-income Canadians are both prepared and eager to

work, even when it will not significantly improve their financial circumstances” (Little 2005:150). Evans (2007) claims that OW incorrectly frames the problem as too few workers when in reality there are too many people looking for work and not enough good jobs for them.

Behind workfare lies also the idea of minimal welfare as a condition of continuous economic growth which is assumed to be primal for social wellbeing. However, economic growth and social wellbeing are not necessarily positively correlated (Doyal and Gough 1991). In this context, the foregrounding of more workers comes at the cost of better work that also diminishes the value of growth focused on replenishing and reproduction.

Lightman et al. (2003:26) emphasize that the busyness required of recipients has not “corresponded to decreased poverty.” In Ontario, work acts as a facilitating and legitimizing factor toward entitlements and citizenship status; OW interprets poverty and unemployment resulting from the recipient’s pathology and promises to fix them in exchange for compliance. Not only is work deeply linked to class based and hegemonic gender ideas that exploit internalized normative interpretations but moreover work becomes the lens through which effort and deservedness are assessed. The provision of benefits is not only predicated on work but is itself seen as a vehicle toward work. Consequently, it is a workfare lens that allows persistent poverty not to be taken as a catastrophic systemic failure but rather as chronic deviance and the tenacious resistance of poor people to the discipline of paid work.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Objectives

This research project is focused on interrogating the normative assumptions about work, welfare, class and gender that manifest in OW work. Two primary objectives guided the inquiry. In Chapter Two, I address the first objective: to explore the literature on welfare state approaches in order to examine the normative assumptions surrounding work that are engaged to diffuse and inculcate neoliberal imperatives and codes of conduct related to class and gender. The second objective, which was to examine the ways in which norms facilitate the administration of OW, especially how internalized taken for granted ideas about work are leveraged by the policy, was achieved by collecting and analyzing data.

This chapter begins with my approach to research which highlights the theoretical underpinnings of the methodology used in the research project. Social justice principles guided the development of the research question and provided the framework for the project's design and approach (Canella and Manuelito 2008, Fraser and Naples 2004, Mies 1996, Leonard 1994). Secondly, the chapter covers elements of the research design, highlighting the methods and data collection process. It then moves on to detailing how I gained entry to research sites, the recruitment strategy used and specifics regarding the research sample. Following that, I cover the approach used to analyze data. The data not only describe but also help me to understand and explain some of the social processes behind the administration of work-for-welfare in Ontario. Drawing on Fraser's (1998) construct of social justice, which includes redistribution, recognition and representation, this inquiry examines the material, subjective and governance dynamics that undergird

the practices of OW work. These are fundamental dimensions in making sense of how OW's actors make sense of the work they are doing and the results they are experiencing. The chapter concludes with my approach and reflections on ethics, rigor and validity.

Approach to Research - Theoretical Orientation of Methodology

Critical research is not concerned solely with the creation of knowledge but in addition is deeply concerned with improving social conditions. A critical frame helps researchers “discriminate between processes that further human resistance to oppression and those that serve to reinforce it” (Humphries 2008:105). Social researchers are expected to be explicit about the values, subjectivity, and inter-subjectivity inherent in their investigation, perception, and interpretation of data (Haworth 1991). This imperative implicitly recognizes that the researcher's theoretical orientation has a fundamental influence on the statement of the problem, rationale for the study, questions and hypotheses, selection of instruments, and choice of methods (Brannick and Coghlan 2007, Bryman and Burgess 1994, Corbin and Strauss 1990, Guba and Lincoln 1982, Patton 2002). Consequently, researchers wanting to affect social change “should begin their inquiry process with philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), how they know what is known (epistemology), the inclusion of their values (axiology), the nature in which their research emerges (methodology), and their writing structures (rhetorical)” (Creswell 2003 cited in Creswell, Hanson, Clarke Piano, and Morales 2007).

A review of the literature, as detailed in Chapter Two, provided an opportunity to engage with philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks that reflect my

worldview. Elements of critical, feminist, and post-structural theoretical frameworks have been useful in analyzing the purpose and explanations of OW work developed by other scholars. A critical lens helped to frame the normative assumptions behind OW policy and work; the influence of social structures such as the economy and social norms are important when examining the process of social and material reproduction (Baker Collins 2004, Calhoun 1995, Graefe 2005, Peck 2001, Piven and Cloward 1993). A feminist framework further problematized this description by distilling explanations based on gender norms, specifically the division of labour (Bakker 2007, Carragata 2003, Fraser 1989, Good-Gingrich 2008, Mosher 2001). Lastly, Gramsci's (2010) and Bourdieu's (1989) work provided theoretical tools to describe how normative intent is internalized and enacted by both workers and clients.

Combined in this way, critical, feminist, and post-structural theories form a grammar useful in deconstructing the contradictions in OW work. In this project, a *mélange* of theoretical frameworks was applied to tease out the potent dynamic between communication and meaning (Calhoun 1995). An example of this dynamic occurs with actors implicated in OW work. The “de-institutionalization” (McDonald and Marston 2005:206) of the welfare state and its “re-institutionalization” (McDonald and Marston 2005:206) into the neoliberal workfare state engages workers and clients by activating internalized normative expectations related to work and recalibrates welfare as a support to the economy. Workfare is a potent tool that communicates expectations regarding the state's and individual's role as well as normative meanings behind work and welfare in a neoliberal setting.

In addition to foregrounding the dynamic between communication and meaning, the theoretical amalgam used was intended to shift this inquiry from abstract consideration of theory to a more applied approach to social policy and practice. Lipsky's (1980) work provides a complimentary framework to bridge these goals. He examines the complex dual role assigned to street-level bureaucrats: social control and welfare state benevolence (Lipsky 1980). Lipsky's (1980) theory was helpful in identifying how these roles manifest in the administration of OW work. By examining OW's contradictions, specifically by foregrounding its practices, meanings and communications, I anticipated uncovering opportunities for action that could change these elements and consequently OW's contradictions.

A fundamental tension that I experienced while formulating this plan, was the debate regarding action research. Although critical, post-structural, and feminist scholars are clear and cautious about the benefits that research brings for people already privileged, (Banuri 1990, Cannella and Maneulito 2008, Hill Collins 1997, Leonard 2004), they also highlight the emancipatory possibilities of social research for marginalized groups (Grande 2008, Humphries 2008, Stoeker 2005, Whitmore 2001). These possibilities are classified as internal shifts in thinking, perceptions and understanding occurring within people either the researcher, the researched or the audience (Hill Collins 1986, Mies 1996, Stoeker 2005).

Action research recognizes that macro change often begins with micro or internal changes at the individual level (Kemmis and McTaggart 2003). Participation in research projects can be a tool for introspection, reflection, and analysis of our own lives (Kemmis

and McTaggart 2003). Or, emancipation can move from internal to external action; action can be defined as the research project itself (Stoeker 2005), action that the researched take as a result of the project (Mies 1996, Whitmore 2001) or action that spreads out to people who weren't directly involved in the research but who identify with the research project's politics (Hill Collins 1986).

In the literature, it appears as though action research has become “hierachalized with ‘emancipatory’ approaches being seen as the best” (Meyer et al. 2006:493). According to Meyer et al. (2006) ‘practitioner research’ is a type of action research that is often interchanged with the term action research. Practitioner research is research of one’s own practice conducted in a “participative and reflexive way” (Meyer et al. 2006:481) that is intended to change understanding and practice. Although there does not appear to be real consensus among scholars, practitioner research is sometimes referred to as a type of action research that can be undertaken by practitioners alone or in collaboration with others with the aim of generating “new forms of knowledge from practice” (Meyer et al. 2006:481). This concept opens up space for my research to be considered as action-oriented which was important to me as I continue to work in the field.

In social work studies, the “traditional academic view of research activism that would collect data yet remain intellectually separated from communities” (Canella and Manuelito 2008:55) is contested by critical, post structural and feminist theorists in reaction to traditional, positivist notions of research. These theoretical frameworks each provide lessons regarding the process and politics of changing reality for OW clients and

workers by politicizing and problematicizing daily practice. The intended action of this project includes a focus on exposing taken for granted practices in administration as a way to provoke clients and practitioners to recognize and challenge the contradictions in OW work. For this reason, I selected interviews as the primary method to collect qualitative data as they are efficient tools to explore expressions of common sense, social norms and dimensions of habitus.

Research Design – Methods and Data Collection

In this research project, sources of data include the policy and the people that interact with the policy including me, as an administrator. Although the research project is not concerned with a quantitative question, I used the quantitative data to round out the analysis of OW's design as quantitative data is provided to the field by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) as a way to measure the official intent and strategies noted in the directives and expected in the daily practice of OW work. However, primarily a qualitative methodological paradigm was used because I am interested in theories specific to the context of my practice. Furthermore, qualitative data such as interviews, my own research journal and document analysis were useful for uncovering emic views (Guba and Lincoln 1994) and for consciousness-raising research (Guba and Lincoln 1982).

Quantitative Data

The MCSS monitors the delivery of OW through the collection and analysis of quantitative data. The data is compiled from the case records entered by staff (case managers, supervisors, family support workers, etc) into the provincially mandated

operating software Service Delivery Management Technology (SDMT). This data informs reports that detail expenditures and employment outcomes that are produced by the MCSS and distributed to municipal delivery agents. Municipalities use these reports to monitor and ensure compliance with MCSS funding and program requirements; data informs actions at organizational, worker and client levels. In Chapter Four, the link between the program design and intent and the data collected through SDMT is discussed in further detail.

Initially, the research site was going to be limited to only one municipality but as I note in the ‘Research Sample’ section of this chapter, I was unsuccessful at recruiting the full sample size from a single municipality therefore the quantitative data provides a provincial snapshot rather than an individual municipal perspective. As this type of information is not publically available, in September 2012, I requested permission and received approval from the Director of MCSS’s Ontario Works Branch to use these reports which are only available to municipal delivery agents. At the time of writing this Chapter, the most current reports were dated December 2011. Caseload characteristics such as gender, time on assistance and employment activities are taken from the MCSS quarterly statistical caseload and employment digest dated December 2011.

Sources of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Quantitative data provided information about what MCSS tracks but I was more interested in examining specific details of the enactment of OW work as a way to understand “how these details are connected to a larger process” (Sandfort 2000:741). In qualitative research, words, understanding and meaning are privileged. Interviews,

journaling, field notes and document reviews allowed me to “enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton 2002:341); “how they organize the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on” (Patton 2002:341).

In this project, I occupy both the position of researcher and researched. This position requires “the careful and continuous negotiation about whose voice one emphasizes” (Reitsma-Street and Brown 2004:303) and who benefits from “particular information and how” (Reitsma-Street and Brown 2004:303). Although other OW researchers have privileged the voices of workers and clients, administrators are markedly absent informers (Vaillencourt 2010). In the hierarchy of OW delivery, administrators hold high ranking positions; according to Directive 11, administrators must be officially approved by the MCSS as they have authority delegated to them from the Minister of Community and Social Services through legislation. This delegated authority includes making decisions, through local policies, regarding the provision of assistance in areas of discretion (such as the provision of dental benefits for adults) provided in the Ontario Works Act (1998). Administrators influence the daily practice of OW delivery through this discretion and authority.

My position as administrator has provided me access to settings not open to most clients or workers; for example, my position allowed me access to the Director of OW Branch which then allowed me to access OW quantitative data that is not otherwise publicly available. Initially, these privileged sites ignited my curiosity about the relationship between policy’s design, its interpretation and administration. Furthermore, my practical experience with OW’s policy development and implementation shaped the

design of this research project including the theoretical orientation, stated sources of data and data collection methods. Consequently, my prior knowledge meant that I listened to participants with a practitioner's ear and analyzed data with this additional filter.

To capture this process, I kept a research journal and field notes. Journaling and field notes were used to collect information about my experiences as well as my reflections on these experiences. Thus, tacit knowledge was explicitly stated and engaged along with other sources of data. Furthermore, being explicit about the data collection and reflexive about the process enables readers to judge the quality of the data (Hall and Callery 2001). Journaling and field notes also served as a method of triangulation (Patton 2002).

Gaining Entry, Recruitment Strategy and Research Sample

Because of the position of authority that I hold in the field in which I conducted the research, McMaster University Research Ethics Board was concerned that participation in the research project truly be voluntary for participants; the recruitment process followed in this project was developed in response to this concern.

I worked with the General Manager and Administrator in Norfolk County to gain access to the research site and to workers and clients. In working to draw the sample, I sent an email and a recruitment poster to OW management requesting that they distribute it to staff and clients. A sample of the recruitment letter, poster and letters of consent are attached as Appendix A and B.

As I am acquainted with senior management in Norfolk County and considered them my peers, this recruitment method presented some potential risks. As management

acted as my proxy and conduit for the participation request, I was concerned that I would not be able to directly address any potential questions or concerns that participants had. These concerns may include fears that I, in fact, represented management, that I aligned my project with their perspective, or that I would not respect confidentiality (Denvers and Frankel 2000). I felt both removed and intensely present during this phase as negotiating access to clients' and workers' stories was done via text with management as my proxy. My conversations were with management and my enticement and pitch to staff was through an email and a poster. I was removed in my ability to monitor management's decisions regarding this communication and unable to explain myself directly to the clients or staff that I wanted to reach.

In order to mitigate this risk and built a rapport with potential participants, through the administrator, I arranged to attend a face-to-face meeting with all of the employment staff. There I told my story, explained my research question and approach and requested their assistance in the study by either participating themselves or by distributing the recruitment poster to clients. I was explicit about my concerns that they would be reticent to participate because of my position as an administrator and was emphatic about respecting participant's confidentiality. I distributed the recruitment material and noted that potential participants could contact me to answer any questions or concerns before committing to participate. Although the staff were very engaged during our meeting and seemed genuinely interested in my research project, after three weeks none of the staff and only two clients volunteered to participate.

Just as Vaillencourt (2010), I also experienced difficulty in trying to engage administrators in research about OW. Consequently, in order to satisfy the sample size, I broadened the recruitment strategy to include informal networks with peers and agencies that I have developed over the years. This strategy was successful in meeting the proposed sample size of 23 however the distribution was not as originally intended. I proposed a sample comprised of 3 Administrators (including myself), 10 staff and 10 clients. The actual distribution is 3 Administrators (including myself); 14 staff (casemanagers, supervisors and managers) and 7 clients. This sample, which is comprised more of OW staff than clients, responds to the gap in OW research that examines the administration of OW work by engaging workers. By broadening the recruitment, I was able to meet the sample size for workers including supervisors, managers and administrators who worked in communities across Ontario including Toronto, Ottawa, London, and Windsor. As well, as a result of one of these connections, I received permission from an administrator of a large urban city to attend a town hall meeting for all social assistance clients who live in that city. There I was able to distribute my recruitment posters and speak directly to OW clients and staff. Through this strategy I was able to finally recruit enough client participants for the research project.

During this experience, I became frustrated with my insider status as I noted that OW participants seemed eager to talk with me about my research project until I told them that I was the OW administrator in Niagara; once I disclosed this information, while still polite, their body language changed. I could see that they were suddenly uncomfortable,

the conversation ended shortly after the disclosure and they walked away without committing to participate in the study.

I have learned that recruitment is a nerve wracking process that really drives home how personal the research project can be for both the researched and the researcher. The researcher cannot separate herself from the position of power that she holds. At almost every step of the process, the researcher relies on the quality of herself as an individual, her reputation as a person, and as a researcher. Not only the project but also the processes involved in the project felt contingent on the caliber of individual that I am or in the case of negotiating entry with other insiders, how peers remember me. I thought that gaining entry would be more successful if there were fewer layers between me and potential participants. I assumed that by negotiating participation with clients and staff directly, they could judge my reputation for themselves rather than relying on proxies. I assumed that this strategy would remove any anxiety or doubt about participation and more specifically about my motives and integrity.

As research participants did not know me, they could not distinguish my personal qualities from my position as an OW administrator. During the recruitment process, I felt as though the staff and clients did not consider me inside of their peer group and I increasingly questioned my assumption that working inside of OW would allow me access to sites and people that were inaccessible to other OW researchers. Pragmatically, I was also very concerned about satisfying the requirements for this research project.

Anti-oppressive researchers highlight the power differential that exists between the researcher and the researched and suggest that an ethical researcher working toward

social justice must be aware of this dynamic and use methods to mitigate it. However, I was surprised by how I experienced this power differential; it was not so much me feeling powerful over the possible participants but the other way around. I felt more supplicant than powerful. The participants had power over me; they had the power to reveal insider knowledge, the power to talk to me or not talk to me and also in this case, their exercised power would mean the difference between completing the research project or not.

The recruitment process made me keenly aware that depending on the participant's perspective, I was a welcomed insider or an unwelcomed outsider-intruder. Given the context of OW, it was not surprising to me that all research participants were nervous about any potential negative implications that would result from their conversations with me. The welfare fraud hotline and welfare fraud investigations remain a central feature of OW delivery today. Although clients convicted of fraud are no longer banned for life from ever receiving benefits again, the culture of suspicion and fear remains prevalent. As a result, I anticipated that clients might be worried that I might relay to workers information such as undeclared income or workers might be worried that I might relay to supervisors any instances where they bend the rules. One participant tape-recorded the interview along with me.

In order to respond to this anxiety, I reassured participants that I would not use their names nor would I identify their location. Because the sample size of administrators is quite small, I have also not distinguished between workers and administrators but rather referred to all OW staff as workers or where appropriate managers. This

experience reinforced the idea that more OW research is needed to break the culture of silence, fear, and anxiety that so clearly impact OW actors and agents on an emotional level.

The research participants were selected using a purposive sampling method because my research project responded to a current gap in the OW research; although past OW research has privileged the experience of clients with the policy, workers and administrators' experiences have been difficult for other researchers to access. As well, this method complements grounded theory work by providing information-rich cases (Denvers and Frankel 2000). This sampling strategy was particularly useful in this research project because it respects the idea that knowledge and experience is multiple, multifaceted, contested and contradictory. It also helped me to understand the relationship between the elements of the research question and the overall aim of the research (Denvers and Frankel 2000); each individual case yielded a substantial amount of data as each case can be understood as nested within other cases revealing the complexity of experiences.

Description of Sample

There are 17 female participants and 8 male participants. Research participants were individuals over the age of eighteen who have experience with OW work as a case worker, manager, supervisor, client or administrator. Participants were given the option of interviewing face-to-face or over the telephone. About half of the interviews were face-to-face and the other half were conducted over the telephone. All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder; those conducted over the phone were placed on speaker

phone. Client participants were given the option of receiving a \$10 gift card to Tim Horton's or to Shopper's Drug Mart. Participants were from municipalities all across Ontario representing large urban cities as well as small rural centres.

All interviews were conducted from March to May 2012. I interviewed 16 people who currently work or recently left work in OW; this included 5 casemanagers, 5 supervisors, 4 managers and 2 administrators. The majority of the worker participants worked in OW (and previously GWA) for a long period of time; collectively they have 243.5 years of service ranging from 1 ½ years to 32 years of working in social assistance. All of the supervisors and managers had previously worked as casemanagers; none of the administrators had previously worked as casemanagers. As noted in the chart below, most clients were new to OW works; they had not been in a household that previously received benefits.

When responses are quoted in the following chapters, I identify the participant according to the sample information outlined in the chart below:

Participant	Group	Years	Gender
C1	client	1 st time receiving assistance	Female
C2	client	1 st time receiving assistance	Male
C3	client	2nd time receiving assistance	Male
C4	client	1 st time receiving assistance	male
C5	client	1 st time receiving assistance	female
C6	client	1 st time receiving assistance	female
C7	client	1 st time receiving assistance	female
S1	casemanager	10 years	male
S2	manager	15 years	female
S3	manager	7 years	female
S4	casemanager	5 years	female
S5	casemanager	8 years	female
S6	manager	14 years	female
S7	supervisor	29 years	male

Participant	Group	Years	Gender
S8	manager	17 years	male
S9	casemanager	32 years	male
S10	supervisor	32 years	female
S11	casemanager	1 ½ years	female
S12	manager	17 years	male
S13	supervisor	15 years	female
S14	manager	15 years	female
S15	supervisor	30 years	male
S16	supervisor	10 years	female

Interviews

The research participants hold crucial knowledge about OW policy and practices because, as I do, they interact with and enact OW policy and practices. In order to examine this knowledge and these practices the interview guide, attached as Appendix C, was comprised of four questions. These were:

- What is OW designed to do?
- What does the ‘works’ part of Ontario Works mean?
- How is the work requirement enacted?
- Whom does this work benefit?

The first question, “what is OW designed to do?” was designed to juxtapose official messages regarding the policy’s intent as reflected in the MCSS Directives with practical experience administering the policy. The question “what does the ‘works’ part of Ontario Works mean?” was intended to expose taken for granted assumptions regarding work, labour, gender roles and class-related codes of conduct operating tacitly in the practices of OW work. When asking “how is the work requirement enacted?” I intended to investigate the tools and techniques that are leveraged in the administration of the policy. Finally, the question “whom does this work benefit?” assisted in drawing out

participant's mindset or attitudes toward workfare work. This includes the elements that comprise this mindset such as normative assumptions about work and welfare.

These questions were designed to interrogate the complex normative functions of OW work which I suspected mitigated to some degree any contradictions that emerged in the practice of OW work and therefore also contributed to the policy's staying-power. As anticipated, much of the data that emerged from this phase of the project supported the existing body of OW research that describes the practice of OW work as complicated and contradictory (Herd 2002, Herd et al. 2005, Herd et al. 2009, Moffat 1999). However, new insights also emerged about the facilitative role that unspoken codes of conduct play in driving the practice of OW's administration and how actors are influenced by norms that operate at the general welfare state, neoliberal bureaucratic level and individual worldview level. Using the same four questions throughout the research project revealed several interesting points of alignment and dissonance that sparked more questions which are outlined in the last section of this research project as potential items for further inquiry. As discussed in the next section, participant interviews provided a rich source of source of data and insight.

Interviews are recognized as a crucial element of action research; they are accepted by some researchers as “a walking stick to help some people get on their feet” (Fontana and Frey 2008:116). I combined a general interview guide with an informal conversational interview approach because it allowed me to explore similarities and peculiarities between my own and the research participant's experiences; this method allowed me to engage reflexively and relationally with the research participants. For

example, I have experienced a great deal of anxiety about the power that I have as an administrator and researcher. I have been greatly concerned about this power and my role as an oppressor in the day-to-day administration of OW. I thought that these interviews, especially interviews with clients, would be experienced by them as exploitation; that I was taking their time and knowledge. However, it was during the first interview that this perspective balanced out somewhat. During the first interview, which was with a client, she was asking questions about OW benefits that I was able to answer. When this occurred, I felt that I was able to give something of value to the client/research participant in exchange for her time and knowledge. This experience was crucial in influencing my mindset and approach in the remaining interviews; it allowed me to flow more easily from the interview guide into a conversation.

The interview guide ensured that I kept the interviews focused within the parameters of the project but the conversation allowed me to explore more deeply experiences and perspectives that were unique to the participant. More importantly, the technique allowed the research participant to share information that did not fit neatly as a response to any of the research questions but they felt were important to communicate. The combination of interview guide and conversational approach effectively allowed me to “encompass the *hows* of people’s lives [...] as well as the traditional *whats*” (Fontana and Frey 2008:116).

Textual Analysis of Policy Direction

As a compliment to the data collected via interviews, I analyzed the content of a specific type of written material – the OW policy directives. There are a total of ninety-one directives. I analyzed five directives (*1.1 Overview of Ontario Works, 2.5 Participation Requirements, 2.6 Employment Information Session, 7.4 Employment and Participation Benefits, 8.1 Early Employment Supports and 8.5 Employment Placements*) because they focused on the intent and enactment of work in OW. For consistency in the analysis, I analyzed the directives using a matrix that I developed; this matrix was structured around the four questions asked in the interviews and noted above. The OW directives are important data for the research project because this written material is the primary mode of communicating intent and expectations in OW to clients and workers. Directives are issued by the MCSS to inform the operationalization of OW. Each section of each directive contains the relevant section of the OW Act, the intent of the policy and audit/compliance requirements. As I note in the analysis in Chapter Four, the structure of the directives is also plays an important role in communicating the design and intent of OW work.

Patton (2002:498) identifies these types of institutional documents as important aspects in the routinization and ‘sense-making’ of policy’s intent. Even a cursory analysis of the directives intimates a contradiction; approximately ninety-one percent of the total ninety-one directives are focused on ensuring financial eligibility and compliance while only nine percent of the total directives are focused on supports to employment. If OW’s primary concern is with work, than the tools (directives) are a

weak support to this goal. These documents were rich sources of data that I believe contribute new insights to the existing literature on OW because other researchers have viewed these documents from an outsider's perspective. However, as these documents are used in the daily practice of translating intent into practice, my perspective includes experiences when this intent is nebulous, contradictory, or problematic. My analysis of the policy's contradictions is unique because of my proximity to the directives as living documents and not just sources of data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the “systematic conceptualization through conceptual linkages” (Strauss and Corbin 1990:254) which involves making connections between the theories and the data and then nesting that connection within other connections throughout the research project. “The aim is ultimately to build a theoretical explanation by specifying phenomena, in terms of the conditions that give rise to them, how they are expressed through action/interaction, the consequences that result and the variations of these” (Corbin and Strauss 1990:421).

Known as the method of constant comparison, grounded theory guided both the work of gathering and analyzing data. Grounded theory was not used in a strict sense which would have been used to search for and generate as many theories about OW as possible. Instead, grounded theory was used in a more of a general way to guide the data coding process so that data could be coded thematically based on themes that emerged from the data. As “grounded theory seeks not only to uncover relevant conditions but also to determine how the actors under investigation actively respond to those conditions,

and to the consequences of their actions” (Corbin and Strauss 1990:419) I felt that grounded theory was a very suitable method to use in interrogating the normative workings behind OW’s contradictions. This method also balances a focused intentional approach with an open mindedness to seeing what is actually occurring. Consequently, I could more easily challenge any original assumptions with emerging theoretical ideas which occurred in during the observational process.

Because analysis is active throughout the field work phase, I paid attention to the themes that emerged and the patterns that took shape (Patton 2002). Themes were identified by asking “what is this an expression of?” (Ryan and Bernard 2003:87). Grounded theorists call discovering themes ‘open coding’ (Ryan and Bernard 2003). Open coding is facilitated when the analyst is vigilant in the search for indigenous concepts, language, and practices that the researched use to describe and make sense of their experiences. For example, relevant indigenous typologies for this study are descriptions of gender roles such as “single mom” and “dead beat dad”. As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, these typologies were helpful in developing theories about how street-level bureaucrats construct OW clients in relation to OW work.

Grounded theorists compare their data both during the gathering and analysis phases as a strategy to produce as many theories as possible (Corbin and Strauss 1990). In order to satisfy this element of the method, each round of data collection (analysis of written materials and interviews) was informed by the data collected and analyzed in the preceding cycle of collection and analysis.

As I progressed through the written text review and interview cycles, I conducted member checks because member checking is considered to increase the rigor of qualitative research by sharing text/accounts with participants for accuracy and reactions (Cho and Trent 2006). I accomplished this by asking questions of research participants based on the responses provided by previous participants. For example, one supervisor I interviewed mentioned that management rewards casemangers who administered OW work according to a specific mindset; these rewards included increased autonomy and recognition of their work in team meetings. In subsequent interviews with OW staff, I asked questions about rewards and recognition.

Ethics

An ethics application was prepared in December 2009 and renewed in February 2011. Ethics clearance (MREB Project number 2010 018) was received to conduct research with the participants as outlined in the research proposal. In accordance with the requirements, participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of their participation and responses. Participants were provided with a letter explaining the research process and providing them with information regarding ethics requirements (attached as Appendix B).

Ethics foregrounds the power dynamic in the researcher/researched relationship (Dockery 2000). This relationship impacts the process, progress, and credibility of the research project (Denvers and Frankel 2000, Patton 2002). My role as a practitioner is an important component and element in the research project. From the participant's perspective, asking questions about their experiences may be viewed as a potential risk or

threat. Consequently, my emic position as an OW Administrator was a specific ethical tension with pragmatic implications for this project.

As action-oriented research is an “ultimately personal” (Patton 2002:47) experience, both the insider and outsider need to be heard. Qualitative researchers acknowledge that the lived experience of participants is paramount to credible inquiry (Sandfort 2000). Feminists promote the benefits of research when insiders invest personally and emotionally; these benefits include deeper levels of understanding because of prior knowledge and experience (Taylor 2011). Insider research can also bridge the knowledge between practitioners and academics (Brannick and Coughlan 2007). Although the boundaries between insider and outsider research are permeable (Taylor 2011), the lived experience of the insider-researcher may sometimes be challenged as a risk to credible research.

However, qualitative scholars assert that all interviewers are personally and actively engaged in the data collection process (Mumby 1997, Guba and Lincoln 1994, Corbin and Strauss 1990). Researchers are constantly choosing what to foreground, what is important and what is discarded or disregarded (Hall and Callery 2001). Researchers use their experience to filter the situation in order to formulate theories (Hall and Callery 2001). Thus, one can argue that the “outsider is no more able to offer value-free or neutral knowledge than the ‘insider’; rather they speak from different positions” (Dockery 2000:98).

My perspective is that my insider position did not primarily present validity risks, (concerns regarding rigor and validity are addressed further in this chapter), but rather, a

fundamental limitation of my insider status was accessibility - specifically because of the hierarchy within OW administration. My experience mirrored Vaillencourt's (2010) finding that people involved in administering OW are not open to critically examining the program. As noted earlier, gaining entry and recruiting participants was initially a challenge and the strategies that I used to address participants concerns regarding confidentiality and personal risks (strategies such as meeting face-to-face) were not wholly effective in allaying concerns. However, my insider status also allowed me to form a quick rapport with participants who agreed to participate because we shared some experiences with the techniques and mechanisms OW uses to implement policy and political goals. This space allowed a conversation to occur. Moreover, this interaction has unique implications for me as an administrator/researcher.

My position as an administrator allowed me insider access to MCSS and other sources of data. Furthermore, unlike other scholars who write about OW, my inquiry was not solely a conceptual puzzle but rather a drive to reconcile a fundamental contradiction borne out in my practice. This research was not only focused on interrogating the policy's inconsistencies but also the search for understanding that may assist in transforming my practice. Furthermore, because I am responsible to interpret and communicate policy to staff, clients, politicians and the public on a day-to-day basis, the research process has transformed my understanding of the practice of OW work; it may do the same for others who are implicated in its administration.

Validity and Rigor

Within qualitative research and grounded theory approaches, the issue of rigor and validity is claimed to vary according to epistemological and ontological orientations (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Validity is “defined as the accurate representation of features of a phenomenon that an account is intended to describe, explain, or theorize (Hammersley, 1987 as noted in Hall and Callery 2001:258). However, there is no clear consensus, even among grounded theory researchers, regarding rigor.

According to Hall and Callery (2001) Glaser defined rigor as fit, workability, relevance, modifiability, parsimony and scope (Hall and Callery 2001:259); Strauss and Corbin defined rigor as “plausibility, reproducibility, generalizability, systematic-conceptual relationship, density, variation, and the presence of process and broader conditions” (Hall and Callery 2001:259). This study followed Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) framework for rigor because the research is intended to influence clients and practitioners. The potential for reproducibility and generalizability is critical for clients and practitioners looking to see their experiences reflected in the research story.

As noted earlier in this chapter, I used the process of member checking as a strategy to check validity and enhance rigor. This was accomplished through the Consent process (form is attached as Appendix B) by offering to share the research transcripts with participants and receive feedback as to whether or not the transcripts reflected accurately the information and experiences they shared during the interviews. As intended, research participants were asked if and how they wish to be involved in this aspect of analysis. Only one participant was interested in receiving the transcripts and did not provide any feedback. Interestingly, when I asked participants if they wanted to

receive transcripts, they stated that they either trusted me and what I would record or they said that they were interested in receiving only the final report. This presents a challenge for researcher's relying on member checks in grounded theory research because respect for the participant's wishes regarding how they want to participate in the investigation trumps the process of research itself thereby leaving questions of rigor solely with the researcher. To mitigate this challenge, I used relationality and reflexivity as a method to check my own and participant experiences.

Journaling and field notes were used to capture reflections regarding relationality and reflexivity. This forms part of the data that was explicitly engaged and analyzed during the data collection, data analysis and write-up phases of the project. These approaches helped to achieve transparency and precision while also facilitating a subtle, balanced, and realistic research project that avoids romanticizing, totalizing or essentializing any one viewpoint.

Relationality deals with "power and trust relationships between the research and the participant" (Hall and Callery 2001:258) and reflexivity deals with the "investigator-participant interaction" (Hall and Callery 2001:258). As I noted earlier and as Denvers and Frankel (2000) suggest, researchers must bear in mind that collecting data is secondary to establishing rapport with potential subjects. Good rapport depends upon a respectful relationship between the researcher and participants. Throughout the planning and execution of this investigation, I have considered my relationship with participants to be complex and difficult to define.

On the one hand, I can describe my relationship with participants as empathic; our relationship is based on similar knowledge, experience and roles as well as familiarity with the same contexts, tools and processes. These elements span beyond the research context. On the other hand, although we share similar social space (liberal welfare state and neoliberal bureaucratic administrative settings), we occupy different locations in that space. Furthermore, as both a researcher and an Administrator, I occupy two different positions within this space. These positions bring diverse power dynamics into the relationship.

Within the hierarchy of OW administration, I occupy a position of high authority; within the researcher-researched relationship, I also occupy a position of authority and control (control over the questions asked, how long we are together, etc). As I experienced, the shared space aligned me with participants as an insider, however the difference in locations distanced me as an outsider. This dynamic only reinforces the idea that collecting data is secondary to establishing rapport with research participants (Denvers and Frankel 2000). In order to establish rapport with research participants during telephone interviews, I began with thanking them for their time and generosity in sharing their experiences. I also used the preamble in the interview guide that clearly articulates the purpose of my research and that participation was voluntary. Throughout the interview, I used reflexivity to maintain rapport by sharing my experiences with participants not only as a way to balance the exchange but also to make transparent to them my motives and orientation.

Brannick and Coghlan (2007) identify two forms of reflexivity: epistemic and methodological. “Epistemic reflexivity focuses on researcher’s belief systems and is a process for analyzing and challenging meta-theoretical assumptions” (Brannick and Coghlan 2007:60). Methodological reflexivity is concerned with the monitoring of the behavioral impact of the research setting as a result of carrying out the research” (Brannick and Coghlan 2007:60). Both of these forms of reflexivity guided my inquiry.

Reflexivity can also be an outsider’s guide to the insider’s perspective. Insight and empathy evidenced in the researcher’s reflexivity facilitates a process which makes the researcher visible and integral to both the research method and motives. Thus, the researcher becomes the medium, an instrument of the research (Patton 2002, Gaventa and Cornwall 2006). Consequently, some argue that research is incomplete until the researcher’s self is also included (England 1993). For this reason, and as stated in the introduction, I chose to write in the first person instead of the third person. Researchers must engage in self-reflection, be explicit about the power inequities inherent in research in order to conscientiously work for change (Wallerstein 1999). But, reflexivity as a power mitigating strategy can also be problematic.

As a representative from the centre, I cannot escape the positions of power that I hold. The process of using my introspection as a method for leveling power relations seems somewhat counterintuitive; how can researchers privilege the experiences of others by placing themselves front and centre? I found that the strategy entailed risk because there is an inherent contradiction in attempting to locate the researcher and the researched in the same social space (the research project) because *we are different in that space*.

Attempting to mitigate power through proximity by being reflexive can be false and contrived because although the research is a shared experience, the socio-political-economic divide between the researcher and the researched may remain intact. As the relationship between the researched and the researcher is but one dynamic in the research experience, the researcher's decision is not whether to declare her politics but rather how much of her declaration is necessary and appropriate. For this reason, my reflections are sparse and used only when my perspective added depth to the data.

Relationality also helped me to understand that the interview process mirrors existing social dynamics. For example, I noticed that during the interviews the participants look for cues from me – normal conversational cues like “uhh humm” or “yes” or “nodding my head”. Often, I noted that a pause in the conversation is maintained until I responded in this way. As the interviews reflected conversational norms, I interpreted participant's pauses as unstated cues that I should express acceptance and provide reassurance that I was not placing negative value judgments on their story. I also became aware that participants might be concerned about my judgments when participants would use the following phrases: “I don't know” or “I could be wrong”; I felt as though they were expecting me to evaluate their knowledge - that there was a *right* answer that I was looking for. From the participant's perspective, I might be a symbol of legitimized knowledge. This may be how the power of the researcher over the researched is experienced. From the participant's perspective, I could be cast in the role of a gatekeeper to whom they give credence and credibility in my research subject even though ironically it is his/her knowledge that I see as critical to understanding the

research question. Consequently, I approached reflexivity cautiously and include it in this project as an authentic reflection of my role and experience in the power dynamics I experienced as a researcher/practitioner. In the end, despite my experience, I am still unsure how to authentically, skillfully and effectively ease this tension.

In Chapter Four, I detail the findings that emerged when I applied the research methodology outlined in this chapter and in Chapter Five take up a more theoretical discussion from the data.

Chapter Four: The Space between ‘Theory and Reality’ - Findings

As stated in Chapter Two, despite contradictory results, work-for-welfare continues to be an unwavering policy instrument in social assistance in Ontario. This research project was designed to interrogate the complex normative functions of OW work which contribute to the policy’s staying-power. Specifically, this inquiry intended to examine the common sense ideas about work, class and gender activated in OW work, the levels at which these norms operate (general welfare state level, neoliberal bureaucratic level and individual worldview level), the function that these taken for granted ideas assume in the administration of OW work and how actors implicated in OW work make sense of expectations and experiences. In my experience and based on research participants’ accounts, the contradictions in OW reveal that there are several goals and purposes at play in OW work. These goals and purposes manifest in the beliefs, actions and behaviours operating in OW work which correspond with neoliberal constructs of work and welfare.

As anticipated, many of the findings that emerged from this project support the existing body of OW research that describes the practice of OW work as complicated and contradictory (Herd 2002, Herd et al. 2005, Herd et al. 2009, Moffat 1999, Lightman1997). Participant responses revealed that unspoken codes of conduct not only drive the daily practice of OW work but also reveal how actors respond to or account for the norms operating at different levels. However, as was also anticipated new insights emerged that detail how implicit assumptions and expectations serve to reconcile tensions and contradictions. This chapter outlines the findings that emerged from the data and is

structured around the four questions that under-pinned the data gathering and analysis phases of the project. These questions were:

- What is OW designed to do?
- What does the 'works' part of OW mean?
- How is the work requirement enacted?
- Whom does this work benefit?

These same four questions were used to gather and analyze data because I expected that this approach would help me to identify both points of alignment and contradiction in the data; these points emerged when official messages were compared with the practice of OW work as well during the comparison between staff and client experiences. These patterns are outlined in this chapter as well.

What do the directives say OW designed to do?

The first question, ‘what is OW designed to do?’ was intended to juxtapose official messages regarding the policy’s intent with the practice of administering the policy. In order to explore the question ‘what is OW designed to do?’ I analyzed the Ministry of Community and Social Services’ (MCSS) OW directives and quantitative reports. The directives are official documents that define what OW is supposed to do and how it is supposed to do it. They are publicly available on the MCSS's website and in my experience some clients have used the directives to advocate for benefits that they have either been denied or not offered. MCSS provides the directives to the field to guide the daily practice of OW - practice that is supposed to be in compliance with the MCSS's expectations; both the client and the staff are expected to be in compliance with MCSS requirements. Directives are fundamental tools used to train staff and staff at all

levels of the organization, including the Administrator, use the directives to inform and rationalize the actions and decisions they take every day about eligibility and compliance.

Analyzing the goals and strategies engineered to enact OW work was an integral part of understanding the intent and practice of OW work as well as the contradictions surrounding its design and administration. The following section examines the relationship between the goals and strategies behind OW work that appear in the directives. My analysis revealed that although two primary goals are highlighted, the directives also contain several other goals and strategies intended to inform the administration of OW work.

Analysis of Directives

There are a total of ninety-one directives. Five directives were analyzed (*1.1 Overview of Ontario Works, 2.5 Participation Requirements, 2.6 Employment Information Session, 7.4 Employment and Participation Benefits, 8.1 Early Employment Supports and 8.5 Employment Placements*) because they focused on the intent and enactment of work in OW. These directives were examined using a matrix (attached as Appendix D) and in order to add depth to the data, the matrix was structured around the same four questions that were asked during interviews with participants (What is OW designed to do?; What does the 'works' part of OW mean?; How is the work requirement enacted?; and Whom does this work benefit?). This analytical process assisted in revealing the official messages contained in the directives that are conveyed about the type of OW work, its intent, and its dividends. The connections that are made between these messages intimate that normative assumptions about work, gender and welfare are

operating generally at the welfare-state level, at the neoliberal bureaucratic level and lastly at the individual level.

The best example of the normative connections that happen simultaneously at the general welfare state, neoliberal bureaucratic and individual levels occurs in directive *1.1 Overview of Ontario Works*. This directive is distinct from the other four directives as it serves as a general orientation to the remaining directives as well as the administration and interpretation of OW. It includes information such as the intent of the program and types of assistance that OW offers. One worker noted the importance of this directive when he said “the first directive is probably the most important one and most people never look at it after they finish training” (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

Directive 1.1 reflects what is stated in the Ontario Works Act (1998); namely that OW is to provide “employment assistance and financial assistance to help people in temporary financial need” (MCSS 2008:1). The first official message about OW in this directive is revealing – namely that employment assistance precedes financial assistance articulating that welfare is an employment assistance program first. This position implicitly relays a hierarchy between the purpose of welfare in a welfare state (financial assistance based on entitlement) versus the purpose of welfare in a neoliberal bureaucratic setting (work-for-welfare). In this way, MCSS establishes the identity of OW by linking financial need (as the problem) with employment (as the priority solution). This identity aligns with neoliberal constructs of welfare as a support to the economy generally and to the labour market specifically.

The discourse used in this directive is also highly revealing. For example, the word “employment” appears thirty-eight times while the word “need” appears only twelve times; using the word *employment* three times more than *need* reinforces the obligation-based orientation to the provision of welfare versus needs/entitlement based framework. Along these lines, the directive also constructs the client as the self-reliant individual defined primarily as the client who finds employment or fulfills his/her obligations in ways that OW recognizes as necessary in the process of becoming employable.

The focal point of directive 1.1 is on the provision of employment services which implicitly constructs the client’s compliance - as demonstrated by their participation in OW work- as a crucial element in improving their own employability. Thus, the road to labour market success is focused on the individual and it is taken for granted that OW work is fundamental for the client’s success in the labour market. This orientation focuses on the process of moving from welfare-to-work leading us to assume that it is participation in OW’s services (OW work) that leads to success for the client. Directive 1.1 not only legitimizes OW work as the policy mechanism for the provision of benefits but also as a pivotal process for improving oneself and concomitantly the community. Furthermore the list of officially recognized services communicates the idea that these are official strategies to be used in enacting OW work and consequently OW work is made up of activities that “allow people to contribute to the community and improve their employability” (MCSS 2008:1).

Besides the focus on the individual and the idea that workfare is an appropriate policy mechanism to deliver welfare, directive 1.1 contains several other neoliberal tenets. For example, the language used in directive 1.1 is reflective of broad neoliberal standards of practice that are based in notions of performativity. Words that reflect this orientation such as "effective", "accountable", "sustainable" and "responsibility" appear throughout the directive. In this directive, even a traditionally held tenet of community development, "collaboration" is bound by performativity named as 'efficiency', 'expertise', and 'rationalized services'. This language does not appear in Directive 0101-01 of General Welfare which served the same orientating purpose as directive 1.1 in OW. Rather, the introductory directive to GWA states that the purpose of the directives are to "encourage consistent policy decisions across the province where appropriate"; to serve as the basis for the development of municipal policies; and to provide information and training material to new staff" (MCSS 1994:1). Rather than prescribing the purpose of welfare in efficiency, expertise and rationalized services, GWA allowed "Municipal and First Nations Welfare Administrators [...] interpretation of the *General Welfare Act*" (MCSS 1994:1). This can be understood as a shift to neoliberal standards in practice.

Another example of performativity is found in the "*Roles and Responsibilities*" section of directive 1.1 (MCSS 2008:3–5). In this section, there are three different levels of monitoring done by the province (policy, program management and regional office). By emphasizing this role, the obligation-based orientation that underpins OW is reflected and further reinforces the policing that is necessary to ensure compliance. Interestingly, the directive notes that many individuals and institutions, including other "participating

organizations” must be engaged in monitoring client compliance; all actors are implicated and responsible to ensure that the client satisfies OW’s criteria for financial eligibility.

Compliance is a theme that underpins each directive thereby focusing administrative actions and interpretation of intent primarily on establishing client’s eligibility for assistance rather than need for assistance. For example, although directives *7.4 Employment and Participation Benefits* and *8.1 Early Employment Supports* are focused on providing employment benefits, the benefits are not determined principally by client’s need, skills or employment goals but rather employment benefits are provided only for activities that are approved by the worker in the Participation Agreement (PA); the PA must be completed before determining a client eligible for assistance and before any benefits are issued. For example directive 2.5 (MCSS 2011:2) states: “All Ontario Works applicants , their spouses and any dependent adults included in the benefit unit must complete and sign a PA prior to the determination of eligibility”. As the provision of benefits is rationalized in this way, the issuance of employment assistance focuses attention on enforcing eligibility standards and requirements rather than providing interventions that clients need to help them find work. This argument demonstrates Herd et al.’s (2005) finding that the practices behind OW are focused primarily on ensuring the client’s continued eligibility for assistance.

As well, while outlining the supposed benefits and assistance that are “required” as part of OW work (required assistance also seems somewhat contradictory), the directives do not cease to communicate the compliance-monitoring-accountability framework of OW work. This focus reinforces the implicit idea that employment

assistance is contingent upon satisfying eligibility for financial assistance. In this way, the directive aligns the strict approach required to ensuring eligibility for financial assistance with the neoliberal construct of welfare as intended primarily for the purpose of finding work. However, as the administration of OW work focuses first on ensuring eligibility for financial assistance and secondly on providing employment assistance, this orientation can be seen as contradicting the very clear message laid out in the foundational directive (1.1) that OW is foremost an employment assistance program.

Not only the content but also the way the directives are structured communicates how OW is supposed to meet the official goals of providing employment and financial assistance. As the directives are official tools provided by the MCSS to the field, their authority is a fundamental driver of practice. With the exception of directive 1.1, all other directives are structured around the following headings: “legislative authority”, “audit requirements” and “application of policy”. This structure implicitly relays deep normative meanings that influence practice. As each directive begins with “legislative authority”, compliance with legislation is the primary boundary for the framework of practice. Consequently, administration that is in compliance with legislation is understood as paramount and continually reinforced in each of the directives. This structure is also a shift from the structure of the General Welfare Act (GWA) directives which began with a “summary section”. The “audit requirements” section of each OW directive conveys the expectation that individual actions are carried out in alignment with the intended mindset of the policy. Client and worker actions must be audited against those stated in this section of the directives as this reflects MCSS’s sanctioned strategies.

Lastly, the “application of policy” section of each directive sets out what the official mindset should be – MCSS’s intent. Neither of the headings "audit requirements" nor "application of policy" appeared in the GWA directives.

Although the MCCS states, through directive 1.1, that OW is designed to provide “employment assistance and financial assistance to help people in temporary financial need” (MCSS 2008:1) several other goals appear in the five employment focused directives analyzed for this project. These other goals are:

- To find sustainable employment (directive 1.1)
- To achieve self-reliance (directive 1.1)
- To provide employment services (directive 1.1)
- To ensure that tax payer dollars are efficiently spent and services are rationalized (directive 1.1)
- To ensure that client and delivery agent compliance is monitored (directive 1.1)
- To ensure that adults receiving OW participate in approved employment activities as a condition of their eligibility (directive 2.5)
- To provide information on obligations and supports (directive 2.6)
- To find work (directive 8.1)
- To increase earning and exits from social assistance (directive 7.4)
- To ensure that individuals satisfy their obligations/conditions for assistance (directive 8.1)
- To provide assistance to clients to find a job by providing skills (directive 8.1)
- To meet labour market needs of employers who have a job to offer (directive 8.5)
- To resolve issues to promote retention of jobs (directive 8.5)

As these other goals are listed in the directives, they could be understood as goals that are also officially recognized and sanctioned by MCSS. Consequently, it is implied that if this list is activated by workers and embraced by clients, OW will meet its primary goal of providing employment and financial assistance. The directives provide preferred strategies that are to be used in meeting OW’s goal. However, the directives also communicate that there are several means that can be used to achieve the intended

outcome. These diverse means simultaneously target several different beneficiaries (the client, the labour market, employers). While this list of other goals, strategies and beneficiaries do not overtly contradict OW's purpose (providing financial and employment assistance) it does create contests and tensions between what OW is designed to do and how it is supposed to do it. The list in the directives can be understood as goals (what OW is designed to do) or as strategies (how OW is supposed to do it). For example, one can say that 'meeting the market needs of employers who have a job to offer' is a goal (*what OW is designed to do*) that satisfies purposes beyond the provision of employment or financial assistance. Or, one can say that the goal "providing employment or financial assistance" (*what OW is designed to do*) can be achieved by activating the strategy of 'providing assistance to clients to find a job by providing skills' (*how it is supposed to do it*). The list of goals and strategies in the directives not only establishes a competition between each of the goals but also a contest between goals and strategies.

Although, at some level one could say that the directives present the engineering behind OW work as clear (provide employment and financial assistance) as discussed in the next section, the other goals and strategies also found in the directives reveals that rather than providing clarity to administration, the directives may contribute to practice that inconsistently or haphazardly supports the policy's stated purpose 'to provide employment and financial assistance'. There are several goals and several strategies that appear in the directives – all of which have been accorded some official recognition in policy and are therefore sanctioned means to be used in administering the policy. Hence,

the strategies that drive practice also drive OW's goals. A worker aptly recognized the contest between OW's goals and the strategies that are sanctioned for use in reaching the goals when he said: "Ontario Works should be the easiest job in the world because you and your client agree on the goal; you just don't necessarily agree on what's the best route to take" (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

What Do Participants Recognize as OW's Intent?

When asked "what is OW designed to do?" participants identified that OW is designed primarily to provide financial and employment assistance. Workers had the following comments about OW's design. "It is designed to be a help for people going through a difficult time in their lives; it's to support people so that they don't lose everything" (S16: worker, female, 10 years). "I think the program is designed to try and help people find jobs and get people involved in training activities and all sorts of participation activities" (S8: worker, male, 17 years). "I think what it asks us to do [...] is to assess each individual claim, figure out where they're at right now, and then establish a plan to move them off of Ontario Works in a positive way: whether that be a job or disability or WSIB or whatever the case may be" (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

However, participants also expanded the boundaries of OW's engineering to include the following goals and strategies: reducing the caseload, empowering the client, supporting independence, helping clients to surpass their limitations, referring to other agencies, listening to clients, building a relationship, helping clients become job ready and helping people to fulfill their purpose. One worker said "After I finished my training, I felt that OW was really helping to empower people become independent and

get back to school, work if at all possible or to deal with whatever their limitations as best they could” (S5: worker, female, 8 years). A goal that was uniquely identified by management was that OW work buttresses social assistance and economic development. One manager said: “So I mean there’s a couple different agendas working simultaneously here: we’re trying to affect both supply-and-demand and trying to see the program as a program in-and-of-itself, but also as a one of the resources we can draw upon as a municipality to satisfy some of the broader goals we have as a municipality” (M7: male, 17 years). Participant responses both aligned with and expanded upon the officially recognized work strategies in the directives. Participants’ ideas about workfare work centered on the two goals stated in the directives, employment and financial assistance but, participants also identified workfare work to include activities and beliefs that are reflective of neoliberal connections between work and welfare.

One worker’s response regarding the design of OW focused on her experience with the directives. She said “[the directives], it’s written for the wrong audience, not for the delivery, it’s written in not understanding how it layers down and how you have to actually be able to operationalize and make it happen” (S2: worker, female, 15 years). This participant recognized that although the directives are provided to the field to guide the daily practice of administering OW work, the directives are insufficient supports for this intent; she felt that the interpretation of OW’s intent varies from person to person and even from each layer in the organization and therefore practice can reflect either supportive or punitive aspects of OW.

Participant responses demonstrate that inherent in OW's design is a competition for primacy between what OW is designed to do and how it is supposed to do it . This highlights the idea that although MCSS provides directives to the field as guideposts for administration and decision-making, as the worker noted above, these guideposts are often experienced as nebulous, contradictory or problematic. And so, during the administration of OW, the goal of providing financial and employment assistance may be usurped by any one of the other goals found in the directives. For example in directive 1.1 (MCSS 2008:1) the intent of OW is “to help people in temporary financial need find sustainable employment and achieve self-reliance through the provision of effective, integrated employment services and financial assistance”. However, it is not clear what form OW help should come in; directive 1.1 lays out the types of assistance provided to clients (employment and financial assistance), the principles of service delivery including the roles and responsibilities of MCSS, municipalities, staff, clients and participating organization in relation to ensuring program integrity. One can theorize that in the day-to-day process of translating OW's engineering into practice, the priority and legitimacy of the goals, strategies and objectives is highly dependent on the intent internalized and then activated by each individual actor according to his/her individualized normative assumptions and expectations surrounding work, gender and welfare. One participant recognized how the strategies behind OW work contribute to the complexity of meeting OW's goal when he said that the province should “just call a spade a spade and say: ‘Our goal is provide financial assistance to people and this is how much financial assistance we think we can afford in Ontario to give people; and we're going to cut out all the

window dressing because that's all it ever was.' If it's just politics we can't afford it anymore" (S15: worker, male, 30 years). The next section explores some of the other strategies that are embedded in OW's design and how these strategies reinforce the administration of policy in accordance with neoliberal constructs of welfare.

Using Funding to Convey OW's Quid Pro Quo Architecture

With the implementation of Ontario Works in 1998, the MCSS began funding municipalities based on completing employment activities. Funding was intended to support the client's shortest route to employment with MCSS providing 80% of the funding and municipalities contributing 20%. In 2000, Employment Assistance funding was generated based on the levels of each participant's involvement in employment activities. There were three levels of service each generating increased funding corresponding to the intensity of employment supports provided to the OW participant (for example level one employment activities consisted of independent job search which earned the municipality \$250 per client per month). Caseworkers recorded in the data base SDMT the level of activity contained in the client's participation agreement; caseworkers were involved in process of linking their work with clients to the funding that municipalities received from the province. In August 2004 the Province announced that Employment Assistance funding would be provided to municipalities based on achieving targets related to the earnings and employment outcomes of OW clients. This new funding model was implemented in 2006 and remains in place currently; municipalities negotiate targets related to: the average earnings of OW clients; the percentage of the caseload that leave OW with earnings; the length of time from exit due to earnings and/or employment to return to OW,

and; the average length of time it takes for OW clients to exit OW with earnings and/or employment. The province provides funding based on the achieved targets and may take back any subsidy that is not earned when targets are not achieved.

The funding provided to municipalities based on the client achieving employment and earnings outcomes is used to pay for OW staff as well as provide employment related benefits that are given directly to clients – benefits such as paying for training or transportation to training or a job. The maximum funding amounts that can be earned by municipalities are set by the province. Although this funding model is not noted in the employment related directives, in my experience and based on participant accounts, because the funding model is embedded in the day-to-day administration of OW work it is highly influential on the translation of intent into practice. In relation to the existing literature surrounding OW, this is a more novel claim about how OW workers and administrators think about their work. That is, although few would dispute the "dehumanizing" (Herd et al. 2005) effects of OW practices, the funding formula (itself a carrot/stick calculus) has not been featured in OW research as a powerful driving source behind these experiences.

Participant responses revealed that the funding model was a foundational undergirding operating within OW. One worker said “We’re governed by certain rules and regulations and directives so we have to conduct ourselves accordingly if we’re going to continue to receive funding” (S13: worker, female, 15 years). Not only did the funding formula influence practice by setting explicit boundaries (receiving funding for achieving targets) but it also used implicit strategies to reinforce these boundaries. “In

the beginning the province threatened to stop the subsidy because we weren't getting the stats they wanted" (S9: worker, male, 32 years). "It was politically driven; I mean we had the Minister come down and you know, say some stuff" (S14: worker, female, 15 years); this worker acknowledged that the Minister's visit to Niagara was seen as a measure for corrective action related to achieving targets. Another worker said "It became more political as you got into various levels of management - cost analysts thought a little differently than this, because you just needed to achieve certain things [such as employment targets negotiated with the province] in order to ensure your funding" (S15: worker, male, 30 years). Although workers identified these boundaries as pertaining to their site, there was little variance across the research participants' communities. This corresponds with my experience as an administrator. While each community's targets varies from other communities across Ontario because targets are negotiated individually with MCSS, the funding formula and performance indicators tracked by MCSS are similar for each OW delivery agent across Ontario. From this perspective one could argue that OW's engineering facilitates similar administration of OW work across the province.

As well, the provincial data-base Service Delivery Management Technology (SDMT) plays a pivotal role in the engineering behind OW work. Workers enter earnings and employment information about clients into SDMT. This information is used by the province to monitor municipal performance regarding the earnings and employment outcomes noted above. Workers also identified that using SDMT created a tension between what they thought OW was designed to do and what they were required

to record in the data base. One worker noted “Ontario Works is trying to do that [measure outcomes]. In terms of the number of people that offer assistance, do the employment” (S8: worker, male, 17 years). Workers experienced this part of OW’s design - the measures and the process of measuring - as problematic. Workers felt that measuring detracted from the “real” goals of OW. One worker expressed this as “We were slaves to the computer” (S9: worker, male, 32 years). Another worker said “You got to have so much done every month. You got to have this, and this. Everything is monitored, you know and calculated. I think we have to listen more” (S5: worker, female, 8 years). Another worker identifies that while OW is supposed to be employment focused, most of the time is spent on verifying client eligibility. She said: “One of issues for the province is they say these are their values but what are we monitored on? We’re monitored on some things that are employment - certainly the employment outcomes [...] but look at all the struggles staff and offices are having right now to ensure we meet verification requirements; because they're [MCSS] counting” (S6: worker, female, 14 years).

The information that workers enter into the technology records clients’ achievements in relation to OW work. This data is used by the province to administer the funding formula that rewards municipalities where clients achieve the targeted earnings and employment outcomes. The funding formula serves to communicate the quid pro quo logic that if clients achieve good employment outcomes, the province will provide the contracted amount of funding to municipal delivery agents. As this funding pays for workers’ salaries and clients’ employment benefits, one can say that the funding formula

undergirding OW work is engineered to yoke workers' success to clients' success. As a practitioner, the idea that workers' success is contingent upon clients' success is part of the taken for granted logic that plays out daily in OW work. The quid pro quo logic is implicitly accepted. The following section examines how the funding model shapes the co-dependent relationship between the client and worker.

Although one would anticipate that the funding would primarily impact the worker as pressure from management for whom funding is more important, as one worker notes, many workers assimilated the funding model as the paradigm for their practice and the relationship with the client. A worker said: “[Workers] hear from the people who got that initial marketing about Ontario Works that—there are these levels: one, two, three, but they’ve been gone for a long time. But people still do case management as if they exist” (S15: worker, male, 30 years). Participant responses revealed that OW’s funding model created tensions for workers and administrators as they determined, at the level of practice, the priority of the objectives legitimized by the province explicitly in the directives and implicitly in the funding design. A specific manifestation of this tension is the varied approach that municipalities take in the delivery of employment assistance.

MCSS does not mandate that employment programming such as job-specific training, life-skills courses or resume writing workshops be delivered internally by municipal OW workers; some municipalities use the funding they earn from the province to purchase employment services from third parties such as colleges and non-profit organizations to provide employment services to OW clients. This approach is one way

that municipalities respond to the pressure to achieve the targets linked to their funding; the assumption is that by contracting agencies to work with clients on employment, more time is freed up for the OW worker to administer the program. One worker describes how this aspect of OW's design contributes to the complexity between OW's funding model and the strategies used as part of OW work. He said:

What little money was put into employment programs was done in house. And it didn't involve so many community partners and keeping them all satisfied and dealing with all of their funding issues and then trying to get the numbers so they can get more money the next year so they could keep their staff. I think that's just made things far more complicated (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

Some workers felt that referring clients to agencies for employment assistance was problematic for their own and consequently for the client's success. They said that that referring OW clients to employment agencies frustrated both the client's and worker's ability to achieve OW's employment goals. One worker said:

I was supposed to refer them [clients] out to an agency that would work with them and then every month I was supposed to see 'how's it going?' To me, that didn't make a whole lot of sense. It wasn't useful. I could develop a lot more rapport by working with them than just sending them out to someone else who doesn't really want to work with them (S4: worker, female, 5 years).

Another worker said:

I think one of the biggest challenges honestly is that people who do actually connect with the agencies, do go through all of the programming available, and still have not had employment. And here we are, nine months later—the agencies have nothing else to offer, but my mandate says you have to be with an agency so now I refer you to a different agency who does exactly the same thing that you've done for nine months. And that is extremely difficult because there are times when there isn't any place to send somebody (S11: worker, female, 1.5 years).

However, not all workers felt that the process of referring OW clients to agencies was problematic. One worker stated “I don't mean that we shouldn't still encourage people that we shouldn't still be working with people but I think the actual ongoing thing with work, getting them employment ready and all that would be better done by other agencies” (S5: worker, female, 8 years). Delivery agents may choose to implement locally the practice of referring clients to third party employment agencies assuming that this practice allows workers more time to focus on administering OW; referring clients to agencies is therefore a strategy used to increase the likelihood of meeting MCSS expectations. One could say that engineering a funding model that rewards delivery agents for the achievement of outcomes may in fact distort OW's design; as municipalities delegate the work of becoming employed and employable to external agencies the interdependent relationship between the client's success and the worker's work becomes uncoupled.

One worker's response highlighted the funding model's symbolic importance. He stated that the funding design was significant because it provided a model for the relationship between the province and the municipality which was also reflected in the relationship between the worker and the client. He said:

I think what it is it's the first step in establishing a relationship where I don't trust you. And that's going to be the basis of our relationship from this point on. I'm just going to keep grilling you with questions because I don't think you are telling me the truth. And I think it goes up the chain; I think we're asked to do that because I don't think the province trusts us. They think you're just going to put all these people on welfare so you can get all this money. As if that makes any sense (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

As the punitive undertones of the funding model played out in the relationship between the province and the municipalities, and as this worker identified the funding model also undergirded the relationship between client and the worker, I wondered how this dynamic manifested in the daily routines of OW work. Regardless of whether employment services were delivered internally or externally by third party employment agencies, as an administrator, my assumption was that workers attributed their success primarily to the client's willingness to fulfill their obligations toward OW work. The notion that clients who do not fulfill their OW work obligations are consciously and willfully making a choice is intimated in directive 2.5 which states that by signing a PA, clients acknowledge their obligation to comply. However, workers identified that compliance is not only determined by a client's will but more contingent upon the client's *ability* to comply. Workers expressed this inability to comply as clients being "damaged".

Although the concept that clients are "damaged" was conveyed in many different ways, the most common expression of 'damage' was barriers to employment. These barriers were identified as intrinsic (such as mental illness) or extrinsic (family history).

One worker's response provides an example of someone who fits this category:

[Worker as client:] I don't know why I can't get a job. [interviewee:] Well one, have you been looking? [as client:] Well there's no jobs out there anyways and, you know, if I sees something in the paper I go and there's a big, long lineup—and I've only got grade eight—why bother? [interviewee:] Okay, well, let's talk about that. How often does it come up that you have to have more education than what you have? [as client:] Oh, all the time. [interviewee:] What do you think about going back to school? Going to school is a job and they're prepared to pay you and give you a bus pass to get back and forth to school. [as client:] "Well I'm not very good writing and reading and that. [interviewee:] Well why don't you go and find out and see where you have to start? [as client:] Well, I guess I could

look into it. And most of them—to be honest—didn't want to go to school. They probably had bad experiences all the way through. And the same thing—if your parents were on welfare and it was good enough for them, and they didn't show any leadership in having you how to get a paper route or you know—[as parent of client:] You'll get welfare, you're 18 now. It's hard because they don't have the basics of—you almost have to explain to them: You only get what you work for and sometimes it's hard, sometimes it's easy (S9: worker, male, 32 years).

Another worker said:

We have a lot now (for lack of, this is not a politically correct word) “damaged” individuals from birth, whose potential to achieve isn't the same as everyone else's. And so what system are they going to be in? And they get caught in the social assistance system and they'll be able to do some things and have a certain quality of life, but we can't fix them (S14: worker, female, 15 years).

Although workers hinged their success on the client's ability to comply, they also noted that OW's design is able to force compliance; a worker said:

They [clients] are told that these are your responsibilities, these are the requirements—I think the message comes out that you better be in compliance, you better be forthcoming because otherwise we will catch you. I honestly think that is the message only because of the process—I don't think anybody comes out and says that, for goodness sakes (S8: worker, male, 17 years).

All participants acknowledged that OW is underpinned by normative drives that are not value neutral but noticeably punitive. One worker said: “From the front-end I suspect that they [clients] probably are given the Miranda Rules, if I can give that as an example” (S8: worker, male, 17 years). Another worker said “I still think a lot of them [clients] consider the OW program to be very punitive” (S3: worker, female, 7 years). Client responses also reflected the idea that OW's design contains punitive undertones. One client said “there's still the broad program that the public knows, that you know we're not going to help you unless you're out there essentially going to work and

contributing back to society” (C5: client, female). Another client said “The premise or the idea or the deal with OW is help people who are in financial or dire need but you get penalized in the process of doing it” (C2: client, male). Another client said that OW is designed for “cost containment and that we aren't getting anything more than we deserve” (C5: client, female).

A specific manifestation of OW’s punitive undertones was the pressure to disentitle clients. One worker said about other workers “They followed the rules. They did their job as they saw they were supposed to [...] if they give out too much they haven't done their job well” (S4: worker, female, 5 years). One worker said “When you got somebody off, regardless if it was for a job or for whatever they [management] rang a bell - like commissions at a telemarketing company” (S1: worker, male, 10 years).

Another worker said:

We had to submit sheets. How many people you’ve terminated (in and of itself a horrible word) each month and those individuals who had five, six, seven and it was posted up like a grade school. Or you had a supervisor who gave you happy faces or if your number was low it wasn’t a happy face it was: ‘What’s going on with your caseload? Or why is your caseload growing in other people.’ So it became defensive (S14: worker, female, 15 years).

Another worker said:

Some believe that if you made it hard enough for people to get on then you don't have to work at getting them off. So that was very much the message on the floor as far as looking at those different stages of working to get on. So, if you made it hard work to get on, then as front-line staff you didn't have to do any work to move them off because you didn't let them on in the first place (S2: worker, female, 15 years).

Participants recognized that OW's engineering is undergirded by punitive undertones that allow and may even encourage coercion, harsh treatment and value judgments of OW clients. This supports the existing literature surrounding OW (Baker Collins 2004, Herd et al 2005). As workers identified barriers for clients, clients with barriers could also be understood as obstacles for workers. Further, because OW's funding relies on clients achieving earning and employment outcomes, clients who are unable to fulfill OW's work obligations impede workers' ability to satisfy the work side of OW's engineering thereby putting funding at risk. Although OW's punitive design is recognized, it is accepted as part of the process perhaps because the threat of losing funding legitimizes punishment of so called 'damaged' clients.

Interestingly, participants also identified the orientation toward reward and punishment in the relationship between the province and the municipal delivery agent. Embedded in OW's design is a formula that rewards municipalities that meet targets related to OW work by giving them funding; the province can recover funding from municipalities who do not meet targets. A funding formula that links clients' and workers' success reflects a neoliberal quid pro quo construct of workfare; OW's design relies upon a quid pro quo equation as a method to ensure compliance. Compliance is embedded in the engineering of the policy and assured through its administrative processes. In the next section, I explore how participants learn about OW's design and examine the correspondence between design and practice.

The Contest between Employability and Financial Assistance

Workers identified that the primary opportunities to communicate OW's design and intent to clients occurred while determining initial and on-going eligibility.

However, workers felt that this process did not ensure that clients understood the goals or intent of OW work. One worker said:

I'm looking at you [client] and I don't have any idea who you are. I may have met you before but I don't really remember a whole lot. I got a file here so I have a general sense. I have no idea what you know or don't know and I'm not taking the time to ask. I have an assumption in my head. You must be on the same page as me and we're just plowing on ahead and unfortunately those clients are many times too afraid to ask questions, too afraid of what they would think of as challenging just by saying 'I don't understand what we are even doing here' or whatever so they just smile and nod (S4: worker, female, 5 years).

Another worker expressed a similar experience when she said "I always say there are two components to Ontario Works: the employment assistance and the financial assistance and we're trying to help you [client] with this [...]so I have to go to this place when they can't even comprehend at the time what's even really happening" (S11: worker, female, 1.5 years).

Although workers said that the goal of OW is explained to clients through the administration of OW, they also acknowledged that a client's *understanding* of OW's goals is not necessary to the administration of OW work. Workers thought that clients' ambiguous understanding of OW's goals manifested as a contest between how the clients see OW (as an income support program) and what OW workers are supposed to get clients to do (participate in employment activities). Workers reported that they believe OW clients do not see OW as an employment program. One worker told the following

story to illustrate the struggle that she faced when trying to place the employment side of OW on equal footing with the financial assistance:

I had a client, a family, that through the years we had started with mom and her children. Then all the children became dependent adults and the mom was not job ready. We put a lot of work into trying to get her to volunteer - to do a lot of things but it just wasn't going to happen. But the children came along and they did not see us as being any support at all. We were a hindrance. We could say to them, "our goal is to help you become independent and could you go talk to, you know trying to set the boys in an apprenticeship situation and the girl wanted to go to hairdressing school. We could provide all this information but being the agency we were they didn't really...they either weren't ready to listen or they didn't see it as being our job. They just wanted to make sure how the money was coming in. They went on to other agencies to do what they wanted to do. The whole family just saw us as the money person (S5: worker, female, 8 years).

Another worker was frustrated by how the contest between the financial and employment sides of OW plays out daily. He said:

No one initially applies for Ontario Works to get employment counseling. They apply to get financial assistance and it's a constant battle from that point on trying to convince them that that's not what we are. We're the Ontario Works office, we're supposed to help you with employment—that's supposed to be our whole focus. Because then they're like: That's not why I called you; that's not what I want. I don't want to talk about that today; I want to talk about my hydro-bill is due. I want to talk about my kids have a school trip coming up. So there's this constant battle of: Yeah I know that's what you want, but that's not what I'm supposed to be giving you (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

This finding contributes a new perspective to the body of research regarding OW. The data revealed that the way some workers approached the employment side of OW was influenced by their belief that clients understood OW as a financial assistance program and did not understand that OW is designed primarily as an employment program. The following statement made by a worker details how this understanding plays out in the daily practice of OW work. He said:

There is a certain percentage of the staff who believe that Ontario Works is just about the work and the clients have to figure out the other stuff out for themselves. And then you have—what I hope is the majority—which is the group in the middle who have a good feel for - that's the stated goal and we always have it in the back of our mind, but the crisis in front of me now is, they're going to have their hydro cut off and I have to solve that before we go home today. And then you have the ones who think (probably an equal percentage to the literal ones) who think the employment part is not important at all: Why would you even mention it to the clients who have all these other things on their plate, you know, we're not even going to go there (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

Although some workers may feel that it is too punitive to push clients into work and focus on employment services, one client felt that she was being held back because her worker was not giving the same attention to employment services as financial assistance. She said:

I was the one that asked them. They didn't tell me about employment services, I just happened to know there was one. So I asked to be referred to it, right away and they said well, normally we have to wait a few weeks. I said, well no, I don't need to wait a few weeks (C7: client, female).

Another client reported that he had lost a job opportunity because the worker failed to provide him with information about employment assistance. He said: “Why aren't they giving people that kind of information? If I would have had that information, I would have had my license two years ago. I would have been working. I would have never seen social assistance again” (C3: client, male).

The Contest between Employability and Employment

In contrast to worker perceptions, most clients very clearly articulated that they understood the goal of OW to be work. “They said it would help me to get connected with a job” (C5: client, female). “Their goal is to try to get people off of it to find some type of work” (C6: client, female). “It was explained to me that I needed to be active in

looking for work” (C7: client, female). Although clients understood that OW is an employment program, their expectations of OW differed from what OW is designed to do and how it is designed to do it. Rather than experiencing a tension between the income support and employment assistance parts of OW, clients said that they expected that OW would find them work. One client said: “I understand they may be on a tight budget and whatnot but why not hire somebody that's on social assistance?” (C3: client, male).

Another client said:

They [workers] came across as if ok, you know what, you're here and you know you need to get to work. You need to do this. You need to do that. and I was so discouraged by their lack of knowledge that I took my own initiative and I went out looking for work and ended up securing a position through an employment agency (C7: client, female).

Another client talked about the job finding club that OW referred him to. He said: “they [workers] like to bring in donuts and buy us coffee but other than that they are not really much help. It's not a good...I don't like to, you know, ‘dis’ them that way but it's not really helping” (C4: client, male).

Workers recognized that clients held the expectation that OW find them work.

One worker said:

When I say [to clients] ‘employment agency’ I always make it clear that that's not a temp agency, because I think a lot of the times there is this misconception that we're going to get them jobs, which I am pretty upfront about that. We'll help support you, but you ultimately are the one needing to meet with the agencies and go find work on your own. Which again I don't always necessarily believe they are capable of doing that (S11: worker, female, 1.5 years).

Another worker said:

I think part of what has made things complicated for staff and clients is we talk about things like the employment continuum which makes sense to the people on the inside. To the average person employment means you're at the job and getting a paycheque, it doesn't mean you're learning life-skills or something like that (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

Another worker said:

I think we can help people, refer people and listen and say 'maybe you need to do this'. We work with people to send them in the right direction but the actual grind that goes on for months I don't know that we should do that and I mean grind in terms of job searching, life-skills courses, stuff like that. People want to work (S5: worker, female, 8 years).

Although workers acknowledged the program's inability to meet client expectations that OW find them a job, they attributed the difference to the client's lack of understanding of OW's design (to provide employment assistance). From their perspective, while OW work is important it may also at times be a 'grind' especially when working with clients who are 'damaged'. As evidenced in the disconnect between engineering, understanding and expectations, one could conclude that the methods for communicating the design and intent of OW work are problematic. However, the more intriguing finding explored in the following section is that according to workers, the administration of OW work is not impeded by the client's misunderstanding of OW's goals.

How do workers learn about OW's design?

Throughout the interviews, workers often acknowledged a disconnect between the engineering, understanding and expectations behind OW work. They labeled this as the difference between theory and reality. At times, this disconnect was

focused on clients. One worker said: “The reality is there is only so much success one can have because if you don't help the people with what they need help with and they are not willing to be helped then what can you do?” (S5: worker, female, 8 years). Another worker recognized the significant role that the province plays in the tension between theory and reality; she said: “you can't just assume that someone sitting in an office somewhere knows what's going on the front lines. So I think it's our role to connect more with those funders” (S16: worker, female, 10 years). Another worker intimated that working with so-called damaged clients contributed to the difference between theory and reality when she said: “Even if the government said that the goals were work, work, work, I don't think that people working within the system could follow that because that's just so unrealistic” (S5: worker, female, 8 years).

In order to understand better the relationship between OW's design and the tension that workers identified as the difference between theory and reality, I examined how workers learned about OW's design.

Primarily training was used as the way for workers to learn about OW's design and intent. One worker said: “It also was an awful lot of coaching and teaching of our front-line management because they're the ones that impact what happens on the floor” (S6: worker, female, 14 years). Another worker said: “I believe it is a mix of experience, skills and very importantly training and tools that the caseworker has but ultimately all that comes together to give someone the sense of ‘how do I make a choice?’” (S6: worker, female, 14 years).

Managers identified training as a key technique in ensuring that OW work is activated in line with official expectations. One manager said: “It’s kind of a coordinated effort to ensure that everyone is working under the same guise” (S6: worker, female, 14 years). One manager said: “we do a number of different events in addition to training people about supportive approaches: helping people, working with people, how to treat people properly” (S8: worker, male, 17 years). Another manager said: “Educate the staff that that doesn’t mean being defensive; being proud of the interpretation you’re taking and if somebody comes back and says: ‘Oh, you’re a little off on your interpretation, what about this?’ Then it’s a learning opportunity so that you do it the next time for the next person” (S14: worker, female, 15 years).

Besides training, managers identified other techniques that were used to influence staff thinking and actions related to the design of OW. One such technique was the use of key messages such as “This is a good program; if run right, it’s a good program” (S6: worker, female, 14 years); “We’re using those principles to kind of send a message of what the business that were in—we’re here to care about people” (S8: worker, male, 17 years). “We had city council telling us this is what we're doing. We had our commissioner and our administrator saying this is what we're doing so we were aligned in that respect. We did a couple of reorgs in order to say where do we put our priorities as a system?” (S6: worker, female, 14 years). Other techniques included staff meetings:

It’s at a local level - the atmosphere that you create within your offices. You know we went through a period where there were entire team meetings, entire organizational meetings with everyone, I mean we even had to pull them off in the evenings because you couldn't coordinate everybody together (S10: worker, female, 32 years).

Another manager highlighted staff meeting conversations when he said:

With my staff it was a constant battle over why are you beating your head against the wall for this person who doesn't want a job and you're not spending any time with the person who does want a job. Why don't you just let that person go? They'll come around eventually. Leave them on for a few months for, you know, 600 dollars a month and they'll say: 'I can't get by on this.' They'll come knock on your door and say: 'How can you help me get something?' But if you push them, it's just their nature - they're going to push back (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

And even the office layout was seen as an opportunity to convey official messages about OW's design and intent of OW. One manager explains that the layout of the office is reflective of the values and messages conveyed to staff about OW when said:

We have done a number of different things to send the various messages and values and principles to staff. We have done a number of different things, social events. Right now one staff person came up with the idea of we have all these baffles in the office—they could probably get 150 staff on this floor; we're trying to find somebody. Whenever I first came here I said: 'Couldn't we just name these things?' And somebody actually came up with the idea that we should give street names. Let's put "empathy" and "trust" as two streets so, you know, I am on the corner of Empathy and Trust (S8: worker, male, 17 years).

As noted earlier in this chapter, workers identified goals and strategies that corresponded with those found in the directives. Therefore, one could say that training and the other techniques used to convey OW's design effectively communicated OW's official goals and strategies to staff. Although management responses identified training as a technique that was used to buttress OW's design and intent with staff thinking and actions, they also recognized the complexity of administering OW work. One manager said: "I would say it is pretty abstract at the case worker level trying to define it, right. Because it's not widgets—we're talking about humans" (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

As well, workers reported that despite the training, they struggled with how OW's design should manifest in the day-to-day practice of OW work. Another worker said that: "You have to try to find your own way through - that was a challenge" (S16: worker, female, 10 years). Another worker said "We've done training and things like that, but I still don't have an understanding of how you want me to assess people's abilities for employment" (S11: worker, female, 1.5 years). This same worker elaborated by saying: "The training provided was mainly the financial piece - directives, SDMT. The employment piece, unfortunately, was: 'Hi, this is our employment team; these are the resources we have available'." (S11: worker, female, 1.5 years).

Although training was used to try to make OW's design and intent clear, workers reported that in practice it is still not clear. One worker said "The goals were not necessarily clear and what I understood - they were not sometimes realistic in dealing with our clients" (S5: worker, female, 8 years). For workers, the difference between theory and reality expressed the idea that although they understood the engineering behind OW work (theory) how it played out in practice was problematic (reality). Consequently, one could say that training and the other strategies used by management were ineffective for reconciling the difference between theory and reality for workers. A major source of this tension is discussed in the following section.

More Time Is Spent Determining Eligibility than Employment

As noted earlier, the directives intimate that OW's primary goal is employment; the directives maintain that OW is first and foremost an employment program. However workers' and clients' experiences did not reflect that focus. Rather, they experienced the

day-to-day administration as focused mostly on determining ongoing eligibility for financial assistance. A worker said: “You constantly have to verify your situation to justify why you’re getting the money” (S8: worker, male, 17 years). Participants linked the daily focus on financial eligibility to the punitive undertones of OW work that manifested as an orientation to surveillance. A client said: “I think that that the attitude of the way the system is designed and managed where it’s one of surveillance where its make sure that we don't get anything more than we are entitled to that that has become the pervasive message to staff - to treat us as suspects” (C5: client, female). A worker said:

The paperwork was set up with the assumption that everyone is trying to defraud the system and I was being told over and over again, and I had that mentality to begin with, that is not the case, that's 2%. So why are we putting all of our energy into the 2% and alienating the 98% that were on board with us but now they're not because we've pissed them off (S4: worker, female, 5 years).

OW’s punitive undertones played out for workers who felt that the orientation towards surveillance regarding eligibility for financial assistance came at the cost of employment assistance. One worker said:

It’s the inability to get to the 3 month review and the chance to just sit and chat with the person as to ‘where are you at?’ and ‘how can I help you?’ Because we're too busy doing intakes and Enhanced Verification Processes but the employment thing [...] it’s always easier to cancel an employment appointment time than it is to cancel intake (S6: worker, female, 14 years).

A client described the process as “the income worker, my understanding is, that they're not supposed to push people to work when they come in. They just explain the

participation agreement and then you go for orientation and from that time on you're introduced to the employment centre” (C7: client, female).

In the following description provided by a worker, one can easily identify that financial eligibility overshadows employment assistance:

In our case, if you're looking for financial assistance—you call our main number. You've got to wait in line for somebody to answer that call; once you answer that call you're with one of our intake-screening representatives that takes the information down, basic information into the system; after that's done then they schedule you an appointment and after you have that appointment—which may be six days now, so within six days someone will see you; then you meet with the worker. The worker will tell you: “These are your rights and responsibilities which you are required to do as part of the program.” You might have to go through a literacy test so your ability to comprehend the English language is going to be assessed. And then you're told about all the things you're required to provide in order to—before the cheque will ever be released—so you need to bring: this, this, and this and if you didn't you'll need to get it because otherwise I can't issue you a cheque. We haven't gotten to the employment piece yet, we're just making sure you get money to pay the rent and buy some food. You go through all of that and then every month you're required to provide an income statement (S8: worker, male, 17 years).

Another worker recognized the contradiction between OW's claim that it is an employment program when most of the processes focus on determining eligibility for financial assistance; he said:

I'm not a numbers cruncher or a stats guy—but sometimes things are just so obvious that you can't miss them. Almost everybody who comes to our office and applies is eligible. Yet we waste more time determining their financial eligibility than we do trying to figure out what would be their chosen goal to move off. Why do we schedule 90 minutes to determine their eligibility and then half an hour for every visit after that? Why isn't it half an hour to determine your eligibility, because you probably are, and then we're going to spend an hour and a half trying to figure out: “What do you want to do with us in order to get off of the assistance?” (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

The contradiction between OW's claim that it is designed as an employment program when most of daily activities focus on determining financial eligibility no doubt contributed to worker's sense of the difference between theory and reality. The difference between theory and reality can be understood as the space between officially recognized intent and the daily practice of OW work. This space highlights the inconsistencies between OW's intent and its engineering; if taken at face value, OW is officially designed primarily to provide employment assistance, however practice is so focused on surveillance that determining eligibility becomes the priority instead of employment. This demonstrates the untidy practice that results from a policy that was either intentionally designed for purposes other than those explicitly stated (punishing poor people) or policy designed primarily to satisfy ideological imperatives (neoliberal work ethos).

The space between theory and reality may be where norms function to supplement OW's explicitly stated goals and strategies (theory) and the day-to-day practice of implementing the goals and strategies (reality). This space may be governed by normative frameworks of logic that participants use to reconcile tensions and/or contradictions. For example, although officially OW is designed to provide employment and financial assistance its administration is based primarily on a neoliberal reluctance to actually provide income assistance. Thus, OW is engineered to reinforce work because the ideal neoliberal citizen should be employed and concomitantly should not be dependent on the public purse. As a practitioner, the space (between theory and reality) that workers identified expand beyond the difficulties of meeting the monitoring

requirements of OW and instead point to deep and powerful normative instruments embedded in OW's engineering.

As part of the administration of OW work, norms must be accepted and engaged in order to interpret OW's design; the activation of normative assumptions and expectations is embedded in its engineering. An example of this norm-intent-practice activation is found in the following statement made by a worker: "You [the client] are working with one of our job developers and they are introducing you to a potential employer—then you start to feel that self-worth again. You know, 'Now I'm a marketable individual, now I can get a job and be like everyone else'. [...]That's the way the system is designed" (S8: worker, male, 17 years). Workers' responses revealed that they searched for normative signposts to guide their practice so that it aligned with their internalized understanding of OW's official design and intent. An example of this activation can be identified when one worker said: "You had [workers] say 'We're bright people, we see the writing on the wall, I need a job myself; I'm going to comply'." (S14: worker, female, 15 years). Another worker said: "I think it takes people's minds off the idea that people are receiving a handout; suddenly they look at people as part of the labour force and they're part of our economic investment toward economic development and bolstering our economy" (S8: worker, male, 17 years). This finding revealed that the normative expectations behind OW work function in administration to yield official interpretations that are in line with neoliberal constructs surrounding work and welfare. In turn, these official interpretations influence and yield individual interpretations that

present as practice that is also consistent with official neoliberal constructs of work and welfare.

What does the Quantitative Data reveal about OW's design and intent?

As noted earlier, the provincial database SDMT plays a significant role in shaping the day-to-day administration of OW work. Workers pointed to the SDMT reports that are provided to the field as tools that they use to link OW's design and practice. This association reveals that all staff participants assumed that MCSS uses quantitative data to measure the official intent and strategies noted in the directives and expected in the daily practice of OW work. Consequently, I used the quantitative data to inform the analysis of OW's design.

MCSS builds their quantitative reports from the data that is populated by staff (casemanagers, family support workers, supervisors, etc) into SDMT. These reports provide information about the caseload such as the number of people receiving benefits (beneficiaries) and information about the employment activities of clients as well as average earnings and employment outcomes for clients.

As noted earlier, MCSS' funding to municipalities is based on achieving earnings and employment outcomes for clients. MCSS reports supply official data to the field that is used by OW staff to monitor the program's administration to ensure that it is in compliance with official OW imperatives. Municipal staff uses the MCSS reports to compare their performance against their provincially contracted employment targets as well as benchmark their performance against provincial averages and other municipalities.

In September 2012, I requested permission and received approval from the Director of MCSS's Ontario Works Branch to use these reports which are only available to municipal delivery agents. At the time of writing this Chapter, the most current reports were dated December 2011. Caseload characteristics were taken from the MCSS quarterly statistical caseload and employment digest dated December 2011. In the charts below, I highlight relevant caseload characteristics and compare caseload and employment trends against official messages regarding OW's design.

Analysis of Caseload and Employment Data

As of December 2011, there were a total of 358,409 OW cases representing 467,511 beneficiaries; 169,685 or 36.3% of these beneficiaries were children under the age of 18.

As outlined in the chart below, overall, there continues to be more women than men receiving OW - although the trend is shifting. In the past, the majority of the caseload was comprised of lone female-headed households. However, the portion of single males receiving assistance has steadily increased since the program was implemented in 1998. As well, as of December 2011, the single male caseload was comparable to lone female-headed households in terms of the portion of the caseload with earnings and the average time on assistance.



Figure 1: Gender of Caseload

However, gender differences were still apparent in terms of head of households; the majority of couple households continue to classify the male as the head of the household. As well, single males now comprise the largest group of OW recipients.

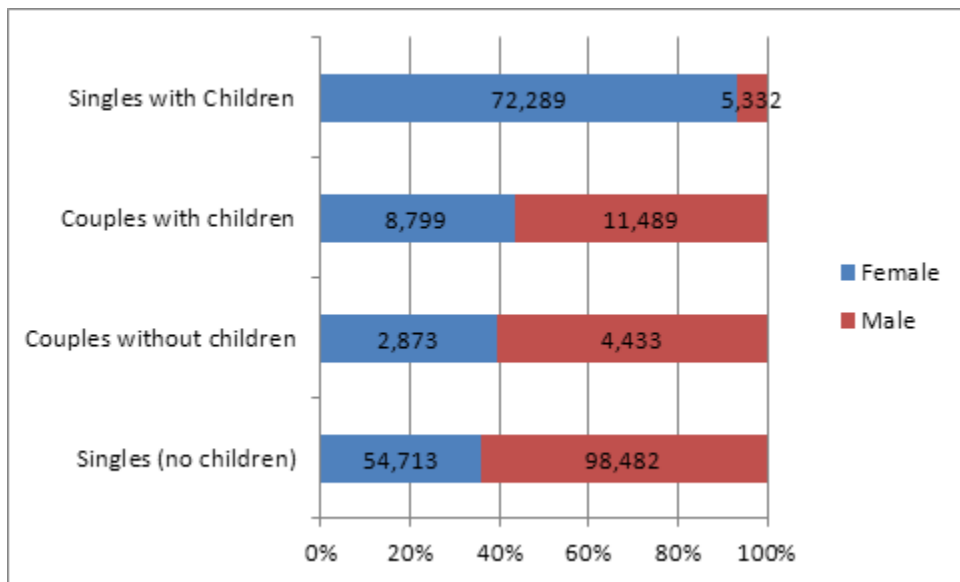
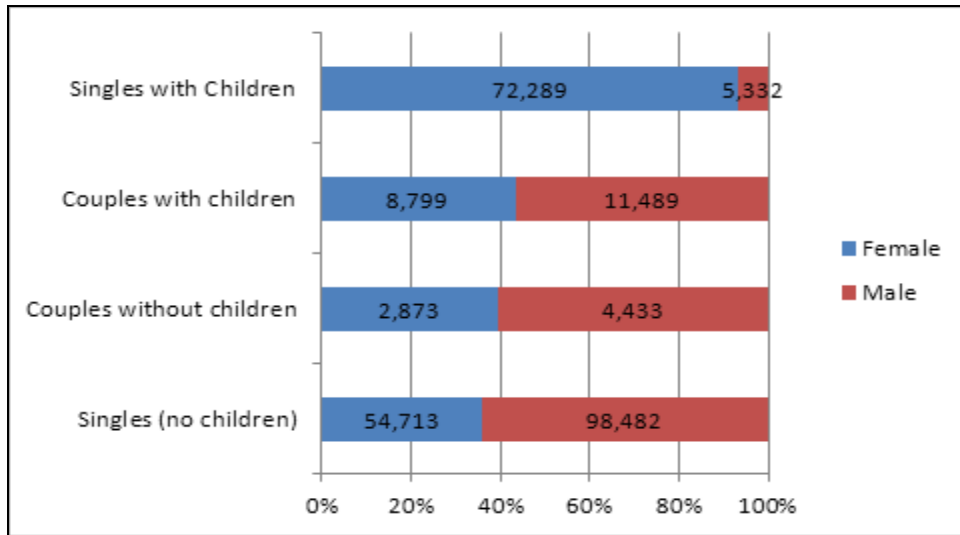


Figure 2: Head of Household

Average Time on Assistance

Approximately 67% of the cases received assistance for less than nineteen months; this data contradicts the stereotype of rampant, long-standing welfare use. Singles with children (37,493 cases) and singles without children (43,906 cases)

comprised the lion’s share of the portion of cases that received assistance for longer than nineteen months.

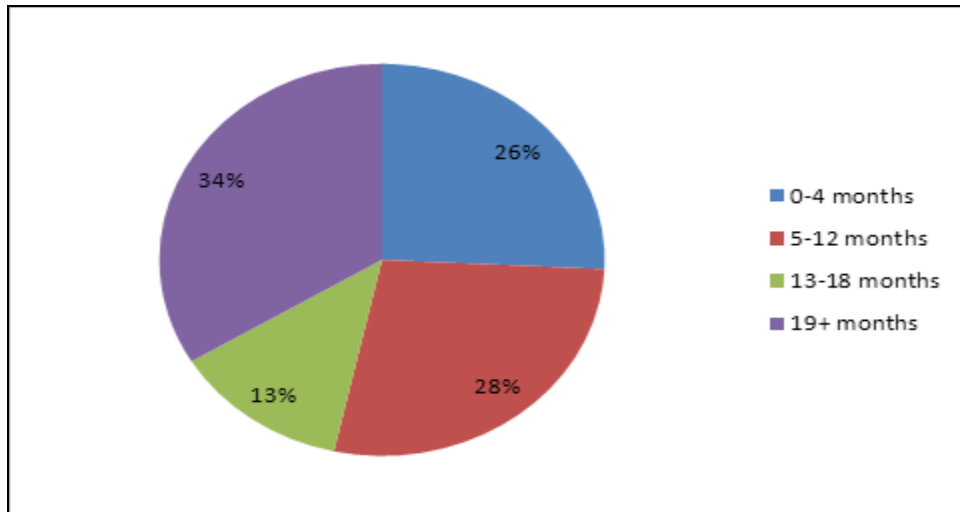


Figure 3: Time on Assistance

Portion of the Cases that Have Active Participation Agreements

As noted earlier in this chapter, a completed PA is a mandatory requirement in the application for assistance and the determination of eligibility for assistance. At the point of intake, the casemanager completes a PA with each client. According to directive 2.5 *Participation Requirements*, the “PA is an action-oriented plan that identifies the approved employment assistance activities the applicant or participant will undertake in order to prepare for, find and maintain employment” (MCSS 2011:2). All OW applicants, their spouses and any dependent adults applying for or receiving benefits must complete and sign a PA before a casemanager is able to make a decision regarding eligibility. According to the directives, the PA is to be reviewed, updated and signed by the client at a minimum of every three months.

While completing the PA, the casemanager also determines whether the client is able to participate in OW work or whether they meet the criteria for deferral. *Directive 2.5 Participation Requirements* provides guidance regarding the temporary deferral of participation requirements. As noted in the directive, clients “may not be able to fully participate in employment assistance activities. The PA may identify restrictions on participation or, where any degree of participation is impracticable, a temporary deferral of participation requirements. Appropriate documentation must be provided and put on file to support participation restrictions or deferrals” (MCSS 2011:2). In December 2011, there were 286,617 clients who were over the age of eighteen and therefore potentially able to participate in OW work; about 10% (29,059) of adults had deferred participation agreements meaning that they have met MCSS’s criteria for exemption. This includes participation deferrals for single parents if their child is not yet of school-age or if the participant has a documented medical reason that limits their ability to participate. Unless casemanagers determine that clients meet the criteria for deferral, it is assumed that they are able to work or participate in work preparation activities.

Beyond the criteria for deferral and the PA itself, MCSS does not provide official tools for workers to determine a client’s employability. The absence of a tool for this purpose is surprising given the primacy this decision holds as an administrative process as well as the consequences of this assessment. As noted in directive 2.5, by signing the PA, clients

acknowledge their understanding of the consequences for refusing to participate or failing to make reasonable efforts to participate in activities outlined in the agreement.[...] Where participation requirements are not deferred or restricted, applicants or participants who refuse to participate or fail to make reasonable

efforts to participate where support has been provided by staff, will have their financial assistance cancelled for single recipients or reduced if there are other members in the benefit unit for one month on the first occurrence of non-compliance; and for three months on subsequent occurrences (MCSS 2011:2).

Research participants noted that there is a high degree of variance in how the assessment regarding employability is made and approached. This finding is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

In the PA, the client agrees to undertake job search and/or work preparation activities. Approximately 234,386 OW clients had active participation requirements; this represents approximately 82% of adults receiving OW. This means that the majority of OW clients have mandatory requirements or have agreed to participate in work or work preparation activities as part of their ongoing eligibility for OW.

As detailed in the chart below, the most common work preparation activity is job searching; approximately 82% of OW clients with active participation requirements are job searching as well as participating in other employment related activities. This finding is startling. Given that the province invests a total of \$502,343,300 annually (not including the financial assistance that is provided in the form of monthly cheque to clients) in OW to support both the administration and employment support activities, one would anticipate that there would be more clients involved in more intensive work-preparation activities such as employment placements. The Provincial Auditor's report of 2009 (Office of the Provincial Auditor 2009:267) also found that "two-thirds of all recipients had designated independent job-search activities as the most beneficial employment assistance activity to help them become gainfully employed." This data

supports the finding that the quid pro quo structure of work-for-welfare serves more symbolic than material purposes; workfare work means that clients must be doing *something* – even the bare minimum - in exchange for welfare.

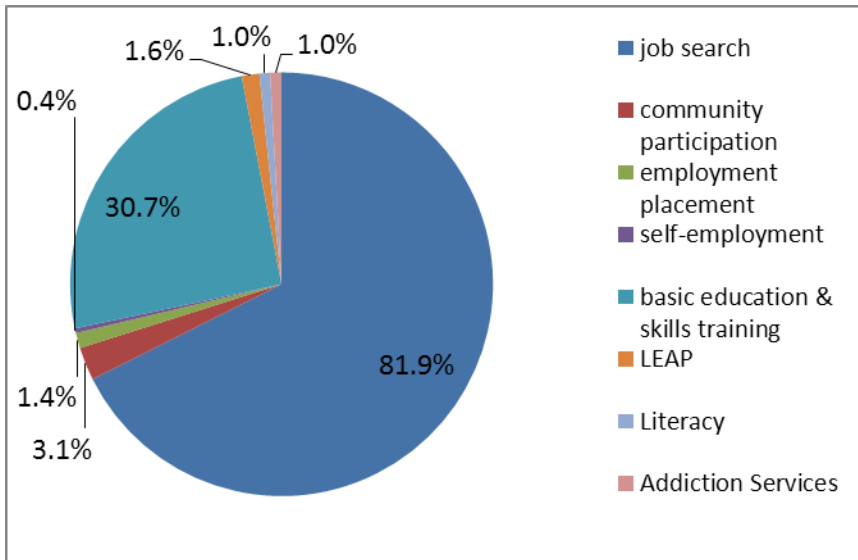


Figure 4: Types of employment assistance

As noted in the chart below, approximately 10% of all OW cases report monthly earnings from employment. The majority of these cases are couples (either with or without children). This means that earnings for these families are not enough to financially exclude the household from continuing to meet the financial criteria for assistance.

Cases reporting Earnings					
	All Cases	Singles (no children)	Couples without children	Couples with children	Singles with Children
Cases	258,409	153,195	7,306	20,288	77,621
with earnings	26,678	10,107	1,380	5,114	10,077
% earners	10%	7%	19%	25%	13%
average monthly earnings	\$ 691	\$ 479	\$ 793	\$954	\$804

Further, as noted in chart above, single households without children (mostly male) report less average earnings than singles with children (who are mostly female-headed households). In fact, the average monthly earnings for singles with children (mostly female) are almost as high as the average earnings for couples. One explanation for the higher earnings of lone-female households may be linked to structural changes in the economy that produced much more precarious work that is part-time, and mostly in the service sector; these jobs tend to employ predominantly women.

What does the quantitative data reveal about OW work?

As MCSS's reports focus on the time on assistance, the family composition and the earnings of clients, one might assume that there is a causal link between the program's design, these indicators and the daily interventions provided through OW's employment programs. From this perspective, the quantitative data could lead one to conclude that to some degree OW's design has successfully engineered a workfare program that leads to successful outcomes; the quantitative data shows that 82% of adult clients are involved in OW work, the majority are job searching and the majority leave OW in less than nineteen months. Consequently, one could assume that the 82% of clients with PAs and the majority of the clients who leave in 19 months are the same people. As well, one could assume that OW work led directly to the opportunity to leave the caseload.

If the inquiry ended here, then the contradiction about OW's design and supposedly disappointing results, might be somewhat disproved. However, I found that success in relation to the program's design is highly contingent upon how OW's official

goal(s) are understood and interpreted. For example, if low caseloads were taken as an indicator that OW’s design is successful, then OW’s caseload trends would reveal an interesting point. Since 1998, the provincial caseload decreased annually until 2006 when it increased by 1.6%. It decreased again in 2006-07 by 1% and did not increase again until 2008 when it increased by 2.3%. Since that time, it has increased annually by an average of 7.3%. As noted in the chart below, the highest increase was 17.5% from 2008 to 2010 during the most recent recession. In my community of practice, the caseload increased by 48% since the downturn in the economy began in the third quarter of 2008.

Increase in Caseload Since 2008 Recession						
fiscal year	total cases	% increase all cases	singles without children	couples without children	couples with children	singles with children
2008/2009	202,181	3.70%	6.30%	7.90%	4.50%	-0.70%
2009/2010	237,634	17.50%	22.90%	23.10%	22.70%	7.10%
2010/2011	251,280	5.70%	6.90%	3.20%	5.30%	3.90%
2011/2012	258,409	-0.80%	1.00%	9.00%	-1.00%	-2.70%
total	56,228	26.10%	37.10%	43.20%	31.50%	7.60%

The similarity between the current caseload size and the caseload size shortly after OW’s implementation is significant because the demand for social assistance increased with the downturn in the economy but OW policy - specifically policy regarding work requirements - remains relatively unaltered. From this information, one can see that the need for welfare is highly dependent upon the conditions in the labour market.

However, this data could be used to tell different stories and in order to fully understand more information is necessary. For example, as noted earlier, the quantitative data in this study is taken from reports prepared by MCSS; they select and provide

certain data and exclude other information (such as the level of benefits provided to each client with an active PA, what interventions were provided by workers that lead to the client's employment or if the job is full, part-time or temporary). I feel that this excluded information is crucial in critically examining the relationship between OW's design and its employment outcomes. Furthermore, the missing information reveals that the officially stated intents and strategies may not be the only narrative operating behind OW work. Staff at all levels acknowledged that the technology captures only what has been deemed as important by MCSS. Examples of this type of data are reports that detail earnings and employment outcome trends for OW clients. This quantitative data is important because it relays, conveys and captures the degree to which OW's goals are articulated through the daily practice of work enactment and enforcement. Is it also important because it is needed for the performance funding regime discussed above.

Interestingly, staff participants noted the quantitative data collected by the province as an indicator of whether OW's goals were being met. However, they also expressed frustration with the process of recording because it reinforced an interrogation type of relationship with the client. Casemanagers talked about ways that they tried to mitigate this negative impact including writing things down and then entering the data into the system so that they could spend more time engaging in conversation with the client, getting to know them, rather than inputting data into the computer "like a bank" (S5: worker, female, 8 years).

Managers and supervisors reported a dissonance between the official goals of OW and its daily intent and practice; they reported that many of the outcomes or supports that

were seen as critical employment related goals for OW were not captured by SDMT. These goals included addressing the client's basic needs such as stable housing and childcare or addressing and responding to barriers to employment such as addictions or mental illness. Conversations about the daily practice of administering the work side of OW reveal a broadened interpretation of work as staff participants included not only the provincially monitored quantitative measures but also many preconditions for employment that they perceived as necessary.

The question “what is OW designed to do?” was developed to assist in drawing out possible contradictions inherent in the policy's design. The qualitative and quantitative data revealed an interdependent relationship between what OW is designed to do and how it is supposed to do it; these elements are at times contradictory and also quite complex. The analysis revealed that OW is engineered to enforce a quid pro quo equation behind workfare. However, this project contributes to the body of research the idea that OW work is designed to make sure that clients are doing *something*. That is, OW is program with mixed goals, and its administration has not solved fundamental conflicts between goals. This analysis provides an explanation regarding why the work around eligibility is the major type of work in OW, even if other types of work (and ways of thinking about work and deservingness etc) are deployed to shape recipient outlooks and sustain political/public legitimacy. The work of satisfying eligibility for financial assistance overshadows the program's supposed focus on employment.

What does the ‘works’ part of Ontario Works mean

The second question in this research project - “what does the ‘works’ part of Ontario Works mean?” - was intended to expose taken for granted assumptions regarding work, labour, gender roles and class-related codes of conduct. In this section, I discuss the assumptions that emerged from participant responses related to work and labour and take up gender and class-related codes of conduct in the third question “how is the ‘works’ part of OW enacted?” In Chapter 2, I argued that OW work consists primarily of three types of work: the work of claims-making, training/re-socialization work and labour-market participation/attachment. Participant responses supported this theory as they described the eligibility, employability and employment-related activities that correspond with the three types of OW work that I identified. Furthermore, participant responses have enriched my theory regarding the three types of OW work; specifically their responses broadened my understanding of the role that claims-making work plays in OW.

OW work is more than a job

As noted earlier in this chapter, the directives provide an orientation to officially recognized effort in relation to work and contributions toward work in OW; these strategies are undertaken by workers (example directive 1.1 “help participants to increase their employability and achieve outcomes such as employment, employment retention, increased earnings and exits to employment through integrated service delivery planning that supports the provision of effective and timely employment services and supports; and make determinations pertaining to the refusal, reduction or cancellation of assistance”

MCSS 2008:4) and clients (example directive 1.1 “provide information to verify initial and ongoing eligibility for financial assistance; participate in approved employment assistance activities; make reasonable efforts to pursue other financial resources; and seek and obtain sustainable employment” MCSS 2008:5).

As well, directive 1.1 (which provides the orientation for OW’s administration) further refines the definition of the ‘works’ part of OW by setting expectations around OW work and the client; directive 1.1 sets the expectation for workers and clients by constructing the responsible individual as the self-reliant individual. In the directives self-reliance is constructed either as the employed client or the client who fulfills his/her obligations to become employed. Directive 1.1 (MCSS 2008:1) states that “The [OW] Act establishes a program that: recognizes individual responsibility and promotes self-reliance through employment; [and] provides financial assistance to those most in need while they meet obligations to become and stay employed”. The definitions and strategies in the directives convey normative expectations behind OW work that are connected to work and welfare: these expectations operate generally throughout our society, in the context of neoliberal bureaucratic settings and in individual practice and worldviews.

Long-tenured workers stated that in the early days of OW’s implementation, the ‘works’ part of OW was defined by the mantra ‘any job is a good job’. One worker describes how this mindset in OW’s early days played out:

Back then it really didn’t matter if someone had the skill-set to do that work, they were expected to take any job. You were expected, if you could, to go and fruit pick because we were connected to a lot of farms at the time, the farm labour pool, etc—so I do recall pushing people: [as client:] ‘Well I can’t find any work.’ [interviewee:] ‘Well raspberries or strawberries are in season; perhaps you should be considering that. It’s income’. (S13: worker, female, 15 years).

Another worker said: “it sounded like bullshit frankly. Yeah, it did. It felt like bullshit but that was the word from on high so you just go with the directive and the directive was ‘any job is a good job’.” (S1: worker, male, 10 years). The mantra ‘any job is a good job’ was congruent with the idea that OW was about being employed and that a job was the best way to make the client employable.

However, participants said that this was not the official mantra of OW anymore. Workers reported that OW work expectations shifted from bad (cutting the client off benefits) to beneficial (helping the client find work and exit social assistance) as the mindset that ushered in OW’s implementation – ‘any job is a good job - was abandoned. One worker said: “we don’t really have that philosophy anymore. I think that it was more rigid. And you did feel pressure and I don’t mean that in a good or bad way but that you did feel that if people weren’t ready, willing, and able to accept anything that their eligibility was in question” (S13: worker, female, 15 years). Not only did workers report that the mantra ‘any job is a good job’ no longer served as the operational guideline for the ‘works’ side of OW but moreover, for some workers the official shift away from ‘any job is a good job’ was preceded by shifts at the individual level as they interpreted the work expectations behind OW and adapted their practice to their rationalization. A worker described how the internal shift occurred for him; he said:

At first, I thought it really sounded like a lot of hogwash and in the midst of a recession and the politicians that wanted the common sense revolution and there was no work - calling it Ontario Works I thought was really quite a bit of irony - an ironic slap in the face to anybody who had been unemployed. The flip side is when I finally got into the individual caseload that was small and condensed and

working with employment workshops, the ‘works’ part actually was again the hopeful part (S1: worker, male, 10 years).

Many workers revealed that the move away from 'any job is a good job' changed the focus of OW work from the client becoming employed to the client becoming employable which would also lead to more sustainable labour force attachment. A worker discussed what is said to clients now, using the new approach. She said: “I tried to get an understanding of what that person’s mindset was at the time and tried to offer them supports and tried to look at other options for them” (S13: worker, female, 15 years). Another worker said:

I think it actually involves the client more because it didn’t do any good if they went off and came back on—that was just more work for you as the worker and then there was no positive impact on the budget. So if you got them off you wanted to get them off successfully and that meant more to something they wanted to do (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

Another worker said:

Are we asking for work and getting shit for welfare? I think we are asking for participation in exchange for welfare. I think that’s essentially the requirement under the provincial program. If they are involved in some kind of activity—and I think it plays back again into the stereotype—that people are saying: ‘I’m willing to do something in order to receive these funds.’ Somehow from the public’s perspective, or a very typical perspective, it is not a handout because they are doing something (S8: worker, male, 17 years).

As OW work shifted more toward clients becoming employable, participants understood OW work as a benefit that OW is offering; the client’s role is to accept the help and participate fully. One client said: “I guess it has a lot to do a lot with exploring potential and what their [client] potential is and what is needed to help them grow or help them to get back on the track that they are on. It is positive to have a goal set up” (C1:

client, female). Another client said that if individuals do not participate that “they are limiting themselves then” (C2: client, male). Another client said: “She [worker] asked me what my education level was and I told her and she asked me if I was interested in upgrading to possibly achieving my GED which is the equivalent of a grade 12 and once she said that I took whatever help that she offered me” (C3: client, male).

Participants’ ideas about OW work aligned with the purpose of welfare in a neoliberal context (becoming employed and employable). These ideas also reflected the neoliberal construct that connects work to the provision of welfare. One worker said:

there’s work as the thing you would want to do often in a circumstance where you have some mastery, autonomy, and purpose to satisfy and fulfill you. There’s the work that you’re coerced to take to satisfy any number of you know, reduce stress on the public purse, increase profitability for certain firms, whatever—and there is a fundamental duality I guess (S12: worker, male, 17 years).

However, some workers disagreed that work should be used to measure OW’s success.

One worker said:

that’s [work] the only criteria we have in Ontario Works—that we will tell you you’re successful by accomplishing it. All the other stuff, if you manage to live on the little bit of money we give you and stuff that we don’t say: ‘You’re remarkable to be able to budget and raise your children and not have a breakdown on the amount of money we give you.’ It’s like: ‘Well, you still don’t have a job’. (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

Another worker said “people think that if you’re employed—no matter what it is—you will automatically be happier. And that is certainly untrue” (S11: worker, female, 1.5 years).

The directives convey that the engineering behind OW includes a causal connection between the client's employability and their ability to gain employment. For example directive 8.1 (MCSS 2008:1) states that:

As a condition of eligibility for Ontario Works basic financial assistance, participants are required to participate in employment assistance activities. In addition, participants are required to make reasonable efforts to accept and maintain employment that the participant is physically and mentally capable of undertaking, and to make reasonable efforts to seek, accept and maintain employment.

Ontario Works employment assistance activities are designed to assist participants in obtaining skills that support progress towards sustainable employment. All applicants and participants are provided with access to the supports they need to achieve these goals.

Directive 8.1 (2008:3) also explains that employment activities, such as job searching, are intended to “support early testing of a participant's employability to help determine which further supports could be introduced”. Participant responses indicate that practice is reflective of this logic and these boundaries; how workers think about what they are doing reflects the tasks noted in the directives. One worker said:

Well there's the assessment that happens in terms of people's level of employability: What are their barriers and challenges? What is their skill sets? What are their strengths? (You do that kind of analysis) What are their interests? They try to attach them to the right programme or make the right referrals in the community that hopefully they can achieve those goals, utilize their strengths, and then work on the gaps that are there. And they do that, the mechanism that the province has put in place is called a participation agreement. By virtue of that requirement there has to be that interaction with the client, the activities have to be monitored and those kind of things (S8: worker, male, 17 years).

As workers are focused on referring, monitoring, coaching, verifying etc, in practice one finds the focus is placed more on the client's employability; workers may

abandon the task of finding employment for clients and focus instead on making clients employable.

Correspondingly clients' responses revealed that OW work did not have the intended results of helping them to find a job. For example, one client said:

She [worker] ended up giving me a six month job placement to try to get my foot back in the door to get my job back. So, I completed my six month volunteer then I did get my job back. I don't have a full-time position. I don't even have a part-time position. I'm just casual. (C6: client, female).

Another client said: "it's not really what they [client] want to do but they are being pressured. Either you choose an education or we cut you off" (C7: client, female).

Another client said: "We have all them classes but it's not getting me any further. It just shows you, you go through interview skills and things like that, like mock interviews, ok but that doesn't put you in the job" (C1: client, female). Another client said: "It's just another class, another class, another class. Like I'm not putting them down, they're trying to help but it's just not getting me back in employment" (C4: client, male).

Many workers also disagreed with the notion that participation in OW work leads to employability which then leads to a client finding a job. One worker said:

They've done everything they can they just haven't been able to find work. So I find that frustrating. You know, it's not the client's fault, they have done everything expected of them and they've done everything that has been asked; maybe we haven't figured out what exactly is the barrier here or maybe there is just not employment for this person. That's the reality (S11: worker, female, 1.5 years).

According to the official messages in the directives, OW work leads to increased employability and employment however participants reported that for many clients,

participating in OW work does not result in a job for clients. Instead, some participants noted that labour market conditions rather than participation in OW work had the greatest influence on whether clients find work or not. One client expressed this experience when she said: “I think that they [workers] need to understand that recruitment has changed a lot. Recruitment for staff at all levels has become extremely professionalized - that their standards for even a resume is way up” (C5: client, female). A worker described how the labour market impacts clients looking for work in the following way:

[To client] ‘Do you want to work? Do you feel like you could do something or is it just too hard?’ And if they give you an honest answer then—[as client:] ‘Yeah, I could of but, ya know, every time you go somewhere and you get turned down it’s like hitting your head against the wall. It feels good to stop’. (S9: worker, male, 32 years).

Participant responses support the idea that the ‘works’ part of OW is comprised of eligibility work, training/resocialization work and labour force attachment work.

Interestingly, the role that claims-making work plays in OW surfaced as primary to the definition, administration and experience of OW work. Participants reported that claims-making work not only involves continually proving eligibility for financial assistance, it also involves the continual search for employment. Thus, claims-making work activates the work of becoming employed and employable. For example, one client said that the ‘works’ part of OW was “just basically whatever they want you to do, you have to do it. If they want you to job search 40 hours a month then you know there's a chance if you don't do it that you could be suspended or terminated and not get your money on time” (C6: client, female). A worker said:

So for me it is kind of a mix message of providing excellent customer service, but follow the rules sometimes and don't follow the rules other times. And I think that's difficult because that actually sends a message to the client that, you know, I don't really have to be accountable because—no matter what—I will still receive my money. And that to me is a little bit of a double-edged sword because if we're trying to teach this philosophy of being employable—that's not really a good skill to be feeding for employability (S11: worker, female, 1.5 years).

Participants recognized the relationship between claims-making work and the work of becoming employable. The use of the analogy between OW work to waged labour reflected the relationship between eligibility and employability. One client said: “You have to do it at work don't you when you are really working there is a reasonable expectation to show up at work and be at work and if you can't make work or be absent you have to show a reason” (C2: client, male). A worker said: “They have to show me they can get up in the morning and come in at 8:30”. Like the workers do” (S8: worker, male, 17 years). Another worker said:

If a person couldn't make the 8:30 appointment, you were probably not asked: ‘Why is this a problem for you?’ You probably said: ‘Bad, bad, bad—I'm going to put your cheque on suspend and I'm probably going to assume you don't have the right skills to get to work because if you can't come to me for 8:30 you can't go to an employer for 8:30’. (S14: worker, female, 15 years).

One worker said that he used the analogy of welfare-as-work when talking with clients.

He said:

They'd [clients] come in and say ‘Umm, are you my new welfare worker?’ I'd say: ‘No, I'm here to help you find employment. Let's start off with this way of thinking: I'm going to be here to help you find employment. You're now being hired to find yourself a job. If that means going to school, getting some kind of experience somewhere on the job where you're not getting paid but you stay on welfare, and that type of thing is what we might be able to do. And it's like any other job; it's a job you could be fired’ (S9: worker, male, 32 years).

For the most part, participants accepted the analogy that OW work was similar to paid labour even though they might experience welfare-as-work as problematic or contradictory. One worker said:

It was numbers of...pieces of paper...it was showing up on time for appointments...which all of it has absolutely nothing to do with anything really. Well, that's not true because the argument is if you can't show up on time for this appointment you're not going to show up on time for work. So there is something there (S4: worker, female, 5 years).

The data reveals that the work of meeting eligibility for financial assistance is seen as the first work test that is also used as the way to allow clients access to employment assistance; both the client and the worker are implicated in activating neoliberal expectations that drive the claims-making work behind OW.

Some of the tensions that surfaced for workers during the conversation about the 'works' part of OW are noted above. However, another interesting tension was expressed by a worker who felt that OW work forces clients into a continual loop of work-preparation activities. She said:

We are very fortunate in [name of city] for the amount of resources that we have for employment and the amount of contracts that we have. I work with people who have worked in other towns—where it's more rural—where there is one or two employment agencies and, you know, a client goes through the process, goes through all the programming, and then our mandate is still saying: 'Well, if you're not with an agency then you're being non-compliant' (S11: worker, female, 1.5 years).

However, not every worker experienced tensions with OW work. For one worker, the material pay-off of a job seemed to be less important than going through the motions because going through the motions was seen as a commitment and commitment as a way to be accountable for the assistance provided to clients. She said: "I don't care if

there's a menu where they sign up for something. It could be every week for a day or every other week for a half a day. There's still an accountability factor built-in plus we're giving them a skill or a certificate or something" (S10: worker, female, 32 years).

Another worker said: "I think people need to see that the hoops, that they have to be able to see a reason and a purpose. So if they think 'ok I gotta go through all this crap to get my cheque but by getting this cheque I'm then going to have food on the table, I can then go see the employment counselor'." (S5: worker, female, 8 years). For some workers, OW work, and any tensions or contradictions surrounding the work, were rationalized against the importance of satisfying the quid pro quo equation behind OW; one worker's comments illustrated this rationale when he said: "Well there's money going out and they want something back in return for it" (S9: worker, male, 32 years).

This dynamic may also explain why all participants generally accepted that the 'works' part of OW – the work of becoming eligible, employable and employed - is a fair exchange for welfare. Participant responses reveal that the outcomes for clients, including employment, are not perceived as the primary objective but rather OW work is more important as a *process*. One client said: "I think that it is a good thing that they have this implemented because work defines our personality, keeps us healthy mentally, emotionally, physically and it gives us purpose in life" (C7: client, female). Another client said: "We have the dominant economic model and that work without a monetary value behind it isn't valued. I have been trying to do volunteer work "(C5: client, female). Another client said: "I just find that's just a natural thing for them [workers] to

want you to do - to go out and prove to them that you actually do want to find work” (C3: client, male).

With this last client, I was particularly struck by his ardent belief in the promises of workfare work. Specifically, I had difficulty when he said: “If you don't want it [work], and if somebody's making your life easy for you or you don't have to work, then why are you going to?” (C3: client, male). I was struck by this statement because this client reported doing everything to find work and still not being able to find any work. By his own account, he wants it, he was doing everything right and was still poor and unemployed. This contradiction reveals the fundamental importance and enabling role that normative assumptions about work occupy in OW work. The ‘works’ part of OW was not defined primarily as a job but rather as satisfying OW’s eligibility requirements and having the client *do something*.

Although participants confirmed my claim as presented in Chapter 2, that OW work consists primarily of three types of work: the work of claims-making, training/re-socialization work and labour-market participation/attachment, their responses also deepened my understanding of the ‘works’ part of OW. Responses to the question “what is the ‘works’ part of OW?” revealed that although the ‘works’ part of OW started out as ‘any job is a good job’, the mantra was abandoned shifting the focus of OW work from being employed to becoming employable. Workers relied on clients’ compliance with OW’s eligibility criteria as an indication of their employability. According to participants, the ‘works’ part of OW is primarily about making the client employable; this expectation is reflective of neoliberal constructs that connect work and welfare. This

finding was also in accordance with McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) who argue that employability has been featured in labour market policies in most OECD countries for decades. However, the current application of employability in labour market policies is heavily focused on the individual or the supply-side of labour market dynamics (McQuaid and Lindsay 2005). As the work of meeting eligibility for financial assistance is seen as the first work test, both the client and the worker are implicated in the claims-making work necessary to satisfying the requirements behind OW work. As clients noted, they expected that OW would get them employed; as workers indicated, they expected that OW would make client employable. Clients' expectation that OW find them a job is refocused so that they accept that they are being "hired to find themselves a job".

How are OW's work requirements enacted?

The third question "how are OW's work requirements enacted?" was intended to examine the tools and techniques that are leveraged in the administration of the policy. The PA and job search list surfaced as fundamental tools used in the enactment of OW work – enactment that was related to gender and class related codes of conduct.

The directives not only served as a tool used in administering OW work, they also provided information regarding the tools and techniques sanctioned for use in practice that is consistent with official intent. As noted earlier, directive 8.1 *Early Employment Supports* states that "Participants are required to undertake an active job search either independently or in a structured job-search program. The intent is to

support early testing of a participant's employability" MCSS 2008:3). OW's tools and techniques communicate how workers and clients were expected to enact OW's work requirements. Interestingly, one worker identified the welfare cheque as a tool that relayed implicit powerful messages behind OW work and the enactment of work requirements. In the following quote, he identified the cheque as conveying normative assumptions and reinforcing normative constructs that drive OW's work requirements:

If you're trying to teach people to try to be part of the regular community why do you even break their cheque up into shelter and basic needs? My cheque isn't broken up that way - your paycheque isn't broken up that way, it's just: 'here's your money, you're an adult, and you decide how to spend it'. It's just that kind of thing; if you really believe that you can all be contributing members of the community then treat them that way. If you believe in all the stereotypes and they can't really be part of the community then just say that (S15: worker, male, 30 years)

However, the PA was most commonly identified by workers as a fundamental tool that they use in enacting OW work. As noted earlier in this chapter, workers must complete the PA as part of the application for financial assistance; clients cannot receive financial or employment assistance unless the worker completes a PA or determines that the PA can be temporarily deferred for clients who meet MCSS's criteria for deferral (also noted earlier in this chapter). The PA functions to enact all three types of OW work: the eligibility work, the training work and the labour market attachment work. One worker described this connection when he said: "The mechanism that the province has put in place is called a Participation Agreement. By virtue of that requirement there has to be that interaction with the client, the activities have to be monitored and those kinds of things" (S8: worker, male, 17 years). Clients and workers identified the Job Search List

as another important tool used in the enactment of OW work. This tool is provided by MCSS to support the mandatory job search activities that clients must undertake. This list must be submitted to the OW worker as evidence that the client has been contacting prospective employers for work.

Although tools such as the PA and the job search list are provided to activate and enforce OW work in officially recognized ways, some participants reported experiencing a contradiction between OW's work-related goals and the tools and techniques used in daily practice to enact those goals. For example, workers noted that the tools and techniques sanctioned for use in the enactment of OW work are an inadequate support in relation to the complexity of enacting OW work. One worker recognized the complexity that workers face in the daily practice of work enactment when he said: "I think it gets harder to just go to the staff and say: 'You're doing it wrong or you're doing it right.' Reality is you have to be juggling all these balls at once and we hope we hire people who are smart enough to - on any given day - know which is the most important thing to do with the client" (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

Although the PA was noted as a significant tool in the enactment of OW work, it was also recognized as a problematic tool. Workers expressed frustration with what was expected of them and clients in relation to this tool. A worker said: "even the PA, you can defer it for six months but at some point you have to do it. So you're going to do it to everybody. So it's not giving any power to the worker to write a case why I haven't done it and say 'justify it'. So for example I have my terminal AIDS patient – why am I giving him a literacy test? Why am I doing a PA?" (S14: worker, female, 15 years). Another

example occurred when a worker identified how the PA was used to guide the conversation about employment between the client and worker. He said: “If I were to talk to any client and ask: “What kind of a job do you want?” We could have a conversation, but if I tried to talk to them about: ‘Well, here’s where you are in the employment continuum and here’s where we want to go and stuff’ - I think they just zone out and they say: ‘Let’s get this over with so I can go on to whatever my next part of the day is’.” (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

Similar to the tensions expressed with the PA, research participants questioned the effectiveness of the job search list; a client identified the symbolic rather than practical value of the job search list when he said: “They just say here, ‘Here's a sheet. Fill that out’ and then they put it in your file” (C4: client, male). One worker described how he used this tool in the enactment of OW work. He said: “All we would do is look at the job search list and say: ‘What happened to this job? Did you have an interview? Why didn’t you get the job? How do you feel about it?’ This type of thing, just for the eligibility part. [...] ‘What do you want to do? Why do you feel you can’t find work?’ Then go step-by-step” (S9: worker, male, 32 years).

Interestingly, many participants identified the job search list as an effective tool for ensuring client’s compliance with eligibility requirements for financial assistance rather than an effective tool for helping clients to become employable or employed. The tools provided to enact OW work influenced daily practice so that it focused primarily on eligibility work rather than supporting client’s employability or employment. For example, one client said that the job search list “seems to be a little bit of a pain. It’s just,

if you don't [submit it] they might withhold your benefits” (C4: client, male). One worker said: “They [clients] are required, as a minimum, a job search. In many cases we ask them for a listing of places they have approached which is certainly not the most effective thing to do; anybody can go through a phone book and do that” (S8: worker, male, 17 years). Another worker said “People could tell horror stories about the job search list that had to have 20 places on it (things like that); I’m sure that there were workers that took that narrow-minded approach” (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

What techniques are used to enact OW work?

Workers felt that assessing a client’s employability was the most important technique in enacting OW work requirements. Assessing clients employability is noted as paramount in the directives (Directive 8.1 MCSS 2008:3). However, participants’ reported that although assessment of employability is fundamental process in the enactment of OW work, MCSS does not provide an official tool specifically designed for assessing client’s employability. Despite this omission, workers must conduct an assessment of clients’ employability in order to remain in compliance with MCSS expectations. In response some municipalities have developed their own tools for assessment.

The approaches and techniques that workers described when conducting assessments varied greatly. A worker described his technique as “I’d sit down and explain to them [clients]: ‘Do you want to work with people or would you like to work on your own? Do you feel like you have mechanical skills and that?’ Find out what they were interested in, first of all” (S9: worker, male, 32 years). The following story told by

this same worker illustrates the complexity of the employability assessment as a technique in the enactment of OW work:

I had one person: ‘Can you read? Can you write? How far did you go in school? Can you read this?’ And he was borderline. I had him checked out; we had a psychologist on call that we could use, and he said: ‘Well very low self-esteem and protective of his problems.’ Is pretty much what he came back with. We sent him out with a job where a guy said: ‘We’ll hire him, just get him here’. And he didn’t go. So I called him in: ‘How come you didn’t go to the job? It was not a guarantee, but a really good job’ (it paid 10 bucks an hour, a lot more than a single-person’s welfare then). [as client:] ‘Oh, my car broke down.’ [interviewee:] ‘Well you could have taken the bus; what else could you have done?’ [as client:] ‘Oh well, I’m sorry I just missed it.’ So I [interviewee] said: ‘So how did you get here today for this interview?’ [client:] ‘Well I drove my car.’ [interviewee:] ‘I thought your car broke down.’ [as client:] ‘Oh it did, but I got the parts from the scrap yard, put a new clutch in it.’ Turned out he was a really good backyard mechanic; he was really good fixing things and stuff. We ended up getting him a job at a bicycle shop (S9: worker, male, 32 years).

If the day-to-day enactment of OW work rested primarily on assessing the client’s employability and no official tools were provided by MCSS to conduct this assessment, not only the process of assessing but moreover the outcome of deciphering the meaning of the assessment relied primarily on workers’ interpretation of the intent and purpose driving OW work. As noted in the data, often worker’s interpretation was compared against the client’s behaviours which subsequently served as an assessment of the client’s employability. This process was facilitated by normative assumptions surrounding the enactment of OW work. The next section explores further some of the normative assumptions connected to the enactment of OW work.

A major theme surrounding normative assumptions emerged in the responses of workers who often spoke of the significant social and financial dividends that come from work. This finding corresponds with Evans et al. (1995) who posit that the normative

foundations for workfare include the notion of desert, self-respect, social responsibility, and citizenship through work. One worker said: “We spend the vast majority of our adult life defining ourselves as an Ontario Works worker or a senior’s person or whatever. If you take that third, or more, of our life away, what are we?” (S15: worker, male, 30 years). When asked about the exchange of work for welfare, another worker said: “What else is there? I mean if you’re Star Trek everybody has the same; you just go to the replicator [laughs]” (S9: worker, male, 32 years). Another worker said:

You have all the other things that come around work which is the sense of accomplishment, which is the sense of where you can fit in society. It’s such a norm in our western world. If we were in some other culture where family and religion and art and other things are valued more highly - so I think it goes right back to who we are as a society (S6: worker, female, 14 years).

Participant responses reveal that the social dividends to work are significant not only for individual clients but more broadly for all of society.

In the context of OW, society is defined in the directives and by participants as “community”. The idea that OW work is linked to improving social conditions for the community is made in the directives (MCSS 2008:1); this connection implicitly rests on the idea that clients improve their employability. An example of this connection occurs in the following statement made by a worker who said:

one thing I used to actually, that I still do, is ask people ‘do you think that you are able to work?’ and some people aren't ready and may never be ready or whatever work they do they can still contribute to their community by doing other things. That's the main thing; you want people to feel good and feel engaged in their community, their lives and families (S16: worker, female, 10 years).

Another worker explained the connections in this way:

We reduce the caseload, we reduce the cost, we are getting people into employment now they are going to be consumers in the community and that generates economic activity (creates other jobs), spinoffs; it provides skilled employees, people gaining experience, learning new skills for investors and employers; people become invested in the community. Once they are invested in the community all of a sudden people start to participate in that community in a more positive, constructive way (S8: worker, male, 17 years).

Another worker said: “A normal lifestyle is to be working and supporting yourself. So I think it’s not right out there in black and white but it is trying to encourage people to be a part of the broader community; I think that’s a well stated goal” (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

Besides the social value of work, workers also used the financial dividends that come from work as opposed to collecting welfare to rationalize expectations of clients in the enactment of OW work. These expectations contained normative assumptions about work and welfare. One worker said: “You just knew that average healthy people worked” (S15: worker, male, 30 years). Another worker said:

From the clients’ perspective it [work] is the way to get out of poverty and the way to achieve sustainability. Independence. And I think when people start looking at it from the perspective of: ‘this is very much economic development’, then I think it takes people’s minds off the idea that people are receiving a handout; suddenly they look at people as part of the labour force and they’re part of our economic investment toward economic development and bolstering our economy (S8: worker, male, 17 years).

These rationales assumed common sense status that provided the basis for workers’ expectations regarding the work contributions made by clients. For example one worker connects his assessment of the client’s employability to the client’s compliance with work expectations when he said that clients must make “some initiative

finding job interviews themselves, they didn't wait for us to say: 'Oh, Joe Blow is hiring—go out there and get an application.' Their job search list that they brought in was reasonable: it was things they could do and places where they were hiring" (S9: worker, male, 32 years).

Common Sense and Normative Assumptions

In the next section, the concept of common sense is used to explore the normative assumptions surrounding work, welfare and gender. The use of common sense here relies upon Gramsci's (2010) construct of common sense which he said functions as the theory of everyday life. Gramsci's (2010) concepts are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Five where the ideas are also applied as a method to explore theoretical findings that emerged from the data.

Interestingly, clients not only accepted the common sense ideas about work (such as the social and financial pay-offs to work) that drive how OW work is activated but they also used these same common sense ideas as a logic and rationale for what was expected of other clients. For example, one client said that clients need "to show that you are making an effort to obtain work and that you're not just being a lazy bugger and laying around doing nothing because that assistance money is there it's exactly what is says it is, it's assistance" (C3: client, male). However, these expectations did not carry over into the relationship that clients had with workers.

As noted earlier, clients had expectations that OW find them a job however when they described qualities of those workers they identified as 'good workers', their experience did not include the idea that 'good workers' would find them a job. For

example, one client describes her experience with a worker she classified as a 'good worker' in the following way:

He was empathetic. Compassionate, non-judgmental extremely professional and knowledgeable. He knew exactly where to tap things. He asked me questions such as 'you know I like to learn about your work history because I need to know if there's a behaviour component that we can work on because if there is then we need to work on that'. So I left there feeling very confident - extremely confident and he also left me feeling that I was a trusted individual (C7: client, female).

Another client said:

They have a woman in the office that you can go in and talk to on any given time as long as you make an appointment and she's an employment counselor and I talked to her a few times and myself" (C3: client, male). Although clients expected that OW would find them a job, their constructs of a good worker did not include someone who would find them a job. Rather, other common sense ideas undergirded the enactment of OW work that plays out in the relationship between the client and the worker.

Participant responses revealed that they construct OW work as a benefit. This understanding is aligned with neoliberal constructs of welfare that legitimize workfare as a process for self-improvement which by default improves society/the community.

Further, the norms surrounding work operate as a paradigm that defines, determines and delineates how OW work is enacted; ideas about social inclusion, self-worth and self-actualization were among the symbolic dividends that come from work or work preparation activities. This connection was a predominate example of a normative assumption and expectation that is active in the administration of OW work. It is also an example of common sense idea that operates simultaneously at the general social level, the neoliberal bureaucratic level and the individual level. During the enactment of OW work, specifically during the assessment of a client's eligibility, people who earn the financial and social dividends from work are used as the archetype against which the

client is being compared. Participant responses also revealed that as a result of this assessment, apparent transgressions of norms surface in their beliefs, actions or comportment. As I discuss in the next section, these transgressions were related to norms surrounding class and gender that are specific to a neoliberal context.

Two participants made overt references to class. One worker said: “We live in a society where most of us support ourselves through work. That is nowhere else but in our society. Certainly you think about our middle-class values - sort of the very first thing that people say when you meet somebody "what do you do?" So work is so valued in our society; it is where the financial resources to live a life come from” (S6: worker, female, 14 years). The other reference was by a worker who said “Middle-class values. We’re putting our nose to the grindstone —that’s a measure of success; everybody would agree. Work as a measure of success is probably the only thing we would agree as a measure of success” (S14: worker, female, 15 years).

These notions construct class more as the stratification of groups according to material and social capital rather than the means of production and reproduction. As well, these statements reveal that the enactment of OW work engages with participants’ normative assumptions surrounding class that are connected to ideas about work that are more than material; one worker said: “It is probably the first or second question you ask a stranger, right. ‘What do you do?’ (S14: worker, female, 15 years). In the context of OW work, these normative assumptions play out as expectations and specific codes of conduct connected to the works side of OW. This finding supports the notion that OW clients are constructed as an underclass (Lightman 1997) and that in the context of OW,

class is distinguished along the lines of labour market attachment. This specific manifestation of class-based norms surrounding work and the codes of conduct related to OW work can be identified in the following statement made by a client: “They [other clients] are showing no effort and that's why, that's where they get stereotyped but however everyone gets stereotyped. But you have to put an effort in first. That's the whole thing. There has to be an effort” (C2: client, male). A worker made similar links when he said:

If your parents were on welfare and it was good enough for them, and they didn't show any leadership in having you get a paper route or you know—[as parent of client:] ‘You'll get welfare, you're 18 now’. It's hard because they [clients] don't have the basics of—you almost have to explain to them: ‘You only get what you work for and sometimes it's hard, sometimes it's easy’ (S9: worker, male, 32 years).

Another worker said: “Taxpayers feel that if people are going to be supported, with their money that they be doing what's in their capability to obtain employment and not be relying on the system. I mean social assistance is meant to be temporary” (S13: worker, female, 15 years).

Participants recognized that these constructs and assumptions are not value neutral but rather they have negative ramifications. One client said: “It means a minimum wage slave labour for whoever will employ those that fall into OW. It means you have to go to the bottom of the grid for work” (C5: client, female). A worker said: “A lot of people perceive anyone on welfare as just lazy so they're a good scapegoat” (S9: worker, male, 32 years). Another worker said:

It's just the politics. I mean a week doesn't go by talking about: ‘welfare bum’ ‘addicts on welfare’ ‘somebody did a criminal act on welfare’, you know? I think

it is that you are allowed to punish this group of people. And as much as you talk about them needing a hand-up, they can see a sub-set needing a hand-up, but there is this other group (S14: worker, female, 15 years).

Furthermore, workers stated that the province played a role in reinforcing the assumption that OW clients are an underclass. For example, one worker said:

If you keep presenting it in the media and stuff as: ‘All these people could get jobs if they just want to.’ Then there is going to be a backlash against the clients saying: ‘Well why don’t you want? I have to go to work, why don’t you?’ They’re not going to buy it, there isn’t a job for them (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

One worker expressed that the negative connotations of clients have personal impacts for workers too. She said “A lot of us are embarrassed of where we work because then you have to defend yourself” (S14: worker, female, 15 years).

Unlike class-based norms, participants did not openly acknowledge the role that gender plays in OW work. The gender roles that participants spoke of were related to family and parenting; specifically the most common gender references that appeared were “single mom” and “dead-beat dads”. The construct of the “single mom” is a female parent without a male-breadwinner. The construct of the “dead-beat dad” is a male parent who failed to support his children in his role as male-breadwinner. Kershaw et al (2008) note that the two gender constructs operating in workfare are somewhat causally related; the ‘single mom’ who is a welfare client is the result of a ‘dead-beat dad’. What these references share is a link to the construct of the nuclear family. OW work constructs gender in normative terms that operate at the general welfare state level, the neoliberal bureaucratic level and at an individual level. Workers and clients used these terms to either refer to themselves or a particular client group. For example, one client

said: “My casemanager knows right now because I’m a single mom that the weekend jobs are hard for me because of being a single parent and not necessarily always having a baby-sitter for a weekend shift” (C6: client, female).

Although these assumptions transmitted ideas about gender, these were not general diffuse ideas surrounding gender but rather ideas specific to the typology of gender roles in OW. The term ‘dead-beat dad’ transmits gender expectations that are linked specifically to the provision of welfare in a neoliberal welfare state. This term fits within the lexicon of workfare that links the role of men as providers for their family. It is also a term that defines poor unemployed men as failures if they are unable to fulfill this role.

Similarly, the role of the female OW client is specifically defined by OW work. One worker’s statement revealed that the work tests in OW place female clients in no-win situations. She said:

I remember we used to have kind of a quota system (you should see so many people in a day)—so in order to achieve that you would have to have people coming for appointments at 8:30. And we didn’t ask the questions or, in some individual’s cases, truthfully—they’re no brainers. If you’ve got kids to get off to school and you’re a single parent, and the child they have is seven, what are they doing with the kid? (S14: worker, female, 15 years).

Thus, OW work reinforces the dual and competing expectations surrounding work for female OW clients. As this worker noted, OW requires that female clients simultaneously fulfill expectations related to their responsibilities as caregivers and waged-workers. I also found that the type of waged-work expected of female OW clients was gendered. For example, one client who was already working identified that OW

tried to encourage her to become a Personal Support Worker; this type of work is typically done by women who are often paid low-wages. The client said: “When I first got onto OW, they actually thought I should go back to school even though I already had my diploma and they thought maybe I should go back to school and go for something else [...] maybe a PSW course or something” (C6: client, female).

Although workers reported that often the enactment of OW work does not make allowances for the dual expectations of women but rather assumes that they will quietly find a way to satisfy the demands of both roles, this was not understood as wholly problematic. One worker said: “we deal with a lot of single moms, the pressure to do it all, is really tough. So, I mean work isn't everything but I think there's something that's reinforcing for people and they can feel like they're successful at something” (S16: worker, female, 10 years). Another worker felt that providing welfare to women based on their contributions as a mother, as previously done under Family Benefits Allowance was actually detrimental to women. She said:

On mother's allowance where people were not given any [work] expectations I feel that that was extremely damaging to a lot of people. Those people that were grandmothered in, or whatever you want to call it, into the new program, of course it was a shock because they went from no expectations to ‘yes, you have to do this’. (S5: worker, female, 8 years).

From participants’ responses, one can identify that class and gender constructs served as normative frames of reference used to assess the client’s employability. During this aspect of enacting OW work any transgressions of these normative constructs elicited a specific response; training and re-socialization work emerged as being of significance to workers in the enactment of OW work.

Techniques in response to Transgressing Norms

As identified in Chapter Two, training and re-socialization is a type of work that intends to reshape client beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. In participant responses, a specific type of training work, life-skills training, emerged as being of significance to workers. Life-skills training was described as:

It's almost like going to school. In Kindergarten you do this, in grade one you do this, and we've lost that life-skills component too and there's not a lot of agencies (other than those agencies that deal with mental health) that provide those life-skills. But I think the life-skills for all recipients of social assistance—I mean we can all benefit from that (S13: worker, female, 15 years).

Clients who undertake life-skills training must attend classes such as budgeting, basic hygiene and anger management; these can be understood as a type of self-help. However, this form of self-help is conducive to neoliberal constructs of the independent, rational-choice-making individual. As a type of OW work, life-skills training revealed that assumptions and expectations about clients are based primarily on the dividing line between them as welfare clients and others as ideal wage-earners. These assumptions and expectations were reflected in participant responses. One worker said:

The life-skills thing - it's about building social capital and trust and relationships and getting people out there and in an environment where they're meeting people, where they're conversing with people, where they're feeling where they are making a contribution. That they have worth. I think that's where that all starts, that hope (S13: worker, female, 15 years).

Participant responses revealed just how much OW work relies upon a transformation of the self. One worker said: "OW can say 'ok this is the goal and maybe we need to this, this and this to get there' but the person needs to do the inside work. They have to do their self-work, their heart work" (S5: worker, female, 8 years).

Workers recognized that all three types of work are necessary components in transforming the OW client. One worker talks about the dividends that come from clients moving from one type of work-preparation activity to the next when she said:

There was more of a flow and a structure and you were getting people to go from, you know, once they got their life-skills training or once they had their pre-employment that they move on towards something else that is more challenging. That, given their previous training or whatever they've gone through, that they're capable of moving to the next step. And maybe the next step isn't out there job searching, but is building confidence (S13: worker, female, 15 years).

However, lifeskills training is not limited only to self-help but rather to helping other OW clients. One client's experience is that OW lifeskills courses include the expectation that clients who are satisfying their own work obligations also work to help other clients to find employment. He said:

The program which I have to go back on the 20th – it's every 2 weeks a month and when I'm there there's unemployed people with me there in the classroom at the college and they [the workers] say 'Well, if you can't find a job for yourself, you could find 'help wanted' signs on windows and doors and stuff and maybe it's for a mechanic or something, you could let these other people know in the classroom where they are hiring' (C4: client, male).

From participants' responses, one can say that lifeskills training was a response to the client who has been assessed as lacking key elements of the neoliberal citizen-worker; lifeskills training emerged as a technique that was used to influence the client who was determined to be operating in contradiction with the class and gender norms operating behind OW work. Participants also revealed that specific strategies were used to recognize positive and negative client responses to the transformation enacted by OW work.

Workers stated that the strategies used to activate OW work depended on the clients' perspectives that workers identified in the client-worker relationship. Some examples of these perspectives can be found in the following responses. One worker said: "She [client] saw me as a partner in her success rather than someone who's trying to hold back money. So if people can get their mind to shift over that way that if you give first, you are going to get a lot more the next time" (S4: worker, female, 5 years). Another worker said: "Initially, to get the confidence of the client; that we're going to work together, not against each other. Be strict, but be fair—let them know that so long as they were making the effort we would make the effort to do what we could for them" (S9: worker, male, 32 years). These responses also highlight another interesting theme that emerged from workers' responses; trust was noted by many workers in many different ways. For example, one worker said: "There are a lot of trust issues that we have to break through to encourage the individual that we have their best interest at heart. Like we're here to try to identify and move you on" (S10: worker, female, 32 years). Although workers identified that they sought to gain the client's trust, what emerged for me was that workers also used the client's trust as an indication of the client's acceptance and compliance with worker's expectations. Trust acted as a moral marker and as a reward that recognized the redemption of the reformed welfare client turned responsible neoliberal worker-citizen.

For clients that were not reformed, the punishment for transgressions of neoliberal codes of conduct related to work, class and gender manifested as the pressure to disentitle

clients from their claim to welfare. This strategy was most apparent in one worker's description of how he conveyed the enactment of the works part of OW. He said:

I would confront them [clients]. And would say: 'Look it doesn't matter to me, I'm going to keep my job if you stay on welfare and not have the things you'd like to have or I can help you get the things. It's your choice. If you're working under the table, you're breaking the law and you might get caught—the choice is yours. But I'm not going to keep you on as a client, and we'll have to determine if you're eligible if I feel you're not making reasonable efforts. It's your choice. I want you to leave now and come back'. Give them a time. 'Discuss it further and see what you want to do'. You've got to lay it on to them. Once they see that you're genuine—I wouldn't say that you didn't care, but you weren't going to be an enabler (S9: worker, male, 32 years).

When examining responses to the question, “how is the ‘works’ part of OW enacted, I found that it was enacted primarily through tools and techniques aimed at assessment. During this process, the social and financial dividends of work were used as normative cues against which the client was compared. As a result of this assessment, apparent normative transgressions surfaced. These transgressions were connected to the neoliberal class distinctions (example worker versus welfare client) and gender roles linked to the nuclear family (example single mom). In response to these supposed transgressions, lifeskills training was used as a specific technique in the enactment of OW work intended to reshape the client who was determined to be in transgressions of these norms. Strategies of trust and disentanglement underpinned the enactment OW work so that the tools and techniques remained focused primarily on transforming the welfare client into the ideal neoliberal citizen.

Whom does this work benefit?

The final question that I asked was “whom does this work benefit?” This question was intended to draw out participants’ mindsets and attitudes toward workfare work. I also intended this question to identify elements that comprise this mindset. As detailed in the chart below, participants identified a broad range of beneficiaries implicated in OW work; these include OW clients, OW and MCSS workers, taxpayers, employers and no-one.

Who Benefits?	Participant Responses
Clients	<p>“Well, personally, I benefit” (C3: client, male).</p> <p>“I think the intention is—hopefully it is the client that benefits; that they are developing their skills to the point that they can move along that skill development continuum and be employable—or more employable. Or, near the end of that continuum, they are participating in programs that will make that connection with an employer. It’s the client at the end of the day that should be the beneficiary” (S8: worker, male, 17 years).</p> <p>“I think ultimately it is the client that benefits if they have a buy- in to the program and if its administered properly so that they realize that this is a requirement and for your benefit as opposed to a punitive measure” (S10: worker, female, 32 years).</p>
Employers	<p>“There's no regulations on temp agencies. Temp agencies are making the money. They hire me for \$20. I’m going to get \$12 but the contract is \$22 or maybe \$25 from the company. They are still making money. You are a commodity” (C2: client, male).</p> <p>“Certainly if you are looking at some of the voluntary experiences, I guess the ones that have a gain are the employers themselves. If you are getting somebody on voluntary basis, it provides a benefit in a number of ways: One, you are getting free labour, I guess. Secondly, and we’ve had this happen, especially with the agencies and employers that are really conscientious—they have a social conscious—it gives them the opportunity to see individuals and say: ‘You know what, I really like this person’s work ethic or I like the way they are contributing or I think they would be a great employee to have on board.’ So they hire them. It is a great way to access the</p>

Who Benefits?	Participant Responses
	labour pool” (S8: worker, male, 17 years).
OW workers	<p>“Making employment within OW ensures ongoing employment for OW staff” (C5: client, female).</p> <p>“I guess what it does is it keeps them [workers] occupied with their job then. It keeps them in their business you know (C5: client, female).</p>
MCSS staff	<p>“I remember going to a meeting years ago (and conference), and they had someone from the province there and they spent the whole time talking about their structure. Who was shifting here, who was shifting there. Like that was really important to them. It wasn’t important to the audience—or to a few people in the audience—so it was more about their careers” (S7: worker, male, 29 years).</p>
Taxpayers (through the politicians)	<p>“Ontario Works is kind of like bizarre-o-world on <u>Seinfeld</u>. It’s the opposite of how businesses would run. It’s like, when the economy is good that’s when you have to ask for new programs and things when you don’t need them because that’s the only time the politicians will agree to give it to you. And when times are tough and you’ve got all these clients to deal with, they’re going to be taking money away from you to balance their budget somewhere else” (S15: worker, male, 30 years).</p> <p>“The politicians want to be elected and if they hear that the people are having a hard times, then they want to show that they’re tough and going to try and save money so they have money to help them a bit. And a lot of people perceive anyone on welfare as just lazy so they’re a good scapegoat” (S9: worker, male, 32 years).</p> <p>“Part of the common sense revolution, I saw it more the government’s way of saying to business to what they would deem as their taxpayers even though everybody pays, that I know that we have this problem but I’m going to make them work for it so as long as we’re making them work for it I can justify giving them money” (S1: worker, male, 10 years)</p> <p>“We have these government bodies that are making all this money and making all of these huge decisions again for people who are not anywhere being able to make a decision for themselves. To me what I think they’re trying to do is satisfy the community in saying: ‘Wait a minute, we are doing good work here, so we are an employment program, but this is the rules of how it works’.” (S11: worker, female,</p>

Who Benefits?	Participant Responses
	<p>1.5 years).</p> <p>“One of the other managers was at a meeting in Toronto with Ontario Works and our staff, our manager, said: ‘This is not cost effective’. The answer from the provincial staff was: ‘We don’t care, this is what politically is required.’ I think that was a very honest answer. I think that happens all the time. It’s more about politics than actually doing something positive (S7: worker, male, 29 years).</p> <p>“I guess you could say its benefiting the province for taxpayers who ask them ‘are you sure that you’re keeping tight enough reigns on our taxpayer dollars?’, I guess but then I would quickly argue how much did we waste to do that, to prove that to you (S4: worker, female, 5 years).</p>
No-one	<p>“I don't think anybody benefits from a program like that. It creates a lot of animosity on both sides and a lot of frustration” (C2: client, male).</p> <p>“Nobody at all because if its a cost decision why we don't do it the employment thing within [the OW office] then we're easily tossing that out the window by how long people are staying on” (S4: worker, female, 5 years).</p>

As participants recognized that there are several beneficiaries connected to OW work, one could say that OW work is not be focused solely on benefiting the client but responds also to broader social imperatives connected to work and welfare. As noted earlier in this chapter, participant responses indicated that they accepted the premise that employment and employment-related activities were fair exchanges for welfare. They accepted the neoliberal tenet that welfare is a mechanism that facilitates both the moral and financial payoffs of paid work for the individual and society as a whole.

What are the benefits to OW work?

Many of the hegemonic beliefs surrounding work and welfare that were identified in Chapter Two were found in participant responses. (The idea of hegemony and its function in the enactment of OW work is explored further in Chapter Five). One worker's response explicitly connected paid work to economic and social benefits; he said:

it's [work] definitely attached to pride, a sense of productivity, a sense of belonging to a community. Being unemployed puts you on the periphery immediately. You're not going to the movies anymore. You don't go to restaurants - you don't function anymore. So many of those people lost their friends, lost their families or chose to stop participating in those social networks because they felt ashamed at not being productive (S1: worker, male, 10 years).

Similarly, another worker recalled a conversation with an employer who expressed work as providing more than a wage; the employer said:

You know I'm an employer and I think the word 'job' needs to be banned. I'm an employer and I provide the opportunity for people to buy milk for their children and their kids can go to school. We talk about jobs like it's just nothing...nothing' and to hear him say it - he said that we just don't need the job, as the result of work comes engagement because so many things come from work (S2: worker, female, 15 years).

Workers identified that in contrast to collecting welfare, work provided material benefits including more income, a better home to live in and access to a middle-class standards of living such as going to see a movie. For some workers, the financial payoffs to work compared to collecting welfare were used to rationalize pushing clients into paid work. One worker said:

I've actually done strawberry picking in my youth. But maybe saying to a 40 year old or a 50 year old: 'You have to go strawberry picking.' I was never that

directive but certainly I provided those options to individuals that if: ‘Even with a part-time job or some occasional employment or yes it may be something you don’t envision yourself doing forever, but if you are working and bringing in a little income then your earnings exemptions will at least give you a budget that you can maybe sustain yourself on until something better comes along’. (S13: worker, female, 15 years).

Besides material dividends, clients and workers reported that “work is more than just a commodity exchange” (S12: worker, male 17 years). Participants identified that employment brings many social benefits such as “standing on your own two feet” (C2: client, male) and “independence, financial and personally” (S10: worker, female, 32 years). One worker said: “There’s obviously the deep moral belief that work is somehow better and that work is somehow inherently noble in some sense—that it completes you in some way” (S12: worker, male, 17 years). “We want to get people into jobs and they’re paid for that work and they’re being valued for that work. And they see the value of doing that work and there are all sorts of returns - and not just monetary returns – right? There is: self-esteem, feeling like you’re contributing, you’re growing as an individual - in terms of your skill development and knowledge - all of these things” (S8: worker, male, 17 years). “It’s better to be a part of society and fully functioning and feel the same as your neighbours as opposed to being embarrassed because you don’t have a job or anything” (S15: worker, male, 30 years). Another worker said:

We have to have a purpose in life no matter who or where we are at in the continuum we need to serve, we need to provide some balance on this earth. So whether I have mental health problems and I can only maybe one day a month go to the mental health drop in and help make coffee. I just feel that everybody needs to do something. I would never tie it into OW; I would tie it into having value - valuing yourself and serving mankind (S5: worker, female, 8 years).

In the material and moral payoffs to work that are linked to the beneficiaries of OW work, I found common sense ideas that operate at the general welfare state level (example: the rationale for labour market functioning), the neoliberal bureaucratic level (example: rationale for the type of work that workers and clients must do in OW) and at the individual level (example: reasons that explain individual behaviour); these ideas are in line with neoliberal tenets that connect work to social and individual wellbeing. These ideas are a shift from the previous iteration of welfare. For example, under GWA, the notion that some individuals were unable to participate in the labour market was acknowledged through the Act (GWA Section 1) and Regulations (GWA Section1) as “unemployable persons” defined as “a person who is unable to engage in remunerative employment by reason of physical or mental disability” (MCSS 1996: Directive 0303-02). Neither this classification nor the definition “unemployable persons” appears in the OW directives. The strict orientation toward work is reflective of neoliberal welfare design and is notable because OW work imposes these norms on individuals previously excluded – unemployable persons including single parents in receipt of Family Benefits Allowance. Thus, one could say that common sense functioned as a fundamental logic that activated codes of conduct related to the benefits of work; specifically, the benefits of labour market participation. Not only does this mindset act as a paradigm that dictates acceptable codes of conduct for clients and workers but also maintains hegemonic ideas surrounding work and welfare. As discussed in Chapter Five, common sense is a fundamental element of the mindset behind OW work that puts in motion normative expectations and assumptions that link work and welfare. Further, hegemonic ideas

surrounding work and welfare may facilitate administrative processes and reconcile tensions and contradictions; as detailed in the following section, hegemonic ideas manifested as assumptions, expectations and explanations related to the benefits of OW work.

Assumptions – How clients are

Much of the OW research has exposed many of the negative commonly held assumptions about OW clients (Herd et al. 2005, Herd et al. 2009, Moffat 1999, Lightman 1997, Vaillancourt 2010). Although this project confirms this finding, it also contributes a new dimension. Research participants also held many negative assumptions about clients however the most surprising finding for me was the number of clients who stated that they believed other clients are “lazy”. “There's just some people that are just lazy and don't want to work and that's it. They try every way possible to try to milk the system as much as they can and that's what screws it up for the people who actually really, really need it” (C6: client, female). Another client said: “I just thought that those people were just lazy - that they were different” (C1: client, female). Another client said: “You know it's the whole thing is not to take advantage of the situation or circumstances which is part of the problem that the program had years ago is that people took advantage of the system” (C2: client, male).

I was surprised by the number of clients who reported that OW was not achieving its goals as an employment program because welfare cheats are a prevalent problem. These clients attribute fraud as the reason the program's intended design does not deliver

satisfying results. Interestingly, fraud was defined primarily as clients who fail to fulfill their work obligations in OW's quid pro quo design. One client said:

social assistance lets people skate through and they're not questioned about different things, I mean, if they were questioned about just minor little things that they went to do their job interview. They make you fill out your sheet [job search list] and I personally guarantee that you would find 50% of the people are not truthful about what they are writing down. Like half of the people, I know for a fact that it's one of the biggest scams going. I've seen people and I know people that they do it. To this day they will phone a company, they will ask them if they are taking resumes and if they say yes, they write that company's name down and the phone number down and they put that that was a job interview or that was a job that they inquired about (C3: client, male).

Although none of the workers identified clients as “lazy”, they also held negative taken for granted assumptions about clients such as clients are: manipulative, defensive, disadvantaged, lack understanding, not realistic, lack vision and take advantage of the system. For example, one worker said: “to be job ready you really can't determine that because they're [clients] going to give you answers you want sometimes and you know they are going to present how you want to them so that it will be to their advantage”(S5: worker, female, 8 years).

Some of these assumptions could be connected to the concept noted earlier in this chapter that clients are “damaged”. For example, one worker said:

I think first of all as human beings we all want to aspire and some of us are blessed with more luck shall we say some of us are blessed with stronger character, some have better family supports community supports, whatever you want to call it, better health, but the more barriers that one has, the harder it is (S5: worker, female, 8 years).

Another worker said:

When I think of when I started - there weren't any European names there. They were all Wasp—English names—or French names. There were no Pennisi's, there just weren't any. All those immigrants who came here, they stayed off the system for a generation or so. And they were willing to take any kind of work. They could vision a future for themselves here. One generation later, already people can no longer envision a future for themselves (S7: worker, male, 29 years).

Another worker said:

The longer a person is unemployed the harder it is to get employed. The longer they're on OW, the harder it is to get off. The more complicated all the other things that are getting involved are getting farther and farther behind financially, they're relationships are struggling, their self-esteem, their employability is declining the longer they're on (S4: worker, female, 5 years).

Not only were the assumptions about clients connected to ideas about work and welfare, they also provided a framework for the codes of conduct that set out what was reasonable in relation to OW work. This revealed another important element in the mindset behind 'who benefits from OW work?' that described the expectations of clients and workers. These expectations focused on what clients need to do to find work and what workers need to do to help clients to find work.

Expectations – How clients and workers ought to be

As noted earlier, some participants identified that clients benefited from OW work. In order to reap the benefits, participants stated that the most important thing that clients need to do to find work is to 'make an effort'. Most of the participants, including clients, noted the importance of the client's effort. One client said: "You have to put an effort in first. That's the whole thing. There has to be an effort. You have to put an effort in there. So, if you have taken a job, first work at it and hopefully 3 or 6 months time you will get a little bit more money" (C2: client, male). Another client said: "You

know I need to apply myself a little better and for sending resumes out and doing the job search applications that kind of thing because I do have a lot of experience under my belt. I've been in the field for what 8 or 9 years. So, there's no reason why I shouldn't be” (C6: client, female). Another client said: “Here there is no work because it is a small town but yet every month I go myself personally - I go to every single store. I don't care if it's dishwashing. I don't care what it is. The way I look at it, they're going to get sick of seeing my resume come across the desk and somebody is going to give me a chance” (C3: client, male).

A variant of the ‘make an effort’ expectation was client accountability. Clients and workers stated that in the work-for-welfare exchange clients are responsible to fulfill their obligation to look for work or to find work. For example, one client said: “I signed a participation agreement where it’s not like I'm gonna sit on my butt and do absolutely nothing. I'm going to go out and job search as much as I can” (C6: client, female). A worker said: “We have to put some responsibility back on the participant as well and if the system right from the beginning doesn't have a lot of accountability built in well then everything we ask of them becomes a hassle. And I’m not speaking stereo-typically; I mean this is just human nature” (S10: worker, female, 32 years). Besides putting forward an effort and being accountable, workers identified that clients need to understand, need to be hopeful and need to be resilient. For example, one worker said: “they [clients] have to be able to see a reason to do things” (S5: worker, female, 8 years). Another worker said: “you have to have some pretty great skills to survive and roll with the punches and keep your spirits up when times are tough”(S16: worker, female, 10 years). Another

worker said: “Many people need to realize that while they may have achieved this status and they're not there right now, again, just like in the very beginning there's, there's steps that you have to take in order to get back there again. It's kind of like being broom boy all over again, you were CEO and now you have to be the broom boy once again” (S1: worker, male, 10 years).

The expectations behind OW work also extended to workers; workers identified that assessment - particularly the effective mitigation of client's barriers to employment - was crucial in helping clients to find work. For example, one worker said: “I think for us to realistically help these people you do need to assess where they are at in this continuum if you want to call it that. You need to spend time with them” (S5: worker, female, 8 years). Another worker said:

People have to be stabilized first. People have to have basic needs met first before we can have expectations and you really have to understand who each individual is in order to understand what is going to motivate them, what's the incentive for moving forward and what the barriers are. And I don't think in a significant number of cases we really have that understanding of who the individual is across from you (S4: worker, female, 5 years).

Another worker said:

I would send people off to other agencies, sometimes they just wouldn't take people and I think, I'm sending you the cream of the crop, and then this person's doesn't have a goal, well...you know aren't you going to help with that?...shouldn't you actually be helping people who need the help? (S16: worker, female, 10 years).

Just as client accountability was a key factor that determined the benefits of OW work, worker accountability was also identified as significant in activating the benefits of OW work. For example, one worker expressed this accountability as “I think the client

should get good service” (S5: worker, female, 8 years). Another worker said: “When you get into social assistance it’s our obligation to give them [clients] something glorified and valuable and educational or uplifting or I don’t know. Give them something to take away and it’s two-fold in that it accomplishes that the eligibility is maintained but there is *true* eligibility (*emphasized true*) in every cheque that goes out” (S10: worker, female, 32 years).

Although I expected to find these ideas operating in the administration of OW work, I had not realized the extent to which these ideas function as codes of conduct and rules of engagement in the field. Participants recognized that in order for the ‘works’ part of OW to pay dividends, the other players in the game (workers and clients) must fulfill certain expectations such as making an effort and being accountable. This notion of the rules of the game is expanded upon in Chapter Five.

Explanations – Why OW is as it is

Lastly, from the responses regarding who benefits from OW work emerged the final element of the mindset - explanations of why OW is as it is. Although participants most often did not name common sense per se, they recognized an intangible, unspoken logic functioning within OW work that is relied upon to explain why things are as they are. This finding is evident in client and worker statements such as: “I just know that” (C2: client, male); “I don’t know how to explain it” (C2: client, male); “I think sometimes there’s philosophies there and the expectations are known” (S5: worker, female, 8 years); “I think sub-consciously, and I don’t know if it’s sub-consciously, or culturally, or just the way to view things historically” (S8: worker, male, 17 years); “In employment we

have to use our own judgment and sensibilities” (S10: worker, female, 32 years); “I don't think I ever uttered the phrase [any job is a good job] but people knew it” (S1: worker, male, 10 years); and “I don't have anything to base this on, it's just sheer intuition” (S5: worker, female, 8 years). One worker's explanation stands apart in terms of describing why OW work is as it is. Her response reveals the underpinning logic within work-for-welfare and its connections to hegemonic beliefs surrounding work and the ideal neoliberal citizen. She said:

I think unfortunately as a society, success has always been defined by employment. And even back in the day, when people were farmers it was always: Who has the best crop? Who works the longest hours? And I think unfortunately success has been hard labour and then we kind of migrated into: success means post-secondary education, employment. Because if you don't work, what are you good for, really? I think it's a fact of society thing. We're on this planet to be employed so we can buy the things that we want, and if you don't have employment then there is something wrong with you. And from my standpoint that is so ridiculous because an artist might not generate an income for months on end; does that mean that they're not successful? Not to me they're not because what they're doing is extraordinary and I could never do that (S11: worker, female, 1.5 years).

Besides generally held beliefs about welfare and work that served to explain why OW is as it is, I also found that specific theories were applied to explain why OW works as it does. Some of the particular theories that are implicitly applied to explain OW work included client-centred service, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, integration of services, and service hub. An example of this logic was expressed by one worker who said: "Financial assistance and employment assistance is part of a menu of things that individuals need. And it should be very client-centered or client centric. Rather than everyone running around the policies - let's run around the individuals" (S3: worker, female, 7 years).

This final question was designed predominantly to find a specific explanation - namely, knowing how the contradiction that I experienced, OW's promises behind work and its disappointing results, was explained by research participants. Participants acknowledged OW's contradictions and explained the poor results primarily as a disconnect between OW's goals and strategies. One client attributed the disconnect between OW's promises and its results to a faulty design and faulty evaluation of the goals and strategies. He said: "you know it's very easy to have a blanket policy and the analogy is that you drop a blanket from 100 feet in the air and you look down and it looks like its covering everything but when you get down on the ground level you see little arms and feet sticking out underneath" (C2: client, male). Other participants attributed these results to a variety of factors such:

- 1) as lack of resources: "I think what we're doing is a very noble program with a lot of goals that could have some phenomenal societal impacts but we're trying to do so much with limited resources" (S6: worker, female, 14 years)
- 2) bad environment: "I wonder if the environment that all government agencies seem to have now, it's an us and them environment. You have cubicles, you've got people sitting in these silly little cubicles, and you got people having everything monitored. You know and calculated stats etc. etc and I don't think that kind of business model or whatever you want to call it - I understand it's necessary - I understand why it's there at least I think I do, but I don't think it's conducive to casemanagers being at their best with people" (S5: worker, female, 8 years)
- 2) bad experiences: "My son had an asshole Prof last year, he's not going to condemn the whole life sciences department at [the university]. If you have one bad case worker in this situation that can make your life truly miserable for even a short period—that stays with you" (S12: worker, male 17 years);
- 3) the way bureaucracy works: "It's not perfect; there are a lot of things we could achieve more. That will happen over time, it is just a matter of getting it into place and bureaucracies tend to move slow. We have to be patient achieving those outcomes" (S8: worker, male, 17 years); or

- 4) a disconnect between goals and strategies of OW work: “But government doesn’t seem to work that way, it doesn’t seem to be willing to say: ‘This was a good idea at the time, but we’re moving on it doesn’t make sense anymore’.” (S15: worker, male, 30 years).

The question “whom benefits from OW work?” revealed that common sense ideas reflective of hegemonic beliefs and neoliberal constructs surrounding work and welfare were used by participants to understand, explain and activate the benefits of OW work. The social and material benefits that come from work were fundamental assumptions that made OW’s dividends contingent on client and worker behaviour. As participants recognized, there are several beneficiaries connected to OW work which reveals that employability is not focused solely on benefiting the client. In this way, OW work is not only about the client’s employability but also about responding to hegemonic expectations and neoliberal ideals surrounding work and welfare; common sense ideas connect OW work with social and economic wellbeing.

Conclusion

The findings that emerged from this research project assisted in interrogating the complex normative functions of OW work which I suspected contribute to the policy’s staying-power. Although many of the findings that emerged from this project support the existing body of OW research noted in Chapter Two, new insights emerged regarding the function of normative frameworks of logic connected to work and welfare that are used in administering OW work. Specifically normative expectations and assumptions serve to reconcile points of contradiction and guide administration so as to align day-to-day practice with explicitly and implicitly sanctioned goals and strategies. The next chapter

goes deeper into the data and outlines theoretical findings and observations that resulted from the research project using some of Gramsci's (2010) and Bourdieu's (1989) theoretical concepts.

Chapter Five: Making Sense of Making Everybody Do Something - Theoretical Discussion from Data

The discussion in this chapter responds to the research project's objectives noted in the introduction as: to explore ideas about work, gender and welfare operating in OW work; to describe how these ideas are evident in the administration of the policy, and; to explore how these ideas are leveraged to facilitate compliance/resistance. The chapter first provides a rationale for the theoretical concepts used in the research project and covers briefly the elements of Gramsci's (2010) and Bourdieu's (1989) work applied in this project. It then moves on to the application of these theoretical elements, specifically how hegemony, common sense, habitus, capital and field were useful in describing and making sense of participants' experiences. Next, the key theoretical findings that emerged by applying these concepts to the data is discussed. The findings include: common sense ideas about work, welfare and gender in the administration of OW work; a specific habitus operating in OW (coach/gatekeeper); strategies employed by actors relating to occupied social locations; and metaphors of movement in OW's field. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical dilemmas that emerged from applying these elements to the research question.

Theoretical reflections on my research question

As noted in Chapter One, other OW researchers have used critical, feminist or post-structuralist lenses to focus their critique on OW's normative intents (Baker Collins 2004, Bashevken 2002, Evans 2007, Lightman et al. 2003, Little 1998, Good-Gingrich

2008, Herd et al. 2005, Moffatt 1999, Mosher 2000, Peck 2001, Vaillencourt 2010). For example, some scholars claim that OW is a policy instrument intended for the moral regulation of single mothers (Bashevikin 2002, Caragata 2003, Good-Gingrich 2008, Little 1998, Mosher 2000) or poor unemployed people (Herd et al. 2005, Moffatt 1999, Peck 2001, Vaillencourt 2010). These perspectives bring into focus some of the taken-for-granted relationships that operate normatively through regulating and administrative mechanisms such as social policy. An analysis focused on normative assumptions also highlights the multiple ways to explain the dynamics that influence and govern the beliefs and behaviours driving OW work. While this body of work was powerful in highlighting the failings of the system, as a practitioner I found these approaches to be insufficient in understanding how failings are reproduced. Specifically, I was searching for ways to make sense of the ways that clients and workers manage the incompatibility between what OW promises in relation to work and the results it produces.

In designing this research project, I searched for theoretical concepts that could not only describe phenomena but also help to ascribe meaning to my own and research participants' experiences. Concepts from critical, feminist and post-structural theoretical paradigms were combined to create the theoretical amalgam used in this inquiry. An amalgam was constructed to respond to a tension that emerged during the investigation. While a singular theoretical framework was adequate at describing phenomena and ascribing meaning (for example that beliefs and behaviors are connected to producing practice in line with dominant worldviews), I found that one framework did not help me to identify elements and dynamics that manifest in micro interventions that would lead

me to conclude that practice was connected to dominant worldview. The combination of theories was used more of a launching point for analysis and not as a recipe to be followed step by step. Furthermore, combining these theoretical frameworks helped to locate my research and reflection on specific roles, in specific structures at specific moments in history. But as my research journey was instigated by a need to indict whoever or whatever was responsible for oppressing the poor unemployed people receiving OW, I was searching for theory to help me to find a smoking gun and 'somebody to shoot' (Hill Collins 1999).

As an OW administrator, I experienced significant internal angst regarding the role that I play in a policy criticized for its oppression of poor unemployed people. I have struggled with my role and the role of other OW workers in reinforcing, perpetuating and challenging the practice of OW work; this struggle was also the subject of my investigation. Because OW is administered by people, I held people accountable for its results. Throughout each phase of the research project this tension remained vivid and intensified with my awareness of the power dynamics that play out in the researcher-researched relationship. However, I noticed that the research project exposed me in a different way to the people who are implicated in OW work. Research participants revealed some disturbing beliefs that manifested in the daily administration of OW work including the view that OW clients are “damaged”. This idea was noted in the previous chapter and is taken up again later on in this chapter. But, as an active participant in the drama of workfare, I could not distance myself from the experiences expressed by other OW actors.

By foregrounding and examining the different vantage points that I held throughout this process (researcher and administrator) I was able to interrogate the intersections between the social and material manifestations of oppression that occur in the enactment of OW work. For example, and as I discuss later in this chapter, the types of training and education available to OW clients as part of OW work may function to relegate clients to low income work and low status cultural capital. As a result of this investigation, my ontological position has shifted; I realized that a great deal of my understanding was influenced by the evidence-based context of practice in a neoliberal bureaucratic setting. My research journey was initially based in the understanding that the grammar operating behind OW work was simply a cause and effect relationship between a policy and its intent, design and practice. However, this simple construct did not expose or account for the power dynamics that drive the daily administration of OW work nor did it reconcile the fundamental contradictions that I experienced with the policy and its practice.

Participants' responses revealed the interdependence between objective (material) and subjective (social) phenomenon as a facilitative dynamic that sustained the beliefs and practices behind OW work. The more closely I listened to participants' stories and the more I reflected on my experience, the clearer it became that there may be "nobody to shoot" (Hill Collins 1999); to some degree norms and structures bind the actions of individuals. That is, the dialectic between agency and structure might explain how individuals who participate in a contradictory and at times overtly punitive program make sense of the program and their participation in its activation.

What I wanted from theory

Some scholars have worked to bridge the dichotomy between structural accounts of power that, on the one hand omit the active role of agents while on the other hand, propose a purely dispersed account of power that overlooks structural constraints on the subject's actions (Hayward and Lukes 2008). Reconciling this theoretical dichotomy reflects the idea that although some actors may have greater access to social, political, or economic capital and are therefore better able to assert a certain worldview, the processes of control and domination are contested and impermanent (Mumby 1997). Actors construct, analyze, influence and resist change. Correspondingly, social relations are influenced by both shifts and legacies at micro, meso and macro levels. This perspective was important because I began my research journey thinking that social justice included blaming individuals *or* structures but as the project progressed I found an interactive relationship between agency *and* structure.

Both Gramsci (2010) and Bourdieu (1989) recognized that the contemporary individual's actions, thoughts and beliefs are the culmination and manifestation of historical social domination. This theoretical orientation was useful in being critical of processes without solely indicting individual actors or attributing oppression and contradictions to social structures alone. As I applied their works, I found that these two theoretical paradigms allowed the focus of my inquiry to move beyond descriptions into a deeper understanding of the mindset that facilitates the contradiction of workfare work by engaging and activating the subjective and objective structures in which they are embedded.

I selected Gramsci's (2010) common sense and hegemony as well as Bourdieu's (1989) field, capital and habitus as concepts to critically examine beliefs and behaviours surrounding OW work because both Gramsci (2010) and Bourdieu (1989) posit that agency, choice and structure are synthesized and there is no strict dichotomy between micro and macro social structures and processes. I discuss this dynamic in more detail later in this section of this chapter. I also recognize that I have not exhausted the literature that explores these theoretical concepts and consequently this chapter does not focus on a purely theoretical critique but instead applies the concepts to describe and explain the processes that are active in OW's administration of work requirements. As both Gramsci's (Gramsci 2010, Mumby 1997, Robinson 2005, Swanson 2008) and Bourdieu's (Bourdieu 1989, Brannick 2007, Noble and Watkins 2003, Van Dijk 2011) concepts focused on problematizing daily practices, I felt that their theories supported the pragmatic focus of my research project. I engaged with Gramsci's (2010) and Bourdieu's (1989) work as they intended - as methods to explain the mechanisms and techniques that disrupt or reproduce social forces. Gramsci's (2010) and Bourdieu's (1989) theories were used iteratively to link theory to data and data to theory. As well, because I recognized similarities between their concepts, I have applied Gramsci's (2010) and Bourdieu's (1989) theoretical concepts fluidly allowing their concepts to flow into one another.

This approach facilitated a shift from abstract consideration of theory to a more applied approach focused on the practice of social policy. As the primary focal point of this study is the administration of policy, my analysis is grounded in the practice of

policy as it is lived – at the “street-level” (Lipsky 1980); my goal is not to ‘uncover the truth’ but rather to examine the taken for granted understandings about work, class, and gender-based norms that are routinized via workfare work. Further, by shifting the examination of contradictory practices from theory to practice, this study intended to encourage essential actors such as clients and workers to claim their respective and legitimate space for emancipatory change. The frustration that I experienced between OW’s promises and its results was also expressed by some research participants. For us, the research project may shift our understanding and catalyze changes in practice. For participants who did not previously identify incongruities, participating in this research project may add another dimension to their perceptions of OW work also resulting in changes in practice. The next section of this chapter provides an overview of Gramsci’s (2010) hegemony and common sense and Bourdieu’s (1989) field, capital and habitus.

What do the theories say?

Gramsci’s (2010) hegemony is a resource useful for debate because it foregrounds ideas and beliefs in questions concerning social governance in which domination occurs via institutional practices. For Gramsci (2010) ideas have material power and this power is productive. Hegemony is the constant shaping and molding of perspectives, ways of thinking and acting that are evident in micro and even molecular manifestations that are often overlooked (Garrett 2010). Although the concept of hegemony is often associated with macro-narratives such as patriarchy, Gramsci (2010) argued that it appears in very intimate social transactions including those internal to actors. According to Gramsci, ruling ideology is transmitted via ideas; the exploitive nature of the ideology is hidden

from consciousness because it is understood as the “natural or normal way of thinking” (Sim 2002: 37). That is, there is a dialectic between hegemony and ways of interacting, appreciating and conceiving the world, others and ourselves.

As a process, for hegemony to take hold it has to appeal to our aspirations, visions and understandings. Once successful, the ideas become embedded as common sense. Using a hegemonic lens we gather and interpret our beliefs and worldviews. We adhere to these because we think that we belong to a group that also believes what we believe. We do not question how these beliefs came to be but feel as though we consciously choose the beliefs because they make sense (Gramsci 2010). From this perspective, a particular philosophy of an age cannot be attributed to an individual or even a group but culminates from various social and historical forces into norms of action.

Gramsci (2010) asserted that hegemony facilitates the divide among groups in order to maintain the status of classes and positions and the divide between the masses and intellectuals. This divide helps to maintain intellectual unity and ethical conformity within a specific conception of social order including domination and subordination (Robinson 2005). According to Gramsci (2010:321-2), changing the status quo requires more than “simply confronting one philosophy with another. [...] It is not just the ideas that require to be confronted but the social forces behind them and, more directly, the ideology these forces have generated which become part of [...] “common sense

Hegemony actively engages with and enacts common sense (Mumby 1997).

Gramsci (2010:322) uses the term ‘common sense’ to mean the “uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become ‘common’

in any epoch”. Common sense is comprised of the various social, cultural, economic and political environments in which norms and codes of conduct are developed and internalized (Gramsci 2010, Mumby 1997, Robinson 2005, Swanson 2008, Watkins 1999).

Common sense “is not a single unique conception, identical in time and space” (Gramsci 2010:419) but rather is comprised of multiple and fragmented concepts that even within the same individual are fragmented, and incoherent (Femia 1979, Gramsci 2010, Mumby 1997, Robinson 2005,).

As the philosophy of everyday life, common sense acts as a theoretical paradigm for interacting with the world (Gramsci 2010, Robinson 2005) that can sometimes confound insight and consciousness into systems and practices that are harmful to certain groups (Mumby 1997). Furthermore, Gramsci’s hegemony is more complex than a dichotomy between control and resistance; it is the negotiation between elite and non-elites, that can contain the interests of both groups (Mumby 1997). Thus, hegemony acknowledges the inherent struggle in social processes when “change becomes a real possibility; at other times, change remains latent” (Mumby 1997:369). However, Gramsci (2010:327) is critical of ‘false consciousness’ as a theoretical framework to explain this dissonance because it relies on “self-deception”. Rather, he posits that critiques of social structures must interrogate the seeming coherence between actions and belief systems (Femia 1979, Gramsci 2010). The key to mobilization is to expose and problematize oppressive aspects of hegemony and common sense.

An ideal site for the mobilization of hegemony and common sense can be found in the functions of the state. Gramsci said that the focus of state control expands beyond the world at work into workers' homes and how workers live their lives when not at work (Garrett 2010). Along these lines, the state is not a thing but rather “an active and creative process of institution-building and intervention” (Coleman and Sim 2005:104 as noted in Garrett 2010:345). As common sense can be harnessed for very different political directions and any direction is in some way bound by common sense (Watkins 1999), it can be said that capitalist common sense is a way of thinking that foregrounds economic relations (Watkins 1999) and neoliberal common sense is a way of thinking that links market philosophy with social relationships. From this perspective, one can say that neoliberalism is more than an ideology because it is conducive of a specific type of practice (McDonald 2006). As I discuss later in this chapter, I found this principle operating in OW – namely that a specific type of common sense in line with neoliberal economic imperatives linked work with social, emotional, financial and moral well-being. Gramsci (2010) helped me to articulate how common sense operates in hegemonic projects. The concept of hegemony contributed a framework for understanding the ideas that undergird OW work and common sense contributed a way to understand how these ideas remain in practice despite contradictions. Although my research confirms that ‘welfare to work’ can be understood as a cornerstone of a neoliberal agenda, I wondered how the specific type of common sense that was driving the practice of OW work was understood, internalized and enacted by individuals who interact with and enact the policy.

For Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1989, Cronin 1996, Garrett 2007, Williams 2001) the material and symbolic interplay between internalization and enactment is comprised of field, capital and habitus. Fields are defined as groups and social classes, habitus is the combination of perceptions, thoughts, and actions and capital is the power exchanged in our social universes. The power dynamics of habitus, capital and field are neither prohibitive nor facilitative but rather simultaneously facilitative and restraining (Bourdieu 1989). Subjects are considered as individual agents while also recognizing the importance of material and symbolic conditions that mediate their beliefs and behaviour (Moffatt and Higgs 2005).

Bourdieu's (2010) theory of practice conceptualizes individuals as creators of social practices that follow specific logics in social spaces. Those logics are comprised of habitus and field (Bourdieu 1989, Cronin 1996, Williams 2001). Habitus is crucial in defining what is internalized as the boundary of perceived possibilities for individuals, relationships and the normative consensus (Bourdieu 1989, Cronin 1996, Garrett 2007); it is the individual's internalized systems, structures, dispositions, and orchestrations shaped by past conditions (Bourdieu 1989, Cronin 1996, Garrett 2007). Field is a "site or sites for struggle and the unfolding of power games over a central stake [;] the resources used in these struggles [are] different forms of capital: economic, social and symbolic" (Ahmed and Jones 2008:60).

Furthermore, Bourdieu posits that habitus is "unintentionally intentional" (Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer 2011:25). That is - individuals will most likely behave according to the rules and perceived possibilities available to them in a given field.

These choices appear natural. “Field” and “habitus” are bundles of relationships that account for external system constraints on individual choice (Williams 2001); this is the material and symbolic interplay between internalization and enactment. This process is made up of two elements: fields which are comprised of groups and social classes and habitus which is the combination of perceptions, thoughts, and actions (Bourdieu 1989). As well, habitus is continuously informed and adjusted based on the outcome of effort and feedback (Calhoun 1995). Current practices impact individual habitus and the greater the number of options, the less predictable the behaviour and consequently increased instability of tradition (Calhoun 1995). Self regulation in accordance with current practice is a critical aspect of this equilibrium.

The dimensions of habitus include attributes, deontology, aims, conditions, and sanctions (van Dijk 2011); individuals activate these elements as they navigate fields that constitute the social world. They influence individual roles, expectations, and consequences in social contexts (van Dijk 2011). People use this apparatus to navigate in objective fields that constitute the social world with the purpose of accumulating capital which can be cultural, symbolic, social, or economic.

Attitudes and tacit knowledge surrounding these expectations are powerful mediating elements in the relationship between the individual and the welfare state (Ahmed and Jones 2008). The individual has expectations of “the system” and “the system” has expectations of individuals (Ahmed and Jones 2008). As I note later in this chapter, I found that expectations (worker’s expectations of clients and client’s expectations of workers) were a prevalent theme driving the enactment of OW work.

Most relevant to my inquiry is the idea that individual dispositions and internalized taken for granted assumptions about the existing social order play crucial roles in tacitly propagating and resisting incongruities in social systems. Thus one can understand action as the result of habitus intersecting with fields where actions reflect the structure of the encounter between habitus and field (Swartz 1997). That is, the value of certain actions, thoughts and characteristics are not intrinsic but rather translate into value by way of their relationship to one another. Meaning is socially derived and structured. When applying these concepts to OW work, one could say that the individual's response (propagating or resisting) could be understood as a manifestation of the intersection between agency and structure such as class. To illustrate, I found that the following statement made by a client was indicative of an individual's response to incongruity that propagated the incongruity between OW's promises related to work and its disappointing results. Even though this client experienced frustration with not being able to find a job, he espoused the idea that clients' success was contingent upon their effort. When I asked him who benefits from OW work, he said: "The person that benefits the most is you [clients]. You get in what you put out" (S3:client, male). Although this client's individual experience was that his repeated attempts to find employment and his strategies for finding employment did not result in a job, the notion that "you get out what you put in" was used to explain the disconnect between OW's promises and results (structure) as opposed to his own experience (agency).

According to Bourdieu, separating groups into classes is dependent on the proximity of agents in the social distribution and the structure of the social field (Cronin

1996). Cultural fields are structured by relations of power resulting from degrees of competence; relations of power are the outcome of past struggles (Cronin 1996). Fields are a “site or sites for struggle and the unfolding of power games over a central stake [;] the resources used in these struggles [are] different forms of capital: economic, social and symbolic” (Ahmed and Jones 2008:60).

Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1986, Swartz 1997) uses the concept of capital to refer to the economic, social and symbolic resources used by individuals and groups to maintain or enhance their location in social fields. For Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1986, Swartz 1997) cultural capital is a type of social capital that refers to any set of non-economic goods and services that can assist one to improve their social standing or status; cultural capital covers wide range of knowledge or social skills that function as a resource, such as verbal facility, cultural awareness, aesthetic preferences, or educational credentials (Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer 2011).

Cultural capital is defined as “presupposed embodiment of distinctive and distinguishing sensibilities and characteristic modes of action” (Calhoun 1995:141). Symbolic capital is governed by the specific social fields that legitimize which type of capital is socially recognized. Some forms of symbolic and cultural capital are more valued than others. For example, I found that education was a form of cultural capital with high symbolic value. I also found that similar to all resources, symbolic and cultural capital are not evenly distributed. Thus, capital qualifies specific forms of action, knowledge and information sources and resources of power (Swartz 1997); capital is used to appraise the value not only actions but also the very essence of actors. Different social

groups have different types and quantities of capital which not only places them within a stratified social hierarchy but also marks them as distinct (Bourdieu 1984, 1990). The signs associated with cultural and symbolic capital function as ‘signs of distinction, positive or negative’ (Bourdieu 1990).

According to Swartz (1997:175) “Bourdieu’s work primarily focused on the symbolic struggles of the cultural elite, with little attention given to cultural capital within working class, marginalised or dominated social groups other than to say that they have none”. This gap presented a challenge when applying his concepts to marginalized groups. In response, I adapted Bourdieu’s (2000) concept of ‘negative symbolic capital’ to examine the cultural capital of participants. The theoretical dimension that Bourdieu (2000) used to refer to the culturally specific markers or signs that identify the ‘stigmatised pariah’ was ‘negative symbolic capital’. The idea of negative cultural capital does not refer to the absence or deficit of capital, such as a financial debt rather it refers to a brand of cultural capital that is recognized as negative. It is potent because of its anti-social, stigmatized or even illegal status (Bourdieu 2000). Further, it is the seemingly paradoxical juxtaposition of the two terms ‘negative’ and ‘capital’ that highlights the function of this type of capital (Bourdieu 2000).

As I detail in this chapter, I found the various types of capital in play in OW: economic capital is evident in the transfer of financial benefits, social capital appear as pathways to leave social assistance through a job, and cultural capital is manifested as the assumed lack of skill or competence in OW clients who were marked as “damaged”. As

I discuss later in this chapter, I found the concept of negative capital highly relevant in describing the dynamics behind OW work.

How do these elements manifest in OW?

In the following sections of this chapter, I discuss key theoretical themes that emerged when I applied Bourdieu's (1989) and Gramsci's (2010) theories to analyze the data in my research project. I begin by focusing on the use of common sense ideas about work, class and gender. Following that, I discuss a specific habitus that I found operating in OW work; this habitus manifested as the coach and the gatekeeper. Next, I highlight the strategies that actors engaged in relation to their own occupied social locations in relation to others. Then, I detail the metaphors of movement found in participants' responses surrounding OW work. I end the chapter by discussing theoretical tensions that emerged while applying these concepts.

Hegemony and Common Sense Examine Ideas about Work, Welfare and Gender

As noted earlier, Gramsci's (2010) hegemony and common sense were helpful theoretical concepts when examining and explaining how normative assumptions and expectations manifested in the administration of OW work. These theoretical elements were helpful launching points to consider how individuals made sense of the dissonance between the stated goals of OW and its results. Specifically applicable was Gramsci's (2010) distinction between practice and intent. According to Hall (1985) Gramsci posits that practice does not necessarily embody intent. Rather, "practice is how structure is actively reproduced. Structures exhibit tendencies – lines of force, openings and closures which constrain, shape, channel and in that sense 'determine'" (Hall 1985: 95-96). I

found that this definition explained the dynamic between hegemony and common sense and how it propagates and maintains dominant beliefs (Femia 1979). In OW, common sense was used to strengthen hegemonic strategies (such as the moral and financial benefits of work versus the moral and financial harms of welfare) and to mitigate contradictions that emerged in practice. During the process of enacting OW work, practice was reflective of and also responsive to dominant beliefs (hegemony) that were expressed as ‘tendencies’ (common sense).

My experience working in the field informed my perspective that common sense was operating in the enactment of OW work. I have noted in my practice that many taken for granted notions related to work, gender and welfare are active in the administration of OW work. Gramsci’s (2010) construct of common sense led me to think about and pay attention to the assumptions or taken for granted ideas, logics and explanations that participants articulated when describing or explaining the administration of OW work. I used this framework as a launching point to search for the ways participants made sense of the practice and results of OW work.

As noted in the previous chapter, participants’ responses supported my experience that common sense was an active and facilitative factor in the administration of OW work; they were aware of and articulated an underlying logic that guided their practice. They used this logic to inform and rationalize the practice of OW work. Consistent with Gramsci’s (2010) position that practice is reflective of taken for granted ideas active in any epoch, the iterative relationship between practice and common sense in OW was evident in the following worker’s statement :

I never saw it [OW policy] as black and white. Nothing is black and white. But, if that supervisor wanted to interpret it as black and white then that was the decision. Sometimes people crave that because they don't have to make a decision or go above and beyond or stick their neck out. Whatever it is that motivates us some people like to say 'oh the rules are rules'. That's why you have different personalities. People generally think that the welfare system is very cut and dry but I'm not in it anymore so I don't know but to me it never really was (S16:worker, 10 years, female).

This quote contains many examples of common sense operating as a logic for practice. For example, the belief that some people construct welfare as “black and white” was an idea about OW that was assumed to be shared. This concept did not need to be explained but rather was assumed as a natural logic contextualizing the administration of OW work. Furthermore, in this quote, the worker’s practice relied upon her understanding that the policy is nuanced enough to be interpreted. From this perspective, her practice was guided by the oppositional stance she took against the common sense idea that the “welfare system is very cut and dry” (S16:worker, 10 years, female). As well, she used the idea that other workers did not want “to stick their neck out” as a logic to rationalize her own practice and to make sense of the difference between her own and other workers’ practice. This worker’s response and the responses of other participants contained frameworks to explain and describe their experiences that operated implicitly and were similar to one another. These appear to be common sense ideas operating in OW work. In OW work, the patterns in the logic appeared as assumptions about clients, work, welfare and gender. In this next section, I highlight some of the common sense ideas that emerged frequently and how these ideas used by participants.

As noted in the quote above and in the previous chapter, common sense ideas were used to rationalize practice. For example, as noted in Chapter Four, common sense ideas such as the financial dividends that come from work as opposed to collecting welfare were used to justify expectations of clients in the enactment of OW work. Not only did participants use common sense in this way but also as a logic for understanding or attributing causation. This function aligned with Gramsci's (2010) account of the dynamics of common sense.

According to Gramsci (2010:326) "common sense is the folklore of philosophy, and is always half-way between folklore properly speaking and the philosophy, science and economics of the specialist". As a form of "popular knowledge at a given place and time" (Gramsci 2010:326), common sense is used as system of reasoning. This role can be identified in the following common sense ideas that were used by participants to explain the dissonance between OW's promises regarding work and its disappointing results. One worker said: "It's not perfect; there are a lot of things - we could achieve more. That will happen over time, it is just a matter of getting it into place and bureaucracies tend to move slow. We have to be patient achieving those outcomes" (S8:worker, 17 years, male). In this worker's response, the ideas that "things are not perfect" and that "bureaucracies tend to move slow" were used as a system for reasoning the incongruence in OW work. These rationales were effective at explaining the dissonance because they were assumed to be logic that was understood, applicable and acceptable to me and the worker; these ideas were common sense in our shared context. A similar function could be identified in the following statement made by another when

she said: “So I think that there was basically a perception out there that was reinforced by our politicians and bought into by the public that there are a lot of people on assistance that shouldn’t be on assistance and if they could only find a job or get themselves a job then the number of people on the caseload would plummet” (S3:worker,7 years,female). In this quote, the worker explained the dynamics behind OW work with ideas such as the public believing the politicians when they said that people shouldn’t be on assistance and that the caseload would decrease if clients found a job. These rationales also relied upon ideas that were assumed to not need explaining.

Gramsci’s (2010) construct of common sense is built upon the notion that certain shared ideas are assumed to be normal. An example could be found in the following statement made by a client who said: “Well, I think it’s because I don’t know how to explain it but I think you have to do something to get something. You know, it’s that simple. You just don’t get anything for nothing” (C2:client, male). Using this notion, I found that the common sense ideas operating behind OW work relied upon normative assumptions about work and welfare to understand, explain and rationalize the relationship between work and welfare on OW. This common sense seemed deeply steeped in ideas of the work ethic and less eligibility. An example can be found the statement made by a client who said: “You know it’s the whole thing is not to take advantage of the situation or circumstances which is part of the problem that the program had years ago is that people took advantage of the system” (C2:client, male). In this response, the client attributed welfare abuse as the driving force behind the implementation of OW. He used the idea that the problem with welfare was that people

took advantage of the system to explain, understand and rationalize the relationship between work and welfare; because 'people took advantage of the system' the system had to change and the result was the implementation of work and work preparation activities. Similar to the common sense ideas noted in the previous paragraph, these ideas were also assumed to be common - not in need of explanation.

Another example of common sense ideas being used to understand the relationships between work and welfare could be found in the following statement made by a worker: “once people stop feeling confident then they feel hopeless then they stop looking for work and then that's when it becomes a cycle” (S16:worker, 10 years, female). Embedded in this worker’s practice were common sense ideas such as loss of confidence leads to hopelessness which means that clients stop looking for work which means they fall into a cycle (of poverty, hopelessness and unemployment). The cycle is a common sense, quasi-professional trope that is also ideologically based and powerful. Common sense not only established that a relationship exists (between confidence, motivation, unemployment and poverty) but also rationalized the practices behind OW work; it is implied that OW clients need to look for work or else they will fall into a cycle.

In the data, I found that common sense was used in this manner to understand or attribute causality between many different variables including those noted above. However I also found that common sense was used frequently to make two specific causal links (1) welfare and the damaged client and (2) the single mom and the dead-beat

dad. In the following section, I used Gramsci's (2010) hegemony and common sense as starting points to probe these linkages.

Clients are Damaged

As noted in the previous chapter, a theme that emerged from workers interviews was the idea that clients were "damaged" (S14: worker, 15 years, female). For example, one worker said: "They [clients] have some personal issues that they have to deal with first - that they are not ready to look for work right away" (S16:worker, 10 years, female). Another worker said: "There were people from every walk of life. There were people and a lot of our clients at that time—and I assume—hide their problems; they don't admit to having problems. And they can cover it up pretty good" (S9:worker, 32 years, male). Workers noted that 'damage' was intrinsic (for example clients are manipulative) or extrinsic (for example clients' family of origin were welfare recipients). This assumption operated as a common sense idea behind OW work that linked the client's need for welfare and a deficiency of some kind. For example, one type of deficiency was the assumption that clients do not understand the normative expectations surrounding work: One worker said:

So many clients would get a job and maybe be there for two weeks and the employer saying: 'Well, he's been late a few times but we're working with him and, you know, it's coming along.' Then all of a sudden one day, they just didn't show up. How come he didn't show up? The employer called quite mad. [as client]: 'Well Joe Blow was moving, I had to give him a hand; he helped me move, I couldn't refuse him.' They just didn't still did not understand that they had the responsibility of keeping the job, not just doing the job. Calling in if you're sick, if you're going to be late; you know, this type of thing (S9:worker, 32 years, male).

Another worker said:

Some people are realistic about what it takes to achieve their goals, other people think ‘oh I just have to do this and it will happen’ and they don't have the patience or the knowledge or the depth of understanding required to see what a long term process it is to move forward meeting your goals. So some people they have what it takes and other people they get frustrated very easily and they don't have the self-esteem, the skills to move themselves forward (S5:worker, 8 years,female).

These types of common sense ideas underlying the enactment of OW work coalesced into patterns of interpretation and meaning that revealed a certain cohesion regarding assumptions about work and welfare. This cohesion was reflective of the beliefs and subsequent actions that undergirded by a certain structure operating in the neoliberal bureaucratic setting. Specifically, the damaged client was a fundamental construct in OW that linked the process of determining employability to the client's cognitive capacity for work and more importantly their intrinsic motivation toward work and concomitantly independence from welfare. The supposed common sense idea that OW clients are damaged can be theorized as a manifestation of internalized hegemonic beliefs that reinforced the thinking that welfare use is detrimental to the individual and society because the need for welfare is voluntary . That is, OW work is the way to rehabilitate clients and reduce the reliance on welfare; clients can prove that they are not damaged if they engage in OW work such as proving their eligibility, submitting to training or resocialization and of course by finding work. Although the notion that people receiving welfare are in some way damaged is not specific to neoliberal contexts (for example, Little (1998) argues that the moral failings of single female parents was an assumption fundamental in the formative stages of welfare in Canada) the assumption

that clients are damaged is actively reproduced in ways that are conducive to hegemonic ideas connected to welfare and work. As noted in Chapter Four, although the concept that clients were “damaged” was conveyed in many different ways, the most common expression of ‘damage’ was barriers to employment. Similarly, hegemonic ideas surrounding gender facilitated the administration of OW work.

The Single Mom and the Dead Beat Dad

As noted in the previous chapter, I found two constructs related to gender operating as common sense ideas in OW work – the ‘single mom’ and the ‘dead-beat dad’. Kershaw et al (2008) note that the two gender constructs operating in welfare are somewhat causally related; the ‘single mom’ who is a welfare client is the result of a ‘dead-beat dad’. A worker implicitly recognized this connection when he said:

If there is a support issue, now you’re going to be subject to our family-support workers because now they’ll have to ask you all sorts of questions about: “Who is the father of your child?” Or ask you about an estranged spouse, are they paying support? I’m not saying we shouldn’t go after dead-beat dads, but you know what I mean? It is a very intrusive system—we ask all kinds of very personal questions so you have to do that in order to be able to qualify to get those funds (S8:worker, 17 years, male).

Furthermore, the common sense gender related constructs operating behind OW work supported the discussion in Chapter Two which stated that in welfare regimes, gender roles were connected to valorized notions of public sphere contributions made primarily by males through waged-labour (Bakker 2007, Fraser 1989). Thus, the gender constructs activated in OW work were reflective of common sense ideas that reinforced hegemonic beliefs conducive to underlying economic imperatives tied to work and

welfare. One worker's response demonstrated the normative expectations and assumptions behind the construct of the dead-beat dad. She said:

You know some of these guys - I've helped them get a job and then their wages are garnisheed like right off the bat. There's no incentive. They felt bad because they weren't seeing their kids. I am not saying you know that they would avoid their responsibilities and then it would get out of control and they'd feel like they could never get out. So I really had some compassion for those guys even though we all create our own mess - we all make choices (S16:worker, 10 years, female).

It was evident that this worker struggled with the notion of the dead-beat dad.

Clearly, the worker sympathized with these clients. She said "there's no incentive", the garnisheed wages made their situation "out of control" leading clients to feel as though "they could never get out" of their current situation of garnisheed wages and poverty.

However, while this response contained the worker's sentiment of compassion for the men who "weren't seeing their kids", this idea was contrasted when she expressed their moral failings. Not only did she judge them for creating their "own mess" but more importantly she linked these men's failure as fathers with their failure as wage earners. Although this worker recognized that when fathers earned a wage that wage would be garnisheed to support any children receiving OW, she concludes with a statement that holds the client accountable for his children's poverty. I found that this data was reflective of hegemonic constructs supported in the literature regarding men's role as breadwinner (Bakker 2007, Fraser 1989) and absent parent (Kershaw et al 2008).

Common sense also operated in the functioning of these hegemonic ideas; the roles for females were articulated through taken for granted assumptions that noted in the body of

work surrounding workfare (Bakker 2007, Fraser 1989). An example of this occurred later in the interview with this same worker when she said:

I think society has an expectation that women manage their relationships. They manage their families. They are responsible for their families being happy and their spouses being happy plus they are supposed to be successful, smart, beautiful and all these things. So the expectations [for women] are different (S16:worker, 10 years, female).

Participant responses surrounding the role of women reflected the idea that the expectations and assumptions about women receiving welfare were no longer legitimated based on their private sphere contributions (as mother under FBA) but rather women were expected to fulfill both the breadwinner and traditional private sphere work regarding the care of others. These normative assumptions also served to maintain hegemonic gender roles for the female OW client. Similar to the dynamics of the ‘damaged’ client, the gender roles in OW work were reflective of hegemonic ideas consistent with work and welfare in neoliberal contexts. As noted in Chapter Four, these assumptions transmitted ideas about gender that were not general diffuse ideas surrounding gender but rather ideas specific to the typology of gender roles in OW. The term ‘dead-beat dad’ transmitted gender expectations that are linked specifically to the provision of welfare in a neoliberal welfare state. This term fits within the lexicon of workfare that links the role of men as providers for their family. It is also a term that defined poor unemployed men as failures if they are unable to fulfill this role.

Similarly, the role of the female OW client was specifically defined by OW work. Although female lone-parent families were not referred to as ‘dead-beat’, one could argue that the expectations of the female OW client (breadwinner and traditional private sphere

care-work) intimates that the need for OW signals a failure in fulfilling these roles.

Along these lines, one participant, (C3: client, male) used the term single dad meaning that the terms ‘single mom’ and ‘dead-beat dad’ are not mutually exclusive gender categories.

In participant responses I found that hegemonic ideas surrounding work, welfare and gender undergirded the administration of OW work. Specifically, participant responses revealed that the hegemony of market philosophy was a fundamental driver behind OW work. As the responses above demonstrate, common sense constructs about the roles of men and women reinforced the status quo surrounding gender which in effect also shut out criticism binding actors to exploitive social orders and oppressive normative codes of conduct.

As noted by Gramsci (2010) common sense is an active facilitative factor in hegemony. In found that in OW, hegemonic institutionalized practices relied heavily on common sense and common sense facilitated the enactment of OW work by functioning simultaneously as a tool, a technique and a mechanism used in practice. Common sense functioned as a tool used to enact the tasks driving OW work; common sense also functioned as a technique that was applied as a theory in the practice of OW work; and common sense functioned as a mechanism used to filter the intent of the policy and subsequently mobilize this intent in practice.

Moreover, it appeared that applying common sense as a theoretical paradigm in interpreting the policy’s intent was a necessary precondition to consent or the internalization of hegemonic norms and assumptions about work, gender and welfare.

That is, as Gramsci (2010) posited, common sense is pivotal to the functioning of hegemony. Hegemonic ideas related to work, welfare and gender are institutionalized through practice that relies upon common sense to activate and rationalize practices even if they may be incongruent or contradictory. This argument helped to respond to my research question regarding the contradictions in OW work; the seeming coherence between actions and belief systems that I found in OW's contradictory results could be explained as the iterative relationship between hegemony and common sense. That is, the hegemonic project of transforming welfare into a support to market functioning was rendered into a generally accepted guiding principle by the common sense assumptions regarding welfare, work and gender undergirding the enactment of OW work. In the next section, I explore a contradiction that emerged from a specific common sense idea regarding the value of work in contrast to welfare dependency.

Contradictions in the value of work

“In Gramscian terms, the processes through which hegemony is secured and reproduced also involve the formation of the capacity of regulatory agents to rule; they must establish their competence and capacity to rule. In order to rule, agents need to demonstrate not only to themselves but in particular to other participants, their entitlement and ability to rule” (Hunt 1997:281-2). I found this concept (ability and entitlement to rule) operating in the administration of OW work. When applied to my research project, workers could be classified as belonging to the elite as they engage with ideas that function to maintain the divide between classes. The position of authority granted and justified workers ability and entitlement to rule in the relationship with

clients. The following quote revealed how workers rationalize their legitimacy to rule which not only included the authority granted to them by their status as official representatives but also allowed them the latitude to use personal judgments in their practice. One worker said “We have to learn how to go through hoops - people in our modern world “(S5:worker, 8 years,female). Another worker justified using her own opinions when she said “In employment we have to use our own judgment and sensibilities as far as programming goes” (S10:worker, 32 years, female).

A client expressed his experience with worker’s demonstrated ‘entitlement and ability to rule’ when he said:

Some workers, when you ask them for funds for things, some workers make you feel like it's coming out of their pocket. I've actually gotten into arguments with my workers just over the simple fact that they tried to demean me and make me feel like less of a person than what I really know that I am. When somebody does that to me, I don't care if I'm in a welfare office. I don't care where I am, ‘don't do it to me because I will put it right on the line to you and if you don't like hearing it then you're best not to do it’. (C3:client, male).

Although this statement revealed the client’s resistance to the workers’ asserted ‘ability to rule’ as demonstrated by their reluctance to issue benefits, this client’s interview also reflected neoliberal constructs underpinning the workfare design. He said:

The social assistance system [...] if they're going to send you out to do a job search, which I do agree with 100% they need to validate what they're doing because I know for a fact just for example last year at (name of company) they were hiring people that were 60 years old plus, they were hiring people they had already fired and yet every time I went into that [OW] office there were people [clients] in there (C3:client, male).

This response not only reinforced Gramsci's (2010) claim that common sense ideas, even within individuals, are contradictory but moreover demonstrated the role that common sense played in sustaining hegemonic ideas about work and welfare – namely that the need for welfare is a choice.

What was also helpful about the concept of hegemony was that it shifted analytical attention to the mechanisms of securing consent. Although, this can sometimes erroneously lead one to conceive consent and coercion as a binary relationship, Gramsci (2010) intended both of these mechanisms to be understood as vital; that is, both consent *and* coercion are fundamental in hegemony. As demonstrated in the section above, the administration of OW work used both coercion and consent to obtain clients' and workers' compliance in the enactment of OW work. Specifically the high value of work was used to garner actors' acceptance that OW work was a moral and social good; this common sense idea was reflective of neoliberal imperatives that facilitated the process of internalizing OW work as good for clients and workers.

As noted in the previous chapter, participants identified the economic and social dividends to work. For example one worker said: “in our world, success we equate to a job - almost on the same field” (S16:worker, 10 years, female). Another worker said:

I think this whole labour-attachment stuff [OW work] —I mean you can attack that if you want but I don't see a whole hell-of-a-lot of alternative right now to other than having this programme. Given that the [OW] benefits have declined as a percentage of everything, you know, as a percentage of income, as a percentage of minimum wage, as a percentage of everything you can think of as kind of benchmarks. If you don't have a labour-attachment programme than you are sort of consigning a great number of people to exist in a pretty meager state for far too long (S12:worker, 17 years, male).

This worker not only rationalizes but defends OW work as the best alternative available to poor unemployed people who would otherwise be relegated to poverty; that is, given the lack of financial assistance available to OW clients, reattaching them to the labour market is the most humane policy response. From this vantage point, domination can be understood as a form of “practical cooperation” (Hunt 1997:284) that occurred when individuals accepted a certain order of things and relationships. Furthermore, as noted in the previous chapter, participants relayed the non-financial payoffs to work – personal (identity, pride) and social (social inclusion, civic participation). With this in mind, one could argue that the dividends of labour market participation were assumed to be enticing enough for all OW clients to leave social assistance as quickly as possible. Yet, participants, mostly clients, said that some welfare clients were not working hard enough in looking for work and that OW was not working hard enough at making clients work harder at looking for work. One client said “If you don't want it, and if somebody's making your life easy for you, or you don't have to work, then why are you going to?” (C3:client, male). Another said “You know there has to be a point where you have to be able to stand on your own two feet as well” (C2:client, male).

As participants said that some OW clients were not working hard enough and that the system needed to monitor them more rigorously, it could be said that a common sense idea was not only that OW allowed clients to free-ride but also that people will choose not to work if given the choice, so it is necessary to impose some kind of threat (for example hunger) for people to continue to work. Participants believed that OW's threats were not strong enough. These types of responses expressed a contradictory assumption

about work and welfare - specifically the comparison of work to the free-ride on welfare. According to participants, work provided financial independence, social inclusion, an identity and a healthy thriving community. A free-ride on welfare provided the surveillance of bureaucracy, stigma and below the poverty-line benefits. From a rational-choice perspective, there was little gain from the free-ride; the choice to free-ride was an irrational one as the client who chooses welfare is maximizing their losses.

By participants' own calculus, work pays and so it does not make sense to also say that OW clients should be coerced to increase their work search efforts. One explanation for the contradiction could be that the free-riders were part of the group of clients that were classified as damaged as evidenced in their disregard for or inability to recognize the benefits of work; they were judged as operating on a faulty calculus. However, I suggest instead that participants espoused neoliberal common sense ideas behind work and welfare without recognizing hegemony. Although, the implicit assumption behind OW is that we expect that people would choose not to work if they could, our neo-liberal world constructs paid employment as the most important gateway to individual prosperity. This argument supports Gramsci's position that "obedience may [...] stem from habitual patterns of behaviour, from unreflecting common participation in established forms of activity" (Femia 1979:48).

Although common sense facilitated the enactment of hegemonic ideas in the administration of OW work, participants acknowledged that these assumptions do not consistently correspond with experience. For example, one worker said "It's superficial really and, and you know at the end of it I don't think we're getting the best bang for our

buck. I think that the province, the municipalities are investing billions of dollars in the social assistance programs between ODSP and OW and there, there has to be a better way to do it” (S3:worker,7 years,female).

Often, when the contradiction surfaced, the dissonance was reconciled with other taken for granted ideas. These were primarily assumptions about motivation (work is a way for clients to contribute to a better community) or rewards (the financial payoff of work is always better than receiving OW). For example a client said “Social assistance does not give you enough to live on and how people can be satisfied living you know hand to mouth every month all the time, it just, it bewilders me” (C3:client, male).

However, work also was recognized as not enough; one worker said: “Success at the end of the day: Number one is that people need to get jobs—that’s not to say that is the cure-all, certainly not” (S8:worker, 17 years, male). This means participants may implicitly recognize the lack of alternatives to the current quid pro quo equation driving workfare work and may draw upon the legacy of previous welfare regimes that conveyed different normative assumptions regarding work, welfare and gender contributing to the seeming contradictions in OW work. According to one worker, the tension between the liberal welfare state and the neoliberal welfare state was not limited to the OW office but was a pervasive tension in welfare regimes across the world; she said “social assistance be it in Britain, the States, here anywhere, we all have this public image and we fight this constantly and we try to be more positive and some people accept the newer model but some people you're still fighting with” (S5:worker, 8 years,female).

Gramsci's (2010) hegemony and common sense were used to probe some of the taken for granted ideas that dominate the administration of OW work. I was able to identify these theoretical elements when participants' articulated assumptions and expectations surrounding work and welfare that are usually implied. Participants' responses relayed the common sense ideas about work, gender and welfare that were used to interpret policy's intent, to guide the administration of the policy, and to inform workers' and clients' comportment and expectations of the system. As noted in Chapter Four, I found common sense ideas that operate at the general welfare state level (example: the rationale for labour market functioning), the neoliberal bureaucratic level (example: rationale for the type of work that workers and clients must do in OW) and at the individual level (example: reasons that explain individual behaviour); these ideas were in line with neoliberal tenets that connected work to social and individual wellbeing. Furthermore, these common sense ideas not only dictated acceptable codes of conduct for clients and workers but also maintained hegemonic ideas surrounding work and welfare by reconciling contradictions that emerged when participants examined their experience with OW work. For example, as noted in Chapter Four, clients often rationalized OW's failures by blaming other clients for being lazy. Gramsci's (2010) theoretical concepts helped me to describe how to make sense of the incongruities in OW. How hegemony and common sense operated in OW work revealed that inculcation may not always be the result of coercion but rather may occur when ideas appeal to the commonalities shared by a group. In this light, OW work may be an ideal leverage point for neoliberal agendas as work assumes a taken for granted status that resonates across social structures. In the

next section, I use Bourdieu's (1998) theoretical apparatus to explore how 'common sense' expectations manifested across social hierarchies including class divisions.

Using Habitus to Describe Class Distinctions in OW

As noted earlier, habitus is crucial in defining what is internalized as the boundary of perceived possibilities for individuals, relationships and the normative consensus (Bourdieu 1989, Cronin 1996, Garrett 2007); it is the individual's internalized systems, structures, dispositions, and orchestrations determined by past conditions (Bourdieu 1989, Cronin 1996, Garrett 2007). Although research participants did not identify habitus per se as an element in the social processes behind OW work, they were cognizant of the interplay between objective and subjective structures. For example, one worker said: "We carry with us who we are" (S6:worker, 14 years,female).

In participants' responses, I looked for (a) the dimensions of habitus (noted earlier in this chapter as attributes, deontology, aims, conditions, and sanctions (van Dijk 2011)) and (b) how they functioned (noted earlier in this chapter as activated by individuals to navigate through the social world by influencing individual roles and mediating expectations and consequences in social contexts (van Dijk 2011)). Specifically, I examined expressions of workers' and clients' general dispositions. These were apparent in how they described their performance as it was reflective of behaviour that is appropriate in the domain, in the language they selected for defining the problem and the solution (example clients are damaged), what is deemed as legitimate to discuss (need for lifeskills training) and what should be discounted/ignored (dual expectation of women). An example of this expression occurred when one worker said:

“I would send people off to other agencies (*what is appropriate in the domain*), sometimes they just wouldn't take people and I think ‘I'm sending you the cream of the crop’ (*specific language used to define the problem and the solution*), and then [the agency says] ‘This person's doesn't have a goal’. ‘Well [as if responding to the agency] you know, aren't you going to help with that? Shouldn't you actually be helping people who need the help?’ (*expectation*). I think there is a lot of skimming (*consequence in social context*)” (S16:worker, 10 years, female).

As a theoretical tool, habitus allows individuals to be considered as individuals while recognizing the importance of material and symbolic conditions that mediate their beliefs and behaviour (Moffatt and Higgs 2005). As I noted earlier in this chapter, understanding the individual's role in oppressive systems was a primary driver behind my inquiry. Much of the literature surrounding OW highlights the role of class in oppression of welfare recipients (Baker Collins 2004, Evans 2007, Herd 2002, Herd et al. 2005, Lightman 1997, Lightman et al. 2003, Little 1998, Vaillancourt 2010). Gramsci posited that “the notion of *the* dominant ideology and *the* subordinated ideology is an inadequate way of representing the complex interplay of different ideological discourses and formations in any modern developed society” (italics in original Hall 1985:104). Habitus allowed me to explain that although domination occurs as a result of social structures, it is not exclusively caused by social structures including the stratification of groups according to class.

As noted earlier, Bourdieu conceives society as a distribution of agents according to the relative amounts of economic and cultural capital (Cronin 1996). Bourdieu posits that the world is viewed through a dichotomized lens that allows individuals to distinguish each other along mainly class lines (Steobenau 2009). This perspective aligns

with the conflict perspective of the world as he also believed that society is driven mainly by competition for resources (Steobenau 2009).

Bourdieu states that distinctions into classes are dependent on the proximity of agents in the social distribution (Cronin 1996). For this reason, I have used the notion of class as type of shared habitus because I feel that it is demonstrative of a group's ethos. From this perspective, the commonalities characteristic of groups of people, such as a class, can be identified as internalized structures. Thus, commonalities are not strictly subjective qualities, intrinsic to individuals in a specific group but rather specific manifestations of structure that is common among a group.

When initially exploring the concept of habitus as a theoretical concept for explaining how individuals made sense of the inconsistencies that emerged in their experiences with OW work, I anticipated locating a distinct habitus for workers and one for clients. When applying these concepts to the data, I looked for stratification using material signifiers of class (for example if the participant was a worker who was paid a middle class income or was a client who received below the poverty line benefits). This reflected participants' articulation of class noted in Chapter Four. Participants used concepts such as "middle-class norms" (S6: worker, female, 14 years; S14: worker, female, 15 years) that linked work to social norms and expectations.

Similarly, Bourdieu (1977:81) defines class habitus as more than material or connected to the means of production; class habitus is "unitary and systematic, transcending subjective intensions and conscious projects whether individual or collective". As well, as habitus is influenced by past experiences including the

socialization of individuals in families (Moffatt and Higgs 2005) I anticipated that participants' habitus would have emerged as patterns that linked their own current material standing, or the material standing in their families of origin as poor, middle and upper class. However, workers disclosed that their families of origin were poor as well as middle class. For most clients, it was the first time that they needed welfare or their families did not previously receive social assistance. These differences were important instances that interrupted the possible essentializing that I feared when searching for the dimensions of habitus.

When searching for and naming commonalities and patterns between, among and across participant groupings, I feared that I came dangerously close to stereotyping participants along class lines – one of the very things that I wanted to challenge through this investigation. However, Bourdieu's (1989) habitus was a relevant concept to the inquiry as it helped to expose the existential and normative distinctions in participants' accounts that were not strictly material. These distinctions corresponded with Bourdieu's (1977:80) statement that "habitus causes practices and works to be immediately intelligible and foreseeable and hence taken-for-granted". For participants, the differences manifested as taken for granted assumptions about class that were expressed when actors articulated their internalized ideas about welfare – its role, design and outcomes. For example, one client said:

This [welfare] wasn't supposed to be a long term solution. It's supposed to be a stop-gap solution. Unfortunately, what happens is that it becomes a permanent fix and then people become reluctant to some extent and are looking for certain things. It's the expectation and no one is really being held accountable for these sort of things (C2:client, male).

Similar taken for granted assumptions could be found in a worker's ideas about OW's design. She said:

I'm having a hard time articulating this because, I, I so genuinely feel that it's an opportunity for municipalities to truly do something worthwhile in their lives but we're also accountable for the taxpayer's money and we need to ensure that every cheque that goes out is for someone that's worthy of it. If they're [clients] working under the table or they've taken off to go to another country for three months, we're going to know it but in the same token we have to take people that have no skills and teach them (S10:worker, 32 years, female).

Although subjectivity influenced how entitlement and obligation were internalized, constructed and enacted, the administration of OW work adhered to and was consistently reflective of a specific grammar; behind the provision of benefits the interaction between agency and structure resulted in a practice that enforced a quid pro quo logic that was pivotal in constructing expectations surrounding the self-reliant individual. In my inquiry, class habitus manifested as opposition between the waged worker and the welfare client; this construct was congruent with the common sense of market philosophy noted earlier in this chapter. This finding also supports Lightman's (1997) analysis, noted in the previous chapter, that OW clients are considered an underclass.

This iteration of class based habitus emerged from both clients' and workers' stories. One could argue that 'work' has remained a central tenet of OW policy and practice even though the results are contradictory or disappointing because 'work' is a social relationship congruent with the current iteration of class based distinctions and hierarchies. That is, because work has assumed a fundamental normative position in society, it serves to maintain differences in power that are not just about class but other

forms of capital that influence identity, opportunities and risk. In the neoliberal context of OW work, work is a highly symbolic site for the identification, exchange, accumulation and legitimization of social capital that differentiates and distinguishes individuals and groups of people. Currently, emotional and material wellbeing relies on interactions on a social level; earning income by exchanging labour is a social relationship (Van Dijk 2011). The habitus operating behind OW reflects the current social stratification of workers that is not only based along the lines of wage earner versus welfare client but also along the lines of low-wage non-skilled labour versus skilled higher wage earners.

Furthermore, although I could conceive that there would be many different types of habitus (for example mentor, expert, auditor) at play in OW a specific and shared habitus emerged as primary in the operations of OW - the ‘coach’ and the ‘gatekeeper’ habitus. This specific and shared habitus paralleled Lipsky's (1980) account of the dual role of bureaucrats. Lipsky (1980) said that bureaucrats play the benevolent role in dispensing public goods and services while at the same time acting as protectors of the public purse. The coach habitus is the benevolent side of the bureaucrat while the gatekeeper is the protector of the public purse. The coach and gatekeeper habitus also correspond with the tension noted in Chapter Two that links the administrative focus of workfare to the normative rules and values underpinning the provision of poor relief (Piven and Cloward 1993, Torjman 1996). For example, where the normative function of workfare is punitive, the coercive and threatening aspects of the policy are administratively reinforced. The more disadvantaged the group, the “more surveillance

and coercion” (Henman 2004:187) are used. Whereas, where the normative function of workfare is reformatory, the assistive intent of the policy is highlighted (Keleher 1990).

An example of the coach habitus could be found when one worker said:

People have to be stabilized first. People have to have basic needs met first before we can have expectations and you really have to understand who each individual is in order to understand what is going to motivate them, what’s the incentive for moving forward and what the barriers are (S4:worker, 5 years, female).

Another worker said:

You would kind of help them to build their confidence. You [clients] have to have some pretty great skills to survive and roll with the punches and keep your spirits up when times are tough. I think that we expect ‘just get out there’; sometimes it’s hard for people to just get out of bed (S16:worker, 10 years, female).

In the data, I found that the coach habitus was empathetic toward the client and used motivation and encouragement to enact the work requirements in OW whereas the gatekeeper habitus was concerned about the public purse and used enforcement of the quid pro quo equation to rationalize OW work. An example of the gatekeeper’s alignment was found in the following statement made by a client “If you're not doing everything you can, and you can be proven that you're not, and you are outright lying about it then you should get no help at all” (C3:client, male).

The gatekeeper habitus also emerged in workers’ responses. One worker said “There is still a carryover of: we still have to protect the public purse” (S8:worker, 17 years, male). Another example could be found when a worker described the interaction with a client surrounding OW’s work expectations. The worker said “[as client:] “Ah, you’re threatening me?” [interviewee:] “No I’m just telling you exactly how it is.” I said:

“I’m going home at night and I’m going to sleep because I haven’t slacked on my job—I have done my best for you and if you’ve done the best for yourself you’re going to be a winner eventually” (S9:worker, 32 years, male).

As noted earlier, habitus functions as an apparatus for making sense of the social universe (Bourdieu 1989). The data revealed that OW actors not only recognized but also accepted the dual habitus (coach and gatekeeper) as ‘normal’ in the administration of OW work; this dual habitus helped to mediate the normative expectations behind the activation of OW’s work requirements. An example of how habitus functioned to make sense of the social universe could be found in the following quote made by a client who was called into the OW office repeatedly to verify her income. When I asked her how she made sense of that she said “I just thought it was because I was employed, right? That the reason why I had to go every year was because I was employed and they wanted to make sure that I was claiming everything that I earned and not hiding any money from them” (C6:client, female).

Interestingly, participants did not occupy one habitus rigidly but moved between the coach and gatekeeper fluidly. This fluidity could be found in the following statement made by a worker:

Did I ever cut someone off because I didn’t think their job search was adequate, or not up to snuff, or that maybe they were offered a job and they should have taken it? No, I tried to get an understanding of what that person’s mindset was at the time and tried to offer them supports and tried to look at other options for them (S13:worker, 15 years, female).

Another worker said:

I don’t know if it is a question about testing people’s eligibility—that has more to

do with a case worker being in a position of power and now dealing with an individual who is in a system where they are virtually powerless and vulnerable. It drives me crazy. I'm not saying that is something that is prevalent; I don't believe it's prevalent, I might have experienced that only once or twice: that's just an abuse of power. I think that buys into that whole stereotype: they're making the assumption that people someone is on social assistance they're lazy. So now, in order to disprove that, now they're guilty until proven innocent (S8:worker, 17 years, male).

Another worker said:

I would say the individuals who see it [OW policy] as black and white are perhaps more closely aligned with a taxpayer notion: "It's my money, it's right or wrong, it's very clear, you should be able to do it in this country if you've been to school and been that; I expect that you're going to be able to achieve that." And that's their experience. They haven't necessarily spent a lot of time actually trying to survive on 500 bucks a month (S14:worker, 15 years, female).

This dually occupied habitus was also found in client's responses. For example, one client said:

If you do work, say part-time you start working and you generate a certain amount of income, they [OW] deduct it from your basic support, right, so I think this is something that I have heard from other people where they say that 'oh people just take advantage of the system and there's no incentive to work so they just stay on it [OW] forever'. (C1:client, female).

Another client said:

There comes a point in time when you have to hold those people [workers] accountable too. So there has to be a certain accountability and responsibility too as well so when you have a program you say here's what you get for 3 years but in those 3 years we're hoping you're at this level and that you will move onto the next level. You [clients] have to show some kind of progress as well (C2:client, male).

The permeability of the coach and gatekeeper habitus corresponds with Bourdieu's (1989) explanation that habitus is used to navigate the social world; participants occupied the habitus that best corresponded with their immediate social context. Thus, not only was the coach/gatekeeper habitus congruent with hegemonic

ideas and normative expectations related to work and welfare, one could identify this divided habitus as playing a mediating role between the state and the citizen in either dispensing public goods or protecting the public purse.

These roles and functions were recognized as legitimate and they therefore provided the logic for the expectations that the system had of the individual and the individual had of the system (Ahmed and Jones 2008). This idea was reflected in the following statement made by a worker: “I think we were all maybe approaching that a little differently. I think I tried to be as fair as I could, but in the end there were individuals that didn’t appear to be meeting requirements and blatantly not pursuing employment” (S13:worker, 15 years, female). According to Gramsci, there are two active elements in hegemony which intend to produce a worldview (Mumby 1997) - civil society and political/social society. The state coerces when garnering consent of civil society fails. Bourdieu’s (1989) habitus, understood and internalized structures, helps to bring the hegemonic project into focus as active in micro processes. Applying this framework to the data leads me to argue that through OW work, the state coerced welfare clients through the processes of becoming eligible, employable and employed either through enforcement (gatekeeper) or by manipulating clients through motivation/empathy (coach).

As participants’ responses revealed that they often served both of these masters, they also expressed tensions and conflict with their shared and dual habitus. For example, in the interview with a worker (S5:worker, 15 years, female), when talking about clients she constructed them as helpless victims (allowing her to assume the role of coach) and

individuals making rational choices (allowing her to assume the role of gatekeeper). The client was both without blame and personally accountable. Oscillating between the coach and gatekeeper habitus may have reconciled internal tensions that allowed actors to align themselves with an identified ‘other’ (the coach habitus let workers off the hook for the punitive practices behind OW work or the gatekeeper habitus allowed clients to distinguish themselves from the stereotyped OW client). From this perspective, one can see that a group’s or individual’s habitus is relational; the apparatus for making sense of the social world depends on how individuals constructed the other players on the social field. This dynamic emerged from participants’ responses and I used the terms ‘strategies of proximity’ and ‘strategies of distance’ to express these contrasts and comparisons that participants used to describe the symbolic position one occupies and that occupied by the other. There is relative autonomy between economic and politics but interests are not just material. This is similar to Gramsci. Actions and behaviour are interest-oriented and advantage seeking but not rational choice but rather pre-reflective. Interest is defined as “whatever motivates or drives action toward consequences that matter” (Swartz 1997:71).

Strategies Engaged In Relation To Occupied Social Locations

According to Bourdieu (1989) the world is misrecognized as constructed along a binary in which the world is perceived as good/bad, male/female, etc, when in fact both the objective and subjective world is more complex than this either/or construction. Although this position makes sense conceptually, I found this idea of dichotomies instrumental in understanding how Bourdieu’s (1989) theoretical apparatus may come together in practice. As I accepted the notion that the oppressed constitute and are

constituted by the oppressor (Good-Gingrich forthcoming), then an analysis that considers the power dynamics in social relationships must define the ‘other’ - that is ‘they’ need to be recognized and brought into focus.

Bourdieu’s (1989) attention to dichotomies alerted me to the fundamental role that dichotomies play for individuals navigating the social world. This led me to think about the notion of the ‘other’ which I used as a guide to reflect on the data. I found that defining the ‘other’ was crucial in understanding an individual’s habitus as actors use strategies to maintain or change their occupied social position in relation to the ‘other’ in their social line of sight. Actors determined the moral, economic, and cultural distinctions and used these elements to evaluate their location in relation to the ‘other’. As noted in Chapter Two, Bourdieu (1989:16) identifies a “strategy of condescension” as a technique used by agents to deny the space between their privileged location and those subordinate. This notion was a helpful launching point to theorize the dynamics that occur in the space between OW actors. As I detail in the next section, I found that the social space between actors and the ‘other’ was either desired (actors wanted to maintain the distance between themselves and the other) or it was undesired (actors wanted to increase the proximity between themselves and the other).

When analyzing the data, I found actors’ responses revealed an alignment to some OW actors and a distancing away from other OW actors. I have named the instances when actors aligned themselves with others as ‘strategies of proximity’; these were instances when actors attempted to symbolically move closer to the esteemed ‘other’. An example of a strategy of proximity occurred when some workers drew analogies between

themselves and OW clients; they increased the symbolic proximity between themselves and the client and distanced themselves from OW work. One worker did this when she said:

The people that I was working with - my caseload - you know suddenly their cheques got slashed by a huge percentage – I would feel for people - you know if my paycheque went down by \$200 a month – it's already limited - it was really tough those times for people and it was hard because there was less support - you know the idea that 'any job is a good job' - that was blah blah - this mantra - didn't fit my value system (S16:worker, 10 years, female).

Another example of this strategy could be found in the following statement made by another worker when she said: "We had to report to the [income maintenance] worker what was going on. I would always say [to clients] 'if you tell me something it's going to go in your file and I'm going to talk to your worker so be careful what you say' (S11:worker, 1.5 years, female).

An interesting example of a strategy of proximity could be found in the following statement made by a worker who identified that clients' also use strategies of proximity; that is he thought that for some clients the primary motivation to get a job is to please the OW worker:

So, that was some of the challenges that, I think, I experienced and more so as I moved into the management roles and that the staff experienced, with no particular answers to the questions; and it was a little bit defeating to see good people [clients] to keep trying and failing and very satisfying to see them get the first job: as they were getting multiple jobs you knew their reality hadn't really changed; and you knew that they were kind of doing it for you, not necessarily for anything else. Not the same kind of satisfaction (S15:worker, 30 years, male).

Increasing the symbolic proximity between workers and clients was also found in responses from managers who used this strategy as a method to supervise workers. An

example occurred in the following statement where a manager drew an analogy between the relationship that he had with workers and the relationship that clients have with workers. He said:

I'm an advocate that how the employees are treated is going to reflect on how they'll in turn treat our clients. Some of the things we have initiated are, that I've made the decision to initiate is to provide people with opportunity, because that is really what we are doing and what we are trying to do for our clients is to provide them with opportunities to get jobs and a sustainable lifestyle (S8:worker, 17 years, male).

Strategies of proximity could also explain the role that the funding formula behind OW, noted in the previous chapter, played in yoking the worker's to the client's success. One manager recognized how the funding formula increased the proximity between the worker and the client when he said:

I think part of the problem with the way it's set up and I think this is what a lot of staff has internalized—it's one thing for the client but it's the funding model for how we get paid and things like that. So I think there is an inordinate amount of pressure that the staff feels, and I don't know that they need to, but they do. We have to keep the numbers up so the [department] has enough money to keep this thing going (S15:worker, 30 years, male).

In the quote noted above, one could also identify how the strategies of proximity could also correspond with the coach habitus; the coach leveraged the close proximity between themselves and the desired other as a social space occupied by themselves and the desired other. In contrast, as I discuss in the following section, I also identified in the data 'strategies of distance' that actors used to symbolically move away from the despised 'other'; that is actors used this strategy to increase the distance in the social space they shared with disregarded or disrespected other.

As noted in the previous chapter, the most surprising finding for me was that clients were critical of other OW clients. This could be understood as a strategy of distance as clients tried to increase the symbolic space between themselves and the stereotyped OW client. This dynamic could be identified in the following statement made by a client:

They [OW worker] say, 'Ok well, this is a participation agreement. You're supposed to do 40 hours of job searching a month'. They give you a piece of paper and you have to fill it out when you hand in your income card but honestly if you want to you can fake that 'Well I tried here and I tried here' but honestly, I don't know if they actually call these places to see if these people have applied. I don't know because they shouldn't just be saying 'Oh well you know I walked down to McDonalds and dropped my resume in (C6:client, female).

Thus, the strategies of distance evident in this client's response could be said to correspond with the gatekeeper habitus as the client distanced herself away from the undesired other (OW clients) and instead aligned herself with the desired other (the taxpayer) by evoking the negative stereotypical welfare client as a cheat.

Another interesting example could be found in the following statement made by a client:

Part of OW is not to leave people homeless, is it not? You know to try to help people but they also need to up the ante a little with the employment services - you know maybe offer a little bit more if you're looking for work - to give you a little bit more because these people [other clients] even though they say that they are looking for work they are not necessarily looking for work? They may say they are but are they really? (C7:client, female).

Here, the client began by being critical of OW and then became critical of other OW clients when she conjures up ideas of welfare cheats. This response revealed an initial strategy of proximity with other clients (critical of OW) that transformed into a

strategy of distance with other clients (critical of the welfare client a.k.a the welfare cheat). This statement also demonstrated the fluidity of habitus (noted earlier) as well as the corresponding strategies engaged by actors occupying a specific habitus (coach aligned with the client versus gatekeeper aligned with the taxpayer). Moreover, these responses are examples of how habitus and strategies can reproduce exploitive beliefs and actions. In the next section, I will discuss how symbolic violence could be identified in the strategies of distance and proximity used by participants.

Strategies are Conducive to Symbolic Violence

The coach and gatekeeper habitus as well as the strategies of distance and proximity helped to dissect the symbolic violence active in OW work. Symbolic violence is defined as:

the capacity to impose and inculcate means of understanding and structuring the world or symbolic systems, that contribute to the reproduction of the social order by representing economic and political power in disguised forms that endow them with legitimacy and/or *taken-for-grantedness* – the best warrant for longevity any social order might hope for (italics in original Wacquant 1987:66).

Symbolic violence means gaining control or domination through moral or economic obligation.

Thus, it could be said that the power to impose specific constructions (such as the damaged client or the dead beat dad) as legitimate resulted in symbolic violence in OW. Moreover, this process relied upon the consent of both the dominated and the dominant as evidenced by the strategies engaged by actors occupying a specific habitus. In OW, symbolic violence could be identified in the activities of the coach and gatekeeper; both the coach and gatekeeper conferred goods/services/support as well as monitored

eligibility, accountability and deservedness – they just used different strategies to accomplish these goals. Clients experienced symbolic violence as workers maintained control through moral or material means. Both the coach and gatekeeper enacted OW work by using moral or material ideas and strategies such as motivation (coach) or coercion (gatekeeper). Through this habitus, OW work functioned to legitimize neoliberal economic and political interests and in doing so converted them into “symbolic recognition for the collective good” (Swartz 1997:91). As Bourdieu (1977:192) noted “gentle, hidden exploitation is the form taken by man’s exploitation of man whenever overt, brutal exploitation is impossible”. Consequently, symbolic violence not only legitimized existing power relations in the enactment of OW work as evidenced in the functions of the coach/gatekeeper habitus, it also facilitated the relative stability of the actions and beliefs deemed as legitimate.

An explanation for the strategies of distance that clients used in relation to other OW clients could be understood through the lens of symbolic violence. In the enactment of OW work, clients may be faced with the idea or the experience that they were devalued because they occupied a location with less authority, legitimacy and power compared to workers and me. Both the worker and I occupied a specific social space (agent of the state) that granted us legitimacy and concomitantly a degree of symbolic capital. Moreover, in the relationship between client and worker, through the enactment of policy workers played a significant role in the symbolic violence in OW work. The enactment of work requirements required that workers leverage their personal symbolic power such as their formal training. An example of this dynamic could be identified in

the following statement made by a worker who leveraged her training as an employment counselor in the enactment of OW work:

This might be hard because I was asking as an employment person more so than what I should have been doing. So I'm not sure what I should have been doing. But, for example, prior to coming into OW, I know there is job...I don't know what they call it...but you had to record all of the places that you went looking for work. In the way that's presented by someone who is not employment [counseling] (as if talking with a client) 'Here's a sheet, fill it out, come back to me in a month if you want your cheque' would be the bottom line perception of anyone getting that. If an employment person explains it, then it would be (as if talking with a client) "I want you to do some research. I want you to look at companies that you might want to work for. When you have identified what you want, write it down here'. So, what I would have done is said, 'I'm better with five that you can tell me the full story about each one of these and who you talk to and when rather than a full page that you just dropped off a resume but that only comes with some employment training and some employment coaching and not sending them off to another person to get all that (S4:worker, 5 years,female).

Symbolic violence occurs when a specific conception of reality is imposed upon another person or group. This version of reality "tacitly [lays] down the dividing line between the thinkable and the unthinkable, thereby contributing toward the maintenance of the [existing] symbolic order" (Bourdieu 1977). In this instance, the coach habitus enlisted her official status as a worker as well as her personal symbolic capital as an employment counselor to enact the work part of OW in a specific way.

The enactment of OW work also necessitated that workers leverage their recognized status as a representative of the state and enforcers of official normative expectations. Clients may have responded to this implicit power dynamic by distancing themselves from the negative stereotype of the OW client. Concomitantly, in order to earn symbolic capital, clients may have aligned themselves with actors representative of official worldviews by espousing supposedly common sense ideas and expectations about

work and welfare in order to earn symbolic capital. By adopting the official worldview, even if it was superficially adopted, clients and others participated in acts of symbolic violence against themselves and others.

From this perspective, it could be said that actors' practical mastery of structures was for the purpose of getting along or getting ahead; strategies applied in the field are for the purpose of maintaining or bettering one's social location. Furthermore, these strategies followed a certain logic. I have identified this logic as 'rules of the game'. As I discuss in the following section, actors used strategies in relation to others according to rules of the game. I found that the rules of the game were comprised of expectations and rules were also engaged in relation to the pursuit or exchange of capital on a social field.

Rules of the Game

In participant responses I found that strategies were governed by unspoken codes - rules of the game that provided the structures behind strategies. This dynamic was reflective of Bourdieu's analysis that social coordination resembles a game; it is active and non-discursive (Calhoun 1995). Participants used implicit rules that operated as the norms that guided which strategies were appropriate to use in the specific social context and what possible outcomes could be expected when the strategies were applied. An example could be found in the following statement made by a worker:

So, you know, the reinforcement at your local employer level was what you thought you were seeing politically so you learned the rules of the game. So if you gave \$785 (and it didn't show up on a report) — you were so inclined to say [to clients]: 'I'll give you as much as I can before it impacts me (S14:worker, 15 years, female).

Another worker said: “As a front line worker you quickly were able to identify who on the management team you wanted to align yourself with. So, for those that didn't want to be ringing the bell [when a client's benefits were terminated], you wanted to work for Mr. P. So your goal was to work for Mr. P” (S1:worker, 10 years, male).

Another worker said: “Okay. I remember one director saying: ‘Well, they [the province] give us the money and set the rules, but we're going to do what we want to do. We know what's best for the people’. And sometimes the rules were not totally different, but they weren't the same as what I thought the feeling of the legislation was” (S9:worker, 32 years, male).

According to Bourdieu, the sense of the game is “rarely ‘set out or imposed in an explicit way’; rather with the new entrant to each field this accommodation takes place [...] gradually, progressively and imperceptibly” (Bourdieu 2003:11 as noted in Garrett 2010:351). I found that the responses contained an implicit sense for how things are done. One worker said: “I give credit to the leadership here—they have managed to turn this around and say: ‘Okay, we still have to play by these rules, but let's make the focus truly employment focused.’ (S8:worker, 17 years, male). Another worker said:

I was lucky when I started, the first supervisors I had - and these were tough times, in the early 90s the recession and I would come back as a new worker on the road, and I would say to my supervisor ‘here's the scenario’ and the supervisor would say ‘do you want to help these people?’ and I would say ‘yes’ and he would say ‘Find it - find how we can justify helping them’. So that's what I would do. I would go through [the directives] and find ‘may’..you would interpret the language. I always approached the job that way (S16:worker, 10 years, female).

This quote also revealed instances of resistance to the rules of the game that occur while actors continued to play within the rules of the game. This means that the rules of the game were an important element in the functioning of habitus as the rules of the game set boundaries for social relationships by providing an implicit logic for how things are done; that is the rules of the game established expectations for the relationship. A worker described what she believed was an expectation for workers when she said: “If the OW experience that clients have with casemanagers or whoever isn't one that improves their sense of who they are or gives them confidence or just sees them as being valued as people then that would really deter their ability to go forward to work I suppose” (S5:worker, 8 years,female).

Furthermore, I found that the rules of the game in OW work were comprised of expectations demonstrative of hegemonic ideas about work, gender and welfare. Examples can be found in the following statements made by clients: “I know a few people that are on OW and I know that they’re more capable of working but for some reason they either have another child by the time they have to actually start finding a job or they just are too lazy and to me it’s like OW is not pushing them whatsoever to get a job or to go back to school or anything like that” (C6:client, female); “I think in the long run that that’s what most people would want to get [a job] so they have long term goals and OW has the resources to help them with that. I think that they want to be good” (C1:client, female).

A worker made the following statement regarding what she expected from clients looking for work: “I guess a commitment to do what they said they wanted to do. So the

whole idea was ‘what do you want and how can we make this achievable for you?’

(S16:worker, 10 years, female). As noted earlier in the section regarding the primacy of income assistance compared with employment assistance, this worker described what clients could expect when they call the OW office:

In our case, if you’re looking for financial assistance—you call our main number. You’ve got to wait in line for somebody to answer that call; once you answer that call you’re with one of our intake-screening representatives that takes the information down, basic information into the system; after that’s done then they schedule you an appointment and after you have that appointment—which may be six days now, so within six days someone will see you—(or you could go on-line and fill it out, you still have an appointment); then you meet with the worker. The worker will tell you: “These are your rights and responsibilities which you are required to do as part of the programme.” You might have to go through a literacy test so your ability to comprehend the English language is going to be assessed (S8:worker, 17 years, male).

An interesting statement about expectations was made by a worker who recognized that employers sometimes ‘game the system’. He said:

Joe Blow was capable and motivated and we’ve tested him and we would tell them what their background and education and that and they would say: ‘Okay, fine; we’ll set him up in the programme.’ And stats went up because we were placing a lot of people in the programmes. And also we had the programme where would could subsidize the income for a certain length of time while the employer trained them. After a certain number of months they would pay them directly themselves once they became an asset to them. Depending on employer, some employer when every three months and would say: ‘Oh well, he just didn’t work out.’ (S9:worker, 32 years, male).

What was interesting about this statement was that this part of the game seemed to be an accepted expectation for how things were done by some employers whereas the tolerance was quite different for any gaming of the system done by clients. As the rules

of the game functioned to communicate what was acceptable, I anticipated that they would have also played a role in the enactment of OW work.

As noted in the previous chapter, training was a primary technique in the enactment of OW work for both workers and clients that was aimed at influencing intent by influencing practice/behaviour – or how things are done. An example of the integral role that training played in influencing practice was found in the following statement made by a manager “I think common sense is really critical and I think it’s why the training that we do and the various tools that we give people that they can pull out of their tool box and say ‘What am I going to do to help this person?’” (S6:worker, 14 years,female).

According to Gramsci, there are two forms of domination – coercion and intellectual/moral; leadership in institutions is an expression of intellectual/moral domination (Femia 1979). This idea helped to identify that the rules of the game were reinforced (implicitly and explicitly) for workers through the worker/supervisor relationship. One worker said: “In management meetings they would say here are the good workers - people with the lower caseloads so they were the more effective [workers]” (S16:worker, 10 years, female). A manager reflected this idea when he said that advancement is seen as motivation for workers:

We had one manager go on so I saw this as an opportunity to start to bring in another manager; I made the appointment of a supervisor to now assume the role of a manager. That will cause a ripple effect because in behind that supervisor will be a union staff that will be an acting supervisor—from the union staff someone else will have an opportunity to fill that role, and on and on it goes. If people start seeing movement, and the bases of that movement is positive (S9:worker, 32 years, male).

As demonstrated in the quotes above, the rules of the game were not only communicated but also reinforced by conferring material rewards such as promotions or symbolic rewards such as praise on workers who played by the rules. The rules of the game were important elements in the functioning of habitus as they set the boundary for what was possible, what was expected and what was rewarded or punished. Rewards and punishment could be understood as the outcome of the pursuit of capital. It could be said that the strategies employed by actors were enacted in relation to the pursuit and exchange of capital in OW's fields.

Capital in OW

As noted earlier in this chapter, Bourdieu uses the concept of capital to refer to the economic, social and symbolic resources used by individuals and groups to maintain or enhance their location in social fields (Bourdieu 1986, Swartz 1997). As I discuss in the next section, I found that cultural, symbolic and financial capital were recognized, pursued and used to leverage the normative expectations behind OW work. In one worker's response, she identified the various types of capital and the impact that a lack of capital can have. She said "Some of us are blessed with more luck shall we say some of us are blessed with stronger character, some have better family supports community supports, whatever you want to call it, better health, but the more barriers that one has, the harder it is" (S5:worker, 8 years,female) .

Symbolic capital is governed by the specific social fields that legitimize which type of capital is socially recognized (Bourdieu 1986, Swartz 1997). Some forms of symbolic and cultural capital are more valued than others (Bourdieu 1986, Swartz 1997).

As noted in the previous chapter, the moral and financial benefits to work were often noted by research participants; these corresponded with notions of financial and symbolic capital. For Bourdieu cultural capital is a type of social capital that refers to any set of non-economic goods and services including educational credentials that can assist one to improve their social standing or status (Bourdieu 1986, Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer 2011, Swartz 1997). The cultural capital that I identified operating in OW work was primarily training and education.

As I noted in the previous chapter, training was used as a way to influence interpretation and enactment of OW for both workers and clients. However, training and education had another specific dynamic for clients. Directive 1.1: (2008:2) describes the types of training and education that are acceptable as part of OW work. Education work is limited to “basic education” such as literacy training and earning a grade 12 diploma; “job-specific skills training” is limited to short term non-professionalized training such as Personal Support Worker or Security Guard.

As education and training are noted as types of OW work that are intended to increase clients’ employability (Directive 1.1 2008), one could say that education is a type of cultural capital with high symbolic value in constructs of the ideal employable neoliberal citizen. However, as OW work is undergirded by dominant class values that divided individuals into wage earners and welfare dependents, I found that rather than functioning to improve the client’s social position (by acquiring the cultural capital earned through education/training), education and training of clients functioned to

maintain current class structures. This function was evident in the types of negative assumptions that emerged in the following statement made by one worker:

They [clients] expected you to have the answers. [as client:] ‘I don’t know why I can’t get a job.’ [interviewee:] ‘Well one, have you been looking?’ [as client:] ‘Well there’s no jobs out there anyways and, you know, if I see something in the paper I go and there’s a big, long lineup—and I’ve only got grade eight—why bother?’ [interviewee:] ‘Okay, well, let’s talk about that. How often does it come up that you have to have more education than what you have?’ [as client:] ‘Oh, all the time.’ [interviewee:] ‘What do you think about going back to school? Going to school is a job and they’re prepared to pay you and give you a bus pass to get back and forth to school.’ [as client:] ‘Well I’m not very good writing and reading and that.’ [interviewee:] ‘Well why don’t you go and find out and see where you have to start?’ [as client:] ‘Well, I guess I could look into it.’ And most of them—to be honest—didn’t want to go to school. They probably had bad experiences all the way through (S9:worker, 32 years, male).

These assumptions highlighted the normative function of education and training in the enactment of OW work. However, as clients’ access to education was limited to low end employment and educational attainment, clients were unable to accumulate the symbolic capital that was esteemed enough to have facilitated a change in social locations. Longer term training or post-secondary education might have allowed clients to move from poverty to middle class wages. Instead, I argue that the training and education work in OW facilitated a lateral move in positions within the social class currently occupied by clients - from poor unemployed person in receipt of welfare to working poor. Thus training and education served to reinforce the class divides between wage earner and welfare recipient by conferring capital that resulted in a modification in social location that corresponded with the class status quo. That is, the training and education provided to OW clients functions to maintain a distinction between the welfare client and wage earners by relegating him/her to the bottom rung of the labour market.

Although through the enactment of OW work, it may appear that it was the bureaucracy's task to 'trade-up' client's capital either directly (through work and education) or to change their habitus (through life skills training) which would have either changed the value of the capital they possessed (negative to positive) or increased the amount of capital they accumulated (economic capital in the form of earnings versus OW benefits) I found that OW work also manipulated the highly symbolic capital of training and education in a way that maintained the current social hierarchies by relegating OW clients to work that has low economic, cultural and symbolic capital. This exchange also relied upon the coach or gatekeeper to inculcate clients and workers with neoliberal attitudes and aspirations toward work and inclinations to avoid welfare at all possible costs. Thus, besides providing a ready source of conscripted labour for low-end jobs (Piven and Cloward 1993, Shragge 1997), OW work maintains normative distinctions by reinforcing the social location of OW clients and their economic, cultural and symbolic capital. The dialogue between OW work and the normative assumptions behind work, welfare and gender serves to brand OW clients in ways that correspond with market ethos hegemony.

I also found that in OW work, negative capital operated in unexpected ways. As noted in the beginning of this chapter, negative cultural capital does not refer to the absence or deficit of capital, such as a financial debt rather it refers to a brand of cultural capital that is recognized as negative (Bourdieu 2000). However, negative capital manifested differently in OW work. In OW work, the presence of certain types of capital (grade school education) was not merely discounted or ignored (as noted by Good-

Gingrich: forthcoming) but treated as a moral or social encumbrance; negative capital was a deficit. For example one worker said:

The ones [clients] with issues or whatever you want to call it, they need a lot of help. You cannot do a quick assessment to determine where they are at in this whole sort of scheme of things, if you want to use that word, whether they've got mental health problems, whether there's addiction issues, whether they've got family issues, whether they're depressed, depressed about the situation, like the list goes on and on (S5:worker, 8 years,female).

Thus, the enactment of OW work set in motion a process where this negative capital must quickly be classified in order for it to be converted into more esteemed capital. Consequently, in OW, the client's position and trajectory were not only defined by the types and quantity of capital but also the lack of capital, the reasons they lacked it and the degree to which clients lacked it. It could be said that the assessment process noted in the previous chapter, was used to evaluate capital; recognition of capital emerged as a fundamental theoretical apparatus that was implicitly used to classify individuals as employable or unemployable. I found this type of distinction as a primary element that drove the classification of clients as 'damaged'. Thus, as Bourdieu (2000) did not intend negative capital to refer to the absence of cultural capital, one could argue that it is possible to invest in negative capital as well as to mobilize it. This argument supports Good-Gingrich's (forthcoming) position that unique types of cultural capital found in some marginalized groups may be misrecognized as negative and their specific type of cultural capital remains unrecognized and therefore the expected conversion strategies may be frustrated. In OW work, negative capital functioned to define clients and therefore relegated them to a specific social location that corresponded with current

neoliberal class distinctions. This dynamic could be identified in the following statement made by a worker who said that clients need “social skills, the middle class norms sort of skills or things that go toward giving people hope. So, if you're strong enough to compete in the labour market you'll be successful in the labour market” (S6:worker, 14 years,female). This worker identified the necessary capital for client’s success as ‘middle class norms’ that not only give clients hope but also make them strong enough to compete in the labour market. She classified the successful client as strong, hopeful and employed because they possess and can mobilize capital that is recognized and esteemed by the middle class. In the following section, I discuss how I identified the social location or fields operating in OW work.

Metaphors of Movement

As noted by one worker, in OW, the exchange of capital also facilitated the exchange of status making the move from one social location to another possible or impossible; she said:

I think most individuals who come on who have skills: who have an employment history, who have that social capital, who have supports are relatively able to move off eventually and get back on their feet. But that’s not the segment of the population that we’re struggling with; it’s the people who aren’t able to move forward (S13:worker, 15 years, female).

The transactions related to capital and status occurred in a specific social space – this can be described as a field. According to Bourdieu (1989), field is a social realm, the domain where social transactions take place; it is where the game is played. As social relationships are governed by actors who learn how to work within social structures,

Bourdieu (1989) states that the social structures of field and capital are dialectically related with action. Field is “a patterned set of practices within a boarder social space which suggests competent action in conformity with rules and roles” (Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer 2011:23). It is either a playground or battlefield in which individuals try to advance their position. Social practice shapes fields because individuals play the game according to a set of rules that facilitate accumulation of a valued form of capital. This logic helps to reproduce field.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the social location of workers and clients was patterned along class lines that distinguished individuals who are able to satisfy their needs by earning wages in the labour market versus individuals who received assistance from the state. Clients’ and workers’ awareness of ‘field’ emerged throughout their responses. I found that they described occupied places (example “black hole”, “journey”, “path”) and the array of possible moves (example “off assistance”, “steps toward independence”, “being stuck”) in OW. Some of these were classified as desired moves/locations that operated in accordance with the rules and would therefore be rewarded with the accumulation of capital. For example, clients who found a job would accumulate more financial capital and would save taxpayer dollars; through training, clients would achieve social inclusion and workers would be promoted. Undesired locations were described pejoratively (being “stuck”) and would result in punishment such as poverty or social exclusion. For example one worker said: “From the clients’ perspective it [work] is the way to get out of poverty and the way to achieve sustainability. Independence” (S8:worker, 17 years, male). These metaphors were

significant in identifying the dynamics operating in OW work. I identified these as metaphors of movement.

According to Fopp (2009), metaphors are effective at conveying symbolic social meanings through common sense constructions of everyday life. Data included clients being described as being “on OW” (S5:worker, 8 years,female) and success was described as “getting off welfare” (S1, S13, S15). I understood these metaphors as implicitly constructing welfare as an infringement, a trespass – almost as though clients were stepping on toes. Further, the responses that described client’s barriers, such as the damaged client, intimated a road block on the field – an impediment on the way to somewhere better than the current occupied location. One worker said: “People in our program - they want to go from here to here and often they don't get there and they feel like losers” (S16:worker, 10 years, female).

In the research project, participants described the transition from OW to a job as a “journey” on the “employment path”. For example one worker said: “It's somebody else's path. I guess the thing is to try to support people on their own path and I do believe people want to work. People want to be successful - they want to be happy. But it's helping them to find that - you know their own path through that” (S16:worker, 10 years, female). The path metaphor brought to mind a “course of action or movement in a certain direction” (Fopp 2009) that was connected to common sense constructs of success such as “moving up” “progressing forward” or “getting off welfare”. Thus, metaphors of movement along the employment path were important signifiers that conveyed fundamental neoliberal tenets such as choice and action (Fopp 2009). (However, as I

discuss further in this section, the ability to make choices or take action was not reflected in participants' stories). One worker said: "Most people who are looking for work will come back not only with a [job search] list but they'll take advantage of getting their resume put together, they'll critique it, they'll sit down with their worker and get some advice—they'll look for a referral to programmes that will help them advance themselves" (S8:worker, 17 years, male).

As indicated in this quote, in OW, the path metaphor relied upon and activated the normative expectation that citizens were active and autonomous; they were taking action and making choices and decisions in their "steps" to employment. For example a worker said: "[As if talking to a client] Let's take little steps so maybe seeing the value in a lot of different kind of jobs and feeling like if you take that job it doesn't mean that you are stuck there forever (S16:worker, 10 years, female). These discursive elements conveyed the idea that opportunities for individual well-being were plentiful as long as there is a possibility to support one-self; "failure to do so is laziness, and social class and social forces cannot explain your poverty or your drug habit or your illegitimate children" (Fopp 2009:7). These types of normative assumptions emerged in the following client's response regarding the goal of OW work; she said:

I think it's the goal of trying help people become I guess self sufficient in the long run and they want to make sure that whatever the barriers are to their working, if its say education or if its just knowing what jobs are out there or skills development different things that you can help in those areas they will be more on their own two feet and you know hopefully barring other things they will be able to make their way and have more income than what OW would just give out (C1:client, female).

Both the movement and the trajectory along the path mirrored and transmitted normative expectations regarding work as a decision toward success and welfare as chosen failure. The metaphor that the client was on a path to employment which is a journey made by choice reinforced the idea that unemployment was voluntary and that welfare use was optional. On the OW field, clients' may choose to follow this path to a job and then 'get off'. If they do not choose this option, then it could be said that it was normatively legitimate in the OW field that clients were pushed down the path or off the path entirely.

However, the ability to make choices or unencumbered decisions was not reflected in participants' stories. In fact, as noted in the previous chapter, clients and workers acknowledged the role that the labour market, a variable outside of the client's control, played in determining whether someone will find and keep a job. Interestingly, two clients attributed their unemployment to nepotism (C5, C7) which implies that they recognized that they occupied an undesirable social location position that they could not escape because of forces beyond themselves.

The figures of speech active in participants' responses revealed that OW's field can be described as the sum of players' social locations as well as the symbolic space of welfare's administration. The practice of OW work is a field nested in the larger field of neoliberal bureaucratic practice where welfare is comprised of social locations that are structured according to a hierarchy and governed by explicit and implicit rules designed to govern movement in the field (both workers and clients). In the field there were players who occupied specific positions and negotiated the exchange of capital in

accordance with the particular habitus appropriate in the field such as coach or gatekeeper. Thus, this field was laissez-faire and at the same time punitive and paternalistic.

Metaphors and figures of speech that conveyed movement were important mechanisms in the functioning of field in OW work. These discursive elements enacted normative expectations that were used by OW actors; metaphors provided logic to the strategies of proximity and distance because they conveyed taken for granted comparisons and contrasts between oneself and the ‘other’. Metaphors also reinforced neoliberal ideas regarding poverty, unemployment and the need for welfare by relying upon and conjuring up implicit constructs of who needs welfare and why.

Bourdieu’s (1989) theoretical apparatus was helpful in dissecting the dynamics behind the interface between agency and structure in OW work. Applying his concepts reinforced his arguments including the idea that habitus is defined relationally; the notion of the other was important in describing habitus. Although there may be several types of habitus occupied by OW actors, the coach and gatekeeper habitus emerged as a shared habitus between workers and clients. Actors used their perception of the other to guide their understanding and interactions in the social world. Individuals increased the proximity between themselves and the desired other or increased the distance between themselves and the despised other. I also found that these moves were made according to a certain logic which conveyed the ‘rules of the game’. These rules influenced whether individuals were defined by others or themselves as compliant or resistant and consequently whether they received rewards or punishment. The rules of the game

emerged as a pivotal mediating element in terms of the individual's expectations of the system and the system's expectations of individuals. I found that expectations were connected to the pursuit and exchange of capital and in OW the pursuit of esteemed capital was encouraged through the training and education work that clients undertook. However, this exchange frustrated the accumulation of cultural capital and functioned instead to reinforce existing social hierarchies – specifically demarcations of class.

While the theoretical concepts that I applied were helpful in responding to my research question, as I discuss in the final section of this chapter, I experienced some theoretical dilemmas when applying Bourdieu's (1989) and Gramsci's (2010) concepts to analyze my data. Mainly, two tensions emerged. These were the balance between objective and subjective forces and opportunities for emancipatory change.

Unresolved Theoretical Dilemmas

As noted earlier, habitus, capital and field as concepts for a class based analysis may be more precise analytical concepts in societies with a feudal history (such as France) but may not neatly apply in more stratified societies such as North America. Moreover, when I applied these ideas to dissect the class based norms operating behind OW work, I struggled with the distinction between capital and habitus. I found that they shared certain key characteristics; both habitus and capital could be inherited or learned and they were both enacted and appraised socially (either subjectively or objectively). However, I found, that as Bourdieu (1989) noted, capital was not always physically apparent or manifested whereas habitus was always practiced and therefore could be observed; habitus was evident in actions and behaviour. But, in the theoretical material

that I reviewed, I was unable to identify how Bourdieu (1989) distinguishes which types of behaviour are more interest-oriented. I was unable to find Bourdieu's account for practice and actions that are not very fruitful for agents. I also found inconsistency in the level of awareness that he grants the actions undertaken by agents. At times there appears to be a high degree of awareness – for example when Bourdieu states: “Agents are endlessly occupied in the negotiation of their own identity” (Bourdieu 1989:21); at other times, Bourdieu states that agents are unaware that internalization through socialization occurs without flaw (Swartz 1997). Why is this important?

I found that the application of habitus, field and capital necessitated classification of beliefs, behaviours and ultimately of individuals or groups of individuals. As I noted earlier, this process of recognizing the ‘other’ as distinct from some archetype (client versus worker, researcher versus participant) came very close to stereotyping or essentializing. I felt that this classification relied somewhat on pathologizing actions, beliefs and thoughts in a way similar to workers classification of some OW clients as ‘damaged’. As such, it may be that these theoretical elements rely more heavily on the objective impacts of social relations (class or gender) than appears at first blush. It is unclear to me how habitus, field and capital can be engaged in an analysis of class and gender without neglecting somewhat the subjectivity of practice. Although Bourdieu (1989) intended his theories to be used as a diagnostic tool they emerged for me more as methods to describe social phenomena. This learning leads to the second theoretical dilemma that emerged for me – how the theories provided, or did not provide, strategies to change the status quo.

Opportunities for change

According to Gramsci's (2010) philosophy of praxis, people have the "ability to act together to change their world (social relations and practices)" (Swanson 2008:58). He posits that in order to shift the effects of hegemony, one must begin with the criticism of existing ideologies; problematizing common sense assumptions in everyday life can help to conceptualize it in a different light (Gramsci (2010) 2010, Mumby 1997, Robinson 2005, Swanson 2008). Similarly, Bourdieu identifies the variables necessary for social change as the "intrusion of external forces, divergent patterns of evolution (reproduction) in the particularly autonomous field that make up a society, brutal disjunction between the subjective expectations of actors and objective probabilities, growth within the forces of production, and deliberate collective action" (Wacquant 1987:81).

Although both theoretical frameworks were helpful analytical concepts that highlight the complex interplay between objective and subjective forces, I found that they were not helpful in drawing out the degree to which actors are able to change the conditions of their existence. Hegemony, common sense, habitus, field and capital appear to explain how reproduction occurs which in turn may highlight opportunities for disruption or resistance. That is, because these theoretical elements present a more nuanced approach to dissecting the dynamics of domination and emancipation, the active participation of actors with structure means that resistance is always happening.

However, these concepts did not provide me with a recipe for change as I had hoped. Rather, the opportunities for change appear to be transmutation of and not

transformation of the status quo, revised reproduction not total revolution. In other words, although Gramsci (2010) and Bourdieu (1989) acknowledge that practices implicate individuals and structures, these frameworks were not helpful in identifying how individual and bureaucratic resistance might be marshaled for change. This disappointment might be the shortcoming of the project's design as the sample did not include individuals and groups lobbying for change. However, given that others have documented the oppressive practices behind OW (example Baker Collins 2004, Evans 2007, Herd 2002, Herd et al. 2005, Lightman 1997, Lightman et al. 2003, Little 1998, Vaillancourt 2010) I would have anticipated that those in the system would also include some people who want to change the system. Rather, I found that clients and workers rationalized the practices behind OW work.

Gramsci's (2010) and Bourdieu's (1989) theoretical concepts helped me to describe how the practice of OW work was depoliticized because it engaged with taken for granted concepts, techniques and mechanisms which in turn facilitated the acceptance of contradictory and disappointing results. However, Bourdieu (1989) and Gramsci (2010) claimed that injustice can be tackled because unjust practices are constructed by people, people can also redesign them.

Conclusion

When using Gramsci's (2010) and Bourdieu's (1989) theoretical concepts to examine the role that norms play in sustaining OW's contradictions I found evidence to support their position that practice and beliefs are not always the result of coercion but rather may occur when ideas appeal to the commonalities that comprise an individual's or

a group's habitus. The beliefs and practice behind OW work were sustained through codes of conduct that transmitted what was acceptable in terms of expectations in social contexts such as the administration of OW work. I found that codes of conduct were influenced by and influenced hegemonic ideas about work, welfare and gender. Hegemony, common sense, habitus, capital and field also highlighted for me that although current practice is the result of what has happened to us and before us, we also have the autonomy to choose beliefs and behaviour that vary from this trajectory. However, when applying these concepts some gaps in the pragmatics of the theoretical frameworks emerged – namely the balance between objective and subjective forces as well as strategies to change the status quo. In the next chapter, I discuss other gaps that emerged and that present opportunities for further inquiry.

Chapter Six: Final Reflections

This chapter summarizes the major analytic, conceptual and methods contributions of the research project and also focuses on unanswered questions that emerged for me during the research project. These unanswered questions may also serve as points of inquiry for further research. I begin this chapter with a discussion related to work as a policy instrument. Following that I discuss the possibilities for research related to the practice of OW work. As this is the final chapter of the thesis, I conclude with final reflections on the research project and how the project has influenced my understanding of the administration of OW work as one of its practitioners.

Work as a policy instrument

Although some scholars have researched OW (example Baker Collins 2004, Evans et al.1995, Good Gingrich 2008, Herd et al. 2005, Herd et al. 2007, Herd et al. 2009, 7, Lightman 1997, Lightman et al. 2003, Lightman et al. 2005, Lightman et al. 2007, Peck 2001, Quaid 2002, Vaillencourt 2010), work as a policy instrument within OW remains a relatively unexplored field of study. This research project responds to this gap and contributes to the existing studies of OW in three ways: conceptually, analytically and methodologically.

Conceptual Contributions: Three Types of Work

A review of existing research surrounding OW and workfare schemes revealed that the work extracted from welfare clients can be classified into three types of work and these types of work can be seen as connected to and reflective of normative expectations surrounding work, welfare and gender operating in a neoliberal policy context. One type

of work is the work of claims making in which the labour of clients and workers is focused primarily on ensuring that the client is eligible for assistance. Another type of work, the work of training and re-socialization targets the reformation of clients so that they are employable. The third type of work is labour market participation and/or attachment which is intended to make the client employed. These concepts were reinforced by participant responses to the four questions that guided the collection and analysis of data.

Analytical Contributions: Reconciling Contradictions

Replies to the first question, "What is OW designed to do?" reinforced the idea that OW is engineered to enforce the quid pro quo equation behind workfare; OW is designed to ensure that clients are *doing something* in exchange for welfare. That is, OW is a program with mixed goals, and its administration has not solved fundamental conflicts between goals. This analysis provides an explanation regarding why the work around eligibility is the major type of work in OW, even if other types of work (and ways of thinking about work and deservingness etc) are deployed to shape the client's outlooks and sustain political/public legitimacy. The work of satisfying eligibility for financial assistance overshadows the program's supposed focus on employment. Responses to the second question "What is the 'works' part of OW?" revealed that eligibility work is more focused on making clients employable; the work of becoming employed is left to the client. Data related to the third question "How is the works part of OW enacted?" revealed that OW work is enacted using strategies that focus on transforming OW clients when gender and work related normative transgressions are perceived. The last question

"Who benefits from OW work?" leads me to argue that employability is not focused solely on benefiting the client but is also about fulfilling broader expectations and neoliberal ideals surrounding work, welfare and gender.

My own experience and participants' responses highlight the idea that work as a policy instrument intended to help unemployed people become employed is not per se problematic. However, an analysis of the data reveals that normative assumptions and expectations related to work, welfare and gender have played a role in distorting the idea in the practice of enacting OW work.

As noted in Chapter 5, a paradox regarding OW work emerged during the research project; the enactment of OW work relies on coercion even though the moral and economic dividends of work are assumed to be self-evident and intrinsically motivating. From this perspective, coercion, therefore, should not be necessary. However, the normative push behind OW work reinforces more the process of re-socializing the client whose goal should be selling their labour on the market. This focus has left little attention on how responsive the labour market is to this expectation.

Although municipalities are also charged with the responsibility to work with local employers and develop the local labour market, because of the funding formula discussed in Chapter Four, this process is possible only through participant's supposed success in the labour market. As noted in Chapter Four, municipalities earn funding based on client's earnings and employment outcomes; the funding provided to municipalities by MCSS to develop macro strategies is contingent upon the success of

micro level interventions. This structure means that in OW's practice, work as a policy instrument is bound by the activities of clients and workers.

Furthermore, because the activities that make up the 'works' part of OW – namely the work of becoming eligible, employable and employed – are focused upon transforming the welfare client into an employable citizen and not productive employment (which is a goal of work) one could say that the outcome of OW work is symbolic as well as material. That is, OW work relies upon normative as well as financial taken for granted ideas about the value of work. From the data, it was apparent that work as a policy instrument functions to structure and organize relationships and resources, to influence by control or encouragement certain behaviours and to codify norms and expectations in line with structures and behaviours. Thus, as noted in Chapter Five, work may be an ideal site for the enactment of neoliberal imperatives because it relies upon and enacts normative assumptions about welfare and gender that are conducive to a specific market focused ethos undergirding neoliberalism.

Correspondingly, work as a policy instrument reinforces a certain construct of welfare that is in line with neoliberal paradigms such as welfare in exchange for work or work preparation activities. Clients revealed that they expected that OW would find them a job in exchange for their compliance with OW work. Workers revealed that in exchange for participating in OW work, clients receive financial and employment assistance; however, clients are responsible for 'finding themselves a job'. As noted earlier, this finding fore grounded the idea that although OW work is undergirded by a quid pro quo structure (employment and financial assistance is provided to clients in

exchange for their participation in OW work) one could argue that the state does not entirely fulfill its obligation to the client in this quid pro quo arrangement because the state does not provide clients with paid work. This information supported my experience that the work behind OW is more symbolic and ideological than effective or efficient at meeting the needs it proclaims to address – helping poor unemployed people return to work.

My research demonstrates that as a policy instrument, work shifts the function of welfare from redistribution to regulation, from meeting the needs of clients to responding to the needs of the labour market. Through the discipline of OW work, clients and workers are conditioned to neoliberal expectations surrounding work and welfare thereby indirectly meeting the needs of the labour market. This structure, reinforced through the enactment of OW work, is assumed to be more effective and efficient at fulfilling the intent of welfare and the needs of citizens. However, my research draws into question this effectiveness and efficiency as the balance of OW work is focused on ‘eligibility work’. My research also highlights the goal conflicts within OW which have implications on the policy’s administration specifically the specific forms of ‘common sense’ that are used by staff and clients in order to live with the contradictions they experience with OW work. This line of inquiry could lead to further studies that ask if the conditions of work are what is most relevant for social justice oriented researchers or is the idea of work and its connections to the provision of welfare and its activation of normative assumptions and hegemonic ideas more germane? Picking up this thread, social justice researchers could begin to explore work as a fundamental need that citizens should rightly expect to be

provided through interventions by the welfare state. For example, researchers could begin by understanding OW's place in the spectrum of supports provided to people who are unemployed and how these supports relate with other social rights. The caution with this line of inquiry is that work, as a social right, may serve to reinforce neoliberal imperatives rather than further an agenda for the social emancipation of people living in poverty. Not only is work, as a policy instrument an important site of inquiry for researchers but moreover a dynamic field of struggle for both clients and practitioners.

Methodological Contributions: The practice of OW work

The methods used in this research project contributed to the body of work surrounding OW because the research sample includes clients and practitioners; clients, front line workers and managers (including Administrators) participated in the research study. Furthermore, my role as Administrator created distinct insider/outsider tensions that I explored in a reflexive way. As noted in Chapter Three, my position of authority created opportunities and presented challenges during the investigation. This conflict brought to light another possible vein of investigation concerning the practice of OW work.

In the research project, it was revealed that the administration of OW work functioned in concert with norms about work, welfare and gender so as to incorporate disparate intents and outcomes thereby rendering emerging contradictions generally acceptable; this in turn also contributes to the policy's stability. In other words, in the practice of OW work, norms mediated contradictions rendering them either acceptable or not problematic enough to change. Throughout the research project when contradictions

emerged, participants called upon taken for granted ideas surrounding work, welfare and gender to reconcile their struggle. For example, I expected that when workers experienced contradictions they would be understood as problematic and their practice would reflect that experience. I expected that if workers experienced intent as disparate from OW's outcomes, they would respond to the dissonance by engaging in practice outside of the acceptable boundaries (for example Moffat 1999 notes that some workers resistance was evident when they refused to listen to client disclosures about information relevant to their eligibility). However, as noted earlier, when faced with contradictions, workers relied upon taken for granted ideas, such as the intrinsic moral and financial dividends of work. Thus the administration of OW work was a fundamental stabilizing and facilitative factor behind the policy's contradictions. However, not all participants experienced OW work as contradictory. For those that did, it may also mean that contradictions are points that leverage change in practice only if and when the contradiction is experienced as problematic enough to change practice. So, it may be that the contradictions within the practice of OW work mean that the policy and practices of OW are effective to some extent; they fulfill intent but not the overtly stated intent of getting social assistance recipients to work but rather the intent of reinforcing norms about work, gender and welfare.

But, I also learned that expressions of resistance are subtle and practice in line with official expectations does not necessarily mean that the contradiction goes unchallenged. Workers found some space within the practice to respond to moments of dissonance (for example when workers aligned themselves symbolically with clients).

Although, it has been said that the field of social work has been transformed by neoliberalism (McDonald 2006) it is unclear what this means for social service fields (such as OW) where the boundaries of professionalism do not necessarily create legitimate space for resistance. The province does not dictate what qualification OW workers must hold; workers do not have to be professional social workers or even social service workers to be OW workers. Thus, another site for investigation would be the seeming contradictions that emerge in the practice of OW work and how a practice that pays attention to the necessities of everyday lives may contribute to the seeming contradictions. This line of inquiry could delve deeper into the structure behind OW work which yokes client's success and worker's success in narrow ways. Research with OW workers in mind may also further the action research agenda by offering practitioners "forms of action research that are less challenging of the status quo and work more with people in terms of where they are at in their everyday contexts of work" (Meyer et al. 2006:491).

Final Thoughts

From my perspective, as the enactment of policy requires the broad application of rationale, administration defaults to the internalized ideas held by actors that play out in practice. As a matter of course, the practice of applying broad policy frameworks to individual circumstances engages with norms that serve to rationalize and reconcile tensions and schisms which in turn contribute to the stability of contradictory policy. Hegemonic ideas regarding work, welfare and gender are codified in the expectations that workers have of clients and that clients have of the system. The practice of administering

OW work can be understood as an operational expression of a neoliberal policy context. Thus, the administration of OW is discursive in that it provides a specific theory for practice that sets the boundaries for relationships and the terms to construct identities. Although the clients are constructed as active participants they are not fully accepted as autonomous rights-bearing individuals. Instead they are responsible for the decisions they make as well as those made for them and about them. The practice of OW work sets in motion a way of thinking, particular forms of cognition and consciousness evident in the practice of social work in neoliberal settings.

Furthermore, as a practitioner, it was apparent in the data that OW subjects both those who work in the system and those who work for the system to the same techniques (such as coercion, coaching, rewards and punishment) in order to achieve the same ends (such as compliance and consent). One perspective is that this process is neither benevolent nor malevolent but rather an operation of power found in the bureaucracy in a welfare state (Rose 1999). Another explanation is that the operations driving OW are intended to marginalize some groups in order to preserve the privileges accorded to other, elite groups (Baker Collins 2004, Evans et al. 1995, Good Gingrich 2008, Herd et al. 2005, Herd et al. 2007, Herd et al. 2009, 7, Lightman 1997, Lightman et al. 2003, Lightman et al. 2005, Lightman et al. 2007, Peck 2001, Quaid 2002, Vaillencourt 2010). I have learned that norms about work contribute to the policy's stability because normative assumptions about work, welfare and gender function to reconcile disparate intents which I believe render the seeming contradictions in OW work generally acceptable to those implicated in its activation regardless of the cost of the status quo.

With this in mind, I feel as though my research project is somewhat incomplete.

Although this inquiry has provided some different tools with which to examine and explain the practice of OW work, it has not yet provided tools for emancipatory change.

My feeling of frustration remains and is best reflected in the statement of one participant who noted, “if it’s just politics, we can’t afford it anymore” (S15).

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Appendix A Recruitment Poster – OW clients

Ontario Works participants, want to share your work search story?

You are needed for a research study relating to employment programs for Ontario Works participants

Ontario Works participant in this research is defined as former or current OW recipient who has participating or currently participating in employment activities.

A participant will take part in a 25-45 minute audio taped interview about his/her experience and fill out some simple background information. All information will be kept confidential. The interview can be in person or on the telephone.

Your participation may help to improve the design and delivery of employment programs for Ontario Works participants

Please contact Sarah Pennisi, PhD student
(School of Social Work, McMaster University)
at 289-566-8822 or penniss@mcmaster.ca

Appendix A - Recruitment Poster – OW staff

Ontario Works staff, want to share your experience regarding OW's employment programs and policies?

You are needed for a research study relating to employment programs for Ontario Works participants

Ontario Works staff in this research is defined as a current OW staff who work with participants engaged in employment activities.

Research participants will take part in a 25-45 minute audio taped interview about his/her experience and fill out some simple background information. The interview will focus on your understanding and experience with employment supports in Ontario Works. All information will be kept confidential. Interview can be in person or on the telephone.

Your participation may help to improve the design and delivery of employment policies and programs for Ontario Works participants
Please contact Sarah Pennisi, PhD student
(School of Social Work, McMaster University)
at 289-566-8822 or penniss@mcmaster.ca)

Appendix B - Consent Letter



DATE: _____

LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT OW Clients

A Study of the Ontario Works employment policy

Investigators:

Principal Investigator: Sarah Pennisi
Department of Social Work
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(905) 525-9140
E-mail: penniss@mcmaster.ca

Co-Investigator(s): PhD Thesis Supervisor, Dr. Stephanie Baker Collins, PhD
Professor, School of Social Work
McMaster University, KTH 319
Hamilton, ON
(905) 525 9140 27960

Research Sponsor: (if applicable)

Purpose of the Study

In Ontario, social assistance policy is set by the provincial government but the program is delivered by municipalities. The Ontario Government states that the intent of Ontario Works (OW) is to help people in financial need find sustainable employment and achieve self-reliance through effective employment services. As part of my doctoral thesis at McMaster's School of Social Work, my research will seek the perspectives of both staff and OW recipients about experiences with OW employment services and employment outcomes.

What will happen during the study?

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview lasting about 25-45 minutes where we will discuss your understanding and experience in participating in Ontario Works employment programs. The interview can take place in

any location in which you are comfortable or we can conduct the interview over the telephone. To enhance the analysis of the study, you will also be asked to complete a simple questionnaire of personal information such as gender, place of residence, etc. The interview will be audio recorded with your permission.

Are there any risks to doing this study?

Some of the questions I am asking may cause you to reflect on issues you find difficult or frustrating. Also, you may worry about how others will react to what you say. Please remember that you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. And you can stop taking part at any time. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

By participating in this study, you will be contributing towards a greater understanding of how the administration of OW employment policy relates to its outcomes. This connection will contribute to the existing knowledge about OW policy and practice.

Who will know what I said or did in the study?

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. However, we are often recognizable in the references we make or stories we tell. Please keep this in mind through the interview.

Any audio-recordings will be transferred and stored in a password protected or encrypted usb drive, and the drive will in turn be locked in a file cabinet (along with the completed personal background form). Only my thesis supervisor and I will have access to the locked cabinet. The data on computer files will have names and other identifiers removed (names might be replaced by code names such as A1, A2 etc).

What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to be part of the study, you can decide to withdraw at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have my PhD completed by August 2013 and will prepare a summary of my findings. If you would like to receive this summary, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or require more information about the study itself, please contact me at:

penniss@mcmaster.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Stephanie Baker Collins at:
sbcollins@mcmaster.ca.

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance.

If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
c/o Office of Research Services
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Sarah Pennisi, of McMaster University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have been given a copy of this form. I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____:

1. *I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.*

... Yes ... No

2. *...Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results. Please send them to this email address _____ or to this mailing address _____.*

.....No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.



Inspiring Innovation and Discovery

Appendix B

DATE: _____

LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT OW Staff

A Study of the Ontario Works employment policy and participant employment outcomes

Investigators:

Principal Investigator: Sarah Pennisi

Department of Social Work
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(905) 525-9140
E-mail: penniss@mcmaster.ca

Co-Investigator(s): PhD Thesis Supervisor, Dr. Stephanie Baker Collins, PhD
Professor, School of Social Work

McMaster University, KTH 319
Hamilton, ON
(905) 525 9140 27960

Research Sponsor: (if applicable)

Purpose of the Study

In Ontario, social assistance policy is set by the provincial government but the program is delivered by municipalities. The Ontario Government states that the intent of Ontario Works (OW) is to help people in financial need find sustainable employment and achieve self-reliance through effective employment services. As part of my doctoral thesis at McMaster's School of Social Work, my research will seek the perspectives of both staff and OW recipients about experiences with OW employment services and employment outcomes.

What will happen during the study?

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview lasting about 25-45 minutes where we will discuss your understanding and experience in providing Ontario Works employment assistance to participants. The interview can take place in any location in which you are comfortable or we can conduct the interview over the telephone. To enhance the analysis of the study, you will also be asked to complete a simple questionnaire of personal information such as how many years you have worked

in OW, gender, office location etc. The interview will be audio recorded with your permission.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

By participating in this study, you will be contributing towards a greater understanding of how the administration of OW employment policy relates to its outcomes. This connection will contribute to the existing knowledge about OW policy and practice.

Are there any risks to doing this study?

Some of the questions I am asking may cause you to reflect on issues you find difficult or frustrating. Also, you may worry about how others will react to what you say. Please remember that you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. And you can stop taking part at any time. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Who will know what I said or did in the study?

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. However, we are often recognizable in the references we make or stories we tell. Please keep this in mind through the interview.

Any audio-recordings will be transferred and stored in a password protected or encrypted usb drive, and the drive will in turn be locked in a file cabinet (along with the completed personal background form). Only my thesis supervisor and I will have access to the locked cabinet. The data on computer files will have names and other identifiers removed (names might be replaced by code names such as A1, A2 etc).

What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to be part of the study, you can decide to withdraw at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have my PhD completed by August 2012 and will prepare a summary of my findings. If you would like to receive this summary, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or require more information about the study itself, please contact me at:

penniss@mcmaster.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Stephanie Baker Collins at:
sbcollins@mcmaster.ca.

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance.

If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
c/o Office of Research Services
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT – OW Staff

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Sarah Pennisi, of McMaster University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have been given a copy of this form. I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____:

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

... Yes ... No

2. ...Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results. Please send them to this email address _____ or to this mailing address _____.

.....No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

Appendix C 1: Interview Guide - OW Clients

When potential participants contact me, I said:

Thank you for calling me and for thinking about meeting with me. I appreciate your time. Before we begin, I'd like to tell you a little bit about why I'm doing this research. I have been working in OW policy for about 10 years now and for the last 5 years as the Director in Niagara region, I heard from both staff and clients that they either love or hate OW's employment focus. So, I decided to go back to school and look at the program more closely. I know that as a client, you can tell me very well what's working and what's not working. That's why I'd like to talk with you. The information you provide is very important for me in completing my PhD but also in helping to improve the way the program is delivered. Do you have any questions or concerns?

Semi-structured interview guide - clients

Preamble: This study, as you know, is intended to understand your experience with the employment side of OW. The questions I will ask are only an attempt to help us walk through your understanding and experience.

I'd like to know if this is the first time you have been an OW client?

How often do you see your worker?

Do you have to go into the office or does your worker come out to see you?

What is OW designed to do?

Please think back to when you first applied for OW. In your own words, please tell me what you understand the goals of OW to be?

(What about in relation to employment? How did you learn this? Who told you?; How did they tell you?,)

Now that you have some experience with the policy and program, how would you explain these goals to someone who is applying to OW?

What does the 'works' part of Ontario Works mean?

Is this something that you talk about with your worker? What would workers say that the goals of the policy are?

How do you think that other OW clients understand and/or experience the program in terms of finding employment?)

How do clients learn about the policy's goals?

How do you know if these goals are being met? (How would you make sense of the difference between stated goals and what's happening?)

What is the most important thing you are supposed to do according to your worker? Is this what you spend most of your time doing? What do you think is the most important thing you are supposed to be doing?

How is the work requirement enacted?

What types of things are important for clients finding work? What can the program offer? What does the worker need to do? What factors are important about the program that helps people to find employment?

How do you go about these goals? What does it look like in the day to day operation of the program?

What types of things do you think staff need to help OW participants find work?

If we were able to speak directly with the Minister of Community and Social Services about OW' work, what would you say? What, if anything, is it about OW that helps participants to find employment?

Whom does this work benefit?

How would you define the program's success? What about your success? What motivates you?

What would you say is the key factor in someone on OW finding employment?

What would you say about OW that doesn't help clients to find employment?

Is there anything that I should have asked you about OW employment but didn't?

Appendix C 2: Interview Guide – OW Staff

When potential participants contact me, I said:

Thank you for calling me and for thinking about meeting with me. I appreciate your time. Before we begin, I'd like to tell you a little bit about why I'm doing this research. I have been working in OW policy for about 10 years now and for the last 5 years as the Director in Niagara region, I heard from both staff and clients that they either love or hate OW's employment focus. So, I decided to go back to school and look at the program more closely. I know that case managers work with the policy everyday and can tell me what's working and what's not working. That's why I'd like to talk with you. Do you have any questions or concerns?

Semi-structured interview guide - staff

Preamble: This study, as you know, is intended to understand your experience in providing employment services to OW recipients who have found work. The questions I will ask are only an attempt to help us walk through your understanding and experience.

I'd like to know long you have worked in OW?

How long have you worked in the employment side of OW?

Do you have a specialized or general caseload? How is your caseload organized?

What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

What is OW designed to do?

Please think back to when you first started this job. In your own words, please tell me what you understand the goals of OW to be?

(What about in relation to employment? How did you learn this? Who told you?; How did they tell you?,)

What about the province? How do they talk about the program and its goals?

Now that you have some experience with the policy and program, how would you explain these goals to a new hire?

What does the 'works' part of Ontario Works mean?

Is this something that you talk about with clients? What would clients say that the goals of the policy are? (How do you think that OW recipients understand and/or experience the program in terms of finding employment?)

How do clients learn about the policy's goals?

How do you know if these goals are being met? (How would you make sense of the difference between stated goals and what's happening?)

What is the most important thing you are supposed to do according to management? Is this what you spend most of your time doing? What do you think is the most important thing you are supposed to be doing?

How is the work requirement enacted?

What types of things are important for clients finding work? What can the program offer? What does the client need to do? What factors are important about a participant's background or experience that contributes to their own employment?

How do you go about these goals? What does it look like in the day to day operation of the program?

What types of things do you think staff need to help OW participants find work?

If we were able to speak directly with the Minister of Community and Social Services about OW' work, what would you say? What, if anything, is it about OW that helps participants to find employment?

Whom does this work benefit?

How would you define client success? What about your success? What motivates you?

What would you say is the key factor in someone on OW finding employment?

What would you say about OW that doesn't help participants to find employment?

Is there anything that I should have asked you about OW employment but didn't?

Appendix D 1: Analysis of Directives Matrix

	What is OW designed to do?	What does the 'works' part of OW mean?	How is the work requirement enacted?	Whom does this work benefit?
intent section directive 1.1	to help; to find sustainable employment; to achieve self-reliance; to provide employment services; to provide financial assistance	work means self-reliance	through the provision of effective, integrated employment services and financial assistance	people in temporary financial need
other reflections on directive 1.1	to ensure that tax payer dollars are efficiently spent and services are rationalized; to ensure that client and delivery agent compliance is monitored.			
application of policy directive 2.5	ensure that adults receiving OW participate in approved employment activities as a condition of their eligibility	participate in approved employment assistance activities as a requirement of eligibility	by ensuring that ow recipients fall within the category of adults requiring to participate and not individuals with exceptions. Required participation includes adults, ODSP dependent adults, ODSP non-disabled spouses without caregiving responsibilities.	not explicitly stated

Appendix D 2: Analysis of Directives Matrix Type of Work

level	Type of Work			
	Eligibility	Training	Community Placements/Employment Placements	
general	directive 1.1 - employment assistance is noted before financial assistance. The intent of the program says it's to help people in financial need but the first service mentioned is employment - they link financial need (the problem) with the solution (employment)	focus is on the provision of services as being critical for labour market success rather than the conditions of the labour market itself - participation in these services is what leads to success even though for many it doesn't - the list of services intimate that without participation individuals do not "contribute to the community" this contribution is by "improving their employability"- the focus is on fixing the individual not seen as an exchange of labour but a process for self-improvement and by default improvement for the community		
bureaucratic	directive 1.1. the word employment appears 38 times while the word need appears 12 times - this reinforces the obligation-based orientation to the provision of welfare vs needs/entitlement based. Language reflective of performativity including "effective, accountable, sustainable, responsibility" - compliance is orientation toward ensuring financial eligibility first for financial assistance and secondly employment assistance. Collaboration is bound by "efficiency, expertise, and rationalized services" the outcomes for collaboration are performance based. in the roles and responsibilities there are 3 different levels of monitoring done by the province (policy, program management and regional office) the emphasis of this role reflects the obligation based orientation (police to ensure compliant)		participating organizations are engaged to monitor client compliance	
individual	directive 1.1 links the responsible individual to the self-reliant individual. This self-reliance is manifest via employment or fulfilling of the obligations to become and stay employed.	burden of 'success' is with the individual - evaluation of outcomes is based on the individual yet the data is not available in this way - no individual profiles just aggregate data.		
in directive 1.1 the word employment occurs 38 times, the word need occurs 12 times, the word individual is repeated 12 times too				